

Narrator: Jack Lourie (JL)

Company Affiliations: Canadian Grain Commission (CGC)

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Interviewer: Ernie Epp (EE)

Recorder: Owen Marks (OM)

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Summary: Retired grain inspector and World War II veteran Jack Lourie describes his work for the Canadian Grain Commission's inspection department. He details his ascent through the company from a sampler at Paterson's elevator to a chief grain inspector, as well as the duties and responsibilities he had with each role. Lourie describes what grain inspectors look for when grading grain, the types of machines used to aid their visual inspections, and some of his favourite elevators to work at on the waterfront. Other topics discussed include the scope of the CGC organization in Thunder Bay, women joining the workforce, grain inspector examinations, Canada's reputation for quality, changes to automatic sampling, his father's work as a grain trimmer, and other jobs he held before joining the grain industry.

Keywords: Canadian Grain Commission (Board of Grain Commissioners, CGC); Grain inspection; Grain sampling; World War II veterans; Canadian Air Force veterans; Grain grades; Government inspectors; Inspection equipment; Grain cleaning; Grain dockage; Chapple's Building (Grain Exchange Building); Labour unions; Labour organization; Saskatchewan Wheat Pool 7; Parrish & Heimbecker Elevator; United Grain Growers Elevator M; Manitoba Pool Elevators; Stewart Elevator (Saskatchewan Wheat Pool 7B); Grain pests

| Time, Speaker, Narrative |
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| EE: Well, it's a pleasure to be here with you this afternoon Mr. Lourie. Perhaps you can start by giving your name for the recording. |
| JL: My name is Jack Lourie. |
| EE: Good. And tell us how you came to work in the grain industry. |

JL: My father was a grain trimmer in the grain industry, and when I came home from overseas, he suggested that I make an application for the government grain inspection staff, which I did.

EE: Right. And if we were to put that in context, we were talking before this began about your birthdate and the fact that you were 21 when the war broke out.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: You joined the Air Force.

JL: Yeah, when I was 23.

EE: When you were 23 and were over in England and flying. A pilot of a Lancaster Bomber.

JL: Yes.

EE: Right. So when you came home, pilots coming out of the forces could look to employment by the government, I guess. A lot of the servicemen went into government employment at the time, I guess, did they?

JL: Yes. Yes, they did. A lot of the servicepeople--. Most of the men on the job were servicepeople. Uh. I can't think of--.

EE: I suppose you did in fact apply for a position?

JL: Oh, yes. Yes. I applied on September 28, 1948, and I was accepted.

EE: So you were in the Air Force for a while after the war ended then if this is 1948.

JL: No, no.

EE: The war ends in '45, and--.

JL: Yeah, but I was out of the Air Force then.

EE: Oh, I see. But you were taken into the service in September of 1948 then.

JL: Oh, no. I went into the service in 1942, actually.

EE: Right. I meant in the government, in the grain trade.

JL: Yeah. Oh, yes. Yeah. In '48. 1948.

EE: You mentioned that your father was a grain trimmer.

JL: Yes.

EE: He'd been doing that for years and continued to do it during the war, I suppose, as well, did he?

JL: Yes, yes. And after the war.

EE: Was there any opportunity to, as a youth, to join in that work. Did you ever do any grain trimming work or anything of that sort in the elevators before?

JL: I worked with the grain trimmers, oh, just for a short period of time. This was before the war.

EE: Yes, back around age 20 or so.

JL: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

EE: Did working in the grain trade seem interesting at the time?

JL No, no. I wasn't really too interested in that type of work.

EE: No?

JL: No.

EE: Because of course, it's fairly messy work, I guess. You're in the ships primarily, isn't that--?

JL: Yeah. At that particular time, some of the ships had double decks, and the trimmers had to go below the first deck and trim the deck into the bottom hold of the boat. It wasn't very pleasant I didn't think. [Laughing] It was very dusty.

EE: No. I'm a farm boy so I have some sense of what you were choosing not to do, and I made similar choices.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: So you entered the grain inspection service.

JL: Yes.

EE: Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] was it already at that--?

JL: Canadian Grain Commission.

EE: At that time already?

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: And could you--. What's the best way of thinking about that? Is there a typical day, or should we think about how your career developed in the Commission?

JL: Well, I remember the first day that I applied for the job, and I got accepted right there in the office. They told me I could report to one of the elevators—I think it was Paterson's Elevator—and I worked there the rest of that day, and I had to work overtime that night. [Laughs] So I worked three hours overtime on my first day.

EE: I see. And was that the pattern that you stayed at one elevator, then?

[0:05:00]

JL: You stayed there--. No. You stayed there approximately, well, maybe for a year. And then later on when I became an inspector in charge like your dad [Jack is referring to Owen Marks' dad, George, who was a colleague of his.], every year we'd change. We would be at another elevator.

EE: But you'd spend about a year, the full season, which it wouldn't actually be 12 months, I don't suppose? Or was it?

JL: Oh, yes. It was 12 months.

EE: It was a 12-month year? I see.

JL: Yeah, yeah. Like there wasn't too much shipping of grain during--. Although, there was quite a lot shipped by boxcar and that.

EE: And so how many of you would there be when you arrived at the Paterson Elevator that day? Were there other inspectors there as well?

JL: Oh, yes there were. I was just what you called a sampler at that time.

EE: Maybe you can tell us what the organization was that you found at Paterson's that day. That first day can be quite a vivid memory. How many people were working, the different kinds of things were that people had to do.

JL: Yes. The sampler had to go out in the car shed and bring the samples from the cars that were unloaded into the office, and then the inspectors took over from there. Yeah.

EE: Oh, yes. How many samples would come out of a car?

JL: There'd be--.

EE: Just one, or--?

JL: Some cars had what you'd call--.

EE: Were they sectioned?

JL: Pardon?

EE: Were there sections in the car?

JL: Yeah, yeah. There were sections. Bulkheads.

EE: Bulkheads. Oh, yes.

JL: And so there'd be grain behind the bulkhead, which was separate from the main load in the car. So you could get, oh, maybe four or five samples from a--. But not all. Very--. That wasn't the norm.

EE: No. The norm was, what, one sample out of a car--.

JL: One sample.

EE: Because it was clear that the grain was all the same from top to bottom in the car?

JL: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

EE: So the sample then would be brought into the building where the inspection staff, the inspectors were at work?

JL: Yes.

EE: Were there just the two categories, the samplers and the inspectors? Or were there other--?

JL: No, there were just the--. It started off with the sampler, and then an assistant inspector, and then the inspectors, and then there was one inspector that was the inspector in charge.

EE: Right. So there was the four categories.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: And in later years, of course, you became an inspector. What was the activity of inspection? What did it involve?

JL: Well, the inspector, he graded—put a grade—on each car of grain that came into the elevator. And then he also had to check the grain that was shipped out of the elevator onto the vessels or boxcar. They shipped either by boat or by boxcar. Mainly by vessel.

EE: Right. And so the first—the sampling and all of that—is a good deal more complicated, I suppose, than is the loading function. It's into the ship, but you need to be sure what's going into the ship.

JL: You have to--. The inspection staff had a sampler, there'd be maybe two—a sampler and an assistant—and they would take a sample out from the long pipes that came down from the elevator, and they would take a--. They had a scoop, about a three-foot light scoop, which they would catch samples and put it in a bucket. And then that bucket would go up to the office for the chief inspector to check, or the other, whoever was looking after that boat.

