

**Narrator:** Patricia Kent (PK)

**Company Affiliations:** Canadian Grain Commission (CGC)

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**Interviewer:** Ernie Epp (EE)

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**Summary:** Retired weigh staff employee for the Canadian Grain Commission Patricia Kent discusses her career on the Thunder Bay waterfront. She describes hiring on with the CGC weigh staff after taking a college course on non-traditional jobs for women. She describes the two major areas of responsibilities she had as an assistant weigh person—one in the car shed ensuring all grain was accounted for during inward railcar unloading, and one on the ships to ensure proper outward loading. She discusses the number of CGC staff per elevator, shuffling staff around the waterfront, and working overtime during busy seasons. Kent shares memories of being a woman in a male-dominated field, recalls vivid memories of work life, and describes her pride in the integrity of the CGC. She recount major changes during her career, like the shift to the metric system, the introduction of hopper cars, the computerization of weighing, and the downsizing of CGC staff. Other topics discussed include the CGC's oversight of elevator audits, her work in all kinds of weather, common safety equipment worn on the job, and the dusty conditions of elevators.

**Keywords:** Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); Grain weighing; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Women in the workplace; Car shed; Boxcars; Boxcar unloading; Railcar checking; Inward weighing; Outward weighing; Grain elevator audits; Grain transportation—rail; Grain transportation—ships; Ship inspection; Computerization; Metric system; Hopper cars; Automation; Downsizing; Health & safety; Grain dust; Labour unions; Grain elevators—Equipment and supplies

Time, Speaker, Narrative
EE: Thank you very much Pat for coming in to see us this afternoon and sit this interview with us. Could you start by giving your name?
PK: My name is Patricia Kent.
EE: And describing how you came to working in the grain industry.

PK: I took an intro course at Confederation College. It was called Introduction to Non-Traditional Occupations. We were sent on different places for on-the-job training, and I chose to go to the elevator. I wanted the inspection staff, but they were all filled up so I ended up going on the weigh staff. That was in 1982, and they were laying off that year. It was in the fall year. In '83 they didn't hire and in '84 they were hiring, so I put in an application and got hired on.

EE: Did you have any family connection to the grain trade?

PK: No. None whatsoever.

EE: What attracted you to the grain industry?

PK: I guess the buildings themselves. I was always--. They were mystery buildings. They were so big and so huge, and I just wondered what went on there. They were always all on the waterfront, kind of thing. They weren't throughout the city, you know?

EE: Sure. You worked there full-time in 1989 until--.

PK: No, I worked casual, which would be part-time mostly, like three months on three months off. Then one year I didn't get called at all because it went on the amount of grain that was being shipped.

EE: Yes.

PK: When Chernobyl blew up in 1983-4, I mean we worked 30 days with no day off. Everybody was just so exhausted because they had to get that grain out. Russia was buying everything—tough barley and tough grain.

EE: You were coming into the trade in fact into the industry about the time things began to slow down on the waterfront. I was elected as a member of Parliament in '84, and I remember Frank Mazur, who was the president of the grain handlers, talking about maybe 1,800 grain handlers on the waterfront. These days if there are 180 working, I think they're doing pretty well. It's been an incredible decline of employment.

PK: Oh, I've seen lots of elevators close down, yes. When I started on the Grain Commission there was 169 alone people on the weigh staff. When I left there a year ago in January, there was 22 or 24 people left.

EE: Really?

PK: That's it, yes.

EE: The rest retired or had actually been laid off?

PK: The job changed. Things we used to have to do then we didn't have to do coming on now. We used to have boxcars.

EE: We'll talk about those kinds of changes that took place over the years.

PK: Lots of changes.

EE: So, you retired in January of '09?

PK: Yes.

EE: So that makes it about 25 years, or 27 if one takes it back to '82. You worked throughout this period for the Canadian Grain Commission on the weigh staff all the way through?

PK: Always on the weigh staff, yes.

EE: You would've liked to be an inspector or--.

PK: No. After I got on there, I liked the weigh staff because you could move about the elevators. You weren't restricted to an office, eh?

EE: Oh yes.

PK: So you could go wherever.

EE: And in how many different elevators did you work?

PK: All of them.

EE: All of them. How many would all of them been in your time of work?

PK: Oh gosh. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Fourteen!

EE: Fourteen elevators. Of course, some of them belong to what company Saskatchewan Pool would have a number of.

PK: Sask Pool, Grain Growers, Richardson's, P&H, Cargill, Western Grain.

EE: What kind of work did you do then, on the weigh staff of the Grain Commission? You already said something about boxcars, so I mean what--.

PK: It varied depending on what shift you were on. If you were put on boats, you just kind of tended to the boats or helped out with the cars or whatever. If you were on cars, well, you were the early morning person. You'd go in and get your car numbers and sound your cars and make up shunts for the order of the cars that would be dumped and stuff like that.

EE: That was part of your responsibility actually, to direct the shunting locomotive people, was it?

PK: Yes. To the elevators.

EE: What about equipment?

PK: Yes. When we first got there, we didn't weigh the cars. We had a weighmen there. Like I said, it changed lots, eh?

EE: Yes. This was a weighmen from the Grain Commission or from the elevator?

PK: Grain Commission, yes.

EE: Right.

PK: Then after they dumped the cars, then you had to make sure all the grain was accounted for, there was no spills in the basement, that the hopper had been empty after the car was dumped, and that the car was empty. Then if the car wasn't empty, well, then you had to fill out a report for it.

EE: Why would a car not be empty sometimes?

PK: Well sometimes they would just miss a compartment of grain if it was a tanker or a box car—not give it the extra shake and leave grain in the corner and stuff like that.

EE: So you'd actually do physical inspections? You'd look at them.

PK: Yes. If it was a boxcar then we had to go in there and do a dust line, which you know when grain would be like this. So we had to kind of level off with our mind's eye where the grain would be. Then we took measurements all around the boxcar—12 different measurements. Then we'd divide by whatever, 12, then we'd say how much grain was in that car. Then there was seals on the door. If the seals broke in, you had to report that too.

EE: The weighing did involve actually the physical weighing of the boxcar, or the hopper car, the tank car I suppose. Was it weighed full and then weighed again when it was emptied with the difference being the cargo or not?

PK: It depended on what elevator. Richardson's had a scale that weighed before and after.

EE: But Sask Pool didn't?

PK: No.

EE: The others tended not to?

PK: No.

EE: So it was actually based on a physical estimate then?

PK: Yes.

EE: It's based on quantity, first of all, and then you do a multiple based on a number of bushels or pounds per. What was the end result if the quantity was done in bushels or metric tonnes or?

PK: It was done in bushels when I first started there, then tons. Then they went to the metric system which was tonnes.

EE: Right, two Ns and an E-S. When did that change take place, roughly?

