

**Narrator:** Linda Luszczak (LL)

**Company Affiliations:** Ogilvie Flour Mills/Industrial Grain Products, Riverside Grain Products

**Interview Date:** N/D

**Interviewer:** Ernie Epp (EE)

**Recorder:** Owen Marks (OM)

**Transcriber:** Sarah Lorenowich

**Summary:** In this two-part interview, former manager of Ogilvie Flour Mill/Industrial Grain Products Linda Luszczak discusses her career in industrial chemistry. In part one, she recounts her schooling in chemistry and her first job with Ogilvie/IGP as a lab technician in the quality assurance lab. She gives a brief history of the lab and its ownership changes, as well as her own ascension through the ranks to manager. She explains in detail the process of separating gluten and starch from wheat flour and processing it into a saleable powdered form, and she lists the variety of uses for each product. She describes the major challenge of ingredient and transportation costs, which led to the eventual closure of the plant. In part two, Luszczak expands on the plant's ownership changes, as well as the closure and attempted resurrection of the plant by Riverside Grain Products for a year. She describes the number of staff in the whole plant, the kinds of equipment in the plant and the lab, and the two unions involved in the plant but not the lab. She shares memories of strikes, of interactions with the sister plant in Montreal, and of being a woman in an industrial field. She recalls the "good old days" of industrial Thunder Bay, the busyness of the port, and the pride in producing valuable products. Other topics discussed include the Canadian Grain Commission and Canadian Wheat Board maintaining Canada's reputation for quality flour, the noticeable difference in the product when low quality flour was used, and the challenges of dealing with production waste.

**Keywords:** Ogilvie Flour Mills; Industrial Grain Products; Riverside Grain Products; Industrial chemistry; Grain science; Starch processing; Gluten processing; Wheat starch; Wheat gluten; Wheat flour; Flour milling; Crow's Nest Pass freight rate; Lab equipment; Protein testing; Moisture testing; Labour unions; Labour strikes; Contract negotiations; Transportation Communications Union (TCU); Management; Waste management; Women in the workplace; Canadian Grain Commission; Canadian Wheat Board

### Audio Part One

Time, Speaker, Narrative
OM: I'll give you the countdown there, Ernie.

EE: Well, it's so good of you to meet with us this afternoon and give us a narration about your experience in relation to the grain trade and perhaps other things as well. Perhaps we can start by putting on the record things you've just told me in terms of your name, first of all.

LL: Linda Luszcak.

EE: And your place and date of birth?

LL: I was born in Port Arthur on June the 7th, 1952.

EE: Then you might tell us how you came to work in the grain trade, unless that was some distance into your life and there might be some things we should get on the record before.

LL: No, no. I went away to university—went to the University of Western Ontario—and took a degree in chemistry. I decided that I didn't want to live in southern Ontario particularly. Came home, but there weren't a lot of jobs up here for that sort of training, and especially not for women outside of a hospital environment. That really wasn't my area, so I had a few part-time jobs. At one point, I actually worked at the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] in the protein lab doing protein testing.

EE: How long were you there?

LL: Oh, just a few months. It was a seasonal position. Then I moved to Ignace, got married, and fate had me come back to Thunder Bay when I secured a job at Industrial Grain Products.

EE: And that would have been when?

LL: In 1977. At that point, Industrial Grain Products was one of the few places you could get a job and do some kind of lab work that wasn't hospital related. I was one of the first two women hired there, which was sort of a big, revolutionary thing that happened at the time. [Laughing]

EE: How did you experience the revolution? Or maybe it's other people who experienced the revolution. You're the agent of revolution!

LL: I think it's the other people who--. Well, yeah, it was a lot of change for the plant. It was full of men, and we worked around the clock. But the lab was my domain, and I work in the quality assurance lab. So, we tested out various samples from the process and the finished goods to make sure they met quality standards, and off we go. At the time, I don't think that too many people, unless they had someone who was working there—and a lot of people did work at some point in their lives at Industrial Grain Products or the Ogilvie Mill, especially on this side of town—it wasn't uncommon, when you looked at obituaries, “Worked at Ogilvie. Worked at Ogilvie. Worked at Industrial Grain Products.” We didn't actually start out with raw grain. Our raw material was flour, which of course, came from the west, from--.

EE: From the Ogilvie Mill in Winnipeg, I suppose.

LL: Winnipeg and the one in Medicine Hat, and then occasionally we'd buy flour from someplace else, depending if the price was right. Those buying decisions weren't made in Thunder Bay. They were made in Montreal because that's where the head office was.

EE: At the company headquarters.

LL: Right, right.

EE: How long had the mill been here, do you know?

LL: Well, I'd forgotten, and I started looking things up and trying to find out. Ogilvie built a flour mill in 1904.

EE: Yes, I thought it would be a long time ago as a flour mill, but the conversion--.

LL: And then it fell into the river in 1906, and there's pictures around of the mill falling into the river. Then right now I'm not sure how long they were actually milling anything there or whether it was just grain or what they were doing, but in 1943--.

EE: During the war.

LL: They built, well they installed, a starch and gluten processing facility. That was the first place in Canada. We had a sister plant in Quebec, and right now I think that is probably the only place in Canada where wheat gluten is produced.

EE: So, it would be, presumably, a wartime need? I suppose the MP for Port Arthur, the honourable C. D. Howe, may have played his part, as minister of munitions and supply, in having the plant moved to that?

LL: I'm not sure.

EE: No?

**[0:04:51]**

LL: I think it was a way to use all the products from the flour stream because the flour that we used was not the same flour that goes into baking. A flour mill has--. It's a work of art, actually, a flour mill, in how the miller chooses to grind the wheat to come up with the flour that he wants. Our flour had particularly high protein because the gluten was the most valuable part of this whole process. So, I can't tell you why or how, but it happened here. That lasted until 1996, then for a short time in 1998 and '99 when Riverside Grain Products tried to resurrect the operation.

EE: You worked in the lab for how long? Through the whole earlier period?

LL: No. Well, I started in 1977 and then I became the quality assurance manager in 1985. I just found my little notice that I was--.

EE: Those promotion letters.

LL: For promotion time. Then I had an interest, and I suppose I had some ability, and I ended up covering for the production manager and covering for the manager when he was away. Then when we got--. You may know the manager that I had for the longest time was Norman Holman. Have you heard of Norm Holman?

EE: I don't think I have. He's still with us?

LL: No, no, he died. He was pretty active with the Metre Eaters. Anyways, after he retired, we hadn't got a new manager. Then in 1993 after ADM [Archer-Daniels-Midland] bought Ogilvie from Labatt's--.

EE: Archer-Daniels-Midland, is it?

LL: Yes. Bought Ogilvie from Labatt's in 1992, I think, then decided to close us in 1993. At that point, we got a reprieve and then it ended up closing in 1996. At that point, our manager, who had already undergone two closures of plants in southern Ontario took a job out west, and ADM asked me to manage the plant. In my mind, that wasn't really a good sign because I wasn't the sort of person that they really needed to move the plant forward, but I could definitely look after it. So, we struggled on for another three years, and then the plant closed in 1996.

EE: So, you had this sort of terminal managership for three years? Well, that's enough time to learn some things about it.

LL: Oh, it was pretty instructive, [laughs] the whole process.

EE: Thank you very much for sketching that, and later we can come to that second attempt, or the attempt, rather, to open it again as someone tried to get Shaw Bakeries reopened, or Bakery, rather, and that failed as well. So, let's focus on the lab for a time.

LL: Sure!

EE: You can sketch for us what kind of work was done in there and the part you played in the lab.

LL: Well, we ran quality control on the process itself and then on the finished products.

EE: Could you sketch the production process for us?

LL: Sure! If you imagine flour and water making a ball of dough, and then letting that sit for a while because that lets the gluten form and get strong. The gluten is sort of the sticky, stretchy part of the dough. And if you can imagine putting that dough under a stream of water, then the starch washes out and you're left with the gluten. With the starch, there's two grades of starch that are based on their molecular size. So, there's clean white starch and then there's sort of a junkier stuff, and a bunch of other wonderful things that are in flour. The process refined each stream to its best point and then, generally, dried those products. So, gluten, I think there's sort of a gluten-free craze now, but gluten is really, truly, a wonderful thing. If you imagine a hamburger bun, a good one versus a not so good one--.

**[0:10:26]**

EE: Not a McDonald's bun, but say an A&W one, maybe. [Laughing]

LL: It's the strength of the hinge. The strength of the hinge is the gluten. In a lot of commercial bakeries, big ones, using gluten allows the company or the bakers to determine their best use of flour plus gluten to get what they want in the end, because you can beef up the quality of your flour with gluten. Shaw's used to buy gluten from us—not much, but they used to buy some. The other thing where gluten comes in particularly handy is for making breads with a lot of whole grains because you need that strength in order to let that loaf rise so that it captures the carbon dioxide from when the yeast is fermenting. So, if you don't have a lot of gluten, it just kind of gets lost and you have this sort of very--.