EE: Right. How many scoops would go into a bucket would you say? Eight, ten, twelve, fifteen?

JL: Oh, there'd be more than that.

EE: More?

JL: There'd be about 28 or 29 or something like that.

EE: So the scoop was quite small?

JL: Yeah, yeah. Wasn't too large.

EE: And the result then, you'd get a good sense of what was--.

JL: Yeah. Yeah, an average. An average. A good average of--.

EE: Going down the chute.

JL: Yeah. That's what you had to get, yeah.

EE: In settling upon the grade to be given to the grain, inspectors became very good at that over a period of time, I suppose. On what was the grading based? What was involved in establishing the grade standard?

[0:10:12]

JL: Well, you had to check for things like if there was any frost in the grain.

EE: Damage?

JL: Damage. And any seeds that might be in the grain which weren't supposed to be there.

EE: Weed seeds?

JL: Yeah, weed seeds.

EE: I guess anything that wasn't wheat, if we're dealing with wheat. Anything that isn't wheat, I guess.

JL: Yeah, mmhmm. Or any small stones too, you know? As you know from being on the farm, there's lots of--.

EE: Dockage is the word that I remember for this stuff.

JL That's the--. Yeah. That's what it is. When it came in, when the grain is graded in, then we call it dockage. But the others, well, it would be called dockage too on the boat.

EE: Yeah, the amount of wastage really.

JL: Yeah.

EE: So once you have the clean grain—although this is still out of the boxcars, so there will be that stuff in it—on what basis--.
How many grades were there?

JL: How many grades?

EE: Yes.

JL: Well, there'd be on Red Spring wheat, there'd be [No.] 1 Northern, [No.] 2 Northern, [No.] 3 Northern, [No.] 4, and then feed wheat.

EE: So there's sort of four.

JL: Four, five maybe.

EE: Four gradations of good stuff, and then the stuff that was going to go for cattle feed or whatever.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: How did one distinguish? What distinguished [No.] 1 let's say from [No.] 2 and so on and so forth?

JL: By the--. If there was frost, frosted kernels. That would degrade it. If there was heated kernels it would degrade it.

EE: It could still be as low as No. 4 Northern, I suppose.

JL: Yeah, some, but--.

EE: But there'd still be regarded--.

JL: Yeah, there'd be a percentage of the content that it would--.

EE: So to sort of turn that over in a sense, No. 1 Northern is, I suppose, clean.

JL: Clean. Oh, yeah.

EE: Kernels are all the same?

JL: Pretty well all the same, yeah.

EE: And of course, the--.

JL: And shrunken affected it also.

EE: Right. You want nice plump kernels. So No. 1 to No. 4 Northern are all milling grades still, aren't they?

JL: Milling grades, yeah. Yeah.

EE: I suppose it's up to the miller to decided what to mix.

JL: Yeah. You know, when I hear that [No.] 4 Northern, I don't know whether there was a [No.] 4 Northern. I think it was [No.] 1, [No.] 2, [No.] 3. You know, I'm forgetting now.

EE: Well, those are the sorts of things we can check in the manuals. What I'm interested--.

JL: Yeah. Yeah, well, that's what I was wishing I had! [Laughing] One of my books so I could look it up.

EE: We won't worry about that kind of detail at all, and if the memory has led one astray or led you astray or led us, it doesn't really matter. What is interesting here is--. Because this is all visual inspections, isn't it?

JL: Yes.

EE: Was there any kind of equipment involved?

JL: There was, like, some grain could come in tough, which means it's got too much moisture in it.

EE: It's been harvested wet, in a sense.

JL: Yeah. So--.

EE: And you could see that I suppose, could you?

JL: No, you couldn't see it, but you could--. Yeah, I guess you could see it now that you mention it, and then that's when we had--. There's a method for testing it.

EE: There's equipment available to do that?

JL: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

EE: Of course, I've seen people chewing kernels for that matter to check them out, although I don't know whether that out in the elevator, I'm not sure that that's--.

JL: That'd be maybe in the elevator or something. [Laughing]

EE: I don't suppose that's a very scientific--.

JL: One of those elevator guys! [Laughing] Yeah.

EE: So the moisture content could be checked for by equipment.

JL: Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Was there other equipment available for this? Or was it very largely a visual thing then?

JL: A lot of it's visual, yes. Yeah.

EE: And so, now, was there instruction then? As you, the first day you're there as the runner, the sampler bringing things in, did you have courses? Was there a manual available to you?

JL: No, not really. We just went with what the chief inspector told us to do. And we would bring the sample in and put it on his bench, and he would go from there to grade it. I was going to say it was--. We used to put--. No. The inspector would get the ticket of that with the car number on it, and he would put the grade down and any remarks on that ticket, and then that sample would go to a desk where we had a clerk that worked writing up the sheets for each of the different cars of grain.

[0:15:53]

EE: Right. Because these cars had been designated back at the elevator where they were loaded, I suppose.

JL: Yeah. Some--.

EE: So that someone knew. In the system, it was known whose grain this was, I guess.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Where it came from and--.

JL: Yes. Yeah, we did. We knew where because it was always a CP [Canadian Pacific Railway] car or CN [Canadian National Railway] car on that ticket. Yeah.

EE: Yes. And you were working in the period when the Canadian Wheat Board [CWB] was in operation, well established by 1948 and later.

JL: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

EE: And so they would be interested in the, on the one hand, the product that they would have to sell which you were establishing.

JL: Yes, yes.

EE: On the other hand, they also had to be concerned about ensuring that the farmer was paid properly for what he brought in.

JL: Farmer got his--. Yeah. Yeah.

EE: Would you say that it was sort of an apprenticeship, journeyman, master situation in the building? There was the chief inspector teaching you, pointing things out, and so it was a good deal of exchange amongst you?

JL: Yeah, yeah. That's what I was going to say. That you had the opportunity of going to the bench if you got a car in and then put it on the desk, and if you had time, you could help the inspector pick any kernels out or check the card. And he'd ask you for a grade, and then if it wasn't the right one or that, he'd explain just what went wrong, where you went wrong. And that's the way.

Like, some samplers really weren't interested in doing that, you know? But if you wanted to get ahead, then you had to do that, as your dad would know. Yeah. So I, like his dad, I was one of the ones that I was interested, so.

EE: What was the organization like here in the city with the Commission? You're suggesting chief inspectors in the place and then their subordinates. What was the organization overall and how did that develop and work?

JL: Well, they also had the weigh-staff branch. The branch, they looked after the weighing of each car of grain. The grain would come in on the belt, and then it would go up to the scales on the top floor of the elevator, and then distributed from there to the different bins.

EE: Yes. Because I guess the value finally is priced per bushel times--.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: And that's established on the basis of the grade, times the number of bushels or the weight of the car, isn't it?

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: So one needs both of those elements.

JL: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

EE: Right. So you have the inspection sections, if you will--.

JL: And the weighing staff.

EE: And the weighing staff. Was there anything--? And then there were the people who were responsible, of course, there was office people. You had to get paid and all those sorts of things that were essential as well.

JL: Oh, yeah. That was up--. The grain from each elevator, it went up to the main office up in the sample room upstairs. It was in the--.

EE: Was this in the Chapple's Building?

JL: Chapple's Building, yeah. That's where the Board of Grain Commissioners were there. And we'd leave the samples that we created at the elevator, they were put in big bags, and we'd carry them down to a box at the end of the dock, and then there was a trucking firm that picked them up every evening and delivered them to the office uptown.

