

**Narrator:** Rod MacKay (RM)

**Company Affiliations:** Canadian Grain Commission (CGC), Western Grain By-Products

**Interview Date:** 05 August 2014

**Interviewer:** Nancy Perozzo (NP)

**Recorder:** Nancy Perozzo (NP)

**Transcriber:** Melanie Larson

**Summary:** Former grain inspector assistant for the Canadian Grain Commission Rod MacKay discusses his career across the Thunder Bay waterfront. He first discusses his grandfather and father's extensive connection to the grain industry through elevator construction, millwrighting, and ship transportation, as well as his early childhood memories of the dusty elevators. He describes his first elevator work on the clean-up gang at Grand Trunk Pacific before joining the CGC as an assistant grain inspector. He recounts the assistant's responsibilities for sampling, running tests, grading, writing reports and pass-on slips, and monitoring ship loading. He explains his large involvement in the ship loading operations and recalls stories of overseeing the grain blending of various elevators and what could go wrong. MacKay discusses some of his other roles throughout his career, like filling in for the inspector in charge at Churchill, working in the CGC Thunder Bay sample room, and inspecting farmer samples in Moosejaw. He describes the CGC's role in ensuring fairness and honesty in the system, as well as the individual inspector or weighman's duty to stay alert to elevator operations. He recalls major changes, like the introduction of protein segregation, computerization and automation, the removal on inward inspection and weighing, privatization of inspection, and increased CGC fees. MacKay then describes his move to Western Grain By-Products as an annex man after his early retirement. Other topics discussed include inspector exams, learning new grain varieties and inspection methods, working during elevator closures, playing on wartime grain storage remnants as a child, sampling boxcars with sampling probes, and workplace accidents.

**Keywords:** Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); Western Grain By-Products; Grain inspection; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Grain elevators—equipment and supplies; Grain grades; Grain sampling; Ship loading; Grain blending; Inward inspection; Outward inspection; Grain varieties; Visual inspection; Protein testing; Automation; Computerization; Privatization; Storage annexes; Wartime grain storage; Grain elevator closures; Grain transportation—ships; Grain transportation—rail; Workplace accidents; Grand Trunk Pacific Elevator; Paterson Elevator; Westland D; UGG Elevator A; SWP Pool 7A&B; Searle Elevator; Richardson Elevator; SWP Pool 4A&B; AWP Pool 9; SWP Pool 8; SWP Pool 6; MPE Pool 3; MPE Pool 1; SWP Pool 5; MPE Pool 2; Northwestern Elevator; Lakehead Elevator; Churchill; Moosejaw

Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: It's Nancy Perozzo on August 5, 2014, and this interview is taking place at 199 Academy Drive. I'll ask our interviewee or narrator for tonight to introduce himself and give us just a brief wrap-up of his connection to the grain industry.

RM: My name is Rod MacKay. My grandfather helped build the Grand Trunk Elevator. He was a head millwright at Paterson's. My father, after the war, was a head millwright at Paterson's and he quit there and went sailing. He was a head millwright at Westland when they closed it. He ran the pellet plant from '73 to '78. It was Pool 7. First time I worked in an elevator was 1965, as a kid for a summer job, and then in '66. And then I got on the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] in 1968 and I left there in 2003. Presently, I work at Western Grain. I've been there since the fall of 2005.

NP: Yes, I'd say you have a little bit of a connection to the grain trade, and I'm always really pleased to interview people who have such a family history. If it's okay with you—for what you can remember—I'd like to go right back to your grandfather. If it takes us longer than a couple of hours, which is all this tape has, then we'll do a second session if that's alright with you? Depending on how we go?

RM: Maybe, I might not understand.

NP: Yeah, and you may not remember as much as--. And I'm asking you to go back a fair bit. Now you said that your grandfather worked on the construction of the Grand Trunk--.

RM: Elevator, yeah.

NP: Do you know how your grandfather arrived here and why he came?

RM: My grandfather come from the north of Scotland to work on a schooner out of Halifax. When him and his friends got to Halifax, a schooner had sunk. So, the Salvation Army lent them the money to come here because there was work here. They worked in the bush, loading ties, and they burned themselves out. So, they came into town and started carrying cement bags there.

NP: So, a pretty tough life.

RM: Interesting story, I--. Anyway.

NP: Well, I love interesting stories and the listeners do too.

RM: Okay, the story goes--. Grandpa told me that the way they made the place was, they had a big tub that was lifted up with concrete. And the way they lifted it up was a steam locomotive drove away with a cable attached to this thing and pulled it up. Then you'd back up and lower down and like that. One day he ran over the cable and my grandfather—being a seaman—spliced the cable and then he never carried a cement bag again.

NP: Because in those days a lot of things were done by rope.

RM: Yeah, it was steel cable.

NP: Oh, was it steel cable?

RM: Well, that's the impression I had. Might've been ordinary rope, but he could splice it. So, he spliced it, and then he said he never had to carry a cement bag because the way they did it was, they had a line of men with cement bags dumping the cement bag into the mixer. And he just didn't have to do that anymore.

NP: Day in and day out. Did your grandfather come over with a family? Or did he come over as a--.

RM: Oh, he was a single guy. I can't remember what year they started on the Grand Trunk. So, I don't know when he came here.

NP: I was just looking at it today, and I was thinking it was somewhere between 1905 and 1910? Right in there?

RM: He might've come in around 1910. I'm not sure.

NP: Do you know why he left Scotland?

RM: Why he left Scotland? Oh, just it was a job. The way they worked in the old country was, they were farmers and fishermen. They would go on schooners between the islands into the North Sea and fish for herring on shares. And then they'd farm the rest of the time. But he was educated. Apparently, he had once been a schoolteacher and apparently he'd been on the Clyde. He'd done lots of things, lots and lots of things.