EE: Soggy thing.

LL: [Laughs] Well, very heavy loaf of bread as opposed to being sort of light and airy and elastic and moist—all those good things. So, most of our gluten went into baking applications. We sent gluten all over the world, and we used to send it to southeast Asia as shrimp feed.

EE: Oh, really? These were in shrimp farming operations?

LL: Exactly. So, the shrimp that you eat now that comes from southeast Asia or whatever, it's probably been fed with gluten from somewhere. A lot of that gluten used to be from Thunder Bay.

EE: I see. And the starch would have domestic uses and industrial uses?

LL: Oh, the starch was amazing, actually, the uses. We made a whole range of food and industrial starches and a lot of fine starches, pre-gelatinized starches. The wheatstarch is whiter than cornstarch and it used—because it has less fat—and it used to be used in angel food cake mixes, but since this whole business with the gluten-phobia, you see cornstarch now. North America is basically a corn economy, not a wheat economy.

EE: The US, all that maize growing down there.

LL: Yeah. It was used in angel food mixes and we also used to make a low dusting starch to put in icing sugar, because if you look at a bag of icing sugar there will be starch in there. That's to keep it from getting hard and to keep it flowing. So, that was a big part of our business. That was one of our big products. We sold our starch in southeast Asia for laundry starch.

EE: So, this was the industrial starch or was it actually the domestic?

LL: No, that one was industrial, but it had basically the same qualities as the food starch. Then we made pre-gelatinized starches, where you take the starch, and there's a big steel drum that has steam in it and you spread a very thin layer of starch on the drum.

EE: On the outside of the drum?

LL: Yep, and then you sort of peel that off and you end up with pre-gelatinized starch that was used in puddings. We made one for LePage's—LePage's wallpaper paste powder.

EE: Glue making?

LL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: I was thinking that some of the starch would end up in glues of one sort or another of adhesives.

LL: Then we made a whole range of modified starches for use in the gypsum wallboard.

EE: Drywall?

LL: Yeah. There's starch in the wallboard and its part of, I guess, a matrix that forms with the gypsum and all the other good things that they put in there. The starch is part of that so that it does that nicely. We used to make the sort of the paste that they used on the edge—the little paper edge that you'd have. We made a lot of starches for linerboard. I don't know if you know what linerboard is, but--.

**[0:15:19]**

EE: Cardboard?

LL: Yes, yeah.

EE: Stuff that they used to make out at Red Rock when there was linerboard work.

LL: We made this other blended product that was used for the glue on the bottom of paper bags at the Reed Paper in Dryden. So, our stuff was everywhere. Most people that I talked to, you know, people ask you, “Well, what do you do?” I tell them and, “Really? This happens in Thunder Bay?” “Yeah, it happened in Thunder Bay!” Not anymore, but it did then.

EE: Canada Starch, am I right?

LL: That’s a cornstarch.

EE: Oh, that’s a cornstarch, okay.

LL: That’s a cornstarch, right.

EE: Despite the name or the *Canada* on it, but of course Canada grows some corn too.

LL: Yeah, we grow a lot of corn too. So, no, that’s cornstarch.

EE: Was Ogilvie selling kitchen starch, if you will, under its own name?

LL: No, no. All our starch was pretty much wholesale. Someone else did something with it.

EE: It would be a question later on—although I might ask it here—do you think that there was a failure to brand the product to develop any kind of goodwill, as the marketing people would probably put it, for the product?

LL: I’m not so sure. I think that producing the starch on an industrial scale and then selling it—because most of the uses really were industrial, for big--.

EE: Yes, I can understand that.

LL: No housewife was going to go out and buy herself some wheatstarch. Buy some cornstarch, you know? I think Ogilvie saved all their marketing and branding for their flour, which was Five Roses. Ogilvie bought that, let’s see, when did I--. The Lake of the Woods milling company in Keewatin, they were milling flour in 1888.

EE: Yes, they started at that time. I’ve written a paper on that as it happens. [Laughs]



LL: Then in 1903, they were bought by Ogilvie. Well, yeah, they were bought by Ogilvie in 1954. So, then that's when they bought that Five Roses name.

EE: The brand name.

LL: And in Montreal, the Five Roses sign on the top of the flour mill--.

EE: That's still on the building, isn't it?

LL: Well, I think they've taken it down now, because ADM sold the brand name to Smucker's. ADM doesn't really need a brand name. They're not into that stuff. They're way, way bigger than that. Not interested in that. So, they sold the brand, which has had a presence in Canada for a really long time.

EE: Yes, from the late 19th century.

LL: Yeah, so as far as the branding and all that sort of stuff goes, I don't think that strategy would have made much of a difference. What would have made a difference, I think, was if the owners—whoever the owners were, whether it was Ogilvie, Labatt's, whatever—whether instead of just taking all the cash, reinvesting so that the plant could compete. Because in the end, we were too small to compete really. Even though we'd had a new process installed not too long before the plant closed, I think it was too late. Too late for those things. The building hadn't been kept really. It was just a sad story all the way around. I'm no sure any amount of money would have made a difference there.

EE: One more of the failures of Canadian capitalism in a sense.

LL: Well, I think so because it--.

EE: Or Canadian capitalists, more precisely.

LL: Well, you know, instead of doing more of the final processing here, instead of sending it off someplace else, and becoming self-sufficient in those things, it's just one more sad story in a whole bunch of them.

EE: Of which there are too many such stories. Well, you were selling into a global market. When you talk about southeast Asian markets, that's a certain level of transportation cost involved in that. Sent by rail to the--?

**[0:20:03]**

LL: Those things were organized by the head office in Montreal, so they would organize all the financing because a lot of this stuff was done with letters of credit and that sort of stuff. They would take care of the transportation and that was another huge disadvantage for us because we could not, in Thunder Bay, load a container.

EE: They hadn't equipped you to do that?

LL: Well, it's hard to load a container in Thunder Bay. I'm not sure you can still do it. We could unload the containers, but to load them up and send them off, that wasn't something that was--.

EE: This is a matter of getting them onto the railcars?

LL: Yes.

EE: Oh, I see.

LL: The logistics of it, of actually loading something and sending it.

EE: These are the great overhead arrangements—the cranes and so on—where the containers are brought in by truck perhaps and lifted over and dropped and so on?

LL: Mmhmm.

EE: There's nothing of that sort in Thunder Bay? I suppose you're right.

LL: No, there isn't. So, what happened was even our stuff—and here we are in the centre of Canada—the stuff is going to southeast Asia, it went to Montreal to get loaded into a container.

EE: By ship?

LL: Yes, and then it got sent by ship. So, if you could load a container and get it onto a train here and then sent--. There was no way to do that.

EE: And Keefer Terminals never built a container--?

LL: No, they had no reason. Who else was actually doing that kind of stuff? It's not as though there was a lot of other manufacturing here where you're going to throw big boxes of crackers or whatever else you're going to throw. So, all our--.

EE: Well, there was newsprint, but it was moving south, wasn't it? Our rail connections for Thunder Bay south are quite poor.

LL: Well, they're not bad, but the logistics were not in our favour, certainly. Even some of the stuff that went to Mexico we could send that by truck, but anything that ended up having to go into a ship's hold ended up going to Montreal, which, you know. If there were more manufacturing here and more of that sort of thing happening, well then, we could have done that here, but there wasn't. That was really tough for us because it added so much cost to the product, that in the end we couldn't compete with any of our sister plants.

EE: I don't think in this interview we'll pursue the issues, explore the issues, involved in Thunder Bay's industrialization as far as it went, and then I suppose the decline of Thunder Bay as a manufacturing centre. But there are locational advantages for the country to some extent, but there are also disadvantages, aren't there? Did you have a sense of a continental starch industry competition within continental or did--?

LL: Oh, sure there was competition, but I don't know too much of the details about that because there isn't very much wheatstarch produced in North America. There's some, but--.

EE: The US is very largely cornstarch as you were saying.

LL: Yes. There are wheat gluten/starch processors in the States, so it was very competitive. For some things, wheatstarch was just better, so the competition for that was pretty fierce.

EE: Did you have a sense of the superiority of Canadian wheat in this production?