[0:20:02]

EE: Right. Do you know perhaps from later experience how long were those samples held at the Chapple's Building?

JL: They were there--.

EE: Through a season and then--?

JL: Yeah, about a season it would be, yeah.

EE: This was the means of checking back, I guess, if there was any kind of question.

JL: Yeah.

EE: And you mentioned the Board of Grain Commissioners, was that the organization earlier? Or was the Grain Commission already in existence and the Board--?

JL: I think it was one and the same thing. Yeah.

EE: Yeah. It's the earlier form, the Board of Grain Commissioners which becomes the Canadian Grain Commission then.

JL: Yeah, and any of the samples that the companies were not in agreement with, they would be taken out. Like, these samples that we sent from the elevator, they were all in the shelves in the Grain Exchange building, and they'd get the—if they got a complaint—they'd get that sample out, and one of the more experienced inspectors uptown would check it out to see if it was--.

EE: Did the grade matter very much to the companies that were operating the elevators?

JL: Yes, it did because--.

EE: In what way?

JL: Well, it would--. Price wise. You know, they'd get more for a [No.] 1 Northern than they would for a [No.] 2 Northern.

EE: And they owned the grain by the time it got here?

JL: Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Ok. So, yes, then of course they would have a very considerable stake.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Because if they were simply providing a shipping function and the grain belonged to the Wheat Board, then of course, they wouldn't be concerned about the bulk.

JL: No, no. Yeah, like Sask Pool owned the grain that they shipped here.

EE: Yeah, they certainly would. And Paterson's, I guess--.

JL: Would be the same thing.

EE: In their case had bought it similarly from Manitoba farmers or wherever the elevators were.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: So the existence of a service that is unimpeachable in its integrity was something the farmers would certainly have wanted. I suppose the grain companies would have wanted it as well, although if they could have persuaded them to grade it higher than it should be, [laughs] that would be to their advantage.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: Was there much discussion about the integrity that was required in doing this work? That's what the Board of Grain Commissioners had been about establishing that service.

JL: Yeah. I think the farmer wanted to get the best deal he could for his grain, and if the buyer gave him a—or the elevator company—gave him a certain price for his grain, then if he wasn't happy, he could send an appeal, and that's when we would check the grain.

EE: Right. Yes, because that isn't difficult to visualize. If the farmer can be persuaded that he's selling Northern 2, and the company is able to sell it as Northern 1, [No.] 1 Northern, they pocket the difference, don't they?

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: And of course, farmer protests more than 100 years ago in the late 19th early 20th century brought this kind of service into existence.

JL: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

EE: Was there much discussion about the importance of doing this properly? Honestly?

JL: Not really that I know of. You mean ourselves out in the elevator?

EE: Among the inspectors.

JL: Yeah. Um, no, not really. No.

EE: No. I suppose the rules--. Did you find--?

JL: We just did what we had to do.

EE: Yes.

JL: No. It was more maybe the--. Like the elevators had inspectors also.

EE: Their own parallel organization.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: I suppose their own parallel weighmen too for that matter.

JL: Yeah, yeah. Well, they did the weighing, and our weighmen, they were checking the weights.

EE: Oh, so that was in sort of a supervision, supervisory inspection. But as far as the grain is concerned, that was actually hands-on, actually looking at the kernels and so on.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Were relations between the inspectors and the elevator companies quite easy? Did it vary from one company to another?

JL: Yeah, it varied a little, but all in all, it was very good. There was--. I had no problem with any of the inspectors. In fact, I was getting a haircut yesterday, and in walks one of the inspectors from Pool 6 elevator.

[0:25:15]

EE: Sask Pool.

JL: Yeah, Sask Pool 6. And you know Ron Pilley?

OM: No, I don't.

JL: Oh. He walked in. I hadn't seen him for, oh, five or six years, I guess. And he came in and we had a little chat. And he was one of the inspectors I well remember because there used to be a little wicket between the two offices and we could just talk to each other. We'd get after Ron or something for something he should have done and didn't do or--. [Laugh] And he'd get after us the same way, but yeah. Yeah, there was discussion between the different inspectors. And some elevators you liked to go to, some you didn't.

EE: So I don't suppose it would have been worth trying to bribe an inspector.

JL: No, no.

EE: I mean, one can imagine it.

OM: They were paid too well.

JL: Yeah. [Laughing] If we weren't taping, I'd tell you why. [Laughing]

EE: Well, proper pay is a very, very important feature of maintaining a service!

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Without getting into policemen in Mexico or wherever, if you don't pay government employees properly, you can hardly expect them to behave properly all the time.

JL: That's right, yeah.

EE: So the Board of Grain Commissioners was an organization worth working for, was it?

JL: Yeah.

EE: I don't know whether we should explore pay rates over the years and so on and so forth. You weren't organized in a union, or were you?

JL: Yes, we had our own union.

EE: From the beginning or--?

JL: No, no. Not from the--. No.

OM: An association.

JL: Yeah, it was an association, yeah.

EE: But you negotiated, and you had the right to strike if forced to it?

JL: We did strike.

EE: When did that occur?

JL: Oh, at the--.

EE: Or was it just the one strike or did it happen a number of times?

JL: No, just the one strike that I can remember being on. Yeah.

EE: I would be guessing perhaps that in the 1960s when the Pearson Government brought in collective bargaining for government employees. Canada Post, for example. Maybe would that have been the time when it was established for your association as well?

JL: Could have been. I'm not too sure.

EE: No.

JL: No, no.

EE: Well, we don't have to pursue it. It's as your memory.

JL I can't just remember, but I remember we did strike.

EE: Were you out for quite a period of time?

JL: Maybe two weeks.

EE: What season of the year?

JL: That was in the fall of the year.

EE: Yeah. If I were the president, I'd certainly take them out in September.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Yes, indeed. Maximum impact with the farmers wanting the companies and so on and so forth.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Should I press you on the ones that you enjoyed working at?

JL: The elevators? Well, yes. There was some elevators that shipped much more grain than a smaller elevator. Like Pool 7, which shipped three times as much as P&H, Parrish & Heimbecker. Yeah, there was some elevators that--.

EE: You enjoyed the ones that were busy, I'm taking it?

JL: Well, you're taking it wrong. [Laughing]

EE: I thought I had to ask! So P&H was a pleasant place to be?

JL: It was a pleasant place! Especially if his dad was at Pool 7. [Laughing]

EE: Right!

JL: We'd phone each other. Yeah.

EE: And Mr. Marks wouldn't have any time to talk, and you would have lots of time to talk.

JL: I'd tell him what I was doing, yeah. [Laughing]

EE: Right, so the fun places to be were primarily the ones that weren't as busy as others.

JL: Yes and no. There was the staff at different elevators that were a little bit more cooperative than at some of the other elevators.

EE: Would you have any comment on Sask Pool and Manitoba Pool Elevators in that regard?

JL: No, they were pretty well all the same.

EE: They were the same. You wouldn't distinguish between those two?

JL: No, no. No.

EE: These were of course the big farmer organizations. United Grain Growers [UGG]?

JL: No, no. Well, the Grain Growers was a busy place to be at, but as far as talking to the superintendent or anything like that, no, they were all on even keel.

[0:30:06]

EE: Yes. And no superintendent ever pressed you to make a decision that you were doubtful about?

JL: Never, no.

EE: Was there clearly understood principles that--.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: And the Commission would come on down hard on anyone who attempted anything of that sort?

