

Narrator: Alec Kubicek (AK)

Company Affiliations: Canadian Wheat Board (CWB)

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Summary: In a short follow up interview with grain market analyst Alec Kubicek, he corrects some mistakes from his prior interview concerning the Kubiceks in Brazil and the career period of Dr. Bjarnason in the Canadian Wheat Board, as well as includes the brief story of his lecture for the World Bread and Cereal Congress in Prague.

Keywords: Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); CWB—Technical Services and Market Research branch; World Bread and Cereal Congress; President Juscelino Kubitschek; Political refugees; Market analysis; Grain marketing; Cereal science

Time, Speaker, Narrative
<p>NP: I'm sitting in the living room of Alec Kubicek, and we are doing a supplementary interview to just tidy up a few loose ends from an earlier interview. April 10, 2012, at 19 Wedgewood in Winnipeg. So Mr. Kubicek, if we could start by the corrections that you wanted to make to your earlier tape. So would you like just to go ahead and talk about the President of Brazil, to start?</p> <p>AK: Yes. This is the first correction because for some reason or other in the original interview, it looked as if we pictured him as immigrant as myself to Brazil. No. Just so you know, Kubicek would be about the third generation of originally Czech immigrants. Lots of them immigrated to Vienna during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, settled there, and changed their name. You see, it's a question of linguistics because the Czech alphabet modernized so that instead of, say, Czechoslovakia, in English "Cz," there's a simple C with an accent over C, and that makes is "Ch." Czechoslovakia. And few other letters in the alphabet, which are part of the alphabet.</p> <p>NP: Were there a number of people who did emigrate to Brazil? What was it about Brazil that attracted people from--?</p>

AK: Well, actually, Kubiceks originally did not immigrate to Brazil. They immigrated to Australia. Well, immigrated. It was very simple then. It was the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and they could more or less go back and forth across the border, you know? There was no formality. There was one empire, Austrian Empire.

NP: Right, quite a large one from--. Yes.

AK: Oh, yes. Austro-Hungarian of which Bohemia was part. So anyhow, that's where it started. That's why Juscelino, the third generation. I should have gone into it more deeply, but one of these projects that you postpone, postpone, and never do. I almost met him, but that's another longer story into which we cannot go.

NP: But did a lot of people end up in Brazil?

AK: No. Not that I know.

NP: Yeah.

AK: Not that I know, no. It was some kind of--. I don't know. The ones from Australia suddenly decided sometime along the way to go south to Brazil. Or maybe there was already some friendship, you know? So they decided to say goodbye to Austria and move to Brazil. But as far as I know, very few Czech immigrants you will find in Brazil, to my knowledge.

NP: Yes, yes.

AK: I might be wrong.

NP: One of the other items in your initial interview was some confusion about, was it, Dr. Oleson and Dr.--.

AK: Bjarnason.

NP: Bjarnason. So would you like to say something about that for the record so we have that straightened around?

AK: Yes. I put Dr. Oleson into the position of Dr. Bjarnason too early.

NP: Oh! [Laughs]

AK: Dr. Bjarnason came in quite a bit later. Dr. Bjarnason was in charge of that reorganization where my original branch—which was Technical Services and Market Research—was tied up to larger department of which Dr. Harold Bjarnason was in charge, and that was called International Policy and Planning. Something like that. And of this, they renamed Technical Services and Market Research into Market Analysis and Research. And I was part of this Bjarnason’s department, and I was in charge of that particular Market Analysis.

[0:05:16]

NP: Where did Dr. Bjarnason originate from?

AK: They all originated in Gimli, you know.

NP: Oh, ok. Ah, one of the Gimli--.

AK: Icelander.

NP: Icelanders.

AK: Larry Kristjanson, Bjarnason, Oleson. There’s also another ending rather than -son, -dal. Westdal, Restdal. So there was a lot of Icelanders.

NP: Mmhmm. [... *audio skips*] And then. Now the last thing that we wanted to add to the previous interview was some comment on a presentation that you made to the World Bread and Cereal Congress because that was a pretty important piece of your career. So what can you tell us about that? The name of the presentation and a little bit about the approach you took in talking about it.

AK: The Canadian Wheat Board always got the invitation to the Cereal World Congresses. They were very regular, you know? I think every two years. Not every year, I don’t think. Anyhow, when the invitation came for the Cereal Bread Congress in Prague, I got very, very interested. And I thought, “By God, I should do something here.” And I proposed to the Board that I would prepare a lecture which would be called, “Marketing Man Meets the Cereal Scientist.” A complete departure from the drier scientific papers one after the other—analyze protein, gluten—on and on and on. So my proposal was a complete departure. In other words, I wanted to connect the cereal science with marketing, which is the most important connection. If it wasn’t for this connection, if the

grain wasn't sold by the Wheat Board, the cereal science in Winnipeg could pack it in, you know? So there's a very close connection, and nobody really pointed it out before—to my knowledge—before. So my lecture was along these lines.