**[00:04:37]**

NP: So, he never intended to stay in Canada when he came over. it's just that the--.

RM: Well, they just intended to work on that schooner. Of all the gang that came, he's the only one who stayed.

NP: Do you think he ever regretted staying? Did you ever talk to him about--?

RM: He never let on he regretted. I think he missed the Gaelic, but he liked it here. And my grandmother, he married her after the first war. He didn't go in the first war. He had stomach trouble. Anyway, she hated the old country and had no intention of going back. So, he went back after she died.

NP: On your grandmother's side, were there elevator workers or--?

RM: No, she was the only one of her family who came here.

NP: Boy, that was adventuresome of her.

RM: Yeah. She didn't get along--. When they got married, they had to run away. So, the story goes, she was Free Church, and he was Church of Scotland. And they didn't like--.

NP: In those days it made a difference.

RM: Apparently. That's what my cousin tells me.

NP: Your grandfather—fortunately with his skills—he got out of the real bull work. What did he end up doing? Did he stay with Grand Trunk?

RM: No. Somewhere—I don't know when—he ended up working for N.M. Paterson and Sons. He was a millwright during the Depression and during the war. I don't know what year he retired. He was 65 when he left there, and he was born 1883. He left there, as a head millwright, and then he went to Grain Growers and they caught him there. He worked for Stan McKay on the cleaner deck at Grain Growers. Then they caught him there, so he went over to Westland. He was millwrighting there and he fell off a ladder when he was 70 and they caught him again.

NP: Now, what do you mean caught?

RM: The impression I had was once you were 65, you're supposed to get out. That's the impression I had. No one told me that, but that's what he told me. He said they caught him.

NP: From the cleaner deck at UGG—and because of age you assume he left there—and then he went where?

RM: Westland.

NP: Westland D. Still called that at the time?

RM: Yeah. I don't even know if it was Fort William Elevators or what it was when he worked there.

NP: Well, that's right because at 65 he retired from Paterson. Right. So, Saskatchewan Pool might've--? No, they had it still taken over.

RM: No. Westland was owned by its consortium. I think Paterson's, Federal--. I forget who. When I worked there in '68-69. No. I forget when I was there. '69 or '70, I was there. With the government, eh?

NP: And you said he fell?

RM: Fell off a ladder, the story goes. I don't know if he told me that or if somebody else did.

NP: We never know, do we? But we figure we don't make these up. [Laughing]

RM: No, I must've heard it somewhere.

NP: Now, did your grandfather like to tell stories about life in the early days?

RM: I can't remember. I heard lots of stories, so he must've talked. Apparently, he liked me the best because I was named after him. And I was the first. They were old when I was born. So, it appeared that was sort of the thing.

NP: Do you recall any of his work stories?

RM: Well, I think his proudest one was he designed a marine leg at Paterson's. The millwright in those days did this stuff. He designed and they built the marine leg for unloading American grain.

NP: Did he ever talk about the Senator Paterson? Was he still--?

RM: He just said that Senator—"He" he called him, so I assume it was Paterson, the old man—sent him out west once.

NP: Just for experience?

RM: To millwright in the country elevators for a little while. He mentioned that. He mentioned other stuff, but I can't--. It'll probably come back tomorrow when it doesn't matter.

NP: No, because you can always jot down these and we can get back together again, and you can--.

RM: Yeah. That was one of his proudest things. I remember they must have been all rope-drive because when my dad applied to be chief millwright in 1970—I think at Westland—him and my grandfather were in our living room with rope, practicing at our house. My father had come ashore for the hundredth time and had got the job as layout man—sheet metal man for the spouting—and the boss millwright had retired so my dad put in for.

**00:10:12**

NP: Did the elevators do their own metal work then?

RM: Yes. Well, my friend Woody—I can't remember his first name—he was the layout man at Pool 1. And he retired around the time I did. He's about my age and he left Manitoba Pool--. No, he must've left them sooner. But he was the layout man there. They did their own stuff.

NP: And then after a while did it--?

RM: They stopped doing that. I remember at Pool 7 the millwrights being so mad when Bushby sold the brake. You know what I mean by a brake? It's for bending sheet metal. Because then, for sure, the millwrights weren't going to be doing that anymore. Of

course, now they use Teflon in the spouts—at least that’s what we do at our place. But up until I can’t remember when, you had to change the linings in all the spouts, eh?

NP: Let’s move on to how your dad got involved--. No, before we do that there was something--. I mean there’s so much that you’re saying that’s raising questions in my mind that I’m having trouble keeping track. MacKay. Stan McKay. Are all the McKays sort of, somewhat related?

RM: Not related at all. My father’s people come from the mainland, 40 miles south of Cape Wrath.

NP: Where would Stan McKay’s group had come from?

RM: I think their family come from Lewis.

NP: Which is an island?

RM: Yeah, in Hebrides. You’ve heard of Stornoway?

NP: Yes.

RM: Well, it’s on the Island of Lewis.

NP: Your grandfather coming very early, and since he was of Scottish and you mentioned Gaelic, I had heard from some people that different elevators were more likely to hire different nationalities just because there were others of that nationality there. Did your grandfather find that speaking Gaelic was an advantage in getting a job in an elevator?

RM: It probably was. According to--. He was principal at Westgate. Oh, for crying out loud. He was a Baptist, and he was Presbyterian. He wrote a history and—when he was a boy—if you were English you went on the railroad, and if you were Scottish you went in the elevators. What was his name? He was one of the first principals at Westgate. He mentioned that. I heard that at Grain Growers tons of people came from Lewis there at Grain Growers. At Paterson’s, the impression I had was almost everybody was Scottish.