JL: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Yeah.

EE: Yeah. I suppose that--.

JL: Now, as far as I know. I never had any problem at all with pretty much anything.

EE: Yes, quite. Yes. Well, the Commission probably had—or the Board had—I guess, maybe half a century’s experience, and the grain companies had all learned that it was well established.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Marvellous system though to have men who were--. Entirely a male force, I suppose, through the first part of your--. When did women come in?

JL: They came in in the--. I would say--. Let me think now. In the ‘50s, I guess.

EE: As early as the 50s?

JL: Yeah, I think. Maybe ‘60s, ‘70s. Well, the late ‘50s. Somewhere around there, I think.

EE: Right, someone has to be--.

JL: I’m forgetting now just exactly--.

EE: Gender free, but it wasn’t as late as the ‘80s or anything. It wasn’t in your last years.

JL No, no. No.

EE: You’ve spent much of your working life with women inspectors as well.

JL: I mostly worked with men inspectors, but towards the end there was women, yeah. And they became inspectors and inspectors-in-charge too.

EE: It was really quite a marvellous system when it’s based very largely on experience.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: Was there any kind of program of instruction ever established in terms of the quality of grain?

JL: Yeah. Yeah, we also had what they called they were “sample tins.” And you’d have a sample of a [No.] 1 Northern, [No.] 2 Northern, and so on.

EE: So you can do that visual inspection.

JL: And you could take that out and compare it with the sample you were grading. Yeah.

EE: But it is still a matter of developing the eye.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: The eye and the hand, the mind, in order to see these things.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: Rather than depending on--. One could have digital machinery conceivably. Drop it in and machine would provide the reading, but human beings did this.

JL: Did this, yeah.

EE: When did you retire from the Commission or the Board?

JL: When did I retire?

EE: Yes.

JL: I retired on the 30th of November in '79.

EE: Ok, so you’ve been out for almost--.

JL: 32 years. Just about 32 years.

EE: And so you served for just over 30 years?

JL: Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: About 30 years then. Right. Spanning that period.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Ok, well, we've just taken care of when did you--. That was earlier, and how long did you work there. Who did you work for? Well, obviously the Board, which became the Commission in time. What kind of work did you do? Your own movement up in the Board, you started as a sampler that day.

JL: Yes, yes.

EE: How long did you do that sampling?

JL: I was a sampler, oh, I guess for maybe six years. Something like that, six or seven years.

EE: So it was more physical work too, I guess.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: I was using the word "runner" earlier thinking of the fact that you're having to be out there and back in.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Cold in the wintertime?

JL: Yeah, it was cold if you had to go in the elevator to do any sampling. Yeah. It was cold in the elevators.

EE: Usually inside so the rain wouldn't bother you, but it could be.

JL: Yeah. Oh, yeah. It was just cold.

EE: And every one of these elevators, of course, involves the facilities—the physical facilities—that are required to do this work.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: Part of the elevator organization is for the inspectors. Their inspectors and then the government inspectors, and you worked, you were saying, fairly close together. A wicket between the two spaces.

JL: Oh, yeah. Sure.

EE: Yeah, at the Sask Pool. And so you did that for half a dozen years or so and then you became--?

JL: Then I became an assistant inspector. You had to write exams, and--.

EE: And what did the exam--? Do you remember what you were asked about on the exam?

JL: Let me see, how do I put that? Well, part of the exams was one that you had to grade, I think it was 30 samples that we had to--.

EE: So 30 samples were set out?

JL: Yeah, and you had to grade those. And you also had a grading exam and a written exam.

EE: Mmhmm. Yes. And the grading exam, of course, would be very important.

[0:35:03]

JL: Yeah. Yeah, it was.

EE: I guess I had in mind, professor that I am, the written examination. What was involved in that?

JL: Well, you had to know the different specifications of the grain. What a [No.] 1 Northern could stand in the way of the heated or how much foreign material within the grade.

EE: The extent of--?

JL: Yeah.

EE: Even No. 1 Northern could have a small amount?

JL: Very small, yeah. It was pretty well free of stones, yeah.

EE: So, of course, the ultimately No. 1 Northern is a quality of kernel, isn't it?

JL: Yeah.

EE: And if it has regrettably some of this stuff in it, well, it could still be No. 1 Northern, I guess, if it was just a small quantity.

JL: Yeah. Very little in the [No.] 1 Northern, yeah.

EE: The fact that there was dockage, just to revert to that for a moment, of this sort meant that the cleaning had not been completely done. Did the grain even when it went onto the ships, would it still have some foreign material in it? Or had it been pretty well--.

JL: No, it's cleaned before.

EE: The elevators here were--?

JL: See, we--. Yeah, the elevators here, oh yeah, they're the ones that--. They have big cleaners in the elevator.

EE: They got all this stuff out of it.

JL: Yeah. Yeah.

EE: Stones or--.

JL: They had different sized screens in the machines.

EE: Yes. Some of it, of course, we know from already having talked to others, some of it would be utter waste if there's stones. I mean, there's no use in stones.

JL: Yeah. Well, yeah. Yeah.

EE: But other stuff that was pulled out, tuned out in time to have its value in making feed pellets or whatever.

JL: Each car would be weighed, and then they'd find out how much dockage was in it, and that would be deducted from the weight of the car.

EE: Sure. In terms of the actual value that was there.

JL: The value of the car, yeah.

EE: And so these are the sorts of things that are being clarified on the written examination to be sure that you know.

JL: Oh, yeah.

EE: I suppose that you needed to be near 100 percent on the written to pass it.

JL: Yeah, you--.

EE: This isn't one of those things where a 60 or a 50 percent is a pass. You need to know.

JL: Yeah, but you also wanted to pass as high as you could so you'd--. There may be only one or two vacancies for an inspector. It would be how many have retired and there's so many spaces to fill. And then when they had the exam, the top person got the job.

EE: Yeah. Yeah. This isn't pass/fail for a moment. This is a matter of finding who the very best are, and they'll move up.

JL: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

EE: And so one moves from the assistant inspector.

JL: No, you went--.

EE: Or this is to become an assistant inspector?

JL: No. Yeah, this is to be--. Yes. And then you--.

EE: How long did you do that?

JL: Well, gee, I'm forgetting now.

EE: Quite a long time or--?

JL: I would say about maybe five or six years you might be--.

EE: Yeah. And so then, how did one move from being an assistant inspector to an inspector?

JL: You would write another exam.

EE: I see. And again the--.

JL: The same. The same.

EE: They were looking for the very best.

JL: Yeah. Yeah.

EE: Was there someone here who was in charge of the whole organization here? One person?

JL: Yes, there was. When I first joined up, there was a gentleman by the name of Burt Prescott. Your dad knew him. He lived there near them at one time. Who came after that? Alec Morgan, I think it was, and then Sammy Ruddick who was chief here one time. A lad came from Winnipeg, Charlie Hammond. Yeah.

EE: And the head office for the Board or the Commission was in Winnipeg, I suppose?

JL: Yeah. They were uptown, like, the head inspector. Yeah.

EE: Right. At what was originally the Grain Exchange building, wasn't it?

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Because you mentioned the name earlier. Later we think of it as the Chapple's Building, when it was actually built as the Grain Exchange building, wasn't it?

JL: Yeah, yeah. But it was known as Chapple's, yeah.

EE: Was space for--. Yes. It became because of the department store. And so, this would be the person who, I suppose, perhaps in consultation make the final decision who had scored highest and--.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. He had two or three inspectors uptown under him that would make the decision. And if there was a complaint, then the head man would check it.