LL: Well, the sense that I got—and I wasn't too involved in the flour side of it—was that I was told by the quality people on the flour side that Canadian flour was top notch, the quality of the wheat. But then the quality of the wheat with the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] and the Canada Wheat Board [CWB] and how that was controlled-- . There used to be, well, Ogilvie had a bake lab in Montreal where they would—because the company, Ogilvie, did a lot of grain exports—where they would do milling on a small scale and then set up for shipments for export through the CWB and however that was done. I'm not sure how it was all done. But in Canada, you could go into a grocery store, and you could buy a bag of all-purpose flour—and there was Robin Hood, or Five Roses, maybe Monarch—and those were going to be the same. You could count on that bag of flour, and it was going to be the same.

**[0:25:21]**

EE: You mean the quality inside?

LL: Yeah, the quality the same.

EE: They didn't come out of the same mills. You're not saying that.

LL: No, the baking quality was going to be the same. Then there were sort of the next level, the Pool flour, whatever those levels were. The way it was explained to me was that that isn't how it worked in the States, that you did choose a brand.

EE: In terms of qualities.

LL: Yeah, yeah.

EE: At that will probably begin to happen in Canada now.

LL: So, in that sense, Canadian wheat is known to be superior, so it is.

EE: It's had a long run, but what will happen now in the dramatic changes that have happened in the movement of grain, the purchase from the farmers, and so forth, the exports.

LL: Yes, with the CWB stuff. I checked out the webpage for the CGC, and they still report on wheat quality overall. They've got third party testers now, so I'm not sure how--. We've got sort of a legacy of the grain inspectors and that whole process, where people know how it was. I don't know how that's going to be in the future.

EE: We need to interview my son, as it happens. My son has moved back from Winnipeg—he's been away for 25 years—he was, I think, in pioneering endeavors to third-party testing. I think a company out of Switzerland was involved, which had a global business in testing. He was sent out to--. We should interview him before we wrap this up.

LL: There's an outfit in town—Intertek, I think—that does the grain testing. A friend of mine, once she lost her job with the Grain Commission—she's now working for Cargill—she is training some inspectors and whatnot. She says, "It takes ten years before you've seen everything, and you know what you're doing." She's been doing it all her life, so I don't know how those skills are going to get moved forward if there isn't some sort of stricter quality control on how that happens.

EE: I think the new government faces an awful lot of challenges, and one of them is surely is the question of whether to endeavor to re-establish the Grain Commission, whether to ensure the Wheat Board remains, let's say, in the control of Canadian farmers as it could conceivably. It's going to be a tough game.

LL: I haven't kept up with how that whole battle is moving along and whether farmers are better off or worse off. I'm thinking the--

EE: The National Farmers Union says they're not. [Laughs] I belong to the Farmers Union for sentimental reasons. I get their newsletters.

LL: Well, I can quite believe it, the thing about it was a cooperative system in a lot of ways. As a whole everybody was ahead.

EE: About 80 years of that in Saskatchewan, the Pools from the '20s and so on. It's a sad decline.

LL: Right. Certainly, when the Crow's Nest Pass agreement was done, that also made our flour more expensive, our raw material, because we didn't--.

EE: When the agreement was done away with in the '80s?

LL: Yeah, yes.

EE: Western Grain Transportation Act kicked in.

LL: Yes, yes. That made our raw material more expensive a little bit, so that just added to--. But it also made it more expensive for our sister plant. For us, every added cost. The plant also had effluent issues, pollution control issues, that were challenging as well. There was some investigation into building an ethanol plant, and at the time, there weren't enough subsidies from the government for gasohol basically to make it worth it.

EE: May be just as well, considering everything that's happened since then. [Laughs]

LL: It is. Yeah, there's something unsavoury about burning food. [Laughs]

EE: There certainly is! Could you maybe walk us through the plant? Sort of virtually, if you will, would that be possible?

LL: Sure!

EE: Because we're talking about very interesting topics, but somebody may wonder now, "How did things work in there? What were the stages of production?"

**[0:30:19]**

LL: Well--.

EE: A train would roll in. The flour would come in in bags or in bulk?

LL: Oh, in bulk. In those big tanker cars.

EE: In the tanker cars?

LL: Yep. If you drive past the plant now you can still see the silos for the flour, because they didn't burn—because there was a fire at the plant site in 2001, I think. 2001 or 2002, I can't remember. The flour would come in and get unloaded, and then it would get--

EE: So, it would just sucked up through the silos, or--?

LL: It would get sucked into the silos, and then the flour would then get conveyed over to the plant. So, the dry stuff was separate. If you think of the flour coming into the plant into what they would call a [inaudible] and whatever you were going to use that day. The flour would get fed into a big mixer with water at a certain temperature—warm water, can't remember the temperature—and some salt, and make a dough. So, this thing was just pumping out dough. Then the dough would go into a huge hopper where it would have a little bit of a resting period before it went into the rest of the process. At that point, the gluten is fairly well-formed. It's there. It's strong.

EE: In these balls? Huge balls, I gather. You were visualizing it originally as a small one on the table, but these were huge I--.

LL: Yeah, it's huge. So, then it would go into the next stage where you would sort of separate most of the gluten from the starches.

EE: You were mentioning that process.

LL: So, then the gluten would get rinsed and coddled until it was very strong. This stuff was like elastic practically, the quality of it.

EE: That's in the grain seed, the wheat seeds in the flour. The stuff of that.

LL: Yeah, and then it would get dried in a specific kind of dryer that wouldn't destroy the quality of it. Because if it was overheated, then it would lose its quality, and our customers were buying it for the quality of it. You could pour some gluten into a cup, add some water, just take a swizzle stick and *chh, chh, chh, chh*, and you would have a ball. It was amazing.

EE: What was the source of the heat in this part of the process?

LL: Gas furnaces. Gas furnace.

EE: Natural gas?

LL: Yes.

EE: So, that would have been when natural gas came through in the late '50s, that would have made possible an upgrade in the process then, I guess.

LL: I'm not sure how they did it before that, honestly. I don't know. I'm not sure what they used before that.

EE: This process had begun in '43, I guess, you were suggesting.

LL: Yes, yep.

EE: A question, Owen?

OM: You got the gluten in a big ball, you wash it. Your dough, you wash it off and you get your gluten, which you say is elastic, what's the next step? You dry it out, and what form--? Does it come out as a brick or--?

LL: Well, it gets dried, and it gets ground, sifted, and that's to--.

OM: Final product looks like--?

LL: Like a very like this colour, that colour, powder. A very fine powder.

EE: Somewhat yellowish, whiteish, but a yellow tinge.

LL: Yeah, tan. They call it tan, but that's very close to the colour right there.

EE: Grinding can only take place with something. When you said dried, so it's actually--.

LL: It was kind of crunchy. So, these chunks or whatever as it was drying, then it would get ground, sifted, and any of the tailings that would get re-ground. Then it would get packaged in whatever package was required. We never shipped out gluten in bulk. I don't think we did. It was in bags of various sizes.

EE: So, that's the gluten stream then.

**[0:34:58]**



LL: And then the starches. Well, then there was a process to separate the high molecular weight starch—the nice clean white starch, A starch—from the secondary starch, which was B starch. So, there was a process for doing that. Then once the A starch was separated, various things would happen to it. Some of it was sold as a liquid. We sold starch to Provincial Papers.

EE: For making fine paper.

LL: Then later we used to take that liquid starch and we would modify it. We would oxidize it, and we sold that to Provincial Papers and to Dryden.

EE: This would end up being coating on the paper?

LL: Yeah, sizing.

EE: Sizing, that's right.

LL: So, then the--. [Coughs] Excuse me. Then the starch would get dried in a couple of different--. The main dryer for the A starch was called a Proctor & Schwartz apron dryer. What would happen is this starch, which was about 40 percent solids--. I'm going to have to cough. [Coughing] If you can imagine this slurry of starch, and it always had to be stirred because the starch was so heavy it would just fall inside.

EE: So, it's in water solution then?

LL: Yeah. It would go onto a drum this time, not heated, but that had a fine fabric on it with vacuum. The liquid would get filtered out that way, then you would have these chunks of starch. Sometimes you'd dry the chunks just as they were, other times those chunks would get extruded. The starch that was extruded was typically for low dusting application like the laundry starch and the icing sugar starch, but the rest of the starch just went through that process and dried out. Then it would get ground. All the food starches were ground, so they were a very fine white powder just like cornstarch. It would look like cornstarch but much whiter.

EE: Sort of like icing sugar, which as you were saying has a fair amount of starch in it.

LL: Yes! That's what it would look like. Wouldn't feel quite the same.

EE: Because there's the sugar as well.

LL: The drier the starch was it was almost like water. If you spilt it, it would just be all over the place. And--.

**End of part one.**

### Audio Part Two

Time, Speaker, Narrative

EE: Lean over and shout at it?

OM: We'll be alright.

EE: Now we are recording, are we? [Laughs] I've become anxious. Right! We were talking about gluten. Well, starch, and then a discussion about gluten began during the power outage. You were talking about different grades of gluten.