PK: Oh gosh.

EE: Mid '80s or even later?

PK: I'm not sure now. That leaves me.

EE: Did you have conversion charts?

PK: Oh yes.

EE: A thing you would've had to memorize.

PK: That was part of our competition because every year we had to have a competition.

EE: To be up to the measure again this year?

PK: Yes.

EE: [Laughs] If one does forget things what would it be over the winter? The slack time would be what? January through--.

PK: January, February, March. Until the shipping started. When the shipping started then--.

EE: Summer on the other hand, late summer could be very, very busy.

PK: Right. But it changed over the years. Like I said, it really changed a lot. Now in the winter they do audits.

EE: What does that involve?

PK: It's where they weigh all the grain and grain products in an elevator. They weigh them all over to balance the books.

EE: I see. The Commission supervises that? Or actually, does it?

PK: Yes.

EE: Is it a service to the elevator companies then, to have this done? Or to the grain company?

PK: No, they have to pay for it.

EE: Ah.

PK: Yes, they have to pay for it.

EE: That's the Wheat Board that would be paying, would it? No. The elevator companies are paying for the service, are they? Is that the payment you meant?

PK: The elevator pays to have the audit done. So I guess they need extra staff because you have to seal bins top and bottom after it's been weighed. They pay for that service.

EE: And are they--. The information goes to the grain company then, I guess, does it? Is that the basis, do they charge the Wheat Board then for the storage of the grain? Just wondering why they would do that.

PK: It's only the grain coming in that is weighed by the Grain Commission, so we have a tally of what should be in that house even though grain has gone out, because they keep track of outwards and inwards. Then all of a sudden, maybe there's a whole loss of grain and maybe the books don't balance. So where did that grain go? If they're under, they have to pay because there's a loss of grain.

EE: And if there's over, they can sell it.

PK: One time at Pool 4 somebody left a spout open, and the spout was put on for the next boat coming. They just left everything go and everything just went right into the slip. That was a lot of—well your dad probably told you about that—but there was a lot of loss of grain.

EE: Grain right into the lake, right into Thunder Bay.

PK: Right into the slip, yes. So somebody has to--. The books have to be balanced.

EE: Pay for that.

PK: Then of course a lot of them stole grain too.

EE: Who would steal grain?

PK: [Laughs]

EE: Or rather, how would it be stolen?

PK: We won't go there. [Laughing]

EE: Not the workers surely.

PK: [Laughs]

EE: I can't imagine a worker being able to steal any significant amount of grain. [Laughs] We won't go there then, okay. I have this question here about a typical day on the job, and we'll talk about changes later on. So maybe I can ask you what a typical day on the job would have been like in the years.

PK: Very busy. Getting the cars and the seal numbers and stuff on the cars, setting up for the elevators to start dumping, and then making sure the cars were all empty after.

EE: You would be doing--.

PK: A lot of legwork. You know a lot of those tracks are long, so you would have to go in and get the push in, and back to the office, and then back to get the empties.



EE: Would you find yourself on a specific day mostly or entirely at one place? Let's say the Richardson's elevators because that's the one I've most recently walked through. So you might arrive there in the morning and look over the cars that would be unloaded. Would you be busy with the unloading and then the measuring and all that? Would you be there through a whole day then at the one elevator?

PK: Yes, yes. But then if they're short at another elevator, they'd move you.

EE: Later in the day or whatever?

PK: Well, whenever. Sometimes you're only in there for 10 minutes and then you get the phone call that you have to drop everything and go to this other elevator because they'd be short handed or something. You had a lot of moving around from elevator to elevator.

EE: And the pressure on your dispatcher, whoever's making those decisions, would be based on what? The grain that was waiting to be unloaded or would it be a matter of ship waiting out there to be loaded that would put the pressure on?

PK: The office would have a list of who's supposed to be at a certain elevator, and if somebody called in sick or couldn't make it in, then there's a man short and maybe there's an extra one at this elevator, so they would shuffle them around.

EE: And in this way, you could end up at maybe two or even three elevators on one day?

PK: On one day.

EE: Was there a policy of having you work at all the elevators in some kind of a rotation, so you weren't just at one place or not?

PK: Not really, but when the lineup came out—we always called it the lineup—but they left you there for awhile. Maybe three or four weeks, two months, whatever. Then they'd shuffle you. Early days, Port Arthur people stayed in Port Arthur. Fort William stayed in Fort William, but then coming on later you got mixed wherever.

EE: Did this have anything to do with the transportation?

PK: Maybe. Perhaps. I'm not sure. Maybe Bill would know that.

EE: Would you be expected to have a car available so you could be--.

PK: Yes, that was one of the things when they asked you when they hired you.

EE: A job requirement.

PK: Yes. You needed a car.

EE: Your own car so you could hop in and be over at the other--.

PK: Yes.

EE: The next elevator.

PK: Well, a lot of the elevators the bus didn't go there, like Cargill. There was no bus service out there, so you needed a vehicle to get there.

EE: Yes. And so, you would get out and walk the tracks, look over at the cars, whatever sort was available, and did the cars have on the outside of them an indication of how much was in them? Was that--.

PK: No, they had a capacity weight but that didn't mean that's what was in them.

EE: No.

PK: But there was a ticket on the side of the car, and you'd pull that off.

EE: Which gave some indication of what was inside?

PK: Yes. It would give you grain, the grade that was in there, and the weight, and where it came from. Shipper's information and stuff like that.

EE: Do you know who would put these tickets on cars? Would that happen at the line elevator where the car was loaded?

PK: Yes.

EE: Sometimes it could be individual farmers who would be involved in loading a car, I guess, or providing the grain for a car, but it's really the agent at those line elevators who has the job of transferring the grain into the cars, I would think. From my farm boy experience with dad hauling to Paterson elevator in [inaudible] Manitoba.

PK: Yes.

EE: So you'd have the tickets in hand, the information on your sheets, and you would then tell the fellow at the locomotive which cars to begin. Did that involve sometimes shuffling them around? On what basis were they pushed in? Was it in terms of the kind of grain, the grade of the grain or not, because I guess the grains would vary, too, on the cars sometimes, wouldn't they?

PK: I think at the beginning—I'm not sure—elevators took whatever. But coming on to the end, certain elevators only took certain grains, and then it was railroads shuffled what grain to go where.

EE: I guess the railway companies, CPR for example, had its yard. I guess CN must have had a similar yard. Maybe there's was in the Intercity area, I'm not quite sure, but I guess they would receive the cars initially and be making decisions about where to send them preliminary to your looking at them. The very first interview we did was with Roy Lamore who worked for CPR out at Rosslyn for years, and he was telling us about this back in the '70s how they were doing it. Or even in the '60s, I guess, because computerization began to come in in the early '70s. Then once you look them all over, they would begin coming in, and then you would be there. How many weigh staff would there be involved with the unloading, let's say, of one car. Just one person?

