

Narrator: Sandy Henderson (SH)

Company Affiliations: Lake Superior Shipping Ltd.

Interview Date: 27 February 2013

Interviewer: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Recorder: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Transcriber: Sarah Lorenowich

Summary: Ship's agent and owner of Lake Superior Shipping Ltd. discusses his career in grain transportation in the Thunder Bay waterfront. He first discusses his early memories of grain elevators and shares how his father started the ship's agent business when the St. Lawrence Seaway first opened. He describes what ship's agents do for foreign vessels as the shipowner's representative, explains the process of coordinating grain loading with other local organizations, and shares stories of dealing with unique sailor emergencies. Henderson recounts major changes in grain shipping, like the disappearance of the Canadian Wheat Board and Canada Ports Clearance Association, computerization, consolidation of grain elevators, and increased sizes of ships. He describes current challenges in shipping, like decreasing water levels in the lower Great Lakes and questions about the use of Great Lakes ship pilots. Other topics discussed include his interaction with ship crews from around the world, working with Transport Canada and CFIA on ship inspections, occasional grain loading issues, increased awareness of ship security post-9/11, and Canada's reputation for honesty.

Keywords: Lake Superior Shipping Ltd.; Ship's agents; Grain transportation—ships; St. Lawrence Seaway; Great Lakes trade; Ocean-going vessels; Seafarers/sailors; Ship loading; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Ship inspections; Stevedores; Grain trimmers; Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Canada Ports Clearance Association (CPCA); Ship's pilot; Great Lakes water levels; Grain varieties; Consolidation; Computerizations; Transport Canada; Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: It is February 27, 2013, and I am in the Keefer Terminal complex interviewing today's narrator. I will have him introduce himself and his position in the grain industry.
SH: My name is Sandy Henderson. My company name is Lake Superior Shipping Ltd. We act as agents for ocean ships loading grain amongst other things in the port, or they're unloading other cargos. [Phone chimes]

[Audio pauses]

NP: That light should not be flashing. [Laughs] So, your career is definitely directly related to the grain industry. I'd like to start the conversation by—especially with people who are from Thunder Bay—by asking them questions about their early memories of the elevators or the railways or the ships. Do you have any of those memories prior to actually becoming actively involved in the industry?

SH: Well, I didn't actively become involved until I finished university in 1964. Then I started working with my dad in his trucking company. He had somebody else running Lake Superior Shipping, and I sort of relieved the other fellow off and on as things got busy, then eventually took over when he retired. But before that time, yes, I do have some interesting memories because Northwestern Elevator was still in existence, and I'd been up there. Paterson Elevator was still in existence, and I'd been up there.

One of the funniest things I can remember is going on a Yugoslav ship in 1959 or 1960 that had first come to Thunder Bay. I was about 17 years old I suppose. Once all the formalities with customs and everything was over, and just before they were getting ready to start to load the next morning—this was in a late afternoon or evening—the captain brought out quart-bottles of Yugoslav beer and passed them round to everybody to have a little drink. That was my first experience of having a little beer, [laughing] as my father let me have a sip to taste because, of course, at that time, you had to be 21 years of age.

NP: And how old were you at that time?

SH: About 17. [Laughing] No, actually I was even younger than that, I was about 16, yeah.

NP: So, you know, you're one of the few people that I've talked to that actually had any experience with the Northwest Elevator. I'm interested first of all, were you living in that area? Was that why you were familiar with them?

SH: No, I was up at Northwestern on a grain ship that was loading there before it was pulled down. This may have been—oh, I'm not sure—maybe 1961 or something like that. We had a ship up there, and I guess I went on there with my father when he made a call onboard. Actually, it was at the end of the loading, when the ship was finished loading and getting ready to sail. I can remember that it was snowing, and they were concerned about visibility coming down the river and through the bridge and everything because the radar was malfunctioning. They hadn't been able to get it repaired. I can remember the captain saying, "We have sailed everywhere in the world without radar, and we can make it down this river without radar as well." [Laughing]

NP: And he did?

SH: He did. He was a Greek fellow.

NP: You say snow, was it fall or spring? Do you know?

SH: No, this was probably in November or December, likely November.

NP: Near the end of the season then.

SH: The end of the season, yes.

NP: Was that your first experience in--? Well, were you even in the elevator or were you just at the elevator? If you were on the ship?

SH: No, I was more on the ship. I wasn't in the elevator, just on the dock to get onboard.

NP: Can you recall your first time going into an elevator? Have you ever been in one?

SH: I've been in all of them. I've been inside Paterson's Elevator before it was pulled down. I was at Pool 2, but never inside, before it was torn down. But I've been inside every other one at one point or another, into the grain inspection areas or to the railcar unloading areas, inside everything, all the facilities, yeah.

NP: What are your general thoughts about elevators? Good, bad, indifferent?

SH: Well, the job they do is fantastic. It's overwhelming to see such complex equipment going on, to see all the different facets of the operation, to see how they sample the grain and grade it, to see the number of different jobs that are necessary—from a guy oiling the bearings on a machine so that it doesn't catch fire to the clean ups so that there is no explosions. Each part of the operation is critical to make the flow go so smoothly. So, it's a fascinating place.

[0:05:01]

NP: When you talk about the efficiency—and fast forwarding to the fact that you're dealing with ships that come into various ports around the world—do you get any sense from the captains and crews of the ships how Thunder Bay sits on the efficiency scale?

SH: Well, the biggest complaint that they have is that our facilities are 50, 60 years old, and they have to move the ship up and down the dock to get the grain elevator spouts into the proper holds because they don't have as many spouts as they do in most other places in the world with newer construction. That's the only beef. The rate of loading and the quality of the workmanship of everybody involved, including the longshoremen, they get the respect of everybody. They do a good job. Nobody has any beefs about that. The only complaint is this having to move up and down. After they've been in the Great Lakes for a while—these are generally the captains who have never been in before—but after they've been in the Great Lakes a few trips, they realize that's commonplace. That's the way it is. You can't go and spend, I don't know, \$100 million to build a new elevator.

NP: Yes. So, let's then go back and--. We were talking about the Northwest Elevator, and there was another elevator next door to it, which in the early days was called the Electric Elevator—though I don't think that was necessarily its official name.

SH: I have no remembrance of that one. It was gone by then I think.

NP: It was gone? Okay. Let's go back to your--.

SH: I only got involved when my dad started this shipping agency when the Seaway opened in 1959 because then ocean ships started coming in. Before that, most of the details of operating ships was done by Lake Shippers Clearance Association giving instructions to the captain of the vessel directly.

NP: So, how did your dad develop an interest? Tell me a little bit about your dad, the company he had before he started Lake Shipping.

SH: My father and my grandfather operated Henderson's Taxi, and then in 1939 my dad started Superior Cartage, a trucking company in Thunder Bay—household goods moving, in particular, and unloading railway cars, product, and distributing it throughout the city. He was coming out of the Royal Edward Hotel in 1958 or 1959 one evening after a Rotary Club meeting, and a friend of his by the name of Jake Southern was walking in with a friend of his on his arm that he knew from Montreal. The gentleman's name was Joe Carton. He was the owner of March Shipping Agency in Montreal. My dad says that Jake saw him and said to Mr. Carton, "Joe, here's your man right here." [Laughing] And that's how it started.

NP: Just for purposes of transcribing, which we eventually hope to do as well to get a printed version of the interview, Carton, how's that spelled?

SH: C-A-R-T-O-N.

NP: Okay. And he was with--?

SH: March Shipping Agency.

NP: Like March and April?

SH: Yeah.

NP: Okay. Good. How difficult was it to set up that type of business?

SH: I don't remember very much of the details, but I do remember dad talking at home in the evenings or on weekends—when I was out of school and he was home from work—that it was all quite different, of course, because we never had any involvement with ships. It was a total learning experience. But, actually, at that time, shortly after, because of his contacts with the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] and the fact that there was no Keefer Terminal or anything like that here, he ended up working with the CPR and taking over their old CPR Shed 7 on the Kam River, which was right next to Westland D elevator—renovating it so that ocean ships could come there to unload automobiles and tractors and TEMs trucks, which came in fairly regularly. Then the ships took grain out. So, from there on, it kind of just expanded. He hired a gentleman by the name of Herman Taalen from Royal Rotterdam Lloyd Line. Herman ran the company for many years and then I took over after Herman moved on.

NP: So, where did Herman come from?

SH: From Holland. He came in 1960.

NP: He came here then?

SH: Yes. Moved his family here, and they're still here.

NP: So, your dad made contact with him when he was still in Holland?

SH: No, actually, Herman came on a cargo ship to the shed that we owned. They loaded seed wheat, I think, if I remember correctly, to take to Saudi Arabia or someplace, I'm not sure. This was bagged wheat. He got to know Herman at that time because to load cargo in bags took four or five days, up to a week. They just got to talking, and Herman wrote him a letter asking if he could come and join him because he knew dad had mentioned he was thinking about hiring somebody. The next thing you know, he brought his family over here—they were very young kids—and he's still here. Retired. [Laughing]

[0:10:37]

NP: Oh, really? So, did your dad then continue with the cartage business?

SH: Yes. It came until we closed it in 2007, actually.

NP: Oh, okay. Well, that's had a long run then.

SH: Yeah.

NP: Yes. So, he was an entrepreneur in the true sense, taking some risks.

SH: True enough, yeah.

NP: Did you always think you'd follow in his footsteps?

SH: Actually, I wanted to be an engineer, but I couldn't do the math. [Laughing]

NP: I can relate to that. So, you said that—I think it was probably off-tape—that you said that you went to university and then decided to join up with your dad in--?

SH: Yes, when I graduated from University of Minnesota in 1964, I had a few choices, but I decided to join my dad, see how it went, and here I am still. [Laughing]

NP: Good. Well, like many people in this industry—anything related with ships or railways—they get in the industry, even though they don't necessarily intend to stay in it, but it's such a fascinating industry that they do.

SH: Fascinating beyond belief, actually, when you think about it because we are fortunate enough to meet people from all over the world who are from every level, from a deckhand, boiler, mess boy, right up to the captain. So they have every level of education, every religion imaginable. You seldom see any racial or religious controversy onboard ship or amongst sailors. It's nice to see actually. We get along with everybody, everybody gets along with us. You don't see any animosity at all to speak of. It's truly an international community.

NP: They get to know each other as people.

SH: Yes. Generally, on a ship, it's all a crew of one nation, but there are a few cases where I've seen as many as 11 different nationalities on a crew of about 22 people. They've got to do the job together or the ship doesn't move, you know? So, yeah, they get along fine. Lots of hand waving because of language difficulties.

NP: From what you know about those crews that you've dealt with over the years, are there certain personality characteristics that makes a good sailor, crew member, captain?