LL: Yes, there was a 75 percent and an 80 percent, which is standard in the industry. The 80 percent gluten, just the plain 80 percent gluten, was used in baking applications, but it was also used in Kellogg's cereal. What is that cereal? The one that they want dieting women to eat.

OM: Special K?

LL: That's it! [Laughs] That went to London.

EE: That's got added gluten?

LL: Yes. That went to London, Ontario, but that plant closed too. [Laughs]

EE: Yes. One wonders--. Let me hold that question for a little bit. You were saying something as well in the break about Shaw Bakeries?

LL: Yes, Shaw Bakeries used to purchase gluten for their baking process as well. I'm not sure which products they used it in, but most large bakeries would use it. Certainly, our biggest customers were the big industrial bakers in the States.

EE: You mentioned the sort of industrial process, added industrial in which a chemical was added to some of the gluten to make it--.

LL: Well, no, but that was still a food product. That made the gluten--. Whatever wonderful qualities gluten had, this magnified them, and that--.

EE: You think it was ascorbic acid was being added.

LL: Yes, and Ogilvie held a patent on that.

EE: There's a certain amount of R&D research work being done by Ogilvie in Montreal or--?

LL: Oh, lots of it. Lots of it. At one point, there was a lot of it for the flour. The flour side had their baking applications and the food applications, and then there was a whole industrial side. ADM ended up shutting that down too.

EE: Before we pursue this matter of the change in ownership and control and all of its ramifications, let me ask you about the workforce. How many people worked in the mill in the various areas of it, based perhaps on your experience in the later mid '90s when you rose to the top for a time?

LL: The workforce was steadily being cutback, just like every other industry, and each production shift had one operator per process stream.

EE: And you ran around the clock?

LL: Ran around the clock.

EE: A process industry.

LL: 24/7. We used to shut down once a month or so to clean, and we'd shut down for a couple days at Christmas. Otherwise, it just went all the time. It had to because it was too much work to clean and too much waste. There was a lot of waste.

EE: So, you were saying there was one operator on each of the processes.

LL: Right. Then, during the day, the warehouse operation was in place, and the packaging operation took place on two shifts. So, you had fellows working in the plant, and at one point Ogilvie was one of those places where young men went to work after they finished high school. Lots of people used to work there at some point, so.

EE: I wonder if the Board of Education has ever given thought to the fact that the high school graduates weren't able to find work any longer. Do their guidance departments focus the fact that one needs more now with the Industrial Grain Products gone and also many other plants? The elevators.

LL: All the other sort of processing plants, places where you actually make something, as opposed to providing some sort of a service, those things--.

**[0:05:11]**

EE: What would the workforce have been, let's say, around 1990 to take it a little earlier?

LL: I'm just trying to think now. When the plant closed, I think there were 75 or 76, but we had some people who were on disability and whatnot. I think there were 66 or 67 active people in the plant and in the office.

EE: That was the least you could have to operate by that time?

LL: Pretty much.

EE: I suppose the reductions had taken place.

LL: Yeah, pretty much. Right. Pretty much.

EE: How much of the changes taken place there and at other plants was the result of the Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA? Did you sense the impact of continentalization of our economy?

LL: I can't say that I did because there were so few wheatstarch and gluten plants that I don't think it was one of those things. I think the biggest thing for us was the Crow's Nest Pass.

EE: The loss of the subsidy for the movement of grain?

LL: Of the preferential rate, yeah.

EE: Right. The increase in cost of the wheat movement.

LL: Yeah, I think that was it. Mind you, as ADM was closing this plant, about two or three weeks after it was announced that Brian Mulroney was going to be on the board at ADM! [Laughs] It was a sweet moment for us all.

EE: There was a time when Canada depended on foreign investment. I think that's still a residual thing out there in the Canadian public. Americans brought their money, their technology and so on, and because of the tariffs that existed, Canadian industrialization was to some extent derivative from the American. Now, there were certainly exceptions to that, although I wouldn't want to have to come up with many examples immediately, but once--. And the *Economist* talked in the '70s and '80s—I was reading economics to some extent as well as my basic history—and they talk about the miniature replica effect, which is to say that in Canada we had branch plants that merely mimicked American plants designed to provide for the Canadian market. And once--.

LL: That wasn't the case with ours because we weren't American to start out with.

EE: No, because you were established by Ogilvie.

LL: Yeah, there were two Canadian plants. The Canadian plants, Canadian Ogilvie, ended up buying an American plant.

EE: When did they do that? Do you remember, roughly?

LL: You know, I would say that that might have been in the mid '80s, the plant in Iowa. It was a Henkel plant, I think. Then Labatt's. When did Labatt's--? Labatt's bought Ogilvie in 1968.

EE: That early? Why did they buy, Labatt's? What did they get from Ogilvie?

LL: I don't know, but what they did get was a lot of cash. When they needed cash after the American peso tanked is when they sold their "jewel in the crown," the papers called it, which was Ogilvie. Cash. It was about cash. So, I think that had that not happened--. Because Labatt's was expanding into Mexico, and then the peso tanked, and they needed cash to pay for all their acquisitions down there, and they sold it. That's when big companies like ADM can swoop in. ADM wanted the flour mills. No interest in the gluten. Because before that point, we even used to make gluten that was packaged for ADM.

EE: So, they knew the plant and the product? [Laughs]

LL: They knew the product. It was one of the products that they sell. They still have the two starch and gluten plants, as far as I was able to determine because it's hard to get a lot of information about ADM. So, they still have that part of this, but it's tiny compared to the other stuff.

EE: And that's a real difficulty in these companies as they become bigger and bigger, the specialized operations don't get a lot of attention.

LL: Yeah, you probably don't make it through a day without eating something that's been touched or owned by ADM, or one of the big agri-processors.

EE: And yet, it's a family-owned more or less--. No?

LL: No. Cargill is family-owned.

**[0:10:02]**

EE: Okay. Because how many sisters--. I would say in the oil industry one gets to talk about seven sisters, but there are a limited number of companies in the US that dominate the grain trade.

LL: Oh, sure, sure. But, no, ADM is very much a public company and they're so big. Certainly, there's a bit of a family flavour to it, but I don't think it was ever a family company. But I'm not sure. Because they're so big, they can attract people like Brian Mulroney. The people that are on their board, it's a who's-who really.

EE: I wonder how much practical advice they get--. Well, better not. [Laughing] Not being there, one shouldn't ask questions about it. How large was the office?

LL: Oh, the office is still there! Now, I tried to find some more out about the office because the office was part of the original Ogilvie flourmill. The front of it, I mean, it doesn't face the tracks. If you're driving Syndicate Avenue, you look, you can see the building, and that's the back of the building. But the front of it was almost like a storefront, and--.

EE: It faces the river?

LL: Yeah. At one point, the mill manager lived there, I think. There were gardens, there was a gardener, all that stuff. I never saw that, but I heard about it. That's a very old building.

EE: A heritage building if we chose to--.

LL: Well, I mean. But it's old. The basement, we call it the catacombs, so. The office was not so much--. It was created out of what was there before because the mill manager lived upstairs. So, the upstairs had a kitchen. Kitchen, bathroom with a bathtub.

EE: Quite well appointed. Would a manager be happy to live there?

LL: I think so! I think so. It was very nice. I had a wonderful office. The plant manager's office was fantastic. I used to call it the Oval Office. Had a fireplace at one end—mind you it wasn't working anymore—but it was spectacular. I think that was the living room or the parlour or whatever they called it. So, all the commercial stuff would then happen downstairs. By the time the plant closed, the microbiology lab had been moved over to the office building. There used to be a little bit of research and tinkering that got done there by some of the technical salespeople. There were four office staff—myself, there was sort of an office manager logistics guy, and then two other gals.

EE: Secretaries and administrative assistants and whatever?

LL: Yeah, administrative, and then there was an inventory clerk. So, it wasn't--.

EE: And all of that had been computerized by the '90s, so it probably didn't require as many people as it had in earlier time. Or not?

LL: Well, the systems for tracking the inventory were computerized, but you still had to, you know, pick. Well, the computer picked what was going to go out the door—first in, first out. Well, I guess there was one less person required because you still had all your accounts payable. We never did receivables, just payables. Then once ADM came on the scene, we didn't even do payables. Just get them ready and send them off.

EE: Because the money flowed to Montreal, so that's why the receivables went to the Montreal office.

LL: Yeah. ADM was pretty good about controlling their money. They controlled the money out of Iowa.

EE: That makes sense.

LL: Yeah, it does. They had lots of it, and they knew how to manage it.