[0:40:04]

EE: Mmhhh. And so after maybe ten or a dozen years, you were up to becoming an inspector yourself.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: And so then you may have served as an inspector for the next 15 to 20 years, I guess, the rest of your service?

JL: Yeah, yeah. The rest of my service I did.

EE: And as an inspector then in this second-half plus of your career, did you continue still in the same way spending a year at this elevator and a year at another?

JL: Yes, we did. Yeah, yeah.

EE: Was there a method to the moving people around?

JL: Well, each elevator—like as I mentioned before—some elevators were a lot busier, like Pool 7 and P&H as the examples. So it was kind of a change. Like when you were at 7, you worked a lot of overtime, and--.

EE: Paid overtime, I presume?

JL: Oh, yes. It was paid. Paid overtime.

EE: But at P&H, you would put in fulltime and not necessarily work the whole day, I suppose.

JL: Yeah. You wouldn't get as much overtime. You'd get some but not as much.

EE: Was there, in fact, a chart which had a person, each inspector, working his or her way through the whole system of elevators?

JL: No, not that I--. No. I think that the inspector-in-charge uptown and the assistant inspector, they would make the decision or what inspector they wanted at what elevator.

EE: But you're not aware of any real system to it?

JL: No, no.

EE: So this would mean that you--. By the time you retired, how many elevators were there still?

JL: There were--. How many were there altogether, 13 or 14?

EE: At the end in the late '70s?

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Because of course there were far more at an earlier time, but we won't get into those numbers. [Laughs]

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: How large was the organization?

JL: Pardon me?

EE: How many people were employed by the Board/Commission would you say?

JL: I don't know. I don't know. No.

EE: Were there gatherings, social gatherings, of you as--?

JL: Yeah. Yes, we did. We had--.

EE: Christmas party or--?

JL: Yeah, we had parties, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

EE: That sort of socializing.

JL: We socialized, yes.

EE: Picnics in the summertime?

JL: Pardon me?

EE: Picnics in the summertime?

JL: No. no. There was no picnics.

EE: Too busy.

JL: Yeah. I remember going to dances though. Your mother and dad would remember that. [Laughs]

EE: Organized by the inspectors?

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Yeah. To what extent were the inspectors of years past people who had been in the military service during the war? Was it the majority of you?

JL: Yes, I would say it was the majority of them that served. Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Yeah. Did the grain business expand after the war, or was this a matter or--?

JL: Yeah, I would say it expanded after the war.

EE: So there were more positions available too for that matter.

JL: Yes, there was. Yeah. Yes.

EE: And I suppose there wasn't a lot of socializing with the company people, I don't suppose.

JL: No, no. Not too much.

EE: Or were you actually told not to fraternize with the enemy?

JL: No, not necessarily.

EE: It wasn't quite that strong. [Laughs]

JL: No, no. No. No, but we did. The inspection branch got along well together. I mean, we had--.

EE: With the company or amongst yourselves?

JL: No. Amongst ourselves. We, like--. I wouldn't be able to name a person that I worked with that I really didn't like.

EE: That you disliked.

JL: Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Yes. Many of you, I guess, would be members of the legions, Branch Five or Branch Six.

JL: Branch Six, yeah. Yeah. But--.

EE: Were you at Branch Six?

JL: I was at Branch Six.

EE: Oh, yes. Well, that would explain why you don't know Roy Lamore as well. [Laughs]

JL: He was at Five. He was Five.

EE: He was at Five. Very much at Five.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. I wasn't a great legion member through. [Laughs]

EE: People vary. We've talked about, I guess, a typical day on the job, or we've talked about the kind of work you did. Is there anything to add to what you were describing in the way of a typical day? Sometimes you ended up with the overtime, but you were still doing the same kind of work.

JL: No. Yeah. Yeah, you're doing--. Yeah.

EE: There's grain moving, so you've got to be there to watch it.

JL: Yeah. Well, yeah. We worked three hours after supper.

EE: The elevators never worked around the clock, I guess, or did they?

JL: Oh, yeah.

EE: So another shift would come in?

JL: Another shift would come in, yeah.

EE: Your usual shift would be, what, ten hours?

[0:45:03]

JL: There'd be--.

EE: Ten, twelve, eight?

JL: Eight hours shifts.

EE: Eight-hour shifts, so it would require three shifts if it was operating around the clock.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Right. Questions that we've thought about. What did you do? Who did you interact with? What tools and equipment did you use? I think we've probably explored those, unless there's anything to add to what you were telling me earlier in regard to--.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. There was--. No, we didn't have too many tools, actually.

OM: Did you have that shaker machine you would throw grain in? It's a sifter.

JL: Oh, yeah. We had that. Yeah, they were--. In the elevator we had the cleaner. Yeah, you're right. That the sample of grain, that the sample brought in, we'd take two pounds of it I think it is and would put it over in the machine, and that would separate it into large seeds and small seeds and any foreign material. Roughage.

EE: So that machine would be the--.

JL: It would clean the--. Yeah.

EE: The real tool in getting a sense of what kind of grain you had in the car.

JL: Yeah. And it would tell you how much dockage was in the car.

EE: Yes, indeed. Would it--. I suppose if one had put two pounds on the machine and it came out practically all plump kernels of grain with very little dockage--. Well, the dockage doesn't really matter, but if you had those kinds of kernels, you've got No. 1 Northern here, I guess.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: There would be cars that come in that way, I suppose, would there?

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: The more the merrier.

JL: Yeah. And the same with--. We had a moisture tester also that could test.

EE: So you didn't have to chew on it to discover it was tough.

JL: No, no. [Laughs] I never did the chewing.

EE: I think the farmers would be checking on the thresh-ability, if you will, of the grain in the swaths sometimes by taking an ear and pulling the grains out and just chewing on them to see how tough they actually were. An experienced farmer would know whether he could wait or take the combine into that and thresh it or wait for the sun to do a little more driving out of the moisture.

JL: Yeah. And the moisture, if it had been in it too long, it would start heating. The heating process too.

EE: Could become very dangerous indeed. Yeah, you can get fires ultimately out of damp grain. I think it can heat to that level.

JL: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

EE: So, I should be sure I guess that I've got the circle of your life. You became an inspector, and you functioned as an inspector to the end?

JL: Yeah. Yes, I did.

EE: You didn't have the joy of sitting at the downtown and supervising other people or whatever? You did this work--.

JL: Oh, no. I never went downtown. Although I did spend, I guess, one year as the inspector-in-charge downtown like of the sample room. Like I was in charge of the men that were working in the sample room.

EE: That must have been quite a large space.

JL: Oh, yeah. It was. We had two floors.

EE: Two floors of the building?

JL: Yeah. One for the outwards and one for the inwards. Mmhmm.

EE: Inwards, off the boxcars?

JL: Yeah.

EE: And outwards onto the ship?

JL: Yeah, yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Was there any involvement with the shipping, the crews or whatever of the ships or whatever? Was it just a matter of checking what's going down and so on and writing it up?

JL: Yeah, yeah. The crews on the ship, you mean?

EE: Yes.

JL: No, we had no connection with them.

EE: I suppose you didn't have any real involvement with the railway workers either, for that matter.

JL: No, no.

EE: They shoved the boxcar in and there it was for you to deal with and so on.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. They'd shove them in in the morning or late night, and then they'd be there for the morning.