PK: At the beginning?

EE: Yes, let's say the beginning.

PK: Oh gosh, probably two or three, depending what elevators. I'll take 7A, that's the biggest elevator on the waterfront at Intercity, there would probably be five track people. There'd be a weighmen, two weighmen sometimes because the skills were upstairs. So probably about seven, and then a weighmen in charge would be about eight people.

EE: All Grain Commission staff involved?

PK: Now you go there, and one man is doing it all.

EE: Yes, because so much of it has been computerized. Yes.

PK: Or maybe two. Sometimes they'll have one getting the pushing and the other one weighing off the cars, eh? Then if they're short you have somebody to do the legwork.

EE: So you're involved in getting it moving within the elevator. Is the weigh staff involved in further points or are there other people who take over then as it gets upstairs?

PK: Oh yeah. Well, then the elevator takes over. On the D-floor that's the distributing floor—we call it the D-floor—with the spouts are moved to bin the grain and then it goes out to the annex on a belt and then it's binned out there.

EE: One of those triumphs of engineering to get all of this going to the right place.

PK: Yes.

EE: And weigh staff are also involved then at the other side, the loading of ships, I guess.

PK: The boats, yes.

EE: And weigh staff supervise that as well?

PK: Yes, there would be a weighman, shipping weighman, and then assistant.

EE: Just a couple of people at the beginning. Two people could do that at the time.

PK: Yes. Then the assistant weighman, which I assisted on boats because I wasn't a weighman, to ship to the boats. You just make sure that all the grain is going to the boat.

EE: Going into the right hold, I suppose.

PK: Going to the right hold in the boat and that the scales are working properly. There was different parts on a scale that you checked.

EE: How does the scale for loading a ship work?

PK: Same as inwards. They look exactly the same.

EE: It's in the elevator building?

PK: Yes. They can hold 65 tonne. They're huge. They're almost the size of this room here.

EE: A huge tank?

PK: Yes.

EE: And it actually does a physical--.

PK: And then we check for tie rods, if there's tie rods in them because if there was or they were broken it would collapse in itself so there's rods in there. Sometimes it's chains. Then there's feet. Safety feet. Make sure that it doesn't hit the floor and equalize your damper. There's parts that we had to check.

EE: Everyday?

PK: Just when we were loading the boat. Make sure that all the grain was accounted for, make sure the spouts were on the right shipping bins.

EE: The satisfaction of everyone, the person who has chartered the ship—I guess the crew of the ship don't care as much about this—the person who was buying, so on and so forth, the seller, the Wheat Board selling, and so on, the weigh staff's supervision of this is the key point. It's at that point you know what weight and what kind of grain is going into the ship.

PK: Well, that was the inspection side what was going into the boat. Although when I assisted on the boat, I always checked the grade. If they're supposed to be shipping wheat and it's canola coming down the belt, well, then I knew there was a problem.

EE: [Laughs] Yes indeed. You cut it off.

PK: Then there was a while we had to go on the boats and check them before they loaded them.

EE: To be sure that--. Did the weigh staff or did the inspection staff take over?

PK: No, we had to.

EE: The weigh staff had to be sure that the holds were emptied?

PK: What happened there was I guess the insurance companies for these boats, especially one in particular, was always short grain when they got to their destination. So when that particular boat came in, we would go on it at the first elevator, and we'd check all the tunnels in the bottom of the boat and everything, and if it was clean or dry or wet, we had to make a documentation on it. If they only went into one and two holds, well, after they were finished at that elevator we went back in and checked those. Everything is fine, or if there was grain spilled on the floor or in the gates. Then it would go to another elevator and then before they'd start loading there, the grain person would go on again and they'd say, "Well there was no grain. Everything was clean." So then we knew then they were starting the belt and throwing it over the side to clean up. Then when the boat was completely finished and then we'd go on and document all the holds, if there was grain or no grain, and then when it got to its destination with all this grain everywhere and then we'd send somebody there to check it and there was no grain. Then we knew then what they were doing. Insurance company really clamped down on that after a while.

EE: What was the crew of the ship doing? They were throwing the stuff overboard?

PK: They wanted to keep it clean, I guess, in the holds in the bottom.

EE: Getting rid of their cargo? [Laughs] That's one way to keep it clean, but the person who's chartered the cargo, that particular voyage, isn't going to be pleased if no grain comes in.

PK: Well, the insurance companies were really getting ticked off at them.

EE: Who was doing this? [Laughs]

PK: I think it was the *Halifax* it was called. The name of the ship was the *Halifax*.

EE: Its own particular ship?

PK: Well, there was a couple of them, but I remember the *Halifax* was one of them. It was an older boat, should've been taken out of service maybe years before.

EE: Was it doing a down lake? It wasn't doing an international trade?

PK: No, down the lakes.

EE: So they were finding this, what, in Montreal when the ship came in?

PK: Yes. I think just the eastern ports just down the lake.

EE: Wherever it came in. That's a rich phenomenon. [Laughs] They were leaving the grain at Lake Superior? Feeding the fish?

PK: I'm not sure. I had heard a rumour that they put the boom over on the side of the bank one time and dumped a bunch there.

EE: Just dumped it on shore somewhere.

PK: Yes.

EE: That didn't happen very often I don't suppose.

PK: This particular boat it seemed every time they were short. So that's why we started--.

EE: Makes one think that they may have been in cahoots with someone who needed grain at a feeding livestock or something. That they did an unloading somewhere that was--.

PK: Maybe. I'm not sure.

EE: [Laughs] The captain was getting tempted in Halifax. It wasn't a Hall Company ship. It was probably an independently owned ship. No one under a big operation would tolerate that sort of thing. Anyway, back to the importance of what you were doing. The weigh staff was central to everyone's being sure that what the farmers had grown, and what we paid for and ultimately by the Wheat Board was actually moving through and getting to market. You were at a central point in ensuring that.

PK: Yes. I remember one time you missed a car that you didn't check a car that was after it was unloaded. He had to call the railroad and they would go and check it for you. It was so important to get that car sounded empty.

EE: Right. If you'd go back physically and look at every one of the cars--.

PK: Oh, we sounded them. We had a stick, eh? We used to hit the bottoms of them and make sure--.

EE: On the tank cars?

PK: Yes.

EE: And depending on the ring of the sound you'd know whether there was something in there?

PK: In the boxcars, you'd have to get there before the grain door man pulls off everything to put all the wires and everything into the door and close it up, so you had to get in there and check them before they did that.

EE: Yes. That would be a fairly physical job, all right.

PK: There was a lot of walking.

EE: You'd be on your feet all day or for much of it.

PK: Yes.