EE: Every time I receive a service and I'm not billed for a month or more, I say to myself, "Someone's got more working capital than I thought they had!" [Laughs]

LL: Well, ADM has an incredible amount of working capital. Incredible.

EE: But they still keep the money flowing in as quickly as they can.

LL: I'm not sure how it is now, but back then it was a very flat management system. I reported to a VP.

EE: Not much in the way of middle management?

LL: No, no. There was a plant manager and then you're talking pretty much to a VP.

**[0:15:01]**

EE: That was through to '97.

LL: So that if you wanted money or needed money--. There was no budgeting. Spend as little as you have to and less than last month. Someone down there would be looking at it, and they had so many operations that they'd be looking at their ratios and saying, "Hey. Something's wrong here." Whatever. There were a lot of questions. They certainly knew their business. They knew their businesses.

OM: Did they come up here?

LL: Sure. Yeah. Mind you, there was a Canadian VP, and a lot of that--. They didn't believe in travelling for travel's sake either. The people that travelled were the VPs, and they had their little air jet and off they went. But there was more travelling when it was Ogilvie. The two operations were so completely different.



EE: Much leaner in the case of ADM.

LL: Yes, much leaner.

EE: The lab in which you worked, how large was that? And what kind of skills were to be found in it? The people with degrees were primarily in the lab, I guess, were they?

LL: Yes, and that's something that pretty much happened when I started working there. It was someplace that people would work for a little bit because we didn't get paid very well. So, guys would stay there for a little bit until they moved onto something else. There weren't very many people who actually, many men, who made their career there. Then once they were able to get people with degrees and more education--.

EE: Were you the first one?

LL: Besides the lab manager, yeah.

EE: And, you were saying, once they were able to, they had to pay more.

LL: Well, they didn't for a long time, but we did have a plant manager who was very sympathetic to our skills versus our compensation. [Laughs] So, that--.

EE: He knew the bargain he was getting, but he was a little uneasy about that I suppose.

LL: Well, he was a really good guy and figured we should get paid more. So, he--.

EE: Who was this fine person?

LL: Norm Holman.

EE: Norm Holman, right.

LL: We had a good bunch there and all of them had degrees because you could. There were all kinds of people walking around with those science degrees that they couldn't find other work with in Thunder Bay.

EE: This was an area in which there was not much competition for Ogilvie, Industrial Grain.

LL: No, and it was really hard to find a job. You know, back then, even the Ministry of the Environment had a beautiful lab, so that was someplace where people could go to work. That's gone too, right? It became really tough for anybody technical. If you were technical and it wasn't the hospital, where were you going to work? [Laughs]

EE: How many people did work there at any one time? How many people were required to keep the place operating properly?

LL: Well, when I started there were over 100.

EE: In the lab?

LL: No, no.

EE: Oh! This is the whole plant?

LL: Oh, in the lab when I started, there were four, what we call, process technicians because we were working around the clock. Then a couple--.

EE: One for each shift and one other person? Two during the day, one--.

LL: Well, it takes four people, four shifts, to cover a 24-hour operation. At four shifts, like four different people. Just the mathematics of it. So, there were four people that did that and usually you had a shift and whatever. Then there were a couple of other technicians there. So, that's four, plus a couple other that's six. There's a microbiologist, seven. A manager, eight, and one other guy. Eight or nine.

EE: Almost a tenth of the 100 you were stating as a--.

LL: Yeah. Then over the years there was no night shift. We quit the night shift because we found--.

EE: In the lab?

LL: Mmhmm because there was an instrument that would measure protein.

EE: Was this an addition to the process that displaced a person then? Or had the instrumentation been there earlier already?

LL: No, this was a new instrument that was purchased in the lab to test finished product. The operators used it to monitor their process. The lab, we would still do proteins from scratch with wet chemistry to check the calibration of the instruments.

**[0:20:23]**

EE: First thing in the morning, I suppose.

LL: After that was done, then the operators could go ahead and use the instrument through the night. So, that eliminated one shift. [Phone rings] **[Audio pauses]** Okay, we were talking about--.

EE: Yes, what were we talking about?

LL: We were talking about the number of people in the lab.

EE: And the process and the no need for a night shift and so on.

LL: The grain elevators and the Grain Commission were using this same instrument. Mind you, their needs were a little bit different than ours, but basically the same thing. You measured protein. Because that's the big thing with the grain—moisture and protein—so this instrument would measure moisture and protein.

EE: Was the employee group or the workforce one for bargaining purposes? I'm thinking now about unionization. Was it already unionized when you--?

LL Oh, yes. There were two unions there.

EE: One in the office, I suppose.

LL: No, no. There was the TCU and whatever it was called before.

EE: Lodge 650? The grain handlers?

LL: It wasn't that. It was its own lodge number. The Brotherhood of Railway Workers, whatever.

EE: Clerks, et cetera, et cetera. BRAC.

LL: And then that became TCU, right?

EE: Yes. Transportation Communications Union.

LL: So, that was the union that represented the production workers. Then we had a boiler and we had pipe fitters, and they were all with the IUOE.

EE: International Union of Operating Engineers?

LL: Of operating engineers, yeah. So, there were the two unions.

EE: So, you saw Frank Mazur as well, I guess, did you then?

LL: You know, I never met Frank Mazur, but I knew Herbie quite well. Herbie Daniher.

EE: So, was Herbie the one leading you, advising you, or whatever rather than Frank? Frank was definitely in charge of Lodge 650 through the early '80s.

LL: Well, the thing is I didn't get involved with any of the negotiating until sort of later.

EE: When you were on the other side of the table? [Laughs] By that time or earlier?

LL: The lab wasn't unionized.

EE: Was not?

LL: No! Hence, they didn't pay us. They didn't have to! [Laughs]

EE: And BRAC never thought of organizing in the lab?

LL: You know, I'm not sure why they didn't bring us.

EE: I wondered if the union was plant wide.

LL: But if you listen to the--. What's that word? Not a rumour.

EE: Urban legend?

LL: Yes. [Laughing] The company found ways to rid themselves of people who were interested in getting unionized.

EE: Except that they had to accept one for the bulk of the workers.

LL: Oh, that was one thing, but unionizing the lab was quite another.

EE: So, anyone who made a move in that direction, you sensed would be let go?

LL: Yes. I didn't ever witness that myself, but I heard about it.

EE: And you never tested it?

LL: No. [Laughing] Especially once they start paying us a bit more, so it was just a non-issue for me. But I think, for some reason, the company felt strongly about these seven or eight or nine people that were working in the lab. [Laughs] I don't know why it was such a sensitive thing.

EE: Would they have been concerned that because you had professional qualifications, university degrees, that if you were to unionize you could--. Except that there were, as you were saying, there wasn't much competition for jobs in the city.

LL: No. it really became a non-issue once I started working there. Like nobody ever talked about it. Just didn't. You would hear about what happened before—quotation marks—but other than that it was more or less a non-issue.

[0:25:07]

EE: Was there a strike at any time or a lockout during that time?

LL: There was no lockout, but there was a strike. It was really a very peculiar thing because every--. I'm not going to say it was a big happy family, but people worked closely together.

EE: Up to the manager for whom you have respect.

LL: Yeah, yeah, everybody. So, they--.

EE: So, what went awry?

LL: The union decided, whatever happened--. Because I wasn't--. I don't know why.

EE: Because you weren't in the local.

LL: And I don't think at that point I was on the negotiating committee either, so I don't know, but I think it probably had a lot to do with pensions. They decided to go on strike, and it was very strange. I think they were on strike for a little over a week, and we came to work every day and got stopped at the railway tracks. We were asked to come every day, and we weren't expected to try to cross the picket line.

EE: The manager noted that you had been there and then you went home?

LL: Yeah, and I think he said, "Don't bother coming until it's over." We were--.

EE: Did they operate during the strike?

LL: No.

EE: No, it was shut down.

LL: Oh, no, you can't. Couldn't possibly.

EE: A few people couldn't staff that kind of operation around the clock.

LL: No! It's 24/7. No, there's no way. So, that was the only time they went on strike. They got close to a strike position just before ADM bought Ogilvie because at that point the guys were really adamant about their pension and their severance packages.

EE: And it's in the mid '80s that Frank Mazur moves to the presidency of TCU as the director of the Canadian-- I'm not certain what the title was. Herb Daniher was taking over, so that's when you would have been seeing Herb.

LL: Yeah, and it was very, very tense because the union was not backing down on the severance part of things and on the pension stuff. We had mediation, and the mediator was tearing his hair out too because the—and at this point it was Ogilvie—the fellow who was negotiating for Ogilvie, you know, I'm not sure, I don't know, but he was very concerned that as good a bargain as possible had to be attained without giving away the wrench because I guess everybody wanted to be in a good position when ADM took over. So, the mediator, he was sweating, literally. He says, "I can't believe that you're willing to go on strike for a severance package." He said that to the company. I don't know what he said to the--.