There was two Rod MacKays worked there, and they lived across the street from each other. [inaudible] Brown worked there. Reg Rose worked there. Merle MacSween was the track shed foreman. It just seemed to me everybody--. [inaudible] Mackenzie was the

cleaner deck man. Swanson? How'd he get in there? He was a millwright. [Laughs] But like that, it seemed like everybody was Scottish when I was growing up or thought they were.

NP: Or wished they were. Now, there were other groups that had come over around the time of your grandfather because, well, my husband's grandfather, who was Italian, and of course a number of Ukrainians and Polish people. They worked in the elevators as well, but there seemed to be different jobs for different people?

RM: It seemed to me that—like the Polish guys that worked at Pool 7—most of those guys came after the war. The whole gang of them. Almost everyone that I met there, it seemed to me, were Polish combatants. Almost all of them that I met. The Italians I met at the Grand Trunk—National, Cargill, or whatever it's called now—when I worked there as a kid in '65, it was full of Italians.

NP: At Grand Trunk?

RM: Yeah, when I started. When I was a kid in 1965, I went in there. Millions of Italians. Everywhere you looked, except for Gunther, who was a hopper man, and he was German. But mostly, you heard Italian.

**00:15:03**

NP: And my husband's family, in fact his grandfather, worked at Grand Trunk. I think he was the night watchman there.

RM: Right. Perozzo?

NP: Well, it was Bel.

RM: Oh, Bel. B-E-L. Vic Bel?

NP: Yes. That's my husband's uncle. So, his father—Vic's father — worked at Grand Trunk, and he was the night watchman there before he retired.

RM: First guy I worked for was Polish. And the next summer the guy I worked with was Nick Pittarelli. The guy who had a shoe making shop was his son. Anyway, there was Nick Pittarelli. Foglia was the track shed foreman. Porkchop—I forget—he was the assistant. But the superintendent was Monroe. Wittick was the foreman. My auntie Millie Tillberg was the office manager. That's



how I got the job. I'm trying to remember the weighman's name. It was sort of a Scottish/English name. I'm thinking these guys must've been after the war, but I could be wrong. Just my impression.

NP: Your dad's history then. Was his first job--. It couldn't have been as a millwright because you pretty well have to have some experience, don't you? To be a millwright?

RM: Yeah. My dad--. In 1915, when he was 15, he went on the lakes.

NP: Doing what?

RM: Passing coal. My dad was in the engine room. Lots.

NP: Did he work for one particular company?

RM: No, they moved around all the time, them guys. This has nothing to do with the grain trade, but he told a story of paying off in Kingston, hopping a freight, going to North Bay, spending the night in jail there. Then they went to Nipigon and the railroad bulls beat the living snot out of them with sticks, big clubs, in Nipigon.

NP: What are the bulls?

RM: Railroad police. So, that happened during the '30s.

NP: Oh, vagrants? I mean, everybody pretty much was on the move in the '30s, right? Looking for whatever you could get.

RM: Yeah, and my dad just hopped a freight, I guess, because he was young and stupid. I don't know. He had money. He sewed his money into his shirt, he said. Then, 1938, he was sailing because he had a tattoo with 1938 on it. He got that in Buffalo. He also worked for Western Engineering, and he worked as a millwright at Paterson's. So, he must've been all over the place, but it was kind of--.

NP: Did he have a steady job as he got older? Like, did he stay on as a millwright at Paterson's?

RM: After the war, he was a millwright at Paterson's. He was in engine rooms in the war. He was a millwright at Paterson's, and in around '53, he quit. Reg Rose told me he quit. I thought he got in trouble, but, no, he quit. And he went on the *Star Bell* as third

engineer. He stayed there for a while. Then my mom nagged him, and he come ashore, and he'd work someplace. My earliest memory of an elevator was when I was around 8. On Boxing Day, my dad took us down to Pool 7. Then we went into the boiler room in Pool 7 because the dryers were going.

NP: Do you recall how you felt? Or the smells or sounds of that earliest memory?

RM: I just remember the tunnels because we went in through 1 Belt there. I know it's 1 Belt now. In the basement, eh?

NP: And you were just 8 years old?

RM: About 8, yeah. Things have changed. Me and my brother and my dad, we went in there. Wilf Bonenfant was on. I remember my dad went down there. They had a bunch of guys shoveling coal. I remember that. But my dad, whenever he worked in an elevator you could smell leather jacket, grain dust, grease, and tobacco.

NP: The last one's interesting. Working in an elevator--.

RM: Well, yeah, everybody smoked. Everybody smoked in the elevator. When I was new, I thought that was a big deal, but later on--.

NP: When were you born?

RM: '48.

NP: Was your grandfather still working at that time?

RM: I think he might have been just working.

NP: Because there were those two big explosions that occurred in '45 and '52. You would have thought that would've stopped a bit of smoking.

RM: It wasn't the smoking that set it off.

NP: Yeah, but did they know that?

RM: Yeah. I think so. I have the impression--. Okay, I'm going to digress. In 1968, I was new, real fuzzy-faced new. I went from Pool 10. The government guy, walking boss, moved me from Pool 10 to Westland. I got there and they put me on the track. In those days, Westland's automatics were in the basement. I go down to the basement. I needed a filter for my mask, and I see this guy through the murk. I'm going to bum a filter off him and I got there, and the guy was smoking. So, I rolled a cigarette and asked him for a light. When in Rome. Yeah, I tell that story and I have a hard time believing it because it was murk! In those days, it was so dirty you weren't exactly sure where the walls were.

**[00:21:02]**

NP: Did you find the elevators to be a frightening place when you were a kid?