EE: So that would be a typical day on the job. We talk about changes later in this interview, I suppose, but you made some reference. The questions asked in regard of this, well, you described that. Who did you interact with? You were clearly interacting with the grain companies, the elevator crew.

PK: The elevator personnel, yes. And then the inspection because sometimes you needed to know what grade was in that car because sometimes there's a pattern. If it's from the same shipping station and grade so you go back up there with--. Because they had the tickets off of the car for their bag samples.



EE: They ended up in the hands of the inspection staff.

PK: Yes.

EE: The Grain Commission staff in an elevator would be the weigh staff and the inspection staff?

PK: At every elevator, yes. There was a government staff.

EE: Those were the two government groups of government staff there. The inspection staff was entirely supervisory then? And providing the ultimate insurance that--.

PK: They had an inspector in charge, yes.

EE: Did you have much interaction with the elevator workers? The grain handlers themselves?

PK: Yes, you do, all of them. They were all pretty friendly, and yes.

EE: One of the interesting things about it is you were there as a non-traditional person in a very traditional kind of work. [Laughs]

PK: It was difficult at first. It really was.

EE: How many of you would've been women? Would you have been the only woman of the men?

PK: No, no. Probably was 10, 12, 15 maybe when I went on the job.

EE: Out of 80 or 90?

PK: Of 169, I'll say maybe 20 women.

EE: So that would still be about 10 percent then. A bit over 10 percent.

PK: Yes.

EE: And you were a novelty in the elevators when you arrived, I'm sure. Were you one of the first to arrive?

PK: Not the very first. I'm not sure when women came on because Gail said she came on when?

[Unknown]: '78.

PK: '78.

EE: Half a dozen years earlier that--. The elevator crews were entirely male I guess in those days. Was a woman secretary in the office perhaps but--.

PK: Yes.

EE: Everyone knew how to behave, I suppose.

PK: [Laughs] Hm.

EE: [Laughs] Or did you find you were experiencing harassment particularly, or not?

PK: Not really because I grew up mostly with boys. I could take it and dish it out back to them. I didn't run and say, "I'm going to report you," because you know, you just--.

EE: Give it back and have them back off.

PK: Yes. There was a few that I just stayed away from because I didn't feel comfortable around them.

EE: That makes sense.

PK: But we didn't—I didn't anyway—associate with everybody because if I worked in the car shed, it was mostly just those guys I got to know because when you first came on the job you didn't do boats. I was there for maybe a couple years before I did boats, so I didn't know who was upstairs.

EE: Also wonders about tools and equipment that you used. You've mentioned the measuring the box cars and tapping the tank cars and so on.

PK: Flashlight. You always carried a flashlight. Hard hat, work boots.

EE: The weighing equipment would vary with the Richardson's having the honest to goodness scales and the other places you were sort of estimating what the quantity was. Grain varies in weight of course, doesn't it? Wheat being heavier than barley or oats. Did you have primarily wheat, or you mentioned canola of course coming.

PK: We handled everything. I worked with everything.

EE: You became familiar with--. How much instruction were you given before you started in the way of preparing you for what you would be finding or for what you'd be weighing?

PK: You mean on this course that I took or when I got to the elevators?

EE: The course, first of all, the Grain Commission had a course for you.

PK: The course I took, Introduction to Non-Traditional Occupations--.

EE: No. Not that one.

PK: Not that one?

EE: No.

PK: Okay.

EE: Actually, in that, were there parts that were really--. What did they instruct you in, in that course? In the broadest kind of terms.

PK: Just the difference in wages that men made compared to women in those days, you know? Women worked for next to nothing.

EE: So it started with that?

PK: Yes. And then a union.

EE: Here's a chance to make a man's wage.

PK: Then a union. We were never familiar working for a union and in all those places they were sending us to were all unionized.

EE: You at the Grain Commission also had a union?

PK: Yes. Then the instructor at the college had a list of places that was willing to take us because, you know, they had to make arrangements for us. How many they could take on the job training.

EE: I guess this would be the kind of instruction that might be called life skills instruction, or would you add to that?

PK: The course I took?

EE: The course at the college.

PK: Yes. It was an eye opener. It was different than what I was used to doing because I was a homemaker and Grandview Lodge in the kitchen and that kind of work I was doing.

EE: So that's what you've done beforehand. You knew about the kind of wages people made there.

PK: Yes, and how hard the work was.

EE: Yes. You were saying.

PK: [Laughs]

EE: Harder than being on weigh staff.

PK: Oh yes.

EE: Then you had instruction of course by the Grain Commission itself on what you'd be having to do?

PK: They showed you around. I went to Pool 1, that's where I went, and I went to Pool 1, and they showed me around, but these buildings are so big, and I had never seen a scale that big in my life. I mean, a little scale--.

EE: [Laughs] In the kitchen.

PK: Yes, and then there's parts and then tell the difference between what elevator workers and Grain Commission workers was something that you had to learn how to do. Then sometimes I'd get lost just trying to find my way back to the office. I'd get turned around and the door and the cleaning machine, I wouldn't know where I was. [Laughs] So it was a learning experience.

EE: A good deal of it was sort of learning on the job with the other Grain Commission staff watching you and instructing you and things. You weren't involved in grading, or were you?

PK: No. That's inspection.

EE: That was another skill that had to be--.

PK: But there was parts of the job where it was really boring. After you did your push-in and you got all your numbers and everything in and you waited for a few cars to be dumped, and then you'd check your empties, take a walk down the track, it would maybe be an hour and you just sat there. What do I do now? I was always used to working and doing stuff, you know?

EE: Then some more cars would arrive or--.

PK: We'd have a new push-in usually at noon, so you're busy again doing another push-in and more empties. A lot of them had shifts on them. So you're getting ready for the 4:00 to 12:00 and relieve you.

EE: Your workday was eight hours? Ten hours? Twelve?

PK: You were scheduled for eight hours, but if the elevator decided they were doing to dump cars at night and they needed staff then we had to--.

EE: You just carry on.

PK: You just carry on.

EE: Right.

PK: Same thing with boats. You're on schedule with boats for a week and the boat doesn't come in until 4:00 in the afternoon, well, you're there until midnight because they used to ship from 4:00 to 12:00.

EE: And overtime was paid or just a longer workday?

PK: No, it was time and a half after eight hours.

EE: That makes it more tolerable.

PK: Yes. Double time on Sunday.

EE: Even more tolerable. [Laughing] What might interest or surprise people most about the work that you did? If you were to think back over it from the perspective of people who have maybe never been in an elevator even.

PK: I think how huge they are. How the grain is moved about. When my brother and sister came to visit me from the East Coast, they had never seen an elevator before. They thought an elevator was in a high-rise building.

EE: [Laughs] Well that is one kind of elevator. But that usually doesn't handle grain.