SH: In most cases, everybody's got to have a job to find to support a family. They go to sea because maybe their country has a tradition of maritime sailing internationally, and they send their money home. Sailors sort of have a reputation of carrying on, hitting the bars, et cetera, but in general, no. They save their money. They send it home. Before the advent of the internet and mobile telephones, the first thing a sailor asked when you got onboard the ship when they tied up was, "Where's the payphone, so I can phone my family?" Everybody, from everywhere in the world. So, they're very human, they're very nice, they're very--. I have respect for them. When you think of some of the tornadoes and things that you see on television, some of the photographs or videos that I have from some of the captains of bad weather, they just have to be very strong, very dedicated people to go to sea.

NP: It's a lonely--. Well, I shouldn't say it's lonely, but it requires a lot of sacrifice for just the reason you said—they leave their families behind. They're not just gone for a couple of days on a business trip.

SH: Initially, a year to a year and a half was the normal tour of duty onboard a ship, back in the '60s, say. Now, in general with Europeans, it's maximum eight months, I think. East Indians the same, Filipinos the same—eight to twelve months maybe for a deckhand. Less for the officers because they are under more stress, of course, and the cost of flying people around the world. And the convenience of air travel has made it easier to change crew just about anywhere in the world. I can remember a Greek captain who had been onboard for two and a half years because he was raising money to put his daughter through university, and he said, "I have to keep working until she is through school."

[0:15:23]

NP: So, during that time period, say the eight months for a regular crew member, do they get time off? Other than weekends or when they're in port, they're on that ship. Is that what you're saying?

SH: 24/7. Yeah. When they're in port, if they're not working on a weekend, they may have a Saturday or a Sunday or a holiday off, but the rest--. But even during those periods, somebody has to be on duty to cover all the various aspects of operating the ship. Safety concerns, security, things like that, all has to be covered, so they still work a shift.

NP: And the ship is running even though it's docked?

SH: That's right. They usually have at least one generator, maybe two, running just to keep the lights and water and everything else going. Fire watches have to be maintained all the time, monitoring all the generator and engine systems, sewage treatment, water treatment. It's like a little city.

NP: Yeah. Since we're talking about people, any personalities that you recall that, sort of characters, that you'll always remember from foreign lands that you built up a relationship with or who had almost star status among the shipping industry?

SH: I wouldn't say that there's anybody that I would consider to be particularly outstanding above many other outstanding people. Because I have a lot of friends all around the world, the captains of ships and chief officers of ships that I have dealt with are all, I would say, far above average. It's very rare for you to find somebody who is a problem, although I have. A number of years ago, we had a Turkish captain who was an alcoholic, which is very unusual. The whole time he was here he was in his cabin. I had an English captain who was the same way, but that was the exception out of probably 800 or 900 hundred people, masters, probably more. Maybe 1,000 to 1,200 captains and chief officers that I've met over the years, those are the only two bad ones. The rest were all exceptional. You have to be when you figure a ship is probably worth \$50-60 million now to build. I don't know, I'm just guessing, but that's certainly more than \$25 million. To be put in command of a ship, you've got to be the best. So, we're lucky to meet the best.

NP: You started in '64, so there would have been some people coming to the end of their careers at the time you were starting, just a generation turning over. Were there some people who were sort of pioneers in that field that other people looked up to just because of their vast experience, what they'd been through?

SH: Well, really, here in Thunder Bay, it's a little different because the Seaway opened in 1959, and everybody kind of learned together, you know? It would have been a different case, perhaps, in an ocean port like Quebec which had been in existence for a couple hundred years, but no, not here. Practically everybody that we dealt with was learning together. Or in the case of guys from Transport Canada, they were moved in and had sea experience. And things are different in the lakes because you have draft restrictions, and it's a little more difficult to load a ship. So, everybody kind of learned together.

NP: What's the involvement of Transport Canada?

SH: Well, before a grain ship can load—a foreign grain ship can load—it has to be inspected by the Agriculture Canada, or see a Canadian Food Inspection Agency [CFIA] to check that the holds are clean and free of insects, et cetera. Transport Canada has to check stability calculations the ship makes to make sure all stability requirements and safety requirements are met. As well as they check the ship to make sure that build's pumps are working, there are no cracks in the frames from coming up the Seaway that could cause the ship to put a hole in the side later on or take a hole in the side later on. So, there's a number of aspects to that. Before they start loading, the Transport Canada inspection is about two hours, and the CFIA minimum of an hour usually. Once they get a pass, that's given to the elevator, and the elevator can release the grain.

NP: I was aware of the inspection from the standpoint of the--.

SH: CFIA?

NP: Yes, but not of the Transport--.

SH: Yeah. Unless they get a Transport Canada certificate after the CFIA is passed, the Transport Canada can pass it and then they can load. Otherwise, no.

[0:20:32]

NP: Have there ever been any instances where ships that you were sort of guiding through the process didn't pass inspection?

SH: Oh, we've had a few cases where, for different reasons, perhaps changing regulations or the way they were kind of trying to load, they couldn't do it and they had to change the loading plan to make it work. But in general, everything has--. It may have taken work, sometimes it took cleaning, sometimes it took fumigating, to get them ready to load grain, but--. And in fumigation, for example, they sometimes had to take the ship crew and put it off and put them in a hotel while the gas fumigation was put

onboard the ship for a day. Then the crew comes back when the ship is gas-free. So, it can be quite an involved process. But in every case, we've been able to get the ship passed to load.

NP: Any mechanical issues, then?

SH: There have been mechanical issues.

NP: Are they a pretty quick fix or very--?

SH: Not necessarily quick, but within a couple of days, I would say, at the worst case usually. A few years back, we had a ship come up here from Chicago, and the captain called me and said, "Hey. I'm not going to be ready to load. I have to go to the Keefer Terminal and do some repairs." So, I said, "Well, what happened?" He said, "Well, they were discharging steel beams in Chicago and one of the cables broke." The beam went on end and went partly through the ship, through the deck plating on the top of the hatch, but not through the bottom, the second skin, to put a hole right through in the water. So, they had to do the repairs here before they could load.

There have been other cases where, coming up the Seaway, the ships bounce back and forth off the concrete locks, and the steel frames that make up the structure can develop cracks. We've had a few cases where those had to be repaired. We've had other cases where they've had engine difficulties and had to come in or sit until engineers go onboard and solve those kind of problems.

NP: Is there the expertise in Thunder Bay to do most of the work that needs to be done in those instances? Or do they have to bring in their own people to--?

SH: Most welding and fabricating jobs can be done here in Thunder Bay, but for others you have to have people who are specially trained and certified by the insurers of the ship to do any kind of work on them. So, they fly them in.

NP: Now, you say that you have, over the years, dealt with well over 1,000 different people. What countries have you dealt with?

SH: India. India, Pakistan, Burma, China, South Korea, Russia, Ukrainian, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine—did I say Ukraine?—Germany, Holland, Finland, England, Scotland, Ireland. South American, had couple of Brazilian and Argentine fellows, deckhands from almost all the South American countries, from Indonesia, practically everywhere in the world.

NP: Has there been a change over time either in the nationality composition of the crews or where most of the ships are--? They operate under a flag, right, a country's flag? Have I got that right?

SH: Oh, I forgot France as well. That brings up a point, that when the Seaway first opened there were a lot of German and French companies operating into the lakes, and German and French crews. But then as time passed, inflation and cost of a sailor for those countries went up—and the Brits. So the owners of the ships started replacing them with crews from other parts of the world. So, we ended up then with Koreans and Filipinos and others moving in—and South Americans and Greeks. As time changes and as the standard of living goes up in some of these countries, and the cost of men goes up in some of these countries, then others come in.

[0:25:11]

NP: Do the captains and the sort of senior crew pretty much stay the same? Or do they also develop in the Philippines and so on? Captains and first mates and whatever that--.

SH: I've met some wonderful guys from the Philippines and everywhere else that are master mariners. The qualifications of all of them are equal. You know, I mean, you can hire a crew from everywhere in the world. Depending on the level of expertise you want, you pay. So, fortunately, coming in the lakes is challenging, so they have excellent crews. We've been lucky enough to meet practically always the best.

NP: Are there countries that specialize in the Great Lakes?

SH: Any sea--. Well, no, not necessarily, I don't think. Any seafaring nation has people going to sea, and they have crewing agencies that will put a crew together for a ship owner. They hire them so much a day, or so much a month, on a basis like that. Any seafaring nation provides men that come to Thunder Bay.

NP: So, tell me a bit about a crewing agency. That's, again, something new that I've never heard of before.

SH: Well, the Philippines is a good example where a ship owner will say, "Okay, I need a crew of 21 for a ship of this size to travel here. What do you have to offer? How much is it going to cost?" Then they make a contract for one or two or three or five years.

NP: So, there would be a contact in the Philippines that would run this crewing agency who they'd contact?

SH: Yes. Then maybe an owner from Norway or Sweden or Denmark or Germany or anywhere else where the cost of sailors from their country is too much. Also, because conditions in their home countries have improved, the guys can get work at home. They don't have to go to sea to get a job. So, they contact a crewing agency, and next thing you know, there you are. That's how they do it.

NP: Does Canada have crewing agencies that you know of?

SH: I'm not sure. For foreign going, yes, they contact people. CSL [Canada Steamship Lines] has a few foreign-going ships, and I'm sure they use a crewing agency somewhere else in the world. There are a couple companies in England and Scotland, for example. For their foreign crews only, they would do that probably. There have been a couple of Canadian ships that trade in the wintertime, trade foreign, and they put a foreign crew on from Russia. They would use a crewing agency for that. But to hire their own Canadian crews, I think, they do pretty much themselves through the Seafarers International Union for the unionized guys, and then they have their own fleet of master mariners and chief officers.

NP: So, your connection is a lot to those foreign vessels coming in, but would you deal with, let's say, CSL's ships that are ocean-going as well?

SH: No, no. Not unless they decide to take a foreign cargo and put on a foreign crew. The Canadian master mariner is here all the time. He knows the port, he has a cellphone, he has telex, he has email. They know everything that needs to be known.

NP: Who's the Canadian master mariner?

SH: Well, the captain of each ship. A master mariner is a captain.

NP: Are there any stationed in Thunder Bay these days?

SH: I don't believe there are any active guys here, no, that I know of anyway. I don't deal with them, so if there are, I really wouldn't know.

NP: This is just another situation where something that looks fairly simple on the surface has all these tentacles that go out and--.

SH: Well, for example, when the owner of the ship, when they're talking to a crewing agency, they have to give them information about the ship—the type of winches they have, the type of engines they have, all the details—so that the guy coming onboard is familiar with their equipment and so on because there's slight variances, you know, all over the world or in all the different manufacturers. An interesting thing that's happening now is most ships are being built in China in the last few years, and one of the offerings of the Chinese crewing agencies now—or the shipyards when they build the ship—is to provide a crew with the ship on a contract for a year or two years, if the shipowner desires. So, when the ship is ready, the Chinese crew gets onboard, sails it, and starts going wherever they want for a couple of years. Some of these guys are well trained and excellent as well, so some shipowners are keeping them on after. We've had two or three ships come into Thunder Bay with windmills and so on with a Chinese crew.