RM: No, I was only in there the one time, and then my mum used to pick him up at the elevator. I remember getting picked up and picking him up at Pool 7 lots. But he must've worked at--. Yeah, he worked at Richardson's, too. They even paid him. They sent him to Kansas City—I'm not sure which one—to learn how to run a pellet plant. They used to make pellets with molasses. Then they went to making them from steam. So, my dad—being a steam man—they sent him there. Then he came back, and the pellet plant wasn't ready yet, so they put him on the millwright staff. It was winter and the chief millwright at Richardson's couldn't stand to see them guys sitting around doing nothing. So one day, he had them doing cement blocks, and they were told to stop.

NP: What are spent blocks?

RM: Cement blocks. For this pellet plant. Why they'd do that, I don't know. Then another day—it was 2:00 in the afternoon—they said to my old man and his partner, "Well, you guys may as well go home." So, my dad said, "What nice guys, they sent us home." Well, they docked him three-hours pay. My dad said, "Shove it up your nose" and quit. After all that money they spent on him, for three hours wages, he quit! The irony of it all was 20 years later or 30 years later, he went to work for Pool 7, running their pellet plant.

NP: What did he do in the intervening 30 years?

RM: Oh, well, he was back on the lake. Every time he quit, he'd go back on the lakes.

NP: He obviously enjoyed the shipping.

RM: Oh, he liked that. He was chief engineer at the end. He was chief engineer for the *Comeaudoc* when he quit. Now, I can't remember if he went relieving after that or not. He was relieving for different companies, but I can't remember whether it was after he was 65 or before. The last winter he worked for Paterson, he spent the whole winter trying to get a temporary diesel ticket. So, you stay on a *Comeaudoc*, but he couldn't get one.

NP: How old was your dad when he retired? Not just from the lake but he went back, you said, to Pool 7 to run a pellet plant.

RM: Well, he worked at Westland as the chief millwright. When they closed Westland, he went to Pool 7 and the pellet plant. And then '78, they moved him from Pool 7 to Searle. Federal Searle. Pool 15? They moved him there. Whoever was running it, wouldn't let you relieve early. So, my dad said, "Shove it up your nose," and he went back on the lakes. The only reason he stayed on shores was because my mother wanted him to.

Basically, he worked '53. He went back on the lakes. He'd come ashore. He'd go back on the lakes. He'd come ashore. My mother couldn't stand it anymore. He'd come ashore. He'd work a few years or less. He worked at Doran's Brewery. It was a steam plant. Back on the lakes. Work at this elevator for a while. Back on the lakes.

That's how he got in Westland in '70 was--. Big story again. *Frankcliffe Hall*, I think that was the one. They did a bunch of work on the boilers in the winter. Only they didn't. There was some graft. Hall Co. paid for the work. The work wasn't done. Blew a small hole in the boiler in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. My dad took it apart and found that the work wasn't done, and they cleaned that ship off. Everybody who worked on that ship was moved. My dad came ashore, and he went to Westland then. Then he stayed until about '78—ashore—and then went back. I forget who he went to work for.

**[00:25:07]**

NP: He finally retired when?

RM: Well, that's just it. I think he was 65, but he might have been older because he left Paterson's when he was 65. But he might have went back for Upper Lakes and them guys—I'm not sure—as a relief chief. But I'm not sure.

NP: Did he ever talk about the shipping or loading of grain in his capacity on the ships? Did he--.

RM: He mentioned stuff like American grain was really, really dirty. I tell this story lots. He said, when they loaded American grain, it sort of drifted up against the coamings like snowdrifts. You know, like the sides, the hatches? Yeah, the dirty grain would have the dirt like snowdrifts. American grain.

NP: And it would drift up like that just because it didn't have the weight that clean product would have?

RM: When the wind blows, blows the chaff out. I imagine that's what they do now because we ship dirty now. I can't believe it. I find it hard to get too sad. We ship it just as dirty as it comes in.

NP: No one checks them anymore?

RM: They don't clean sometimes. Sometimes it's clean. I think we're loading maybe at only one percent. I'm not sure how dirty it is. I'm not in that end anymore.

NP: It's all just whatever the company's contracted for?

RM: Yeah. Used to be a time, it had to get special permission to load dirty grain from the Grain Commission. Now the CGC hardly exists anymore.

NP: We'll come to that. That's a big story.

RM: I don't understand, but I've been away from the CGC for 11 years. Eleven and a half years.

NP: But you're still working in elevators, so you--.

RM: Yeah, but I'm in a different part now.

NP: Keep your eyes and ears open, and people talk, right?

RM: Yeah.

NP: Getting to your story then. Did you always think, "Well, I'll work in an elevator?"

RM: I used to look at Pool 10 and sort of want to work there because I saw the smokestack. I thought maybe I'd work there. But the plan was everybody knew that I was going to be a schoolteacher from the time I was old enough to understand. I think I sort of wanted that when I was around Grade 7. And then when I hit Grade 12, I got a chance, this summer job at the Trunk on the clean-up gang.

NP: What was the clean-up gang?

RM: Yeah.

NP: What did the clean-up gang do?

RM: Well, we were cleaning up the boots. Yeah, cleaning boots. But anything, any sweeping and, you know, odd jobs. They used to hire guys to do that stuff. We clean the roof off and whatever. I was only there a couple, three weeks the first summer and the same the next summer. They wouldn't let us shovel. I don't why. I never found out why they wouldn't let us shovel.

NP: So, you just swept.

RM: Swept and dig out the boots and shovel off the roof. You know, like in the old days they used to spit it up in the air? The legs weren't capped, so all the dust would land on the roof, and it would rot. They had a gang would go up there every so often and shovel the roof off.

NP: What was that like?

RM: It smelled just marvelous, but it was better than the boots. I mean, a wet boot is dirtier than the dirty roof.

NP: Yeah, you at least have the fresh air to breathe.