EE: Because you heard the company's--.

LL: Mmhm because I was on the company's side. At that point, I was the company, plus the guy from--. It was me and the fellow from Montreal. The mediator could not believe. He says, "I can't believe this. You're willing to put these guys out on strike?" So, finally Ogilvie sort of gave in. You know, it was a good thing too because the guys got just that little bit more when the plant closed. Because everybody could see that it was going to happen at some point.

EE: The mediator was basically saying, "Why is Ogilvie making difficulties when it's going to be someone else who will shut the place down and who will have to pay the severance?"

LL: Pretty much, yeah. Yeah.

EE: Of course, they were concerned, as you say, to have Ogilvie be in the most favourable position as possible.

LL: Anybody who was involved in signing on the dotted line was going to be someone who wanted to be in good favour with ADM. I mean, I think at this point, that whole closure thing had been hanging over the plant in one for or other for such a long time.

EE: When do you think ADM did then close it down? I don't know that you said that precisely earlier.

LL: When they closed it?

EE: Yes. Why would you think, say, they did it?

LL: Why?

EE: What was the final reason?

LL: Money! [Laughs] Money.

EE: There just wasn't enough money to be made here?

LL: No, there wasn't. It was a losing operation for all those reasons.

EE: Been run into the ground, you were saying. [Laughs]

**[0:30:01]**

LL: Yeah, well, the new process had come in, but it was too little too late. The effluent, the yields, the cost of transportation, just a whole bunch of things plus the scale. It was a small plant compared to the plant in Montreal. The plant in Montreal was closer to its markets. Just all those reasons. The same ones. [Laughs]

EE: Did you talk to people from Montreal much? In these years you were on the other side, the management side, of the table, you were saying, with someone from Montreal.

LL: Well, I talked to--.

EE: How did they regard the plant?

LL: Well, nobody wanted to see it close. You know, you developed good professional relationships, and some of these people became friends depending on how long you'd been working there—especially the R&D group because they'd come up here and do



their technical stuff, usually with Dryden and Provincial. So, you've had a good relationship, and then there was the relationship among all the Ogilvie plants period, with the flour mills and the starch plants, so that there was that sort of camaraderie and sort of togetherness. But then--.

EE: You mentioned Labatt's ownership, of course. Do you get a sense of change? Were you close enough to the action to get a sense of the impact that Labatt's ownership of it might have meant?

LL: Well, it was nice being part of Labatt's. [Laughs] You get a case of Blue every July!

EE: July 1, I trust.

LL: Yeah!

EE: Every employee got a case of Labatt's?

LL: Well, you know they would do different things depending on the year. At some point, Labatt's was expanding into lots of different food industries. When they bought a mushroom plant, everybody got a little container of mushrooms. It was nice with Labatt's. Labatt's wouldn't have sold Ogilvie if they didn't need the cash.

EE: So, it was actually sort of international finance, or the, as you said, the collapse of the peso in Mexico that forced them to look for cash wherever they could find it.

LL: That's the way I understood it. I mean, I wasn't part of that, but that's what I'd read in the financial papers and stuff, you know, that they sold the jewel in the crown. [Laughing]

EE: But then there was an attempt to open it again. We need to look at that because you were involved—you were in charge—at that point.

LL: Well, I was in charge of it for a little while. The plant closed in 1996, and then, I guess, there was an outfit in the States called Southern Ventures who had formed this little company called Riverside Grain Products. They wanted to resurrect this operation. Their new attempt was going to focus on reducing the waste stream because close to 15 percent of what went in as expensive flour went out as waste.

EE: If you could turn that into money, that would be worth a lot!

LL: And you know, that was another challenge the plant was facing towards the end was that our emissions of phosphorus were way too high. The city couldn't handle--. Because at that point we were discharging to the city because we could no longer discharge to the river. The city couldn't handle the phosphorous because they in turn had limits on the amount of phosphorous they could--.

OM: Where was the phosphorous coming from in the process?

LL: Oh, it's part of the flour. It's a nutrient. So, it was just there.

EE: What were the possibilities? What can you turn phosphorous into?

LL: Well, it was just there. The Southern Ventures and Riverside Grain, they were going to use the starch to put into briquettes because that's where the secondary starch went. It wasn't worth very much, but a lot of that starch went into making briquettes because it kind of holds the briquette together.

EE: This is the charcoal fuel?

LL: Yeah!

EE: And it burns, I suppose, well enough, does it?

LL: Yeah. So, that was what they were going to do. So, when they were getting ready to actually finalize the purchase of the plant from ADM, they were looking for a manager. They phoned me because one of the guys that was working for them used to also work at Ogilvie because that wheatstarch world is pretty small. So, I had gone back to school. I was taking some accounting courses and that kind of stuff, but I went and continued with that on a part-time basis, and I said I would work for them. So, they needed someone who really understood what was in there.

**[0:35:32]**

EE: Which you certainly did.

LL: So, I did a lot of that work for them—told them what they would need and this sort of stuff—and they were supposed to work on the actual process part of it because I’m not an engineer. I wish I were, but I’m not.

EE: They had that expertise, did they?

LL: Apparently. I say apparently because they really didn’t. So, I got them what I thought would be organized. I re-established their relationships with the Ministry of the Environment, the city, all that stuff, whatever it was--.

EE: The red tape businesspeople like to curse.

LL: Yeah, and ADM wanted us to succeed.

EE: Did they really?

LL: Oh, they did because they--. Well, the day they closed—the first closure notice—the mayor at that time, David Hamilton, phoned Andreas, that was the CEO, and like, “What can we do to keep this place open?” All that that any mayor would do of any town that’s losing a major employer like that. So, they wanted this plant to succeed. We were going to be buying our flour from them, so they were very cooperative. Very cooperative with providing information, historical information, all that stuff. Where was I?

EE: Were the files still up here in the--? Where had that gone?

LL: Well, a lot of it was just destroyed, and a lot of it just went on pallets and went to Kansas, where ADM milling has their head offices. I think it went to Russel, Kansas. They’ve got these huge warehouses down there where they keep stuff like that. So, all the drawings, all that stuff, went down there and then it came back.

EE: It was sent back for this reopening?

LL: Yeah. The Southern Ventures and Riverside Grain Products got the expertise of some starch chemists that used to work for Ogilvie, and tried to introduce another modification process for the starch that I think Jean Killens would know a lot more about than I would. Because before the plant actually opened, I went and took another position at the resin plant. So, I wasn’t involved in the actual reopening of the plant, but they were far enough along that they could carry on. Plus, so many people went back to work there that they had their expertise for the process.

EE: Experienced workforce again.

LL: Yes, they did. They did.

EE: So, how long did they--? You were involved for a year?

LL: I was involved for probably, oh, a little over a year to sort of get them going and to actually be part of the purchase.

EE: And then what happened?

LL: Then Riverside failed. It failed.

EE: How long after you left?

LL: Well, you know, I'm not sure how long they were actually operating. I think that they might have been operating for a little over a year.

EE: It wasn't your departure that ended up dooming the operation?

LL: No, no, no, no. I think that, well--.

EE: They'd been putting money into it for a while and at some point, they need to be--.

LL: Well, there's things that probably we don't want to talk about, but I could see the writing on the wall.

EE: Management office failings then? They just didn't know the business?

LL: Just a lack of expertise and money.

**[0:40:01]**

EE: Yeah, working capital. Pockets not deep enough.

LL: For sure! Because in the end, I don't know all the ins and outs of how they failed, but certainly money was a big part of it. They couldn't pay their bills and the processes didn't pan out the way they thought.

EE: Expectations.

LL: I think if you wanted to get a sense of that you should talk to Jean because she--.

EE: Well, we did interview Jean, and I couldn't remember any of the detail from that interview, but you of course recommended it. We called you and it took me a while to get around to doing that. I'm glad I did.

LL: She was intimately acquainted with how things were at the plant when it started up and the things that they had real problems with.

EE: She was there until the end, wasn't she?

LL: Yeah, yeah. She's a great and capable gal.

EE: My sense is she said the same things about you! [Laughing] Owen?

OM: Did they go into receivership? Who owns the property now?

LL: I think the province owns it, however that works. I read it someplace. They didn't pay their employees. They had creditors in town and elsewhere. I think whoever ends up taking it over did, so now it's just a public burden, I think.

EE: In some ways it sounds similar to the attempt to start Shaw Bakery again the second time because they ended up failing as well with the creditors out there.

LL: You know, you just need a pile of money. I had written the grant applications with HRDC it was at that point because of the hiring that we were going to be--.

EE: Human Resources Development Canada, yes.