[0:30:02]

NP: Well, I guess, that certainly makes sense because there's a training and learning curve that would be required of someone who was unfamiliar with the ship. If it comes with operators, that saves you some money because I don't expect that operating a ship for a day is an inexpensive venture.

SH: No. Ships coming into Thunder Bay? I don't know, \$25-40 000 a day depending on the size of ship, I think, is considered the daily hire value.

NP: What size are the crews now of the modern ships coming in?

SH: Well, most—a lot—of things are automated, like engine rooms and so on are almost totally automated, so you need one guy monitoring the computers and guys ready to takeover to solve any problems. The same with the type of winches and so on onboard now. In the old days when a ship came in that was loading general cargo, a crew of 35 to 40 was not unusual. Now, 11 to 20.

NP: Quite a difference and very different, a lot of electronic skills needed, which were not needed before for the computerization and--.

SH: Well, training to operate the equipment. Yeah, you can't fix anything. You just fly in a replacement part or a replacement unit. In the old days, yeah, you had a radio operator who could repair a radar maybe or repair the radios. Nowadays you can't do anything. You just throw them out and get new ones. They have several back ups. The idea is the guy's got to know what's wrong, pinpoint it, and say, "Okay, I need this. Send this to me, quick," when in port. When they're out of port, well.

NP: I'm sort of following the discussion stream as it goes along, but I would like to come back to when you joined your dad and ask you to try to think back then to your first couple of months on the job. What did you need to learn?

SH: Well, basically, I was involved more with the trucking company for a number of years until we got too busy in the ocean-ship business for one person to handle. Then I was a relief guy, basically, for Herman Taalen. I was fortunate because Herman was a master mariner, very bright person, very demanding, but I have to give him credit for all that I know about ships. You had mentioned before about people retiring in Thunder Bay from years ago who might have taught us. Well, it didn't work that way. Herman came in as a young man and had many years of experience at sea, so he was my teacher. As time progressed, Transport Canada guys changed. Senior guy retired, but he was of the old-school where things were done with more trust given to the captain of the ship and less involvement in checking calculations and stuff. Then new guys came in who had sea experience, and they wanted things done in a more modern way. They checked things more carefully and helped solve a lot of problems. So, as that all developed, it was kind of a learning process for me from all these other fellows. So, I was very, very fortunate.

NP: What surprised you about the business?

SH: I don't know that there are any surprises, abrupt surprises. When I think back, the surprise is that everybody got along so well. There were occasional discussions, occasional differences of opinion, but everything was resolved by gentlemen with simplicity of simple discussions. Everybody respected everybody else's ideas. A consensus was reached if there was a problem without any hassle, without any animosity at all. Nowadays, it's more confrontational and some people like to wear their official government hat and say, "I'm God. This is my decision. Too bad."

NP: What do you think has led to that shift from sort of the handshake agreement and "Let's solve the problem," to--?

SH: I think probably in those days they had more authority and could say, "Okay, we can work this out, and this is what I think." Nowadays, everything has to be referred to somebody up above you. Anything goes wrong is publicized immediately all over the internet and the newspapers and so on, so people have to watch their back more carefully. And they have to follow the regulations, too, exactly. There was room for interpretation in a lot of cases, but nobody's going to stick his neck out the way experienced, say, master mariners who were here before you--. They weren't really sticking their neck out because they knew what they were doing, where a lot of the younger people who have come in don't have that expertise or experience. So, things change. I'm not saying that it's worse--.

[0:35:30]

NP: And sometimes it's not necessarily for the best.

SH: I'm not saying it's worse or better. It's just different, that's all. Yes.

NP: It is. So, let's talk about the inner workings of your business. I have a question that says: "Describe a typical day on the job." But I think I'd like to have that question answered, but I'd also like to know what does your business do?

SH: Well, generally somebody that we work for, one of the grain companies, nominates us to be the agent for the ship.

NP: Well, how do you even get to be an agent? Not just for a ship, but to get to be on the list to become an agent, what--?

SH: Well, as I said, my dad started when the Seaway opened, and it's just continued with contacts that you develop over the years. We're working closely with all the grain companies on a daily basis.

NP: Why were you needed?

SH: As I was just going to explain, when a grain company might nominate us, or a shipowner might nominate us to be an agent for a foreign ship coming to Thunder Bay because the captain of the ship may have never been here before and knows nothing about procedures. Then the grain company will tell us what cargo mix they want to load. There might be some wheat, and there might be some canola, flax, or different kinds of things that all have a different specific gravity. Some of them take more space than others when you load them in the ship, so the calculations--. The ship has to prepare calculations for Transport Canada based on that and decide on a stowage plan based on that.

So, we coordinate between the grain shipper and the shipowner and the ship to make sure that they can load the cargo that the grain people wish, that they can do it safely, and that they comply with all the regulations that Transport Canada has in place to pass the ship for loading. We inform them of what's to be expected with the CFIA inspection and the Transport Canada inspection so that when they arrive, they're ready for it, we hope, so there's no delays. As they progress up the Seaway, we keep everybody advised as to when we expect them to be here—the elevator, the Customs, Transport Canada, the agriculture, and the grain companies. Coordinate with the elevator company and the elevator as to when we can bring the ship into the berth for inspection and for loading, and pass that onto the ship and the shipowner on an ongoing basis. We do this daily.

Then we arrange for the vessel to be cleared at Customs when it arrives. Load the cargo. Transport Canada comes and checks at the end, makes sure everything was loaded according to the plan submitted and no issues there, gives them a fitness to proceed to sea, and get a clearance from the Customs to send them to sea. We have to have documentation from the grain people to give to Customs to do all of this, and then we sail it out again. Then we look all after the invoices for linesmen, tugs, pilots, linesmen, agriculture, Transport Canada after the ship goes—pay all these bills for them. And then we send the shipowner a bill for our fee. [Laughing]

And if the captain calls and says, “Oh, one of my sailors tripped and fell, and we think he broke his arm,” we get him to emergency or to a doctor if we have one that will look after him. Funny thing actually is my dad had been an agent for a few years and we were living on Oakdale Crescent in the Southward at that time. Dr. Cecil Dodick graduated from medical school, and his father had built a house for him and his brother a couple doors down from my parents. Cecil moved into the house, and my dad knew his parents, and he asked Dr. Dodick if he was interested in doing some work for him, as he needed a doctor for sailors. Dr. Dodick looked after the sailors in the port until he retired about, perhaps, six years ago, on call. You’d phone him and you got him in that afternoon. You go to emergency, you might wait four, five, six hours. There’s nobody else really that’ll do that anymore. We have one doctor that we can use occasionally, if he’s available, but. And that’s an important issue. We had to find a dentist. If a guy has a dentist, he can’t wait a week. He’s got a toothache now. He’s sailing to sea. Same with a sailor, something happens to him, so then we have to send him to emergency.

[0:40:25]

NP: You were talking about Customs. Or even let’s go back a bit further, so when you are sort of recommended as an agent, then the company calls you?

SH: The grain company will tell the owners that they have chosen us if it is their nomination, or the shipowner will. And then the shipowner will tell us, or the shipowner will just tell us if they are making the choice. It depends on what’s negotiated between the grain company and the shipowner. They negotiate a contract which is called the charter party, and they decide in there how they’re going to appoint the agent, who’s going to appoint the agent. Who the agent will be is decided amongst the two of them.

NP: Do certain agents work with certain grain companies? Or is it sort of--.

SH: There’s various ways. Some grain companies prefer some agents. Some spread the business around, and the same with shipowners. Some shipowners use one company or favour more than the others, and others just spread the business amongst the three agents that are in the port today.

NP: Let's say that you have been selected by either a grain company or the shipowner, what happens next? Does the shipowner, from wherever they are in the world, get in touch with you?

SH: Yes. They'll email us to say that they have an agreement with one of the grain companies, and this is the name of the ship, and this is when the ship is due, and please let us know what the cargo is, so we can pass on to the master. Or we will go directly to the master and copy the owner with everything that we know on messages. Because nowadays with the internet, it's so easy to direct instead of sending something like the old days we used to do with telex or had to do it with ship-to-shore radio, or before that--. [Laughing]

NP: Telegrams probably.

SH: It was telex when I first started. Every ship had a telex, or not all of them but most of them anyways. So, you'd send a telex, yeah.

NP: So then, let's assume a company like Richardson's will be dealing with this particular shipping company—whether they recommended you or the shipping company recommended you—you then have to work with Richardson's on the actual product that's being--?

SH: Right. And keeping them advised of, as I said, of the ETA of the ship. Once a stowage plan has been settled on between the captain and the stevedores actually going to load the ship and us, we pass that onto everybody—to Richardson's and to the elevator—so everybody knows. Like a ship comes in here has six holds, perhaps—one, two, three, four, five, and six. Well, in the Great Lakes, most of the big ocean foreign-going ships will load 22-23,000 tonnes of grain, and then they can go to the St. Lawrence and load another 8 to 10,000 because they can go deeper than the Seaway draft, which is about eight metres right now. They can load to maybe ten and a half metres. So, we have to, when a ship load here in Thunder Bay, generally one hold will be empty—say number three or number four—two or three holds full, and then the two end holds will be partly filled. Then they load those two holds at different levels to make sure the ship is even keel when it leaves. Then when they get to the St. Lawrence, they can fill up whatever they have to.

NP: Now, are the stevedores same as trimmers?

SH: Grain trimmers are the guys that actually do the work onboard, and the stevedoring company have a manager who deals between the grain trimmers and the chief officer of the ship. Lakers don't require that because the lakers are here all the time. And

the chief officer, you know, he's English speaking. He deals with the grain trimmers all the time, and he works it all out. But the foreign-going ship, the guy might be from a different country. It's always a communication issue, and they hire a foreman who really manages the grain trimmers and works with the chief officer to load the ship.

NP: Who hires the foreman?

SH: The grain companies.

NP: The grain companies.

SH: They hire, they pay for all the loading costs.

[0:45:01]

NP: So, they don't have that person on staff then? They hire sort of on contract for--?

SH: Yeah. There's a company called a stevedoring company that actually looks after supervising the loading of a ship.

NP: Ah, okay.

SH: Another new thing. [Laughing]

NP: Another new thing!

SH: Well, the same with windmills or anything else. Any cargo loaded on a ship, there's a company that is called a stevedoring company that looks after the loading of the cargo or unloading of the cargo.

NP: And supervises the trimmers that--?

SH: And supervises the longshoremen or grain trimmers or whoever's doing the work.

NP: Whoever's loading whatever kind of cargo there is. So, if the grain, you mentioned earlier, that grain was going out in bags, would that require a trimmer or just a stevedore?