PK: I took them to Pool 1. It was the middle of the winter, and he couldn't get over how cold it was in there. The cement is cold, and, you know, I didn't find it cold at all. Of course he worked in a bakery.

EE: [Laughs]

PK: He said, "Well, you can have your elevator, and I'll keep my bakery." And I said, "Well, I can't stand the heat." But they were just amazed at how---. And I'd tell them that the grain comes in the car shed here, and it's dumped in the pit, and it goes up a leg. "Well, what's a leg?" Buckets, and you know I took them through the whole thing, and they were just amazed at this operation.

EE: And you were moving the stuff that would be ground so that he could make bread.

PK: Yes!

EE: So it was a vital connection for him, actually. All of this astounding stuff!

PK: Oh, he liked it, but he said it was too cold for him.

EE: There's really no heating in the elevator.

PK: The only heat is in the offices. They don't need heat in the bins or out in the annexes.

EE: So sometimes in December you'd begin looking forward to freeze up, I'd suppose.

PK: Yes. Toes and fingers and nose.

EE: Part of dressing for the job. What are you most proud of the work that you did?

PK: I think the honesty of it. That I was able to catch some spills and report it and stuff like that. Find some leaks in bins and leaky hoppers and stuff like that.

EE: And the honesty of it we could expand on the fact, as I was suggesting earlier, your work was vital to ensuring everyone from the farmer who was selling to the person buying somewhere and everyone in between that exactly this much wheat had moved through. Did you ever think about how the whole system came to be? How the Grain Commission developed? Or were you told about that?

PK: I was told that it came about because the farmers weren't getting paid for the grain that they were shipped. There was a lot of grain missing in between the farmer and the buyer, so that's how the Grain Commission came about. And also, for the inspection staff. You know, if you sent [No.] 2 Red and you're getting paid for something different--. The integrity of it.

EE: For something less. Yes. So you would have thoughts about reducing this function these days because there's some of that going on, isn't there? In fact, there's a bill in parliament dealing with the Grain Commission, is there not?

PK: Yes. They want to do away with the Grain Commission.

EE: What do you think of that? Struggling for a printable language, are we Pat?

PK: [Laughs] Well it's changed a lot. It's big corporate farmers now. It's no more little farmers to worry about, it's big corporations. They own the farm, they own the grain, they own the boats, they own--. You know what I mean? They own the whole thing.

EE: Yes, certainly if--.

PK: And it's all weighed on the Prairies. It's all weighed, and it's all graded there. It's duplicate work.

EE: It can't be certainly if a large corporate operation hasn't been paid, it's by someone who acquired it. Conceivably, if Cargill is buying it then presumably their own staff could be depended upon to ensure the corporation that what has been bought is moved through and so on. I guess when corporate farming develops to that extent, I suppose that's true. But it is really--. Small farmers and the individual operators aren't all gone.

PK: There's not many of them left.

EE: There certainly has been an enormous reduction in all of that. Let me see, I don't think that I have to ask you about the contribution you were making to Canada's successes in the international grain trade. We were just saying that, really, in terms of its role, nor the connection of your work and the work of the farmers growing the grain. You've indicated that as well, really, in terms of the--. Unless you wanted to add anything to that?

PK: No.

EE: Did you ever see farmers?

PK: I have a friend that lives on--. Yes.

EE: Farm on the Prairies?

PK: Girlfriend that I went to school with. She's married to a farmer.



EE: Where's that?

PK: In Austin.

EE: Oh, in Austin! Have you visited them?

PK: I was there in September.

EE: Did they take you to see the museum?

PK: No.

EE: For shame.

PK: I hear it's interesting, yes.

EE: Oh, marvelous collection of old steam engines and farm tractors and so on and so forth. If you're there in the summertime they also have this--. What do they call it? Farmers--. Some expedition but there are competitions and some of the tractors or run.

PK: I'll have to see it next time I'm out there. When I was there in September I was--.

EE: It'll be closed down, I expect.

PK: I was coming out of Winnipeg hospice, so I was recuperating.

EE: Right. Not walking around very much. I come from Manitoba, and I visited the place a number of times. You talked about major changes—or changes along the way—would you want to sort of--. There's changes obviously in the rolling stock, in the railway companies. Changes in computerization.

PK: Oh yes. Cuts down on a lot of jobs. Well, they did away with just the boxcars alone. They used to have a lot of elevator guys for a boxcar. You had one hook man, a door man, a dumper man, you know what I mean. That was a lot of--.

EE: Once the tanker cars came in.

PK: Yes, it was simpler. Then they had the automatic openers.

EE: One person to sort of supervise the machinery--.

PK: Yes. then when I first started, we had to check every car after to make sure it was empty, and then almost coming onto the end, and you get your weight off your--. They don't even have take it from the cars anymore, it's all put in the computer. If you got a tank car coming in with 90 tonnes and you get 90 tonnes out of it, you're not even checking the car anymore because you got the weight you're looking for. But I mean, who's to say there wasn't an extra 10 in that car?

EE: Well, you should be there to say that. [Laughing] If it gets computerized to the extent of actually not physically checking it. Of course, if the elevator company doesn't have--. Or if the terminal elevator doesn't have weigh scales like the ones at the Richardson ones, it does become impossible to be sure.

PK: Yes. But those ones at Richardsons, because you've seen those ones at Richardsons--.

EE: I have. I don't remember them clearly, but I've been to the Richardson's.

PK: But the thing is with those cars, they come in and the ends of them could be full of stuff. They throw all kinds of stuff on the ends of those cars like old motors and picnic tables and like you name it. Grain gets spilled on there, rotten grain, I mean that makes weight that you're looking for in that car and it's all at the ends which is junk. You have to visually check those ends of the cars.

EE: You found cars with old engines in the end?

PK: Oh yes. All kinds of stuff. When you're doing the push-in, we have a look at the ends of them to see if there's anything on the back of them because sometimes when they load these cars now, the way they load them is like they don't stop. They just continuously load them from these spouts and then the backs of the cars sometimes gets all filled up, because they don't move the cars fast enough for that spout to go into the next car.

EE: This would be the tanker cars you're describing now.

PK: Yes. So there's a grain loss there.

EE: Yes. So you found a boxcar with an old engine in the end of it?

PK: The end of it, yes. Not the boxcar, the tanker.

EE: I see.

PK: Like an old motor off the farm or something.

EE: Anything put on a car is designed to add weight to it.

PK: That's right, yes.

EE: Which would, at some point or another, that car would be weighed I suppose would it?

PK: Yes. When it got to Richardson's with those kinds of scales, it's weighed on there with that.

EE: Yes.

PK: One time I was at Pool 3, and did a noon push-in, and I'm at the back of the track by the lake, and all of a sudden, this guy is there. I thought, "Where'd he come from?" And you knew he wasn't an elevator worker because he didn't have hardhat, work boots, or anything. He's asking me where he is. I'm like, "What do you mean where you are?"