LL: Yeah. The hiring that we were going to be doing, and the number of people that were going to be employed, and all the rest of it. So, it was a good project, but I think that the substance behind all the ideas just wasn't there. That's about as fair a thing as I can say. [Laughing]

EE: The fairest thing you could say, right. Well, as I suggested earlier, one of these questions—or maybe it's been more than one—allows us to sort of scan and explore the various stages of work that you've carried out and so on. Then there are a number of questions that are designed to produce nuggets of insight, I suppose, or memories.

LL: Oh, okay!

EE: Such as what would you like the people to know about the work you did in the places that you worked? Well, in this case it's primarily in this plant. We won't get into the resin plant that you were in for a time. What would people find interesting about what this plant did, over and above all the interesting things you've already told us?

LL: Well, I think that just having something that complex, something beyond raw processing, and having that happen in Thunder Bay, having had the gluten happen in Thunder Bay first in Canada, that was a big deal. It was a big deal! It was a great place to work. I loved it. I think most people that you'll talk to liked working there too. It's one of those things where it was at a time and place where it was the good old days, right? I guess that's what I recall, that we produced something of value.

EE: The good old days in what sense? As against what's happened since?

LL: I guess we weren't as aware of how the rest of the world can intrude on your life and change things. [Laughs] When Ogilvie closed, I think there were only maybe a couple of other outfits in town that had closed, and now it's--.

EE: The good old days of an industrial Lakehead.

LL: Yes, yes. That's what I'm talking about, yeah. Life was good. Life was good. I was hoping to retire there because so many people did retire there. That idea of having one employer, and you work with people, and you get to know them and know their families, that was important.

EE: Let's keep the change theme for the later questions, I won't press it now. What might interest or surprise people most about the work that you did? You may have already suggested that in a sense, the sheer fact of what was--.

[0:45:21]

LL: I think that it happened in Thunder Bay and most people didn't know. Unless you lived in Fort William, people just didn't--.

EE: You were hardly even aware that there was something of that sort going on in there.

LL: That it was there and that that sort of stuff was going on there.

EE: And that one of the products was feeding shrimp for you to enjoy in Thailand or--.

LL: Exactly, yeah. Or the gypsum wallboard that you bought had starch that was produced in Thunder Bay in it.

EE: Back in the '60s when I was truck driving for Redekop Lumber in the early '60s, a good deal of GLA—gypsum lime alabastine—wallboard was on the back of the truck I would drive. I guess it may have been sizing from here, then, the starch that was part of the process of making those sheets.

LL: One of the products I didn't talk about, it's sort of a meat extender, binder. It's a mixture of gluten and flour, and that stuff is sort of still used in some sausages and things. For me, it was a big awakening as far as the food industry goes. It's what's involved in food.

EE: Right. The industrialization of our diet. There are whole books on that subject by now!

LL: We were producing basically natural ingredients. We had kosher certification for our food products.

EE: What kind of certification?

LL: Kosher.

EE: Oh, kosher! I see.

OM: Could you have gone organic?

LL: Well, unless we used organic wheat.

OM: Yes. It's a niche.

LL: Yeah. No, it wasn't organic, and it wouldn't have been, I don't think.

EE: You were just buying first-class Prairie wheat, so. What could be higher than that? [Laughs]

OM: Organic! [Laughing]

EE: No fertilizers or sprays? [Laughs] Oh, the spraying I did as a kid on the farm. What are you most proud of in the work that you did at IGP?

LL: Well, personally it was the relationships, the integrity. Because we were making food and some of it was destined for--. Some of our products, also, we tested for USP, for pharmaceuticals. So, I was proud of that. Everybody that worked there could and did take pride in what we made.

EE: Do you think that the work you did contributed to Canada's success as an international grain trader? [Laughs] Probably not all-- . Well, in terms of the product and it's global--.

LL: Well, we still have a gluten plant in Canada, and the reason the gluten is as good as it is is because of the flour. [Laughs]

EE: The quality of the grain that was being milled.

LL: You can't have one without the other. We certainly knew whenever they made a budget purchase of flour. It showed in the process. You could tell that dough wasn't the same. It was more waste, it was sloppy, yeah.

EE: And that did happen? They didn't always get number 1 Northern or whatever the best grade? The flour is based on that kind of grade.

LL: Sometimes they would slip in and try to use these lower-grade flours at a reduced rate, and you could tell. The operators could tell, certainly. There'd be differences.

OM: The big balls wouldn't be very good?



LL: Well sometimes--. Well, the gluten wasn't as good. It was sloppier.

EE: More expensive to produce, I guess, at the end of the day, would it be actually?

LL: Well, no. Those were financial decisions, so they decided at a certain percentage if they got a deal. Because that stuff wasn't always available either, or they would try a different kind of wheat. Glenlea wheat, have you heard of Glenlea wheat?

EE: Was it a different--?

LL: It's an off-board wheat. It was. I guess there's no Wheat Board anymore, but it was off-board.

EE: Right. I have heard of it.

LL: It didn't process as well but used it a little bit at a time then you could--. Our measurements weren't sophisticated enough to really figure out how much we'd wasted and thrown down the drain.

**[0:50:23]**

EE: Well, there are obviously connections between your work and the work of farmers growing the grain handled in the grain trade. [Laughing]

LL: Yes!

EE: I don't know whether to specify those further. Actually, well, would you want to add anything to what you were just saying, actually, about Glenlea wheat—a lower quality of wheat as it seemed—as against the others, which were coming through the Canadian Wheat Board from the farmers?

LL: The best wheats made the best flour made the best gluten. I think that's how it worked. [Laughs]

EE: I can well imagine. That's why I'm wondering what seems a bargain when you're purchasing it as an ingredient, does it end up being a good seller at the end? You make money to match what you think you've saved.

LL: As I said, I don't think we were sophisticated enough in our measurements, our ability to measure how much we actually wasted. Because a huge part of the operation, actually, was the treatment of the effluent. At one point, all the effluent just went into the Kam River. Then the Ministry issued a control order. I guess that was in the late '70s, then I think in 1979--.

EE: Soon after you started then?

LL: Yeah. There was an anaerobic waste digestion facility built there. That worked really well for a while, but then the province no longer wanted industry discharging directly into waterways. They wanted to go through municipal treatment.

EE: Processing plants or treatment plants.

LL: The city was very cooperative with that, except that they could not handle the phosphorous because that impinged on them because, I mean, our phosphorous was high. So, that ended up being a real big problem in the end too.

EE: And phosphorous releases are infamous, aren't they? The dyeing of Lake Erie because of the combination of presumably detergents, farmer run-off, and so on and so forth.

LL: Well, it's such a nutrient.

EE: Yes, it is such a nutrient.

LL: It's such a nutrient that you have all kinds of other stuff going on. There was one particular parameter, the BOD5—the Biological Oxygen Demand—that was a huge thing for us.

EE: It would be. It would be. Was there any possibility of its being turned into fertilizer?

LL: Well, I think that that was looked at when--. That was looked at. I can't remember. It was tried somehow. It wasn't successful and not pursued.

EE: Because you wouldn't have just phosphorous in the fertilizer, so that may have been the problem. Getting the others, the nitrogen--.

LL: Yeah, and when ADM was looking at the feasibility of having an ethanol plant attached to the wheatstarch and gluten, I think there was a feed and fertilizer aspect of it. But, you know, it never happened.

EE: Did the plant require subsidization? You mentioned the start up again and the HRDC monies for people, but in the earlier operation I don't suppose there was much in the way of government subsidies at all.

LL: No, I don't think so. I don't know, but I don't think so. In the time I was there, I don't remember. I think the biggest subsidy we got was when I was able to hire a summer student in the lab. [Laughing]

EE: You did mention, of course, the Western Grain Transportation Act, the loss of the subsidy to grain movement for everyone.

LL: Well, that big subsidy. Yeah, so that was a huge subsidy, I guess.

EE: And in the early '80s, the last Pierre Trudeau ministry was really concerned about the potential demands of the Crow's Nest Pass agreement. There's a whole book about the end of the Crow, or the work towards that, and so on.

LL: Oh, it was a huge deal at the time if I recall. But, you know, it makes sense. The grain, generally, a lot of it is going the other way, it should be cleaned on the Prairies. Why should it come here to get cleaned? There's all those things, sadly.

EE: And how much of the grain could be fed to animals on the Prairies, so it never had to be moved and so on and so forth. There are all kinds of debates to be carried on. Well, you saw all kinds of major changes on the job over the years, I'm sure. Would you want to think in terms of changes?

**[0:55:18]**

LL: Well, we had a major process change. Before I had come, of course, there had been process changes because they started in 1943 and obviously had done a few things by the time I got there. That was interesting. It was sort of a dynamic environment and it's nice to work in that. It was nice to see the money being invested in the plant. That was good. Then there were changes in just the way plants are managed, people are managed.