RM: I remember it looked like a puddle of water. So, my partner Ian McPherson he gets his shovel, and he goes, *whack!* He's going to splash this water and it was bugs. When it blew, it just looked like a puddle of water, and he hit it and it was bugs.

NP: What kind of bugs?

RM: I didn't know in those days.

NP: And they were just infesting the grain? Or the dust up there.

RM: Yeah, it was all this dust. On the roof. It used to--. Again, it would drift up against the wall. The heap would be higher than your head against the wall and it'd be rotten. You'd dig that out and put it in wheelbarrows, and you dumped it down a shoot. At the bottom there was something. I can't remember what it was.

NP: What would they do with it then?

RM: You take it to wherever you'd throw it. It was rotten.

NP: They didn't just toss it in the--.

RM: At the Grand Trunk we had a spot there at the end of the slip. The slip part was cement and then on the landward side is where we threw anything—stones, garbage, anything—threw it there. I don't know where Pool 7 threw theirs because my friend—when he come out of the army—he was working on the roof there.

NP: Did putting it where they put it attract any kind of wildlife? Wanted or not wanted?

RM: I was only a kid then. Well, you know where the Trunk is there. No, it probably repelled them. Yeah, it was pretty rotten.

**[00:30:10]**

NP: You didn't go in to be a schoolteacher? Obviously.

RM: No. I finished my 13 and I wanted to get in an elevator, but no one was hiring that summer. So, I worked a bit of construction. I worked in the ice gang of White River.

NP: What's the ice gang?

RM: Before they had refrigeration, you'd fill the icehouse up.

NP: You must've been young when you did that.

RM: I was 19 and the CPR--. I was getting kind of desperate. The CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] hired us. You go to White River. You live in a bunk car. You work nine hours in the ice, eight hours in the icehouse. either one. I worked there two, three, four weeks—I don't know what it was—and I got laid off. Then the government staff hired me. I didn't want to work there but--.

NP: How did you end up getting hired by the government staff?

RM: I just applied. My dad told me he knew Sam Rudich—who was a walking boss—and the word was out that they're hiring. So, I applied. They hired two of us.

NP: Who was hired with you? Do you remember?

RM: Yeah. Terry Buske. Terry had been a sampler, but he was casual or whatever it was then. He applied for assistant inspector—grain inspection assistant—and I applied for the same job. I tried for sampler, and I tried for this job. So, they called me for this job.

NP: Grain inspection assistant.

RM: Assistant. PPI-1.

NP: Did you want to be a sampler?

RM: I didn't want to be on the government staff at all, but I had to get a job.

NP: You were desperate.

RM: Yeah. I took it. I wanted to quit, and my mom says, "Look, stay two years." Next thing I knew, ten years were gone. My pension was frozen. Then I got married, so I may as well stay, and then I decided I would like it. "You will like it. You got choices. Like it or get out." So, I got interested in it, and then I found it interesting.

NP: What years would that have been that you got that first job?

RM: With the government staff? February of 1968. 26 February '68.



NP: What was it like being assistant?

RM: At first? The way they did it was you were a year probation—supposed to be a year probation, but I did it in six months. Lots of studying. Some of the guys were kind of cruel, kind of nasty.

NP: In what way?

RM: They were always on your back. The older guys. I guess they were in their twenties, thirties. It was like something out of--. They were bullies. They were.

NP: How can you be a bully in grain inspection?

RM: Well, you yell at a guy for doing it wrong. The way it started is I went to Grand Trunk first. I was there a month. I went to Pool 10, working with your dad [George Marks] and Harry Marshall.

NP: I hope he wasn't one of the bullies.

RM: No. Holy. No. No. Harry Marshall was my next-door neighbour—well, one house down—and your dad, gentleman of the first water. There was Russell Graham and Rowley Jackson there. And then I went from there to sampler room. Then there was a big strike. Elevator guys went on strike for the whole summer. That was embarrassing because they laid all the samplers off, and they kept me on. It was embarrassing. Some of the guys had 30 years and they kept me on. Then I went to Grain Growers. When you're new you remember these things. Before I went to Pool 7, worked for John Gallo. Alistair McDougall was in charge. I wrote my exams then I went to Grain Growers. I was there for three or four months.

NP: What does an assistant grain inspector do that a grain inspector doesn't do? How is the job split up? Do you remember?

RM: The way it worked here? Weigh up the sample. Throw it over the kicker. Clean it up like you're supposed to. Put on the moisture tests. Of course, you get the weight per bushel and all that other stuff. Check the sample and grade it. We did all that. Sometimes if you work with the inspector and sometimes if they were real busy, the assistant did everything except sign it. Sometimes. A lot of times actually. Except sign it. Sometimes there was inspectors who just said, "Put my initials on that."

**[00:35:04]**

That was one job. Another job was the sheet man in those days. We recorded everything on sheets. Between eight and twelve cars went on a sheet. Five copies of the sheet. Two copies downtown. One copy to the company. One copy to us. Where'd the fifth copy go? I can't remember. Maybe it was two copies to the company. I can't remember. Oh, one copy to the weighing staff, I guess. I can't remember it anymore. That was before computers.

The big change came--. As an assistant inspector you had to know everything about grading grain, I think, that the 3 knew, the PI-3 knew. I think you had to know all that stuff. You had to write exams every year. You had to do a grade exam, variety exams, and seed analysis exam as an assistant, and so did them guys. The impression I had, we were supposed to know as much as the inspector, but we didn't have the same responsibility.

The other job—for instance—if they were short of guys in the track then you went outside, and you were a sampler on the track. You know, tending the automatic sampler. The main guy who was in charge on loading a boat was the assistant. Like at Pool 7, me and a sampler would go on the deck. The guy who did the inspecting was inside, the 4. Most places the 4 let me decide it was raining too hard. I'm the guy who checked the holds. I'm the guy who made the pass-on slips. I'm the guy who--.