EE: You'd see them being cleaned out and be checking the grade.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Well, we have such questions on this questionnaire now as what would you like people to know about the work you did and perhaps the places you worked? You've suggested some things, but is there anything that you haven't said that you think people might be interested in hearing about? Sort of some vivid memories of what you did that would make a nice little vignette? Anything at all?

JL: I just can't think of anything right now.

EE: Or another question is what might interest or surprise people most about the work that you did? I've been pressing you on how you did it. I suppose I am a bit surprised about the fact that it was, to a considerable extent, it was visual assessment grading that was going on.

JL: Visual, mmhmm.

EE: You know, what was in the eye and the head, and you learned these things.

JL: Yeah, that's what it was, yeah.

EE: Did you want to expand on that or add anything to it? Anything else that surprised you? Not quite, surprise people.

[0:50:06]

JL: Well, you had to--. There was the odour of the grain too was another important segment of it.

EE: Yeah. Do you want to say something more about--? Odour is a pretty strong word. Aroma is a milder word. Stench is a gradation. [Laughs] When you say odour--.

JL: Yeah. Odour. Well, grain that is heated, has a strong--.

OM: Sweet.

JL: Odour too it, yeah.

OM: Yeah. Sickly sweet.

JL: And if there's any--. What else would there be? Um. I don't--.

EE: So No. 1 Northern high quality wheat might have a bit of dust around it or whatever, but not very much in the way of smell, I don't suppose.

JL: No, no. There'd be no smell to it.

OM: Any bugs?

JL: Pardon?

OM: Bugs?

JL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's right, Owen. We checked. We did check for bugs also. Yeah. Insects, yeah.

EE: You didn't have to worry about vermin where you were working, I don't suppose.

JL: Pardon?

EE: You didn't have to worry about vermin?

JL: No, no.

EE: The rats will be around. Other people will have to worry about the rats, but not you.

JL: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. [Laughing] No, no.

EE: But there could be insects.

JL: Yeah. There could be some bugs, yeah.

EE: Still alive?

JL: Some would be still alive, yeah. Mmhmm. Yeah, yeah.

EE: Nothing that would jump up and bite you, I don't suppose.

JL: They had to spray for bugs, I remember now that I'm thinking of it.

EE: In the elevators?

JL: Yeah. Yeah. And also we had to in the sample room when we kept those tins of grain for, let's say, two months or three months. You'd have to check them to see that there was no—what did we call it?—well, bugs. There's another name for it.

EE: Yeah. My sense is that it would be that if it was at all wet, you could—if there was any kind of dampness in that grain—it would begin to breed.

JL: Yeah. It could, yeah.

EE: Maggots is probably the wrong word, but I guess that's more on flesh.

JL: Yeah, there were different types of bugs. There was the--.

EE: Mites, lice?

JL: Beetles.

EE: Beetles?

JL: Yeah. Those were the ones. I'm forgetting.

EE: You never opened a container and were met by a whole fleet of--.

JL: Oh, yeah. Oh, no, no. But you had to check the ones that were in the sample room if you kept them too long. Yeah.

EE: Sure. Looking back over your years as an inspector, what are you most proud of in the work that you did?

JL: Well, I'm proud that I got through the work that I did without any problems, not too many to speak of. I was never accused of giving false information as far as the grading went.

EE: Did it happen to some other inspectors?

JL: Well, no. I wouldn't say that. No, no.

EE: It was something you were going to avoid having happen to you.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Do you think that the work you did contributed to Canada's success as an international grain trader? That's a--.

JL: Yeah, I think it did. Yeah. I think we at least, we used to always hear that our grading was much better than the Americans had. Yeah.

EE: Were you told how that was appreciated or what its consequences were? The fact that the Canadian grading was as high-quality as it was. Were you told what that--?

JL: Well, I think that the countries that bought more Canadian grain were satisfied with the Canadian grain more so than the American. Yeah.

EE: So that if they were—if I can put it in words—if they were assured, or if they were told that a cargo was No. 1 Northern, they would accept that sight-unseen?

JL: Accept. I think so, yes. Yeah, we had very few complaints on our shipments.

EE: Did you ever meet anyone from, let's say, a Canadian milling company that was buying this grain?

JL: No, I didn't. No.

EE: Did the local members of parliament show up at any time? [Laughs]

JL: Not when I was there. [Laughs] Although, they may have, but I never met any, no.

EE: So you were living in Fort William, I take it?

JL: Yeah, yeah.

[0:55:01]

EE: If you lived in Port Arthur, you would of course have had this member of parliament who was one of the most powerful men in Canada until 1957.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: I don't know whether he probably--.

JL: C. D. Howe was the one you're thinking of?

EE: Yes, indeed. The right honourable. [Laughing] Given the position he'd risen to. I think that's just beyond doubt, what you were saying about the importance of the work that you were doing in this way in establishing the quality. In fact, I think some people involved in the grain trade, they know it was important, but it's not as easy to put it in words as you have just done with the importance of it.

JL: Thank you.

EE: Describe any connections you see between your work and the work of farmers growing the grain handled in the grain trade. Maybe just expand a little bit on the importance of your work for the farmers.

JL: Well, I think that the farmers are assured that they're getting the best grade possible for their product. Yeah. I think--.

EE: Yeah. The grain companies had such an obvious motivation, if you will, to cheat the farmers somewhat.

JL: To drop--. Yeah. That's right,

EE: To grade lower and sell high.

JL: Yeah. And a farmer would put in a complaint to have the grain reinspected.

EE: You mentioned that before and now again. Did you yourself deal with any such cases where a farmer complaint came through and you were--?

JL: Yeah, over the course of my time I'm sure I did. Yeah. But I never--. Some of them we didn't know. It would go to the office uptown, and there that can that had been sent from the elevator would be taken out and reassessed uptown. But we did hear the results at all.

EE: No, I guess if you were in an elevator, you just wouldn't--.

JL: Yeah. No, no.

EE: It would come, I suppose, from the farmer to the office in Winnipeg, and that Winnipeg office would say, "This particular request has come in for a regrading of this and take a look at it at the Grain Exchange building here."

JL: Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Yeah. What changes took places? What were the major changes in your job over the years? Were there changes or was it pretty well all the same kind of work all the way through?

JL: Well, the work was much the same. We had changes in the way the samples came from the elevator, at one time. Like, the sample was brought in, then they came on a chute from upstairs down to our office instead of us carrying samples in. It was a--.

EE: So that running function really wasn't needed any longer.

JL: No, no. It was automatically came into the elevator.

EE: And you inspected that system, I suppose, to be sure that what was coming in were the proper samples, I suppose, was it? Or someone will have looked over the arrangement.

JL: Oh, it was looked over, yeah.

EE: So that was one of the changes then.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Did this mean that there were fewer people then required?

JL: There'd be fewer samplers required, yeah.

EE: So for a time the Commission or the Board wouldn't be hiring because they just didn't need the starting grade.

JL: Yeah. Mmhmm.

EE: Were there other changes that occurred?

JL: Um. Hm. Not too many that I'd know.

EE: Another possibility, the shaking and the moisture testers, those were there at the beginning?

JL: They were all there, yeah, when I started.

EE: During the time you were there, did computers come in at all? Was there any kind of digitization of this?

JL: Computers come in just as I was leaving. I never had anything to do with them. Yeah.

EE: No. Must talk to some of the later retiring inspectors to get the information on that.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: And so, it was really much of a muchness other than this matter of--.