EE: Cargo.

PK: Yes, he came out on the back of the car, and he's all disoriented and he doesn't know what city he's in, how to get out of here. [Laughs]

EE: "Stay on of the car, Fred." Did you get that? It's heading back. [Laughs]

PK: No, it was pushed in to be dumped. He would've had to wait a day or two for it to go back out.

EE: Well, those are interesting things. Are there any other major changes that you'd like to focus on?

PK: No. It's just that there's a lot of changes from when I started to now, and there's not much of a job left anymore. A lot of computer work now. A lot of different programs on the computer. That's about it.

EE: You would remain proud of the work that you did through--.

PK: I do. I do, yes.

EE: But you wouldn't recommend it to anyone starting out now? It was a good thing in its day, which was a better part of a century, this work dates back to the Laurier era I think when the farmers had the impact of government to say, "We need a square deal and you better be sure we're getting it."

PK: Yes.

EE: In addition to the changes that have taken place, did you face other challenges on the job?

PK: Yes, the weather was--.

EE: Which?

PK: The weather. The storms, and you're up to your knees in snow getting push-ins. And cold. Sometimes you had to be on car shed duty. You always had somebody in the car shed. They are really cold.

EE: Those car sheds the wind would [inaudible] through there.

PK: Oh, like a tunnel effect going through there. Then if you're upstairs on a boat, you can't leave the gallery because of the annex because of the grain movement because they're going to ship soon. You'd have to wait around there, and sometimes you'd want to go to the bathroom, and you couldn't go. Then the dust. Wearing glasses, you'd put those goggles on, and they'd all fog up, and you couldn't see where you're going.

EE: Did you have dust masks of any sort?

PK: A mask, yes.

EE: Did you have them from the beginning?

PK: No. And the ear plugs too, not from the beginning, no. But I'm lucky with the hearing. A lot of the guys lost their hearing with the noise and the squeaky breaks on the trains. I have no sense of smell. But because I have no sense of smell, I got extra hearing. I can hear people in my building on the third floor. That's--. [Laughs]

EE: Extra sensitivity there, eh?

PK: Yes, it's unbelievable. [Laughs] And yet I shouldn't have any hearing. I should be stone-deaf.

EE: Were you given advice by the Commission itself in terms of clothing? You weren't issued clothing, I don't suppose. You had to buy it.

PK: Not at the beginning. At the end, we were issued parkas and work gloves. But I mean the work gloves were too big because women's hands are small, and they'd give you men's gloves.

EE: They didn't have women's sizes?

PK: They did, but they were still too big and stiff.

EE: Just not--.

PK: And then they give us a boot allowance, too, coming onto the end. You're allowed a pair of boots every year or every two years, something like that.

EE: You'd need the steal toes, I'm sure.

PK: Definitely. Green patch.

EE: Insulated as well, preferably, but I bet that they had more steel toe than they had insulation in them. Or were they well insulated as well?

PK: They were insulated to a degree, but they were still cold. Steel on your toes, no matter, they're cold.

EE: You could take cold better than other people, I suppose.

PK: Yes.

EE: You preferred cold to heat.

PK: I prefer the cold to heat, yes.

EE: It's against the kitchen, which would be mighty hot. I can well imagine by the way of contrast. Are there any other challenges that you'd want to mention about doing the work?

PK: No.

EE: Major challenges the industry faced that you might want to recognise?

PK: It's very political. The government changes and stuff like that. I don't think I'll get into the political side of it, but it is a political game that's being played. Lots of politics on the job.

EE: Were you much involved with the union?

PK: No. I went to the meetings. Unions are good, and unions are bad. I don't know if I should say this but--.

EE: What would you say is the good thing about unions? Or are good things?

PK: The good things is because they negotiate for you for the contract. You get your raise, not necessarily on time or always a year or two behind getting retroactive pay. The bad thing is that they protect the people who don't do their job, and then you have to cover for them.

EE: Did you find some of that in the weigh staff?

PK: Yes.

EE: Slackers on the job? Did anyone ever get fired?

PK: No.

EE: There were people that should've been? I tend to think of that as a management failure. Having been management briefly and having terminated someone in that brief period of time, I think that a good manager knows how to deal with problems.

PK: They'd stay until they got in the union, and then once they're in the union it's hard to get rid of them then.

EE: It's because they're more difficult. Unless they cooperate by really slacking off or something [Laughs].

PK: Yes. Pool 7 before I left there—this elevator talk, it's not Grain Commission talk—they wanted to get rid of this guy, and he was one of the newer hirings, and they went after the shop steward, and he said, "You knew what he was like when he first came on. Why did you let him 90 days and then get in the union? Now I can't do anything about it." He said you should've fired him then.

EE: That is true, but if there are expectations of what people will do, and you can document his failure to do so, you build a case for letting him go.

PK: They eventually did. The guy was so out of it on drugs that he was going to kill himself or kill somebody else with cables and cars and the car shed. It's dangerous work.

EE: He was ultimately let go?

PK: Eventually, yes.

EE: Took awhile.

PK: Took awhile to get rid of him, yes.

EE: This certainly can be seen as one of the downsides. Trying to protect workers against--.

PK: The elevators there's a safety issue. They're not the safest place to work, and then you have the possibility of them blowing up!

EE: Yes.

PK: You get overheated bins, and they'll blow up. Pool 4--. Were you ever at Pool 4?

OM: Yes.

PK: Do you remember the floor in 4B?

OM: No.

PK: It was round like this, and I remember walking when I was assisting on boats when I first started there, and I asked somebody, "Why is it that the floor is like this?" And they said, "Well that's a bin lid you're walking on." "Yeah, but why's it all--." They said, "It blew up. Overheated."

EE: With enough force to bend the steel of the floor.

PK: Not the floor, the top of the bin. When you're upstairs you're walking on bins--.

EE: I mean what was the floor up there was the roof of the bin and it pushed that.

PK: Yes, you're walking on bin lids.

EE: Sure. Were you ever in danger that you were conscious of in this way?

PK: Grain dust sometimes really bothered me. Sometimes you couldn't see because it was so bad.

EE: It was still that bad in the '80s was it?

PK: Oh yes. Then fires. Fires made my knees buckle. I would walk like this with my knees because when I saw a fire, especially flames, and I knew that for an explosion--. Some of the elevators were very lax. They never thought anything of it.

EE: What would the fires be on?



PK: A trip overheated. A trip moves along the belt, and it grind and grind metal on metal and a little bit of grain dust there or whatever and it caught fire.

EE: Yes, I would be anxious too. [Laughs]

PK: Yes.

EE: Never did create a big explosion when you were there?

PK: No.