NP: What are pass-on slips?

RM: In the old days—well, up until recently—a ship comes in empty. The assistant goes onboard, and he looks in the holds to make sure they're empty, clean, and dry. I mean, you don't go down the holds. You just look, make sure it's empty, clean, and dry. Then you say it's okay to load. Then the trimmers can open the spouts. As the grain goes into the holds, you write out on a piece of paper, “SS open bottom. 1 Northern Hold 1 and 3. 2 Northern Hold 4 and 6”. Then you write down the elevator you're at, when you started, and your name. You give that to the first mate. When he goes to the next elevator, the assistant goes on board and grabs that piece of paper. Nobody starts until he checks that against the order because a very odd time there was a mistake.

NP: The wrong grain? Or in the wrong hold, or whatever.

RM: Yeah, the order was wrong. So, you'd catch it. That's how you caught it. Every elevator this ship went to he got a pass-on slip. Pass-on one, maybe, at the Grand Trunk. Pass-on two, maybe P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker]. Pass-on three, Pool 7. Well, you wouldn't even give them one at Pool 7. Usually, you finish at that place. I remember one time I had 15 pass-on slips. There wasn't any grain around, but there was lots of elevators. One of the pass-on slips, I made it. He come to Pool 7 to finish, but I'd made one from Pool 7.

NP: What do you mean you made one from Pool 7?

RM: The fourth elevator was Pool 7. So, I give him a pass-on slip from Pool 7. Every elevator he went to—even if there was grain in every hold—you still gave him one and put your name on it and what elevator it came from. When you did the sheets for downtown, you always put whatever the last elevator was on the sheets. By that stage in the game, instead of just--. When I first started, you'd send a sample in at half-way, and you'd bring the sample in at the end. What we started doing was we'd divide the sample up, the amount. Say he's going to take 120,000 bushels. Well, every 20,000 bushels, you'd send a check in. While you're catching it—every time the draft started—you had to go look, make sure it was the right stuff.

NP: Was that difficult to do? To get—because they can load ships pretty quickly—to get the grade, making sure that you've got the right thing going at the right time? Obviously if it's flax versus wheat, you know. But getting the samples down to the inspection office to make sure that--.

RM: But, you see, a guy like me was trained to realize if he's putting, say, 1 Red on. I had a good enough eye to know that he had too much wild oats in there or too much heated or it was 2 Red instead of 1 Red.

NP: Just by standing there watching it or picking out a little scoop.

RM: I'd go grab a scoop and I'd look at it. You'd look. I remember at Pool 7—when they'd give you examples—they were slipping heated into the No. 1 durum, or whatever. I can't remember if it was No. 1 durum. I caught it. I said, "Hey! You're getting heated on 1 High." "Okay. We'll fix it." So, they put it out the other end where the sampler was. Well, the sampler was just as sharp as I was, and he caught it.

**[00:40:26]**

NP: This kind of thing happen very often?

RM: I used to shut them off there at Pool 7 sometimes once a day.

NP: Really? It happened frequently enough that it wasn't just an accident?

RM: It was just a game. The game was--. Heated was a bad thing. 1 Red takes a total of four-tenths of foreign material. That means barley, whatever the hell. In that four-tenths, there's so much oats, there's so much this, so much that, so much wild oats, I mean. If

you start seeing wild oats showing up, you yell at them, "Hey, you're getting too much wild oats on 1 High," or whatever the hell. They usually cleared it up a bit. If something bad happened, you'd shut them off. You'd say to the trimmer, "Shut that spout off." You'd say, "Okay, look. You got too much wild oats in your 1 Feed Barley." They'd shut the scales off. "Okay, open the spout. Let six shipper go." They'd open six shipper. You'd say, "That's okay. Shut it off. Okay, now open seven shipper. That's the one!" They'd shut that off. If it was too bad, they run it back to the house. If it wasn't too bad, we'd let it slip in there, but they'd fix it up. Like that.

NP: My understanding from interviewing several people that it was a very fine line. In fact, the people who could blend—I think was what they would call it—could blend within the tolerances, but right up to the tolerance, were really desirable employees for the shipping staff. Because they could--.

RM: Of course! That was the game. You want to be able to put on--. For instance, barley, 1 Feed in the old days took one percent of wild oats. Well, it didn't come in with one percent of wild oats. Every so often they'd take in a car of Mixed Feed Oats. And then you'd--.

NP: It wasn't just what they happened to have around? They actually deliberately had the lower grade stuff to blend in?

RM: Then they'd put that in there. As long as it was blending, that's okay. It was against the Canada Grain Act. For instance, Grand Trunk did it. I don't know how they got away with it. Guys told me that they were shipping 2 Feed Barley right out of one of the spouts and out of the other one was the 1 Feed and they were sort of--. In fact, someone told me—I don't believe them—that they actually had 1 Mixed Feed Oats going out one of the spouts, but I can't believe that. They must have been blended.

NP: And it being allowed? Or just a mistake?

RM: That's just it. You're supposed to blend it before you get it on the boat. That was the rules. When you're opening up the spouts, it's blending down the belt. If this shipper is higher than that shipper, and they're both going out the same spout then maybe they're blending. There was a fine line there.

Just like I used to read that you were supposed to re-clean the last 1,000 bushels in every bin. Well, nobody did that! Because when it goes down, all the light stuff floats to the top. Nobody ever did that. You knew that they were running out when it started getting a little dirtier. But you didn't get yourself too upset because it was a bin bottom. That's the sort of thing guys like me did. You're on the deck--. We were on the deck, and we sort of knew what we were doing. Some of the guys were idiots. Some of them were stupid. Some were lazy. That was the problem. There was a lot of lazy guys.