NP: Can you fill in some of the details of some of the connections you--?

AK: I prepared it, and you can be sure there is Kubicek immigrant, but of course, I was already in Czechoslovakia before on several visits. But anyhow, that lecture I wrote made the rounds, let me tell you. The Board, the Grain Commission guys read it, approved it, and off it went to Prague for translation. See, all was translated. There were five cubicles in this big, huge hall that was in Cultural Palace in Prague, and in this hall where I had my presentation. Five cubicles with translators. So it went on and on and on. So I prepared the lecture, and off I went to Prague including my wife on this occasion. Because I was making the presentation, they said, "You take your wife with you." "Sure." So both of us went. And here I was, ready to make the presentation in the afternoon. Full hall, I don't know. Couple of thousand men. Oh, it was huge.

NP: Amazing.

[0:09:50]

AK: Huge. Huge, huge, huge. So you have to understand, the head table is composed of Westerners and very, very large component, of course, of the locals, and the Russians because the Russians always have been very strong in cereal science. They just missed completely one thing and that was marketing their various research, what have you. That, you know, they didn't care about. So that was really one of the first points of my lecture—to point out it has to be spread out. So the lecture, the start, was something that they had started to turn around. "What the heck is the guy talking about?" And I just to summarize at the start of the lecture, "Listen carefully." Of course, I said, "Thank you, Mr. President for the introduction," what have you, and I started the lecture.

President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, he said to or declared sometime ago the following: "If we didn't have any shoes, and South African Republic was the only country producing the shoes, we would be working for the rest of our life barefoot. If on the other hand, we had no grain, no flour to make, and South Africa was the only country producing the bread wheat, we would go to South Africa and buy bread wheat to maintain our bread supply." So that was the statement, and I said, "I think that statement really typifies in a nutshell beautifully what this congress is all about. Cereal grains and bread doesn't have any frontiers, doesn't have any races, doesn't have any political connotations. It's cereal grain and bread, staple for everybody." Oh, and then, of course, they had stopped talking, turning. They knew why I started in Tanzania. That was one part.

The other part was Bob Roehle, who was the boss of this new department of Market Analysis and Research, of course, was the first one to read my lecture before it was printed and sent to Prague for translation. And he said, “You know, I think at least few sentences somewhere at the end you should put in in Czech.” I said, “Well, I don’t know. I’m not so sure.” “No, no. You should do that.” “Ok, if you think so, I will.” And I did. I did. I said a short part of it in Czech, pointing out that the Faculty of Commerce which was just not too far from this Cultural Place, I pointed it out that my alma mater—university alma mater—Technical Branch of the Charles University where I got my commerce degree—not mentioning anything that I escaped or what have you. Everybody knew it anyway. [Laughs] Then I thanked them to include me and what have you, and that was it. The applause because of my idea of Tanzania to start the lecture and my paragraph in Czech, you know, including the Russians, applause you wouldn’t believe. You wouldn’t absolutely believe.

[0:15:08]

And then as I was leaving the podium, couple of guys, one from Holland, another one from Germany, “Mr. Kubicek, could we have this lecture?” “No, I’m sorry. You would have to ask the management of the congress. I don’t not feel I have copyright anymore to this.” The lecture was printed in Czech in the commemorative edition of their journal monthly, *Journal of Milling and Baking Industry*. They printed the special issue and included, amongst all kinds of scientific papers, my lecture, “The Marketing Man meets the Cereal Scientist.” Of course, Lakehead was mentioned very prominently in the lecture of course.

NP: Was it?

AK: Of course.

NP: In what way?

AK: Because this is one of the hubs of the movement of grain. If it wasn’t for the Lakehead and 15 whatever huge terminal elevators, the grain wouldn’t move from the Prairies to the east. Absolutely essential, you know?

NP: That must have been just--. I can see why it was a highlight of your career, that all of the things that combine there—with going back, with speaking Czech, with talking emotionally about a really important issue—that’s a wonderful story.

AK: And usually that’s where I think Lakehead really should--. That’s where I appreciate the Voices project and possibly some kind of a history museum of the Lakehead function of this movement, which is tremendous. There is no question about it. It’s huge.

NP: Mmhhh. Well, you won't get an argument from me on that.

AK: Yeah. So this is what I mean. It should get some kind of a, yeah, museum, commemorative thing, what have you. It certainly deserves it.

NP: Mmhhh. Well, thank you very much. Is there anything else you want to add before I officially close off the additional information?

AK: I don't think so.

NP: Great. Well, thank you once again. I love that story.

End of Interview.