SH: No, in those cases it would be a stevedore using longshoremen from the International Longshoremen's Association [ILA].

NP: Oh, it is complicated. [Laughing] Add another one to my list. So, we've got the company—the ship company—we've got the grain company because that's what we're talking about on this project. Then we've got you. Then we've got the stevedore company, and then we've got the foreman that's hired by the grain company. So, who brings them all--?

SH: In the case of an ocean ship, the stevedoring company actually employs the grain trimmers.

NP: Okay, but the grain company employs the foreman?

SH: Employs the foreman, yeah, the stevedoring company. The foreman--.

NP: So, who coordinates that?

SH: That's our job with coordination of everything, make it go smooth. Make sure there's no hang ups. We always know we do a good job when there's no hang ups and nobody complains.

NP: And add to that, you have to coordinate with the tugs.

SH: We have to arrange--. As the loading progresses, we keep everybody advised at how it's going. We have to give notices of 12 hours to get a pilot because every foreign ship has to use a pilot in the Great Lakes. Then we have to give four hours final notice for a pilot to have him onboard when the ship is ready to sail. About two hours notice for tugs to be there to sail it. So, we have to keep a close handle on how the loading is going, particularly at the end of the loading because if the ship has to move up and down the dock a couple times, they make calculations every time as to how much grain they're going to put in the ends. If there's a little difference—because tables and computers are nice—but at the end, it's actually you've got to read the draft and make sure it's just right. So, if he has to go up and down one more time, that can make a two hours' difference in the loading time. Then you've got tugs and pilot and linesmen and everybody there standing by at let's say \$1,000 or two an hour. You've got to be very careful. It's a very, very hands-on job, if you do it right.

NP: Is this fun?

SH: I love it. I wouldn't be here. My son loves it too. And we're good at it.

NP: Now, I'm interested—it may sound picky, my interests—but I'm interested in the communication. So, a ship is hired to take a load. When do you first make contact with that ship? Do you know when it leaves its home port?

SH: Not always. A ship loading windmills is a good example to take because they often load at a port called Aarhus in Denmark. Windmills are made in Germany, taken up to Aarhus, loaded onboard. It takes about a little over two weeks to get here. They unload the windmills, and then they make any cleaning or adjustments that they have to do to get ready for loading grain. Then they can load grain out.

So, often that company that's going to be loading the grain cargo has two or three ships headed for the Great Lakes to different ports with windmills. So, they may not decide until three or four days ahead which one they're going to send. Normally we have a week or 10 days' notice. Also, because of the confidentiality, information in the market with the grain companies competing with each other, everybody likes to keep things a secret until as long as possible so the other guy doesn't know about their ships.

So, normally, we know a week ahead. Sometimes we know--. In the last minute somebody might book a ship that's in Duluth or something, and we might only know the day before it gets here. There have been cases where ships have sat in—particularly, say, with the Polish Steamship Company—they've sat waiting for a cargo. Because they're regular traders in the lakes, and they come in and they don't have an outbound cargo, they'll sit at anchor down in Lake Huron for a couple days or at the end of Lake Michigan for a few days waiting for cargo. Then all of a sudden, they book one. Ship gets started before we even hear about it, and it might be 24 or 36 hours away, and we may only hear about it 8 hours away.

[0:50:24]

NP: At one point, when a lot of manufacturing was done in southern Ontario—or let's say Europe—there were a lot of ships coming into the Great Lakes with cargos. Now that a lot of the products are produced off the West Coast of Canada, are there many ships that come into port without, I don't know if you call it the front haul—I know they call it the backhaul, which would be the grain. So, they come in empty to load?

SH: Occasionally, but not that many. There are a few, but it's rare now to see a ship--. They call that running in ballast. So, there have been occasions where a company has a charter party with one of the grain companies, for example, for five trips this season. Because of the ongoing cargoes that they're taking, they don't have a ship available with inbound cargo to be here within the timeframe that the grain company required in the charter party. I have seen one or two in the last few years come in ballast from, say, Gibraltar.

NP: So, what are they bringing in besides windmills?

SH: Generally steel products going to the USA. Occasionally, pig iron, different things like that.

NP: It's going to Duluth, essentially? Or they'll come into Michigan and--?

SH: No, no. They might anywhere, yeah. They can start out Toledo or any Great Lakes ports. They have a lot of sugar coming from South America to Toronto. They may bring--.

NP: What comes into here, Thunder Bay?

SH: Very little other than windmills. An occasional project cargo for western Canada, but no steel or anything like that because we have no manufacturing to speak of here.

NP: More going into Duluth? Or they're pretty much in the same boat?

SH: No, they've been having their difficulties as well. They've had out-boat going issues as well because of the drought that they had down there last year, for example. We've had a couple years of bad grain seasons until a good one this past year, so those issues have affected the ships loading out of Thunder Bay, and the economic factors of the [inaudible] have affected the number of ships available that are coming in with cargo that will be available to load out. Of course, if a shipowner knows he hasn't got any cargo going in, quite a bit for a foreseeable future, well the rate that he's going to want for the ship to come in here to Thunder Bay is going to go up because he's travelling one way in ballast. So, it's an ongoing, changing situation. As you said, when the Seaway opened in the earlier years, there were a lot of manufacturing products coming in from western Canada.

NP: Or from eastern Canada.

SH: From western Europe, pardon me. Louis Dreyfus, for example, as I mentioned, brought in combines and, rather, tractors and automobiles. There was Poseidon Linien, a German company that brought in a lot of steel products, and then they would load grain out. Well, times change. The manufacturing mix changed. Steel products started coming in from all over the world—just basic steel or pig iron instead of manufacturing products. Cost of crews changed. Everything changes. [Laughing]

NP: Yes. Changes. So, you may or may not be notified when the ship leaves its home port or its last port, when do you really start the communication then?

SH: Well, normally by the time the ship gets to Montreal, if it's got cargo inbound, it's about seven days away. We often hear about that time.

NP: And things run pretty smoothly through the Seaway other than storms or--?

SH: Yeah, it's a many-years'-developed process. The pilots and so on are very experienced. All the guys working on the Seaway are all experts at their job, or good at their job, so it generally goes pretty good.

[0:55:00]

NP: I can understand your making contact with the various grain companies to sell your service. How do you do that with the shipping companies? Have you made personal visits to the various--?

SH: Yes. Most of the foreign shipowners are elsewhere in the world, so, no, we don't travel to Germany or to Poland, for example. But we do contact other agents in Montreal who represent these shipowners. Polish Steamship Company has an office in New York. We're in contact with them. Nowadays, with internet and telephone and so on, you're in contact with people all the time. Having been in the business since 1959, being very careful to do a good job and trying our best to do a good job, well, we have a reputation that we're proud of. I've tried very hard to do as good a job as Captain Taalen taught me, and I think I've been very successful. I'm not sure that Herman would ever say I'm as good as he'd like. [Laughing] And my son is following in the tradition behind me. My son is doing an excellent job, and I'm really proud of him.

NP: Good. That's nice. It's always nice to see companies move from one generation to the other and maintain the reputation.

SH: That's right. The people at companies that we've worked with for years respect him, and obviously they respect me, or they wouldn't be using me.

NP: Now, what might surprise people most about your work? You're at a cocktail party and somebody says, "Well, what do you do?" You say, "I'm a ship's agent." What do you think surprises them about the work you do?

SH: Nobody has a clue what a ship agent does. The shipowner--. We act as if we own the ship, and if there's any problem at all that occurs, we have to solve for the owner. Because he might be sound asleep at 3:00 in the morning in Germany when the problem occurs—he doesn't want to be bothered, and he can't do anything anyway. So, as I said, you get the emergencies with doctors, you get the emergencies of ship repairs that have to be needed to. Whether we actually are able to arrange anything, the necessary solution, here or not, we have to find a solution somehow, somewhere for any problem that occurs.

I can remember a number of years ago when I was curling with Walter Brown who ran Walter Brown Tours. We were out curling one night and Walter—no cell phones or anything—Walter calls me on Sunday morning, and he says, "Sandy." He says, "One of your sailors got thrown through my window in a fight on Victoria Avenue last night at midnight when we were just finishing our curling and having a couple drinks or so." So, of course, I had to go down and bail the guy out of jail and arrange to fix the window. [Laughs] So, things can happen.

NP: In talking to one person, interviewing them about similar things, he was talking about defections. Were you ever in the unpleasant position of that?

SH: It was normal years and years ago when Greece was under military rule to lose two or three or four Greek sailors just before the ship sailed. They'd jump ship. The Greek community would take them home. A number of years ago, we had a ship here on Easter Sunday, a Greek ship loading here at the Keefer Terminal, bagged cargo, so it was here for a while. The captain and chief officer went to midnight mass at the Greek church, and they were invited for brunch the next day, or maybe they had a meal after. I don't know exactly. But anyway, when we saw them the next workday, they were telling us, "Oh gee, yeah, we went to the church and it was really nice midnight mass," and so on. He says, "It's funny." He says, "You start talking to these guys, the people that we met there, all these guys had jumped ship years before."

NP: What did you do? What do you do in a case like that? What's actually the process?

SH: You would have to have Immigration come down to do documentation for them and take their passports. The shipowner has to put up a cash bond, so we have to arrange for that—get the money from the shipowner and deliver the money to Immigration. Then if they do find the fellows and send them back home, they deduct the expenses of all that from the amount of the bond and refund it and send it back.

[1:00:02]

NP: And if they never find them?

SH: They keep it. They become Canadians. [Laughing] We've had a case—I had a case—a number of years ago of a Romanian guy who decided he was going to jump ship. The captain got wind of it, asked me to call Immigration. An Immigration officer came down and had a talk with him and told him how hard it was going to be for him, and convinced him to go back home, go to the Canadian embassy and make a proper application, and do everything properly.

NP: Mission to Seafarers is another group that we've had contact with. Do you coordinate with them ever?

SH: Always, yeah. They always, a couple times a week, we let them know what ships are coming, and when they're expected to be here, and where they're going to go. Particularly nowadays, it's really great because they have wireless internet access, so guys will go down there with their laptops, and everybody can talk on Facebook to home or communicate--.

NP: Skype?

SH: They can communicate with Skype. They can do, yeah, Facebook, Skype. They can Skype back and forth. They get to talk to their families. Evenings here, of course, with the time changes to Europe and India and so on—six, seven hours to Europe—so, they have to--. If it's 10:00 at night, it's 8:00, 9:00 in the morning there—8:00 in the morning, 7:00 in the morning, and 12 hours change to India, the Philippines, and China. So, 10:00 at night, 10:00 in the morning over there.

NP: I started out this discussion with asking the question about what surprises people, and what surprised me, I think, in just the conversation to this point is the complexity and that it's not just pushing paper.