NP: In what capacity?

RM: On the government staff.

NP: What would distinguish a non-lazy person from a lazy person?

RM: Okay, when you're loading flax—especially flax—clean flax is 2.5 percent of dockage or less. When you calculate this stuff, you're doing it to two decimal places before you round it off. Say it goes out as 2.1 percent of dockage. You see, flax was considered commercially clean 2.5 percent of dockage or less. You assessed it to the nearest tenth, but you did it to two-tenths. Some of the guys would fill the bucket up on the first draft and then every so often grab a scoop. Whereas if you knew what you were doing, you'd say, "Okay. I'm going to send a check sample down every 20,000 bushels. Pool 7 that's ten drafts. I'll catch six a draft." So, you catch six scoops every time a draft goes by. Then you mix it all up and you pour it in a bag like this and throw it in to the inspector to look at. You made sure that you caught six a draft. Not seven. Not four. Six.

There were 2,000-bushel drafts at Pool 7. There were 1,500 at 4A, 2,000 at 4B, 1,500 at 6. Grand Trunk was 1,500. At Pool 8, you had to catch by time because it never stopped running. They filled the shipping bin, and it just ran. I used to just catch. I just walked back and forth. It went by time there. But that's what you had to know. If you were doing your job, that's what you did, and you were looking all the time. You were watching. You knew what was going on.

You watched the sky for the weather. If you're seeing something come in, you talk to the mate. You say, "You better start closing up." One of my proudest moments, I was at Pool 4. We could see it coming. I says to the mate, "You better start closing up." I told the elevator, "You better start shutting off." As they were swinging the spouts off, the rain was coming down, and we put the last hatch on as the rain hit the last hatch. That felt pretty good! I like to think I did that on purpose, but I know it was pure luck.

**[00:46:17]**

NP: Was there advantage taken of those lazy people?

RM: I don't know. I do remember one time--. I used to do almost all the boats. I was at Pool 7 from the summer of '73--. When the hell was it? I think I went to Pool 6 in '78 at Easter, so I was there all the time and I worked almost all the boats. I think someone didn't like that, that I was always doing the boats. So, they took me off, and they put a couple of people on that either didn't know what they were doing or didn't care. I was working at the bench. I remember the elevator guys sticking their head in the door,

telling the inspector-in-charge, "Get those two off there and put Roddy back out there." Which made my head go--. I mean, Darrell Sedayo wasn't working then, but there was tons of guys who were like I was. Then there was guys who weren't.

NP: It's like every job.

RM: Yeah. Trouble was, these guys, they wanted a person who was going to do it right because they were blending. It had to be done right. If you caught too much of the heavy stuff, then it looked like it wasn't good enough. It was fine with them if you missed the bad stuff, but if you caught too much of the bad stuff then it isn't what it was. They were blending, so they had to have good samples.

NP: It could actually work against them to have somebody there not doing the job properly because they weren't doing the representative sample, which they needed, through the whole stream.

RM: That's the thing they told me, and they told everybody who came on the job. The most important thing is a good representative sample. The inspector may as well stay home if you don't give him a good sample. When we got new guys, I used to take them through a tour of the elevator and the last place I took them was the board. You know, in the foreman's office? The board? I'd show them, "Select 1 CW Amber Durum, account ten percent of barley. These guys are going to get that stuff out, so you've got to get a good sample. Not too much. Not too little. It's going to get out."

NP: So the board you're talking about is the one that's the bin?

RM: Yeah, the bins. Where everything is. You'd see 1 Red 13.5, 1 Red 13.5, Select 1 Red 13.5, account 10 percent of durum. Well, that's going out, and they're going to open it this much. If you catch that sample wrong, then it's either too much or you're going to miss it altogether. So, you have to do it right. I was one of those goofs. I was converted. I liked that job. I liked standing on the deck freezing or getting covered in dust and chewing snuff and shooting the breeze with the boys.

NP: You worked as an assistant grain inspector for how many years before--?

RM: When I retired, I was still an assistant, but I used to be acting inspector sometimes. I went to Churchill as an acting inspector. The inspector-in-charge wanted to go home, and no one would relieve him. So, I did that job too, which I felt pretty good about.

NP: Tell me about your experience in Churchill.

RM: There it was a little different. At the time I was there, I don't think they had a house inspector. So, we gave them the grades. Every car, we graded. It was our grade, not their grade. It was boxcars, so we did the car, and we didn't--. Thunder Bay method of inspecting is different than Winnipeg's.

NP: In what way?

RM: Their assistants prepare the sample and leave it. Whereas we usually work as a team. Like I say, if there's enough inspectors, you're working together. One guy's writing. One guy's throwing over to the kicker. Another guy's getting a moisture test. Someone else is doing this. Somebody else is doing that. The two guys are working steady. You're picking it together.

NP: If there's a question you can--.

RM: You're both looking at it. It was real quick and that way everybody learned everything. I thought it was a good system, myself. I can't remember if we did it in Churchill or not. I can't remember.

**[00:50:43]**

NP: What was the operation like in Churchill, just the whole elevator operation?

RM: When I was there, there was four dumpers. It looked like Pool 7, but it operated like Pool 6. It was sort of about like that.

NP: What do you mean it looked like Pool 7? I know what it looked like—Pool 7—but operated--.

RM: It actually had the same thing going on four receivers. They had four shippers. They had a gallery system. They had four shippers went to shipping bins and there was a gallery system. So, it was different than here. I only worked a few boats there.

NP: There were probably only a few boats there.

RM: At the time I was there, yeah. The first year I was there, I was on inwards--. I was only there four weeks. I worked two boats. The inspector-in-charge went home, so me and this girl from Winnipeg we stayed. When the boat finally got there, we did the sampling. I forget how many hours we worked. They used to have to shut off for the tide and stuff.