EE: You're grateful for that. Did you come away from this with health problems other than your nose?

PK: Not that I know of so far, no.

EE: Do you think the nostrils are a result of working in the grain trade?

PK: Probably.

EE: Or is it just a matter of congenital--.

PK: I really don't know but I can smell cigarette smoke, or I can smell smoke. It's the only thing I can smell. Or something that's really strong and out of the ordinary, but then I don't know what I'm smelling. If somebody has a cleaning agent in the hall I'll say, "What am I smelling? What is that smell?" It's different. I can smell it. But it's got to be really, really strong.

EE: Sure. What are your most vivid memories about the job?

PK: The fun ones?

EE: Why not the fun ones first?

PK: Oh gosh! Oh gosh. They had a jack ladder, and I didn't know what a jack ladder was.

EE: You better tell all of us.

PK: Do you know what a jack ladder was?

EE: We don't know either.

PK: It's like a belt that goes up and down, and it just went in the workhouse, and it just went on the upper floors. I thought it went—it's got a place that you put your feet on and a bar that you stand, and it goes on like a pulley—I thought it went from the top of the elevator right to the bottom the floor. So I'm on there, like I say everything's new, and I'm going along, and I'm looking around. "Wow look at this, look at that, look at that big motor, wonder what that is." It's all new to me. Well, all of a sudden when it comes down, this board goes around and goes up the other side. It threw me on the floor! I'm thinking I'm going right to the bottom. So I got up and I thought, "Oh!" I looked around, my hardhat fell off and dust myself off and I'm wondering, "Did anybody see me?" [Laughs] I felt embarrassed but there was nobody around.

EE: That was the place to get off it.

PK: I should've gotten off, but I thought that--.

EE: Because it turned around and drove all the way down.

PK: I thought it was going right to the bottom of the elevator. Right to the ground floor. But it only went to the top four floors at the top.

EE: Was an easy way to get up to the top.

PK: Yes.

EE: How did you get down? Not on the same thing, surely. Once you were at the top how did you get back down?

PK: You could get on and get off on this thing because it went continually.

EE: I see.

PK: There was a board that you stepped on and a handle.

EE: There were handholds in both directions so that--.

PK: The hand thing was on the belt.

EE: Yes.

PK: So it just kept going.

EE: But when I'm thinking that it flips over and goes back down then you'd be reaching up for a different one.

PK: I didn't reach. I fell. [Laughs]

EE: Well, yes. [Laughs] So that would be a vivid memory.

PK: That was one of my first memories.

EE: And you still call that a good one.

PK: Well yeah, that was--.

EE: You survived.

PK: Yes. It was a learning thing, yes. Another one was because I was working at Grain Growers, and it's so loud at that elevator because they have these fans over the car shed, and I had the door open. I worked midnights. I'm getting ready for my relief to come in the morning and Rene Bannon—I don't know if you know him—he was such a card. You can't hear anybody coming in because of these fans, and I'm watching the cars going and ticking off in my book what's happening. Rene come in, and I'm not expecting him in. It's like 10 after 7:00, and he comes in and he shouts at me and I, after midnights not expecting anyone, I started screaming like, "Ah!" And I couldn't stop, so he had to come and slap my face like, "Stop it! Why'd you do that?" So every time I saw him, after that it was the same thing.

EE: You were slapping him in the face each time? [Laughs]

PK: No, no he was slapping me to get me out of the shock-state I was in. We still laugh about it. That's like how many years later.

EE: The surname suggests he was from the Fort William First Nation.

PK: He was.

EE: Were there some number of Status Indians working for the--?

PK: Yes, I think there was a few. Yes. Rene stayed with it and retired from there.

EE: This was Grain Commission's staff?

PK: Right.

EE: Because your employment, too, would've been part of what in Canada was called the Employment Equity Program. Must have been open jobs to make the workforce--.

PK: I think that came later. Didn't that come later?

EE: My memory is that there was a parliamentary committee that had recommended. Judge Rosalie Abella had recommended it. It was being discussed in the summer of '84 because I was at a meeting with Jack Masters, while he was still MP talking about this. So it was just coming in about the time you were getting into the employment.

PK: Yes.

EE: Through '84 and then gradually it was later.

PK: Moreso into the '90s, I think, is when they really--.

EE: I suppose so. Government began responding more actively to it. I don't know whether the Mulroney Government did not take it up very actively.

PK: I don't think at the beginning or else I never paid attention to it.

EE: Well, you would've been conscious of it because the employment of yourself and other women and the employment of Indians, both of them I think, quite possibly, be responses to this, the workforce, the Grain Commission staff to be more representative to the community. That was the basic principle.

PK: That's still in fact now. There's so many Italians in town now that the last time they hired they hired a lot more Italians, because they represent the community.

EE: This is the Grain Commission?

PK: Yes.

EE: I'll be darned. There was a day of course when those Italians were in the elevators. They were grain handlers, right? [Laughs] But there's so few jobs we have to make it up for them. That's a nice touch.

PK: They have lots of Natives there now.

EE: They do actually, good. Visible minorities otherwise?

PK: Yes. We have a Vietnamese lady they hired about 5 years ago. Japanese. Yes. We've got a mixture.

EE: So these would be other changes in the Grain Commission staff then.

PK: That's right. And since I've left now, they've hired a whole bunch, I think 20 young ones. I don't know any of them, so I don't know what they are.

EE: Whether how many of them are women or Indian, or whatever.

PK: I'm not sure.

EE: Well, vivid memories. Bad ones? Rene Bannon an obvious one.

PK: Oh Rene Bannon, bad ones. One time we had to check the boats in the basement for seals because the slides on the seals had to be sealed Grain Commission seals on them, and once a week we had to do inspections of the equipment. I went down this ladder thinking I was going to step into grain but what it was was water with the grain in it rots. It's got to be the most, stuff that smells, rotten grain.

EE: As yucky as they come.

PK: I don't know if you're familiar with--.

OM: Your nose was working that day.

PK: Yes.

EE: Well enough.

PK: And then when I got back in the office, they kicked me out. I'm all mud up to almost my knees, my pants, my socks. I had to throw everything out I just couldn't get it cleaned.

EE: It wouldn't wash clean?

PK: No. You couldn't get rid of that smell. It was just--. [Laughs]

EE: This was a ship that had not been properly cleaned, obviously. This was on the ship you were in.

PK: No, this was a boot in the basement of the leg, before the grain started to be elevated. You had to go down this ladder to get to the boot to make sure the seal was on there. Well, I didn't know. I thought it was grain I was stepping in because I had my light, but it was water with grain on top of it. So when I stepped down I went down a little but farther than what I should have into this rotten--.

OM: Probably fermenting a bit.

PK: Yes.

OM: Maybe that's where the grain was going. [Laughing]

EE: Who knows.