SH: Particularly the complexity of the industry, not just the agency work. When you think about it, railcars loaded on the Prairies have to arrive here in Thunder Bay with the proper cargo for this ship that's coming from halfway around the world perhaps and going to be here on such and such a day, and it's all got to come together at the right time.

NP: I've seen ships sitting in the harbour. It almost seems to me to be the same ship all the time.

SH: Normally you're seeing lakers sitting out here, occasionally you'll see a foreign ship. That can happen because the ship is early for the cargo, or the railways are having problems and the cargos not delivered on time to the elevator, or there's just too many ships coming at the same time, and there's congestion at the elevators. It's always been unusual here in Thunder Bay for a ship to wait more than a couple of days.

NP: Right. I've seen, I think over the past summer, I saw one sitting there for--.

SH: Two years ago, I had one from the Polish Steamship Company that sat here for 35 days at anchor.

NP: Somebody's paying for that.

SH: Yeah.

NP: How much does it--? What are the penalties, or they just--?

SH: As I was saying, with the ship being worth anywhere from, let's say, \$16-17,000 a day to \$25,000 a day, that's all in the charter party when they negotiated how much they have to pay for demurrage.

NP: And is there a charge to sit in the harbour?

SH: No.

NP: No. So, they can rest at anchor there and enjoy the summer.

SH: But this particular ship that was here a couple years ago—actually it was three summers ago—captain and I were old friends. It was from the Polish Steamship Company, and after being there for about three weeks he said, “Sandy.” He says, “We’re kind of running out of groceries.” He said, “What can we do?” He says, “If I put the lifeboat down and send the lifeboat into the Keefer Terminal, can you take the guys ashore to get some bread and milk and eggs and this and that?” I said, “Oh, yeah. No problem.” So, that’s what they did.

NP: A shopping trip!

SH: Lifeboat came to the Keefer Terminal, and it was one of those ones that are launched off the stern and they fly into the water. Of course, it's difficult to get them back up again. But two or three guys came in, a cook and a couple others, to the Keefer Terminal. I dropped them off to get groceries for a couple hours and picked them up with my SUV afterwards, filled it up to the roof, brought it back to the lifeboat. They went back out to the ship. And in the process, they have to conduct regular lifeboat drills as part of their safety procedures, so they counted that and did a lifeboat drill.

NP: Good. That's creative thinking. You mentioned a couple of times about the communication issues because the crews are from all over the place. Does that ever have an impact on you?

SH: Generally, the masters and chief officers are good English speakers, if not excellent. So, it's very rarely a problem. Years ago, I had a couple of cases where it was a little difficult. We had one Chinese crew that their communication was almost zero. So, I printed my instructions because they could read it perfectly and understand it that way.

[1:05:25]

NP: Ever need to use interpreters?

SH: In the hospital and places like that where we've had guys that are ill, yes, we've had interpreters arranged. Number of years ago we had a Polish chief officer that had a heart attack onboard. So, Dr. Dodick put him in the hospital, and I think he was there for six weeks before he could fly home. We got the Polish community here in touch with him. But it was interesting because Dr. Dodick, after all these years of dealing with sailors from all over the world, could speak a few words of about 17 or 18 different languages to determine, diagnose what was wrong with a person. Some of the Indian fellows in particular were laughing like hell because Dr. Dodick's ancestry was Polish. They were laughing like heck at him being able to say a couple words in Indian. "Do you have a tummy ache? Do you have a pain in your chest or head or what?" Funny things.

NP: A lot of the questions that follow are probably ones that we've touched upon in your answers so far because things don't usually just go along in a nice straight line. Have you ever thought of the connection between you and the farmer producing the products that you get shipped out of here?

SH: Always. It's always in part of your mind that we're just one cog in the wheel of a huge process. A number of years ago, the United Grain Growers [UGG] had a philosophy that we were part of a big pipeline, and that every section of the pipeline should know what the other section was doing to make the process flow as smoothly as possible, and that you've got pipelines coming from all over the Prairies, like two hands and fingers, and the pipeline is slowly getting bigger in diameter with fewer branches flowing together. That's still the way it is. It doesn't change.

NP: As a result of your work, did you learn a lot more about Canada's western grain industry?

SH: Oh, definitely. Definitely. You learned a lot all the time. Every time you go into an elevator you learn something about where railway cars are coming from, why they're delayed, where they're delayed, why they're here faster than expected, weather related

issues that they have, the quality of the harvest coming from different areas, what the different areas produce. It's an ongoing learning process, and it's an ongoing changing process.

NP: That leads me into asking questions beyond just the farmer connection, which is a pretty important one. You definitely know your connection with carriers, from the standpoint of the ships. Do you have to have any contact at all with the railways?

SH: No. Not really.

NP: That's dealt with by the elevator?

SH: The elevator companies and the elevator themselves.

NP: Canadian Grain Commission, any connection there or--?

SH: Very little. That's all done through the elevators. They provide analysis of quality of the grain, but it really isn't an issue for us or for the shipowner because in most charter parties it says, "Quantity and quality unknown, as declared by shipper." The shipper doesn't care, or the shipowner doesn't care, if the specifications are what the paperwork says. All he cares is I get paid by the tonne. As long as I've got that many tonnes and get paid for that, that's all I care about, and to get it there without damage, no leaking hatches or anything like that.

NP: So, if there's an issue of the wrong grain being dumped into the hold against the contract, that's between the grain elevator and the customer?

SH: In that case-- Well, quality levels is between the receiver, the customer receiving it. But in the case where the wrong grain gets dumped into a hold, then I get into it because we've got to get it out of there. [Laughing] That's usually noticed right away during the loading that there's been a mistake. "Oh, jeez! That's not wheat! That's canola for god's sake!"

NP: So, what do you do in that case?

SH: Well, then we have to arrange either with an elevator or some method to suck that bad grain out of there. We've had cases where we have to bring a ship here to the Keefer Terminal and suck out some of the grain, and then go back to the elevator and load the correct stuff.

[1:10:14]

NP: Are you or your son actually onsite when the loading is being done?

SH: We're not there constantly, but we are there. We call there usually first thing in the morning, and if the ship is completing loading, we'll be back there a couple hours before the loading is finished to see how things are going. But we get progress reports from the stevedore. That's his job, all during that day.

NP: When a ship is in port you guys, somebody from your company, is here?

SH: Yeah.

NP: They have to be.

SH: Yeah.

NP: So, you can never take a vacation with your son?

SH: No. Except in January, February, and March. By the time we get through the documentation from the end of the season—the last ship usually sails on the 21st of December—it's usually by the middle of January to the third week in January before all the paperwork is done for all the bills and so on, because over Christmas and so on everything is still coming. So, from about the third week in January to let's say the first week in March, we have a window there because usually by the first week in March we're already hearing about ships that are coming because the Seaway opens on the 22nd.

NP: Do you have to be licensed?

SH: No.

NP: Are you audited by any organization?

SH: Revenue Canada. [Laughing]

NP: Yeah, but not--.

SH: Customs check us to make sure we are doing our documentation properly, and if we make a small mistake, it's an automatic \$500 every time.

NP: So, you try not to make those small mistakes. [Laughing]

SH: For example, we have to report exactly what's on the ship, what's loaded on the ship, to Customs and where it's going two days after the ship sails, maximum. If we miss that, they charge us \$500.

NP: You deal with Customs here?

SH: Yes.

NP: When a ship enters the Seaway system, where do they clear Customs coming in?

SH: A ship that's proceeding to a Canadian port will clear at Montreal first and then re-clear here. It travels coastal from Montreal to here.

NP: So, when it leaves here, it clears Customs and then it doesn't have to clear any longer anywhere along the line?

SH: No. Not unless they stop in to load or take on bunkers. Usually, they put bunkers on in Montreal, and they might have to do an extra clearance for that. But not the cargo.

NP: Okay. So, it's not a question of they might have to clear Customs a couple of times going back out?

SH: No, no. Straight through. If it goes to the US first, it'll clear in Montreal to the US, and then we have to clear it again here.

NP: Okay. Did you ever have any contact with the Wheat Board when it was in operation?

SH: Oh, yeah. Always.

NP: What was that connection?

SH: A lot of our ships loaded wheat for them, so we were dealing with them. A lot of the foreign ships loaded wheat. Often, they would load, as I told you earlier, a ship could load maybe 22-23,000 tonnes here, and then it'll go to one of the St. Lawrence ports where the Wheat Board has their stockpile and fill that.

NP: So, were you dealing with Denis Portman then at the Wheat Board?

SH: Yes. Mmhhh, yeah, before he retired, yeah. Well, there are various operators for the East Coast operations department, for example, here. The West Coast operations has a different operator. We would deal directly with an operator. David Chlebovic is the guy that is the marketing director. We would deal with him on some issues.

NP: Such as?

SH: Oh, just general conversation about what they're loading from where, what their plans are for the future. He used to come into Thunder Bay and make a presentation to the grain elevator association of what their forecasts were annually, every spring. But generally, we deal with the operations department because we coordinate with an operator of the Wheat Board just like we coordinated with an operator at the grain companies.

NP: So, that still occurs now with the existing Wheat Board?

SH: With Wheat Board shipments, yeah.

NP: Were they always like one of the other grain companies, like the Manitoba Pool, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and Richardson's, the Wheat Board?

SH: Yeah. It was always, as far as I can remember.

NP: Now, if the Wheat Board didn't have its own handling facilities—still doesn't—but it would still contract with ships directly as opposed to--?

SH: Yeah, they would contract with the shipowner directly, and they would say, "Okay. This cargo is going to be half at Richardson elevator at such and such a time, and half at Cargill elevator at such and such a time. You speak to Lake Shippers Clearance Association, and they will coordinate all the ships going in and out of all the elevators."

[1:15:21]

NP: The changes then. Let's start with changes, and since we've started with the Wheat Board—or we ended with the Wheat Board—let's start with changes related to the Wheat Board. The changing of the system related to the Wheat Board, has that had any impact at all on your work?

SH: Not really. Just instead of dealing-- Well, Canadian Ports Clearance Association, which used to be called Lake Shippers Clearance Association, became disbanded because now we just deal directly with the operations manager at the elevator. The situation had changed now because each elevator company has its own wheat. It's not Wheat Board wheat anymore, excepting they have some Wheat Board stocks as well. So, they sell their own, charter their own ships, decide when they're going to load it. So, we deal with the elevator manager in that case. The difference--.

[Audio pauses]

NP: Reminding me. Your red light is still on your--?

SH: Good.

NP: So, since you were just dealing with ships regardless of who chartered the ship--.

SH: The difference now, since Canadian Ports closed on--.

NP: August 31st.

SH: August 31st, we deal with each elevator instead of just calling them. But that also means in most cases now, that a ship calls at one elevator for a full cargo instead of going to two or three. So, there have been some changes that maybe simplified things a bit in some ways—changes in procedures—but really not much difference.

NP: It's all balanced out?