EE: And the people who are being managed.

LL: Organizational change, that sort of stuff. I was always interested in that.

EE: You mentioned your own role in non-traditional employees, women coming into the--.

LL: And then working to improve quality, reduce rejections, getting people to work together. The production workers, and the maintenance workers, and the lab for some of these quality issues—not just production issues, but quality issues. That was exciting. I've enjoyed organizational change through my career. It's interesting.

EE: Someone who enjoys that is a natural born manager, I suppose.

LL: [Laughs] Well, I like working with people, and actually working with people. It always appealed to me.

EE: As one of the pioneers of women in an industrial setting as an employee, how was that? Did you find it relatively easy?

LL: Well, there was a--. I didn't find it too difficult because when I started working there, I was married. So, that made it a whole lot easier for the guys because I was married. The other girl wasn't, so there was a little bit of those guy-girl things that--.

EE: Were there many single men in the plant?

LL: There were, but, you know, it just became a non-issue pretty quickly. People were afraid of what were you going to do. It's going to have this one girl in the lab with all those men in the plant all night. Well, you know what? Everybody's busy. They're working. [Laughing]

EE: Jolly well should be!

LL: They're working, and what my personal feeling on men and women working together is that it keeps everybody on their best behaviour.

EE: Improves the quality of the workplace? [Laughs]

LL: I think it does. I think it does. I appreciated the chance to do that. When I was looking for jobs in the first place—and this is in town here—I had people come right out and tell me I had the wrong plumbing, back in the days when they could do that. [Laughs] They might think it now, but back then they could actually tell you! [Laughs]

OM: You had plastic instead of copper? [Laughing]

EE: There was a move to encourage women to move into non-traditional employment. Was your hiring at IGP influenced by that? Because that was happening in the late '70s, wasn't it? Some of our grain inspectors were coming in thanks to a federal program.

LL: I think that at the time that I got hired, they needed someone. I had applied that day. The manager was a great guy. [Laughs] He, at the time, the lab manager--. I just got really lucky. I got lucky. I was there at the right time.

EE: Your skills were needed and there you were.

LL: Yeah, and I'd worked in a lab before because I'd worked at the Grain Commission.

EE: Experienced, sure. In the industry, but in the large.

LL: At least knew what a protein test was and knew what some of this stuff was.

EE: Would you want to expand on the good old days and what we were beginning to open up there? The fact that there was an industrial Lakehead in those years, through into the '90s. From the '90s onwards, there's been an incredible amount of deindustrialization, and not just in the actual making of things. When I think of the grain handlers, if there was 1800 of them—as Frank Mazur was telling me around 1984 when I was first elected--.

**[1:00:17]**

LL: Well, my dad worked for Sask Pool. The grain trade, in one way or another, everybody--. If your father wasn't working there then maybe your uncle was or somebody down the street. It was just part of life here. It was exciting. They're magnificent structures.

EE: Those elevators, oh yes, indeed.

LL: I remember when I was in high school, I was part of a student exchange to Quebec. When we came back here with our partners, one of the things that had been organized was a visit to a grain elevator. They took us to the top, and it's extraordinary the view from the top. You know, the Seaway and all the boats that used to be here and where they were from. My dad used to come home from work and say that he'd been talking to someone—we're Polish—he'd been talking to someone from Poland, and there was also

some Russian people there, you know, whatever. It was just exciting. I think that, I guess, the point of all of that is that when you've got that sort of thing going on, there's a lot of pride to be had from producing something of value.

EE: There is. There certainly is.

LL: You're making something tangible, and it is more valuable than when it started.

EE: That's right. You have added value to it.

LL: The skills and the trades and all that goes into that, it's a great experience and we don't have that. Like we've got the mill, we've got Bombardier.

EE: One paper mill.

LL: Yeah. We've got one paper mill. You know, people used to be able to have a life. You used to be able to raise a family, do all that stuff, if you were just a regular person. A regular person could do that.

EE: A high school grad, or even conceivably less.

LL: You could build your skills and move ahead. But the opportunities for doing that now are just--. They're different. I imagine they're still there. Actually, I got really excited the other day when I was looking at--. [Laughs] They had on TV, they were talking about the cyclotron, and they had the process there. There's a process! There's a process in Thunder Bay! How exciting is that, you know?

EE: Yeah, I heard a presentation about the cyclotron, and it is exciting to have these things happen. But that's a very small operation. I don't know how many people are employed.

LL: Yeah, I don't know, but they're making something of value. [Laughs]

EE: Yes, they are indeed! Isotopes that are life-preserving or life-assisting.

LL: And I think that if a country isn't producing things of value, besides services, then it's not a good sign for me. You know, to be able to feed yourself, provide your country with--. To do those things yourself as opposed to not, I think that--.

EE: Well, if you end up having to buy them from elsewhere and you don't have anything to sell, and your trade is going to go badly into imbalance, you can't do that very long.

LL: And then when someone else wants it and they're not going to give it to you--. I don't know.

EE: One wonders about the challenge. The next couple questions are about challenges rather than change, but I wonder to what extent it becomes a combination of management and financial challenges, mistakes made, or whatever. In the case of Labatt's, I suppose, for them to be expanding in a large way in Mexico, in a country where they might have checked with the international financial people to see whether this was a bright idea at that time. But to what extent is it a capitalist failure that has produced this end result in Thunder Bay?

LL: Well, I think that it's part of what--. I mean, I'm not quite sure what you call it, but I've read a little bit lately and heard a little bit lately about sort of the lack of innovation in Canada. We're just different. We're not Americans. They'll go out and they're going to make it happen. I think that if there were a bit more of that in Canada for--. It's a little bit of the risk taking and a little bit of just going out and doing those things rather than being as laidback as we sometimes are, I think, that some of these things would have--. We would be doing more. But I don't know if that's true or not.

**[1:05:33]**

EE: Owen? Oh, in that case. We better not talk about NorTel, BlackBerry, and Bombardier. [Laughing] I don't think we have time for that on the tape. Okay! Well, maybe I'll slide past the challenge questions, major challenges the industry faced. You, I think, already focused a number of those in terms of the grain movement and so on and so forth. What are your most vivid memories about the job? These are the ultimate nugget possibilities.

LL: The people. I think that's probably true of most jobs is you remember the people that you worked with. You know, some of our successes when things worked out. Professionally, I mean I started out green, and by the time I left I had done a lot of my professional and personal growing there. A big part of my life. I was there for 19 years.

EE: If I were to ask if you had to brag about something, what would be the ultimate bragging about those 19 years and what you achieved or what you became perhaps?

LL: Well, I was really glad to have an opportunity to--.

EE: You started as kind of a chemist and became much more than that.

LL: Yes, I was. Yes. I was really just glad to have the opportunity to do that. You know? I lucked out getting the job in the first place, had a manager you didn't care what kind of plumbing you had, [laughs] and so it was just great for me. I think I provided, in the lab, an environment that allowed people there to grow too. People came and they left, and when they left for something better everyone was happy for them. It was a great proving ground.

EE: On the job training in more ways than one. A lot of different ways.

LL: Exactly, yeah.

EE: You think it's a good idea for us to be interviewing you today and preserving the history of the grain trade?

LL: If you'd asked me 20 years ago, I might have had a different answer, but now I think it's really important to hear peoples' personal histories and how that fits into things. I find myself reading things now where it's really about people in the context of what's happening around them. Because this, I mean, it is history, right?

EE: Yes. Are you retired now completely?

LL: I am retired, but not completely. I finished my career as an accountant, if you can believe that.

EE: [Laughs] That is a long way from the chemistry class!

LL: And I can tell you that I did not miss my calling. I was good at it, and I got--.

EE: Which qualification did you achieve? CGA?

LL: Well, I was working on my CGA, and then decided that--. Well, my husband was already retired, and I was at that age. I thought, "You know, I can have this designation in a couple of years, but I'm not going to be any happier than I am right now." I had buried a few friends, and I thought, "No. I'm retired." So, I work a couple years during the personal tax season. I love it, but processing and that environment, that was my milieu.



EE: That's where you lived, eh?

LL: I didn't know it when I started, but I was very lucky that I had a chance to do that in Thunder Bay because I don't think people will have that chance now. And it's too bad.

EE: Outside, I guess, the healthcare system in these days.

LL: Yeah. If you're outside the healthcare system, if you can luck out into something at the paper mill or at Bombardier or whatever, but just generally for--. And that skill, that is leaving Thunder Bay. It's not in the collective consciousness. I have a friend at the economic development thing and that skillset, if you wanted people to work in a--.

**End of interview.**