PK: There was spills everywhere. Belts spilled, leaks, you know.

EE: Well, that's where the elevator companies need to spend some of their money, ensuring that--.

PK: When we would find anything like that, we would notify them, and they were pretty good at fixing up.

EE: Well of course.

PK: At the beginning. Now they're kind of slack about it sometimes. Except if it's shipping. If it's shipping and they're losing grain, they're on it right away.

EE: Yes. Everything else is not that important. What are the most important events that happened in the workplace during your career? Do you want to designate any of those?

PK: Hm.

EE: Do you think it's important to preserve and share Thunder Bay's grain trade history?

PK: I think it is, yes. It's too bad we can't preserve an elevator for tourists and get a grain car there and how the elevator works.

EE: One of my friends used to work for Sask Pool and he said that, in purchasing, he said that he had tried to persuade them to set one of the elevators aside as a working elevator for demonstration purposes.

PK: Pool 1 would be a good one. It's a nice elevator.

EE: The smallest I guess that is still working.

PK: Because it's got a gallery to it, it's got shipping bins, it's got the whole thing. Some of them don't have shipping bins, they got direct spouting.

EE: Which is Pool 1?

PK: By Intercity next to--. There's Pool 7, the big one, and then there's P&H, it's right next to P&H, where McCabe's used to be. You know McCabe's?

EE: Yes.

PK: Yes. Right next there.

EE: That's the one. Advice for Nancy and company. Okay well that--. Are there any questions that I should have asked that you would have loved to answer?

PK: No. I'll probably think of them when I leave here.

EE: [Laughs] Let us know if there's a second interview, we should do.

PK: I think Bill will have lots for you. Bill's got the politics of this job down. No kidding!

EE: Which of the governments was the best?

PK: Which of the what?

EE: Governments was the best, in your opinion.

PK: In power?

EE: In your time of employment.

PK: Oh well I ain't going there, no.



EE: [Laughs] Best is a--. That should be okay. I didn't ask you which was the worst.

PK: No, I'll leave the political side out of it.

EE: Okay. [Laughing] Well I think that could summarize it. We've been at it for about an hour, believe it or not. So thank you very much for coming in and agreeing to this. This began, after all, your seeing that ad that Nancy put in the paper and you called me to inquire what that was all about.

PK: Yes, well Friends of the Elevator, yes.

EE: Oh, and you probably have a question to ask.

OM: Not a question. It's just an observation. I worked for Canada Manpower way back when, and I can remember the course.

PK: Oh yeah?

OM: Into because we did a lot of referring to it. In those days it was quite different. It was from the late '70s and maybe early '80s when I remember it, but women were just moving into the classic non-traditional occupations such as forestry industry and the elevators.

PK: That's right because I went out to MacMillan Bloedel, they took us to different places, yes.

OM: That course I remember was one of the best ways of getting into non-traditional work because they had done a lot of the work in advance and opened doors, and it's very interesting to talk to somebody all these years after, almost 30 years afterwards. You tend to forget sometimes that you affect some of these little processes have in people's lives. I'm just interested in the course itself. Who were the instructors? Do you recall their names at all?

PK: It's funny you ask that. I can picture her. I have everything from that course at home still and her name is probably still there. She was just awesome.

OM: That would be interesting to even see that material and maybe even archive it.

EE: It was a woman too that taught the course?

PK: It was a woman that taught it, yes. I'll look it up and see if I can find it.

OM: A lot of women got started in those areas, and you basically were forerunners of what we now would see was quite natural, back then it was like Martians dropping.

PK: Yes. And we went on tour. We went to MacMillan Bloedel, we went to the Hydro plant, we went to the sewer plant. I saw a lot of different plants.

OM: Yes, and then they would give you a job based on it afterwards.

PK: Yes. Well, she had a list of places that would take us on the job training. The Hydro, I think women got on at the Hydro, that I know of. The elevators, inspections staff, weigh staff. MacMillan Bloedel, I don't think anybody got on there, although they went there training. She told us where we might get on and where we couldn't but there was places where we could go but not necessarily going to get a job. So I went kind of to a place where I thought I want a job.

OM: And it worked out that way.

PK: And it worked out, yes.

OM: Well, that's all I wanted to ask. Thank you.

PK: Well, thank you.

OM: [Laughs] It's nice to hear that. I hadn't thought of that course for a long, long time until you mentioned it.

PK: Kind of brought back from memories, eh?

OM: Sure did. I was a much younger person.

PK: You were probably one of the ones who helped me to get into that course.

OM: I may have. I'm just feverishly--. I usually have my memory [inaudible] about two weeks so I was--. But I may have been. It was probably, if it was in the '80s, I was working out of Fort William in those days.

PK: Yes, well, that's where I was too.

OM: Yes, okay. So we probably--.

PK: I'm trying to think of where I was living. Some place on Gore Street in those days.

OM: You would've been in the same building because on Secord Avenue where the old Revenue Canada was.

PK: In the back of Victoria Ville before Victoria Ville was there, yes.

OM: There you go! Our paths crossed.

PK: Yes. That's where I went to get into this course.

OM: Did you happen to--. Was that something that you would have planned on doing? Or is it just something that you fell into?

PK: Oh, I know! A girl on the job, Shiela, another Native lady that was on there ahead of me, she I think had taken that course, and she got on, and I was asking her about it and what the job and exactly what you do. I thought, "Gee, I can do that job. It's not a hard job." I heard it was really something hard and complicated. The things of the job was the little things to know, not the physical labour of that job, because it was nothing to it. It was the little things you had to know like the Canada Grain Act and the Wheat Board and what they stood for. You had to know all that. Tonnes to pounds and pounds to tonnes and don't ask me what it is now. We had to know those things.

EE: Sixty pounds to the bushel and so on and so forth.

PK: Yes. [Laughs]

EE: [Laughs] Once upon a time.

OM: I just have one more question, I'm sorry, just sometimes you have to screen while the opportunity is there. Did you feel prepared for what you had to deal with for the first year or so? Given the traditional aspects of the industry at that point?

PK: The first year, yes, I did. I really had a good supervisor.

OM: [Inaudible]

PK: Yes. It was maybe a couple years later, and you seen some of the antics and some of the goings on that, that--.

OM: The bloom was off the rose.

PK: Yes well, I wasn't--.

EE: The antics in the Grain Commission and in the elevators the work itself?

PK: Some of the workers, I never come across those kind of people before but Gail and I were talking about it. I never had to deal with those kind of people.

OM: Well, you hung in so that's a good thing.

PK: Well, I hung in, but there was many times I didn't want to. Many times I came home crying. Is this still on?

OM: We'll wrap it up here. Just let me finish this thought here. Okay now we can talk.

PK: But this lights still on. [Laughing]

**End of interview.**