SH: It's all balanced out, yeah.

NP: I didn't realize that you had to--.

SH: Of course, we don't have the volumes that we had 25 years ago either, so I don't know what would happen in that case.

NP: You mentioned there were three ships' agents in Thunder Bay.

SH: Yeah.

NP: Has that pretty well been steady throughout your career? The three of them?

SH: It was two for most of the time; it's only recently that it's become three.

NP: Dealing then with just general changes in the industry related to grain, there have been some major changes other than the Wheat Board disappearing on the Thunder Bay waterfront. What are the changes you've seen and what are your thoughts about them?

SH: Well, years ago when you went to Winnipeg, you spent two days trying to call on all the different people that were involved with all the different elevators and elevator companies. Now, there's only two or three left.

NP: What are your thoughts about that?

SH: Before there were ten people involved maybe in certain areas of grain in Thunder Bay that we would have to deal with, maybe even, let's say, a dozen, but now it's down to perhaps two or three. I'm not sure whether it's better or worse. It's progress, it's change, it happens. That's all. I can't really say whether I think it's better for the industry or not. I don't know.

NP: What about for Thunder Bay?

SH: Thunder Bay? Well, for Thunder Bay itself in some ways it's made it simplified a little bit. Whether we like it or not, we're competing on a world stage. If we don't keep our costs in line, we don't sell our stuff. I have a client in Turkey that buys Canadian product when the price is right, and they buy Ukrainian product and Russian product too. It's a lot closer. The price has got to be good. Now that the Russians and Ukrainians are getting their ducks in a row and being able to get all their harvest to seaports efficiently, well, that changes our competitive status. We've always got to watch costs. If we don't, we're dead.

[1:20:09]

NP: The one person I was interviewing recently was referring to the same thing in talking about Seaway costs and pilotage costs as sort of issues related to competitiveness.

SH: Everybody talks about the costs of the Seaway, and I agree. It's pretty high. So, that's an even further reason that we've got to keep our product costs low. They've talked about trying to eliminate pilots, but I'll tell you the pilots that I've worked with here in Thunder Bay are very good, very efficient. Maybe nowadays some people might think that that's not as necessary for them to be here. But I know a lot of ship captains who say, "Oh, jeez, you know, if I had to come up the Seaway without a pilot, I'd never get any sleep. I'd never get any rest. Sooner or later, I'm going to [inaudible] and there's going to be a big accident." So, there you go. It's easy to say, "Eliminate a factor," but when the ships start bouncing off walls or off each other and tear out a lock or something, then what?

And the thing is too that here you're coming up the Seaway, they're going into locks that they're not familiar with. They're all concrete. There's not rubber bumpers. If you hit it too hard, you've got a big hole. You've got a big mess. These guys are good. They're good at manoeuvring ships in tight quarters. Same thing coming into the elevators—captains of ships don't do that. Everywhere in the world they go to, they get a harbour pilot to take them in, you know? Yeah, they might be okay, but bad weather and so on? What is a Russian captain going to say to a tugboat when he gets excited and things aren't going the way he's wanted? What language is he going to speak in? [Laughing] I don't know. It's all very well to say, but I think they should be talking to the captains on these ships and the people on these ships as well and see what they really think about it, if they had to do it themselves.

I know guys that did do it themselves. Years ago, the French companies, after a certain number of trips, you could be qualified to do it without a pilot. They got what was called a B license. But those days, the crews were 26 people, and they had two chief officers—one for cargo, one for navigation. So, they've cut all that down. When's a guy going to sleep? Coming in the lakes to discharge, these ships would often go to four ports starting at Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago. They'd sail all night and discharge all day. There you are. That's when accidents happen, when people get tired.

NP: Now, you mentioned something just in passing, coming into the slips. And talking about changes, listening to some stuff about New York and sea levels, we have our own issues with lake levels.

SH: Big problem right now is that Lake Huron and Lake Michigan are down so that the water level below the Soo Locks is low, and ships here can only load—have to shut out—let's say 28 to 30 cm of cargo here in Thunder Bay. They can't load as deep. So, that's roughly 1,200 tonnes—1,000 to 1,200 tonnes—depending on the size of the ship, less cargo that they can take each trip.

NP: Since when? Like where's that--? Was just over the last--?

SH: Just started about a year ago. Last spring, middle of summer last year. So, if a ship gets, just at a guess, \$60 a tonne to take a cargo from here to Europe, and he has to shed out 1,200 tonnes, \$72,000 pays a lot of Seaway tolls.

NP: Do you watch carefully the prognosis for lake levels?

SH: Yes, we watch it all the time. When a ship is loading, we're in discussion with the master and the owners to help them decide how deep they want to load because if they load too deep and the water goes down, if the wind is blowing in the wrong direction the water level goes even lower, and they get there they might have to wait. If they have to wait outside the Soo a day with a pilot on board and all the other consequences that go with that, plus the cost of the ship per day, it can get pretty expensive.

NP: Is the industry, the elevator owners on the waterfront, are they concerned about this?

SH: Of course, yeah. They have contracts as well when they ship the grain, contract with a grain buyer to ship so many tonnes, and it's got to fall in those limits for them. The more they ship, the more money they get, so of course they want to ship the maximum. Get more money in their pockets, make more sales.

[1:25:00]

NP: What's sort of flashing into my mind is a picture at this point is, you know, Pool 2? I don't think it still has it, it was probably taken down, but there's a photograph of Pool 2 with the loading--.

SH: The gallery.

NP: The loading gallery. So are we in danger of needing loading galleries?

SH: Oh, I don't think so. Not here. They dredge the slips when needed. They did it, I think, the last time five or six years ago, and some of the elevator companies have had touch up dredging done. But right at the moment, Lake Superior is high enough. It's not a big problem here. The problem is below—Lake Huron, the next lake.

NP: Unless they adjust it through the locks. Southern Ontario and the States versus Thunder Bay.

SH: Well, I mean, the only way to--. The lack of precipitation in Lake Huron and Lake Michigan is the cause of low water levels there. The only way they could improve that is to reduce the flow through the Detroit River. I don't think that they could very well do that. What does that mean? Putting in another lock. And then what does that do to Lake Erie and Lake Ontario? [Laughing] Or they reduce taking the amount of water that's going out through Chicago. There's all kinds of things that can be done, but what's feasible?

NP: From the standpoint of changes in numbers of ships dealt with, ships have become bigger, so I'm assuming that over your career there have been fewer ships that agents deal with every year?

SH: Not really because more cargo used to go on lakers years ago to St. Lawrence ports until about, let's say, the '80s was about the peak of volume, and it was also the peak of ocean ships coming up here. By that time, the ships that were built that were coming up here were large ships as well, similar in size to what we have today. From the mid '80s on, pretty much the ships that had been built had been maximum Seaway size or close to it.

NP: So, what was the best year for foreign ships?

SH: Oh, I suppose it was probably--. I don't have any statistics or--.

NP: Like 17 million in 1983 was the tonnes.

SH: No, the ocean ships weren't that many then, that was all mostly lakers. I don't think--. The best year for ocean ships was probably around '88, say, '89, in there, because it all depends on the cost of moving the cargo to Montreal and the St. Lawrence port on a laker versus how much an ocean ship wants. That depends on how many ocean ships are coming in with steel products that are available. So, lots of factors come into play.

NP: Are you able to say what the average number of foreign ships has been in the port in the last little while?

SH: Oh, in the last few years it's about between 60 to 80, in there.

NP: And last year?

SH: Last year? Oh, I don't really know, but I think it was around 65 maybe. The Port Authority will have definite figures. I don't worry too much about the totals that the other guys are doing. [Laughing]

NP: No, because it depends on how many have you--. Yeah. I didn't know if you wanted to say how many you handled, so I just asked for sort of in an industry perspective.

SH: No, we had 29. There you go. So, it's roughly 30 each.

NP: And that's over--.

SH: No, it's not. The others were a little bit up. No. I don't know. We're similar, but not quite the same. So, I think 70 maybe.

NP: Any other changes in your business that we haven't dealt with at this point that you've seen over the years?

SH: Well, the biggest boon has been computers, you know? Before you sat at a typewriter until 2:00 in the morning trying to get your paperwork ready for--. Because we have to make reports called the statement of facts, report logs, to the shipowner of everything that happens as the ship arrives.

NP: So, what kinds of things go on that?

SH: Well, passed by the CFIA. "It was passed by Transport Canada. It berthed at the elevator at such and such a time and used two tugs. It loaded from 8:00 in the morning to 4:00 in the afternoon. Then it loaded on overtime paid for by the grain company from 4:00 to 7:00. Then resumed the next morning at 8:00." Every time it moves up and down the dock, you record it. It's a total log of everything that goes on and how much cargo is loaded in each period.

[1:30:06]

NP: Is it possible to get a copy of a sample log for our records?

SH: I could make you up one, yeah.

NP: Yeah, that would be great because it's one thing to talk about them, it's another to see one. So, that would be good. Change in products over the time that you started into the industry, wheat was king and then canola became the later shipment?

SH: Well, actually, flax. A lot of flax and mustard seed, canary seed, oriental mustard seed, these kind of products. A lot of those went on ocean ships because they were shipped in small amounts. You would get two or three kinds on a ship. To try and move those to an elevator in the St. Lawrence in 1,200 tonnes of this, 1,200 tonnes of that, and reload it on another ship is not very practical and does damage to the product as well. But flax was a big thing on ocean ships out of here until genetically modified issues came into play, and we can't ship it to Europe now. There's an embargo on it unless it goes through special screening to make sure there's no GMO flax in the whole cargo of, say, 20,000 tonnes. They find one kernel, it's a big deal. It's a problem. So, flax is practically gone by the wayside from shipping a couple hundred thousand tonnes a year to zero. I think, well, last year we might not have had zero, but we might have had 10,000 tonnes, 15,000 tonnes maybe out of the port to Europe. That used to be a big product. 20 ships a year, maybe more.

NP: So, have you had ships that have gone to every elevator?

SH: In one time?

NP: No, just from every elevator?

SH: We've had ships load at every elevator in the port.

NP: So, you've loaded out of Western Grain By-Products?

SH: Oh, yeah. Years ago, that was very commonly used when there was larger volumes going on ocean ships of certain products. The large grain companies didn't want to handle 2,000 tonnes of mustard seed through one of their elevators when they had the rest of it full of wheat and other things, so they would whistle some of that through Western Grain. Then as times changed and volumes went down in the port, elevators wanted every tonne they could get through their own place instead of using Western Grain as an assistance. Plus, water issues in the river made it difficult because there's no longer--. We used to be able to load to seven metres or more up at Western 10, now six metres. That's a big, big problem. Plus, every elevator wants everything through their own house. They don't want to give anything to anybody else. They need the volume to keep their own staff employed.

NP: Yeah. That's come up clear through just general changes on the waterfront with stiffer--.