JL: Yeah, it was. Yeah. I can't really think of any big changes.

EE: I suppose I might wonder whether this made the job boring for you or was there--?

JL: Oh, no. No, I never found it too boring.

EE: No?

JL: No, no. Really. I enjoyed my job. Yeah.

EE: Yes. I guess there was the ongoing matter of assessing. Just time after time assessing what you're seeing, and each one is a new challenge, I guess.

JL: Every car of grain was different. Yeah.

[1:00:02]

EE: Yeah. The next, there are three questions. Besides dealing with change, what other challenges did you face on the job? And I guess I was just suggesting one possibility, bored out of your mind. [Laughing] But that didn't happen.

JL: No, no. No.

EE: Were there any other challenges that you faced?

JL: I don't--. I can't think of any really.

EE: It was a good job?

JL: It was a good job, yeah.

EE: Good job, good pay?

JL: Good pay, yeah.

EE: Respected by people in the community?

JL: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

EE: Would you have any comment on challenges that the industry faced over the years?

JL: No, to me it just seemed to run the same way from when I started on the job as from when I--.

EE: Yeah. There was a rail strike in, what was it, 1953 or so? The rails were out for quite a while, but all that would do would be to slow down your work.

JL: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's all. Yeah.

EE: And the first question about the--. Most of the people you were working with were veterans.

JL: Yes.

EE: In fact, that's the question.

JL: Yes. Yes, they were.

EE: And, yeah, at the beginning. When did you leave the--.

JL: Leave the what?

EE: When were you discharged from the Air Force? I guess I--.

JL: In, uh--.

EE: Right after the war?

JL: Yeah, right at the end of the war. Yeah, just--.

EE: Because the war ended in, what, August of--. September of '45 in Japan.

JL: Yeah. Yeah, it was just before that. Yeah, yeah.

EE: And so you were on Sydney Street so to speak for three years?

JL: Uh--.

EE: If you joined the--.

JL: Yes, I was. I worked at Canada Car. I worked there before the war for a year or so, and so they had to, they were kind of committed to take servicepeople back. Yeah. So I worked there for two or three years, yeah.

EE: What kind of work did you do there?

JL: I was in the production office for a while, and then I worked on the bench in the electrical department. And that was we were building all of the city buses that we were building at that time. And before the war when I first worked there, we were building the Hawker Hurricane.

EE: Right. Because you were saying you joined the Air Force in '42, was it?

JL: Uh, '42, yeah.

EE: So there was a three year period, practically, from--. When did you start at Can Car? Before 1939?

JL: It was just--. It was, yeah, around '39 I guess it was. '38 or '39, I'm just forgetting now. Yeah.

EE: So you would have been, what did I say, was it 1918 you were--?

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Right.

JL: Then before that, I worked out in the bush for a while as a clerk.

EE: Oh. [Laughing] You never cut? You were never a cutter?

JL: Never a cutter, no. I was just a clerk.

EE: We didn't really talk about your education. You'd completed high school, I suppose?

JL: Yeah. Yeah, high school, that's all. Yeah, I didn't go to university or--. No.

EE: Right. In the various kinds of jobs that there were in the grain trade or in the Lakehead cities, where did the grain trimmer rate, if you will? They had their own association, did they?

JL: They had their own, yeah. They had the Grain Trimmers Association, that's what it was. Yeah, yeah.

EE: And were they quite well-paid relatively speaking?

JL: They were paid on the number of bushels of grain that were shipped.

EE: I see. It was entirely on a piece rate basis.

JL: It was piece rate.

EE: But this left your father then well-enough off I suppose.

JL: Oh, yeah. He was quite well off. Like after the Depression, the grain trade seemed to really come ahead, and we had good crops, and yeah, my dad had a pretty good job.

EE: Yeah. So you were never faced with the challenge of having to go and work in a bush camp or on the road in those relief camps? You were never anywhere close to facing that kind of challenge?

[1:05:10]

JL: No, no. My dad did. This was before. Like they just, of course, just worked in the summertime up until about Christmas in the grain trimming.

EE: And he was forced to do that for a--. Oh, I see. As a grain trimmer.

JL: Yeah. And then--. Yeah, grain trimming.

EE: Sure. During the navigation season.

JL: And then during the Depression part, then he worked out one year, I think. He used to work for the ice company. They used to, from Boulevard Lake, they'd put ice up in the wintertime, and my dad worked there for three or four years.

OM: Keep it covered in sawdust.

JL: [Laughs] Yeah, that's right! They did. Yeah.

EE: I mean these are jobs, this is work that was displaced at a later point once refrigeration took over.

JL: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

EE: You didn't need ice that way, did you?

JL: No. They used to supply the CPR and CNR trains with ice. Yeah, they had those on, what street, it was Syndicate Avenue. They had the icehouse.

OM: Oh, ok.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Would you use the phrase here as well that you were making ice?

JL: Pardon me?

EE: Making ice?

JL: Yeah. Well, they had two places. Down by the Empire Elevator at the mouth of the Kam River, they'd cut ice there, and also at Boulevard Lake. Yeah. That's where they'd bring the big blocks of ice and store them in the--.

EE: I've made ice, or helped my father make ice, on the dugout at home on the farm.

JL: Oh, yeah. Yeah. You know! [Laughing]

EE: So I have some acquaintance with this business. Of course, it can be dangerous too. You have to be very careful around it.

JL: Yeah, you do.

EE: Once you're--.

JL: Mr. Cadieu, I guess you wouldn't know him? No. He had the family, they owned the ice company in Fort William.

OM: Cadieu?

JL: Cadieu, yeah. And he drowned going out to the job to see if everything was going right, I guess. He went and took the wrong turn, and he drowned.

EE: Into the water? Yeah.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Well, it's very--. I was just a kid of course, but it really is frightening that dark water there and so on. If you fell in, it's very cold. If you ended up under the ice and so on, and if the ice is two or three feet thick, you know, you're probably a goner.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: I mean, they should really have been working, I suppose, with a rope around their waist tied to a tree or something so they could be pulled back out or whatever, but--. [Laughing]

JL: Yeah.

EE: It's curious. You think about this phenomenon now, making ice now occurs in curling rinks. [Laughs]

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: That's probably the only place. Or you have a refrigerator that makes ice for drinks and so on! [Laughs] But there was a time when they were solid blocks of frozen water that came out of--.

JL: When Mr. Caruso used to deliver ice with the truck to all of us. Of course, maybe that's before your time.

OM: No, I can remember the first refrigerator with a block of ice on top.

JL: Is that right? Yeah.

OM: Then they got the General Electric.

JL: Yeah. Well, it would be Mr. Caruso the--. Do you remember Henry Caruso?

OM: I know the family.

JL: Yeah. Yeah.

EE: Well, we've got ourselves down, I think, to significant events. What are your most vivid memories about your job? Are there things that really stand out?

JL: Well, I'll have to think about that.

EE: Bucket after bucket of wheat, I'm sure! [Laughing] They just begin to swim together I would imagine.

JL: Yeah. I do remember sampling grain on the boats, too. It was sometimes a dangerous job and sometimes when the boat was empty and when we used to have go down and check the boats to make sure there was no--. That they'd been cleaned, no water in the holds.

EE: That means going down the ladders and so on to the very bottom then?

JL: Yeah, down the ladder into the bottom. Yeah.

EE: So part of the grain inspection, then, was to sort of be sure.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Did you sign a certificate or anything, or just checked to be sure that it was clean before?