SH: More consolidation, fewer elevators, yeah.

NP: Yeah. Less cooperation.

SH: More efficiency.

NP: And less cooperation.

SH: Less what?

NP: Cooperation. I dealt with the guys, like old time managers of Manitoba Pool, Saskatchewan Pool, UGG, they used to regularly say, “Hey, I’m having a problem here. We’re a little short on this, can you deal with it?” Not happening.

SH: Well, I’m not sure that it’s because of lack of cooperation or willingness to cooperate, or maybe just inability because they’ve all got their own contracts to fulfill first.

NP: Yes, yes. Circumstances. All kinds of things changing.

SH: And the cost of moving a ship from one elevator to another is quite extensive. It wasn’t such a big deal with a laker, but because they didn’t have to hire a pilot, they generally don’t use tugs or linesmen, so it wasn’t such a big deal for a laker to move around two or three places. But now it’s a little different, yes.

NP: The role of Thunder Bay in the grain trade, that’s been a big change from 17 million down to 6.

[1:35:01]

SH: It’s all because of where the sales are going. There’s nothing we can do about that. As I mentioned before the costs, everything is cost driven. Now that Russia and Ukraine are net exporters instead of importers of cargo, that affects a lot of what goes on with our sales to that area of the world. Population growth is more in the eastern sector of the world, so Vancouver’s now the--. The West Coast is more active.

NP: Any competitive advantage from a shipping perspective—or disadvantage—of Thunder Bay versus western ports, would you say?

SH: Well, it all depends on where the product's going. Yes, we have advantages. It's all cost. We have advantages when it's going to Europe and so on. But summertime, you've got Churchill into competition too, but they can only handle so much the way their facilities are at the moment. They take, let's say, 25 ocean ships a year away from us. If their season gets longer it may end up more. But everything is price-driven, so not much we can say.

NP: Is there any--?

SH: Actually, it's interesting because it also depends on the market for the costs of ships in the world market. When the economy took a nosedive a few years back, there were a lot of Panamax sizes they call them. They were ships that were the maximum size for the Panama Canal, which are, let's say, at least twice to three times the size of a maximum for the St. Lawrence Seaway. Panamaxes were such a flood on the market and were so cheap that it was way, way cheaper to load ships out of Vancouver, go through the Panama Canal to the Gulf of Mexico, than it was to go from here because Seaway size vessels were not hit as bad by the market change as the Panamaxes.

NP: And congestion in the West Coast ports? I've--.

SH: Well, that's a factor in our favour every time it happens. Whether due to labour strife or weather or various other things that go on, every time it happens, the ships are sitting there and those ships are bigger, so they may be \$50,000 a day. [Laughing]

NP: Interesting, isn't it?

SH: But the grain people that we're talking about, don't forget, are very experienced in all of this, and they can predict. They have stats to predict. This is all built into their price for the product, so they know a certain amount of this is going to happen. But yeah, any competitive advantage we can have by keeping our cost down and our production up, that's all we can do. That's all we got.

NP: Well, it's interesting that you say--. Some of the people that I've interviewed earlier on in the project when I knew less than I did about the industry—I knew nothing essentially—and people were saying, “Well, the reason that Thunder Bay lost so much of it's grain trade was because of labour costs.” And it was labourers who were actually saying this. But the major issue was the one you just put your finger on, which is markets. Markets are the--. If you don't have customers, and labour costs are pretty similar between the port of Vancouver and the port of Thunder Bay.

SH: There was a—I'm not sure of the date or timing of this—but back in the early 1990s, there was a speaker arranged I think by the CWB to give a talk that was done at the Airline Hotel. And I'm not sure—I attended but I don't remember much of the details

on it—but it was an economist. He talked about the direction of grain shipping in the world and how it was going to change and what was going to happen to Thunder Bay. At that time, of course, we were, I don't know, 10 million, 12 million, maybe had--. He predicted that within five years the direction to the eastern market was going to increase and the western market was going to decrease, and Vancouver was going to be the big port in Canada, and we were going to be a secondary port. He got booed and hissed here in Thunder Bay because, at that time, every elevator was operating at capacity. Five years from then it started *whoosh!*

NP: With nothing that could be done about it?

SH: Nothing to do with costs, no. When costs do come into play, because then they decide depending on costs where the breakline is in the Prairies, whether they should ship west or east, so, there is a factor there. It's always a factor in the total thing, but the biggest factor of costs is competitive in the world market now.

[1:40:14]

NP: Yes, and of course, the weather has a part to play. You have a good crop, you have a bad crop, and that's why--.

SH: Well, that too. That affects costs and the price of our grain. The revenue that the poor farmer gets depends on that, on all of this. When you think about it, yes, we're all cogs in the wheel, but without the farmer where are we? Nowhere. [Laughing]

NP: And he or she without the weather is nowhere either. I have a question that is: "How has your service changed over the years?" Or is your service pretty much the same?

SH: No, the same requirements are there. We serve a need that hasn't really changed. If anything, it's expanded because of the changes of technical things that go on with ships and reports that you have to do for government, this sort of thing—slightly, but not a lot, I wouldn't say, no.

NP: What would you describe as the major challenge in your job?

SH: [Laughing] That's difficult because there's no one particular point. It's a job of coordination. It's a job of teamwork, and sometimes the biggest challenge is just to get information from the people that we work with—either the ships or the grain companies or customs or Transport Canada or anybody. I guess probably the flow of information between everybody involved is the biggest challenge when you come to think of it, making sure everybody knows what they need to know, making sure I can find out what I need to pass on. [Laughing]

NP: I'm sort of smiling at this because it reminds me of an administrative position where one of their biggest challenges is to get their people to put their expense claims in on time. [Laughing]

SH: Oh, my father was the worst for that, honest to God. He was president of North American Van Lines Canada in the days when I got out of school, and the general manager would be phoning and, "Jesus cripes, you're six months behind! We've got to close our year-end and we need these. We need these. We need these!"

NP: And if he looked at it, that's what he was trying to get other people to do was to get that information to him. [Laughing] There's an irony in that. Besides coping with any changes, were there any other—and there were not a lot of changes—any other challenges that your company faced over--?

SH: I wouldn't say there weren't a lot of changes. Changes occur, and then it seems to me in this industry almost on a daily basis, but they're not as major as what happened with the Wheat Board and Canadian Ports. So, I think change is an ongoing growth process, and we take part in it on a daily basis, so much so that we don't really give it much thought. It just happens. Regulations are changing all the time for ships.

NP: Such as regulations, I was going to say that.

SH: We have to be at least conversant with what they are and with what's going on with them. Things like water levels and the environment and so on we're kind of involved with all the time too. We have to think about them and be aware of them and change as they go. So, you don't really think about it because you're changing every day.

NP: Is there some kind of system that keeps you informed of the changes, or is that something that you actually have to be actively seeking out to make sure that you're on top of the changes?

SH: Both. It's a combination of that. There's information on the internet, in the newspapers, on television, on radio, and there are sources of websites where you can access more detailed information if it needs that.

NP: So, what are the professional journals or websites that are really useful in your kind of work?

SH: Well, I'm not sure if, for what we need to do, there are--. There are notifications that come out from the Shipping Federation of Canada, and various other sources. Then we hear other things through the shipowners, through the grain companies, and

through the, as I said, just through the news. Then we dig into it a little further if it applies to us. Transport Canada has all kinds of information on their website, so does the CFIA, every government body in every part of the world. There is an international body that coordinates stuff to do with safety of ships and so on. You can find out from them as well. Little bits here, little bits there—there's no particular one source of information. You just have to--.

[1:45:33]

NP: And your shipowners would be telling you?

SH: They tell us. Some of them tell us some information that this is new, that's new, yeah. There's a group in Ottawa that sends us emails about stuff nowadays. It's a private group, and I'm not sure if they're eventually going to try and solicit money or what's going on with them because it's relatively new. Transport Canada tells you all the time any new regulations that come out that apply to ocean ships, and so do the CFIA. So there you are.

NP: Your most vivid memories about your work life. So, anything that you'll sort of--. Any incidents that happened that you haven't already commented about that sort of are highlights, lowlights, amusing?

SH: Well, as I mentioned before about running into a couple guys who were very, very ill with alcoholism. That's probably the worst thing that I--. It was pitiful, really, both cases. The highlight is, honestly, is just going onboard a ship and meeting the great people that there are. I like to get invited to lunch on an Indian ship or an Indonesian ship or a Polish ship or a Ukrainian ship. I've had cooking from every part of the world. That's a plus.

NP: Without having to leave Thunder Bay!

SH: That's a plus! I don't have to go to a speciality restaurant. I have the opportunity all the time. I might not always like it, but I get to try it.

NP: So, when a ship comes into port then, do they immediately call you regardless of what time of day it is?

SH: Oh, yeah. Well, we're in touch on the internet all the time.

NP: But if they're sailing into port at 2:00 in the morning?

SH: We don't bother about that, going at 2:00 in the morning, usually. No. If it's up to about 8:00 at night, we're there when they dock and go onboard, have contact with the captain, explain what's going to happen with the next morning's inspections because the inspections are only done in daylight.

NP: So, you meet them at--?

SH: At the elevator.

NP: At the elevator. Okay.

SH: Yeah. We're there when they berth, and we're there when they sail. And almost every bit in between, at least once a day. [Laughing] More often when something is needed. Almost everybody has a cellphone too now on a lot of these ships. So if there's an urgent need, they phone.

NP: Have you talked about the most unusual requests that you've had?

SH: [Laughing] I had a very good friend who was an Indian captain. He came with his wife when she was pregnant. She asked me to get her a breast pump, which I referred to my wife immediately. [Laughing]

NP: I think that's a great story! [Laughing] That is. You know, I can see it as a quiz. "What was it? \$1 million dollars for the person who can tell me what the most unusual request was from a foreign ship." [Laughing]

SH: There's the winner!

NP: Oh, that's great. What would you say would be the most touching incident? Can you think of--?

SH: Ha! Years ago, we had an Indian—or pardon me—an Italian ship in port, and the captain and his wife had their daughter. She was probably five or six years old and had been on the ship for quite a while, of course, with no opportunity to play with kids. We had a Sunday afternoon free or a Sunday free with nothing to do, so I asked them if they'd like to go into town. My daughter was the same age, and my son was a couple years younger, and I said, "We'll take the kids out to a park, and they can run around and play." They thought that was really a nice idea.

Well, I went and picked them up, and we met my wife and my two kids at Hillcrest Park, I think, to start with because they could have a look over Thunder Bay. This little girl was dressed in her Sunday best—crinoline and everything, you know—full blown dress, running around Hillcrest Park with my kids dressed in their jeans and sneakers. It was so much fun. That was probably one thing I'll never forget because this girl was just having so much fun after being on a ship with all adults for probably a couple months, not even seeing a child. And there she is playing and running around in this fancy Sunday dress. [Laughing]

[1:50:24]

NP: Do you have a photograph of that by any chance?

SH: Oh, no. That was--.

NP: Oh, that's too bad.

SH: That was a long, long time ago. My son is 38 now, and he was probably about 5 then. [Laughing]

NP: Was it usual for children and families to travel on the ship?

SH: Occasionally you'll see--. Most captains are allowed to take their wife with them when it's convenient, quite often—not regularly, a couple times a year. Well, maybe once a year you'll see a spouse onboard—if that—these days. I guess that just worked out through her age and her summer break and so on because it was in the middle of the summer. So, often they'll fly the family to Montreal to join them or to pick them up at whatever port they sail from in Europe. In those days, of course, a ship may even come from Italy, and they might have got onboard there, came all the way here, and were going back to Italy. Who knows? I don't remember the details, but.

NP: Have you travelled on a ship?

SH: No.

NP: Oh? After all these years?

SH: It's hard to travel on the ship when you've got to do all this custom preparation for them, both inward and outward, and everything that has to be coordinating before and coordinating after. I've taken a couple of cruises, went into the Panama Canal on

a Princess Line cruise. My wife was laughing because we're standing on the bow of the ship, and I'm telling my wife what's going on. The next thing you know, there's 20 people gathered around. As my wife says, "Everybody's here for your lecture." [Laughing] Explained when the pilot got onboard and all this, yeah. So, it was fun.

NP: Great. Now, you know, because we've talked about it before, that Friends of Grain Elevators is hoping to establish a National Historic Site here and an activity centre. If we are successful, what part of the ship's agent's role in the whole thing do you think we should attempt to feature?

SH: That's pretty hard to pinpoint anything because there's so many facets of coordination that we do. You know, as I've described, we've got to do anything that they want. If the captain runs out of paper for his fax machine, you do that. If he wants \$25,000 in cash to pay his crew delivered onboard, you do that. So, basically that's it. We act as if we're the owner of the ship while it's here. We do everything that they need. We find a solution to any problem that they have, or fulfill any requirement that they have, or tell them where it can be done if it can't be done here. It can be done down the Seaway by the time they get to Montreal. How you work that in, I don't know.

NP: No, but it is essentially the nub of what you do.

SH: That's right, it is.

NP; Yeah. It's almost like a Medusa.

SH: For example, I'll tell you, years ago, it was normal to deliver cash—and I mean \$25,000 was not at all unusual. We had a Greek ship come in. You'd phone ahead to get \$25,000 US cash. Of course, you had to phone the banks. They had to bring it in. They didn't have it. And then you take it onboard. We used to use an armoured car service at one point, and I decided, "Oh, to heck with that!" By the time you arrange it, and they're never there at the right time, and it's just too much effort. So we figured out a way to do it ourselves. But I went to the bank, got the money, took it onboard. They counted every bill, so you're sitting there while the captain and the chief officer and the steward each are going through these piles. They don't want all \$100 bills. They want \$20s and \$10s and \$5s so that they can spend some around town. Most of it ended up back at the bank with money orders, but they can't do it that way. These sailors wanted the cash in their hand.

So, they got finished counting this \$25,000, and the captain says to me—they're talking away in Greek—there was a mistake. This was the day before banks had counting machines. It was all done by hand. I said, "What?" He says, "Yeah, there's a

mistake.” I said, “What happened? I didn’t count it. The bank counted it. They put it in parcel and brought on aboard.” He said, “There’s \$1,000 too much.” [Laughing] I took it back to the bank, and the teller was so thankful.

[1:55:12]

NP: That’s a great story. [Laughing] So, your talking about this makes me think about something we didn’t talk about and that is with any changes as a result of 9/11.

SH: Security’s a big issue now. There are security procedures on every ship and at every elevator theoretically to make sure that the terrorist angle is covered, but I don’t think there’s--. To myself, I think here in Thunder Bay being a place the size that it is, and everybody knows everybody, that if any terrorist tried to walk down at the Richardson’s Elevator dock to get onboard a ship or into the elevator, he’d be spotted before he got out of the parking lot. But now every elevator you’ve got to go through security in and out, every crewman has to go through security in and out. To get onboard the ship, you’ve got a security officer there signing you in and signing you out, checking your identification, all to do the paperwork so that when they get audited the paperwork is in order, even though they know very well that there’s not going to be a problem. So, it’s a big expense and a big overhead and a big safety issue that, to my mind, in Thunder Bay is just a waste of resources. But it has to be done.

NP: Is it an actual, physical security person?

SH: Yes. Every elevator now has a security person on the dock at the access point to the ship or to the elevator.

NP: So, it might be temporary? I’m thinking of Western Grain where they have a ship coming in five times a year, or whatever.

SH: Yeah. He locks the gate in the meantime, and most others as well. Everything is fenced now. That wasn’t done before. The Government of Canada provided funds to do all this to a certain extent, or an allowance. I’m not sure how it worked. Every elevator is fenced in now and access points are controlled. Most of them, I think, have even video monitoring of those points as well. So, don’t know all the details because of course they’re supposed to keep this all secret, eh? So, I can’t go in there and phone them up.

NP: Yeah. Right.

SH: Interestingly too each ship, of course, has their own security plan. For example, you’ve heard of the pirates off Somalia? All these ships have plans to try and repel pirates, for example. When they get into pirate areas, some of them string barbed wire

around the guardrails around the side. They have plans to lock, well, steel doors, and put shutters on as many windows as possible. But, like one captain says, “You can do all that, but the machine-gun bullets will go through the steel on the sides of these ships like nothing anyway.” But they do have plans to try and protect them that were not considered, say, 20 years ago.

NP: Have any of the captains you’ve dealt with actually been involved in any of those incidents? Piracy or--?

SH: I’ve had a couple of them mention that they had been in areas where boats were coming towards them that they got kind of scared of, and then they veered off for some reason or another. But I’ve never run into anybody who was actually attacked by pirates or anything like that.

NP: Question that I ask is a very general question about--. I’m very proud of the Canadian grain industry, having read a lot about the history of it and how it’s progressed over the years. I think that Canada has accomplished quite a bit in that industry. So, how would you describe your role in making Canada a successful grain trader?

SH: The big thing, as I mentioned before, is to do our best to make sure things go as efficiently as possible, to reduce costs. If costs go up, harder to sell the grain. I’m just as proud of the industry as you are, so when we get a foreign ship captain that comes into Thunder Bay or a Canadian port for the first time who’s not familiar with our industry and the regulations—the standards, how they’re checked, how the grain is checked, and so on, how it’s weighed—we explain all that to them, so that they realize that things that go on in other parts of the world are not going to happen here.

[2:00:06]

NP: Such as?

SH: Well, when a ship comes here, they have ways of--. They read the draft of the ship, they know how much ballast they have onboard, they can do calculations as to how much grain they’re supposed to have on at the end of loading. They call it doing a draft survey. They ask me, “Well, okay, we’re going to do a draft survey at the end. What do you think? What can we expect?” And I say, “If you find a difference of 25 tonnes or more, there’s something wrong with the way your chief officer is doing the draft survey. It should be down to 10 tonnes at the most if you can do it.” And that’s pretty hard to get to 10 tonnes because it’s hard to read the water level on the draft marks because you’re talking about a half a centimetre, a quarter of a centimetre, all the way around the ship. You’ve got to go around and read it all the way around.

Some of them who've come here the first time and had bad experiences in other parts of the world where somebody's tried to short them a couple hundred tonnes will think, "Okay, yeah. Sure." Then they're surprised at the end. I've had them come and say, "Hey. There's 200 tonnes difference. Something's wrong." Not the elevator. I had an Indian fellow—he's a very good friend of mine now—five or six years back with Richardson's elevator, maybe longer. I think '97, '99. '99, I think. I remember the case. We were finishing the loading and he said, "Hey, there's something wrong. 350 tonnes difference." I said, "You've got some ballast somewhere." He says, "No." Chief says, "No." I said, "Remember I told you when I got here, and I read your draft, and I did an approximate estimate, and I said there's something wrong? You got any ballast left?" He says, "No." They say, "No."

After they got going down the lake, the chief rechecked. They found that there was a tank of ballast 350 tonnes they'd forgot to pump out. Somehow or other when his crew down below, went and checked, the communication issue came up and they forgot to check this one tank. So, there you go. There's a convert. [Laughing]

NP: Is honesty an issue around the world?

SH: Every part of the world, except here pretty much. Most vessel captains that come in say, "Oh, we really like coming in the lakes because we don't have to worry about dishonesty." In the Great Lakes, period—US, Canadian, everywhere—they like it. Everything is straight up and pretty much by the book.

NP: I've heard that from others, so it's nice to hear it confirmed. Of course, would we admit otherwise? [Laughing] Are there any questions that I should have asked you that I haven't asked?

SH: No, I don't think so. I'm surprised at how far wide-ranging our discussion has gone. Ships have gotten bigger. Ships have gotten moderner. Ships have got more automation, more electronics, less crew because of that. That's the way times are everywhere, eh?

NP: People are people.

SH: That's right.

NP: So, you can count on that constant.

SH: Yeah. But the people haven't changed. They've all been great.

NP: Perhaps become more sophisticated because they've had to, just because of the ships.

SH: No, they--.

NP: Or educated maybe?

SH: No, the guys on ships back in the early days were as well educated as they had to be for the times, and they learned as they went. This whole industry has learned as it's gone, as it's gone by, just like the grain section and the elevator section. Everything's modernized and improved. Well, changed, not necessarily improved. [Laughing]

NP: Right. Memorabilia related to the grain trade—photographs, things like that—that might be of interest to the public that you have that we could scan? I think we've talked previously about your photo collection.

SH: I've got lots. So, whenever you want to.

NP: So, we should chat more about that. Can you categorize it, what you have, in general? Or is it just so varied?

SH: Oh, I've just--. Yeah. I mean I've got guys on the waterfront loading bagged flour into the hold of a ship in 1959 or '60 along the river at the old CPR sheds. You know, everywhere I went I had a camera mostly, except that day with that little girl. [Laughing] But I can still see the picture of her in my mind.

[2:05:13]

NP: I can imagine. I can see it too. It was a very nice description that you did. Her little crinoline and her fancy little black-patent shoes probably.

SH: Right, right, yeah. She was all set for church.

NP: Well, that's great. I'd like to thank you very much. It's been a wonderful interview. I will certainly be in touch. I'm hoping that you'll be able to lend your expertise as we try to make our way forward with our centre.

SH: Glad to. And as you get further along with photos and so on, well, hey. I don't know.

NP: Fill your boots!

SH: Probably 20,000 to go through. [Laughing]

NP: I'll bring in some reserves to help out.

SH: I've got almost everything digitalized though.

NP: Oh, perfect. Very nice. I'm going to sign off officially now, and thanks again. It's been a good experience.

End of interview.