JL: That's right. We just checked and spoke to the mate. Yeah.

EE: Yeah, well that's a very different kind of work, although part of the arrangements then.

JL: Yeah. And then the actual sampling of it. And it could be, in the summertime, it would be not too bad a job, but in the winter, in the late fall when it was so cold, it would be kind of nasty out there.

[1:10:15]

EE: Yeah. This was on the ships before the navigation season ends.

JL: Pardon me?

EE: On the ships before navigation season into December.

JL: Yeah. And it's--. Yeah.

EE: Because of course, you're working in the elevator through the winter as well.

JL: Yeah.

EE: When did the season begin? When would you be going to a new elevator?

JL: We used to go, I guess, it would be around the 1st of February we'd go.

EE: Ok. So it's sort of the--. Yeah.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Well, that's, I guess, really designed to be a time when the work is fairly slow.

JL: Slow, slower.

EE: So there's no change taking place in the midst of--. Because a crop year ends, what, it's the end of August?

JL: August.

EE: And the new crop year begins September the 1st.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Which is when the grain is thought to be coming in from the farmers.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: But you'd have the earlier change.

JL: Mmhmm.

EE: Did you--. Which elevator were you fondest of?

JL: Um, I would say I liked, let me see. Think of the name of it now.

EE: You mentioned P&H a couple of times, so I guess it wasn't P&H.

JL: No, it wasn't P&H. [Laughing] No. There was one called, ah, I can't think. In between the two cities.

EE: Somewhere in the Intercity area here?

JL: Yeah, it was in the Intercity.

EE: Who was in there? Sask Pool, Manitoba Pool, UGG.

OM: That's on the other end there.

JL: Huh. Federal Grain!

EE: Federal Grain. Right.

OM: Another smaller operation.

JL: Pardon?

OM: Smaller operation.

JL: Yeah. Not too--. It was about middle sized. Yeah.

EE: Yes. What did you like about Federal Grain?

JL: I think I got to know the superintendent and the foreman and that there, and I seemed to get along better there with them.

EE: Federal Grain eventually became part of another organization?

JL: Yes, it did.

EE: Did Sask Pool buy it?

JL: Sask Pool took it over. Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

EE: When they took it over, did they keep all the workers there through the superintendent? Or send in others?

JL: I really don't know. I wasn't there at that time. You know, I would think they would maybe keep the same people that they had there.

EE: They weren't buying just buildings. They were buying an organization of workers and--.

JL: Yeah. I'd think the--. I don't remember any of the men being fired or anything, no.

EE: Did you have anything to do with the workers, the company employees, the grain handlers if you will that belonged to the Lodge-650? Frank Mazur's guys.

JL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

EE: Once Frank was the leader.

JL: No, we didn't have too much to do with them. The only time was if you needed something done on your car at the millwright shop. [Laughs] You'd go down. You always wanted to be friendly with the millwrights. [Laughing] And sometimes the electricians, too.

EE: Sure. Well, there's an odd part of me that says if I hadn't been a university professor, maybe I would have become a millwright. [Laughing]

JL: Yeah.

EE: My father loved working with steel far more than farming.

JL: Oh, yeah?

EE: And that may be part of it.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Well, where are we here? Do you think it's important to preserve and remember, share Thunder Bay's grain trade history?

JL: Oh, yes. I'm quite proud of Owen's sister.

EE: For getting this going?

JL: For getting this going. Yeah, I think she's doing a--.

OM: Nancy, she's--. Ernie, I think, is starting to appreciate her vision too. [Laughing]

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: I suppose you wouldn't be giving us the time of day here today as you are telling us about it if you didn't think it was important.

JL: Oh, yeah. No, I, you know, I worried about you coming and about how I would react.

EE: You've done very well.

JL: I hope I have.

EE: I mean, losing things in the memory happens to all of us, so there's no problem with that.

JL: Yeah. And that elevator I was trying to think of was Stewart's.

OM: Stewart's.

JL: Yeah, that was--.

EE: Oh, your favourite?

JL: Yeah. That was the--. It was Stewart, which belonged to Federal Grain.

EE: Oh, yes. Right.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Ok. I haven't had the time to do the research yet in the museum with the maps and so on to lay all of these out clearly, you know, the "when" and so on and so forth.

[1:15:07]

JL: Federal had Stewart's and the Northwestern.

EE: Oh, yes.

JL: Was also theirs.

OM: Ok.

EE: Right. Are there any aspects of the history that you think we should concentrate on in sort of preserving the memory of what happened here?

JL: I'm just not too sure what you mean.

EE: I suppose we can agree that remembering the grain inspectors would be a good idea. [Laughing]

JL: Oh, yeah! Yeah.

EE: Are there any other aspects of the industry that you think we should concentrate on?

JL: Not that I can think of right now.

EE: We'll remember your trade.

JL: Yeah.

EE: Obviously the elevators as a whole. If we can keep one of those elevators in operation so people can actually visit it and see what was going on.

JL: Yeah. Could actually visit them, yeah. How is that coming along? That was the main--. That started this.

OM: They're still working on it, Mr. Lourie. [Laughs]

JL: Are they? Yeah.

EE: If someone would give us \$20 million. [Laughing]

OM: That's we need! The infrastructure.

JL: I think Len told me—I have a son-in-law, Len Seguin—and he's in Winnipeg, and he was the chief inspector, grain inspector.

EE: Was he?

JL: Yeah. He worked his way up. I got him the job on here, and he went, didn't look back. And he's still working up there. They've been--. Your sister was in seeing about money, I think. Money matters. [Laughing]

OM: That'd be Nancy!

JL: Nancy. Yeah, Nancy.

EE: Was there quite a bit of the sons of the veterans entering the Board, the Commission? Becoming grain inspectors?

JL: Let me see.

EE: The veterans would mostly--.

JL: No, not too many. But there was a few on the job.

EE: The veterans would mostly be going by around 1980, I suppose.

JL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: And so the ones that had come in, there was a lot of new people there. It wasn't just the children of the inspectors that came in.

JL: Oh, no. Yeah. Oh, no.

EE: Well, at the end of it all just about, are there any questions that I should have asked you that come to mind? And deep dark secrets that I--?

JL: How did I get into this? [Laughing] That's the first one!

EE: Well, I think we've got that clear. [Laughing] She who cannot be denied? [Laughing]

OM: That'd be Nancy. "Phone Mr. Lourie."

EE: Right. So we know the answer to that. Are there any other questions, or do you think we've done a good job of--?

JL: Yes. I'm quite happy with it.

EE: Within the limits of your memory.

JL: I worried about it.

OM: Now you can relax!

JL: Now I can relax. And you have done a very good job. I've really appreciated the way you've gone about it.

EE: We've done a good job together! Yeah.

JL: Yeah.

EE: And you mentioned a name or two enroute. I don't suppose we need to record those, but I'm going to pull out a sheet of paper and have you suggest any other people we might talk to. You mentioned a fellow in the barber shop, for example.

JL: Oh, Ron Pilley.

EE: Ron Pilley, right. Let me get to a sheet of paper here and do that.

JL: That's--.

EE: Well, thank you very much Mr. Lourie for giving us the honour of telling us about it this afternoon.

JL: Well, you're very welcome.

EE: It's been great to do it.

JL: I just hope--. Oh, and what I want to do too is phone Margaret and have her come down and meet you.

OM: Ok.

JL: She's just down the hall. And you can compare arms. [Laughs] That's all though.

End of Interview.