NP: Which would be different.

RM: Yeah. It was a different setup. The sample was automatic there. By that stage in the game, it was automatic everywhere. When they put the automatics, and the system would be inside--. We went to the system, eventually, which worked really well when you had that. Again, I was at Pool 7 most of the time, where you went to so many grams per tonne.

At Pool 7, they had a screen that showed you how many tonnes had gone out on each scale of that grade. When you change grade, they'd take that off the screen and then start over again. The way it worked there, you had seven spouts, seven automatic samplers. It goes 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 Shipper and 1 Receiver? Yeah, 1 Receiver went on the boat. Then you had the screen up there, and it told you how much went out of each spout, out of each scale. The way it worked was, you had a board, so you'd write down, "Okay I made it up at 25.3 tonnes here. So many tonnes here, so many tonnes there, so many tonnes there." Then when you'd see that it's come up--. Say, you're getting a sampler of 1,500 tonnes. You'd look at it. You'd write down the numbers. Subtract. Multiply by the number of grams you're keeping and then throw it over the divider.

NP: It sounds—to the unknowledgeable me—that it's fairly complicated. You have to do math. You have to know grains. It's not a really easy job.

RM: If you were doing it properly, you had to pay attention to what the hell was going on. You had to know--. Like I said, they made assistants into inspectors, *snap*. If you came in in the morning, there was two guys missing and there was a 130 cars going to be unloaded, then, poof, you're an inspector. And they didn't pay us, until later on, they wouldn't pay us until we we'd done it for so many days. You had the responsibility without the money.

NP: It would probably be a paperwork nightmare, otherwise.

RM: I guess so. I don't know. I didn't care.

NP: Part of the union agreement, right? Those kinds of things are negotiated.

RM: Yeah. After a while I think they started paying us if you worked a day as an inspector. I didn't even pay much attention anyway.

NP: Was there a real pecking order between inspectors and assistants, as there oftentimes is, or--?



RM: Yeah. If you work with the inspector, the understanding is he's the boss. But I mean, normally he works as a team, but he took the—he, she, they—took the responsibility for stuff. After you got good at it--. I was there 25 years when I went to Churchill. By that stage in the game, if you don't know what you're doing, you're an idiot.

**[00:54:55]**

NP: I can remember my father—he didn't speak much about his work—but the one thing I do remember that he said that was negative about it was he really didn't like doing the exams. They were very stressful to him—maybe not to everybody—but did you find that?

RM: I hated them exams.

NP: Twenty-five years later you're still writing exams, I think, which was really--.

RM: Yeah, but I was sad when they took them away.

NP: Why?

RM: They lowered the standard. For the inspectors it wasn't so bad, but for the assistants it kept you up. Every year you had to write this stupid thing just to stay where you were, but it kept your standard up. The varieties, so you knew the varieties. Now they don't even care. They don't care except for when they get caught.

It used to be the law. You couldn't license a variety unless you could recognize it with a magnifying glass. Apparently, someone told me they got caught. Who the hell was telling me? Somebody. They shipped out and they had this new variety, and no one could tell. They had to put a DNA test on, and it turned out it was 20 percent of the wrong stuff or something. That's the story. How true it is, I have no idea.

But, in those days, it was a big job and it depended where you were. If you were at 7, you were just going crazy. You were almost hunted. If you were at P&H, you get to read books, discover interesting authors, and sweep the floor until the floor wore out, because they only did ten cars—ten cars in the day or whatever.

NP: My understanding—correct me if I'm wrong—that the Commission knew that and they moved people around so that somebody was not stuck at 7 forever.

RM: No, unless they're a nut like me, who liked it there. I spent my last eight years there. Usually they moved around. By the time your dad retired, he probably was at a place like P&H or something. Or maybe if he'd spend a summer at Pool 7, they might put him at Pool 10. I know he spent a year at--. Inspectors-in-charge spent a year at each place, and then they'd move them.

NP: Was part of that, too, to make sure you didn't get too cozy with the elevator?

RM: I think so.

NP: Or at least not give the impression that you're getting too cozy.

RM: There was actually one place where they did get too cozy. I refused to work there.

NP: How do you get too cozy?

RM: Before I got married, I wouldn't work there. After I got married, I needed the money more. I was working there, and the inspector-in-charge phoned me up and told me, "Don't catch from number four belt."

NP: Really?

RM: Yeah, that's called cozy. Another time when I was--. Why I stopped working there. There was four belts. We were catching the samples at that place, and I smelled heated or something. It was rapeseed or something like that. I sent the whole sample down. In those days that's how we did it. I sent the whole sample down and when it came down Eno Anderson, who was a sampler, said, "You know that sample you sent down? They threw it down the turkey bin. Didn't even look at it. They just threw it out." I said, "Fine." I never worked there again.

NP: Did everybody know that this was going on? Were you just more observant, it was just general knowledge that this--.

RM: I think it was general knowledge. I could be wrong. I knew it was on. I figured everybody knew.

NP: What would you think the payoff was for the inspector?

RM: I have no idea. I didn't get involved. I stayed away from that place. I remember one time they were hard up for guys, and they needed somebody on the track. So, I went over there to work the track and they said, "Oh. Sorry, the guy who's working the boat isn't coming in tonight." I said, "Okay. I'm going home." I'm not working on that boat. I refused. Not me. I'm not going to have my name on the sheets, not with that stuff. And what happened, the story goes--. Ricky Cairns is dead now, but he was there. He got moved in there after these palsy-walsy guys, and they were loading the boat. There was something wrong with it. It was rapeseed, like canola now. The inspector from the house come up, the house inspector come up and said, "How is it?" And he said, "You're over." The guy laughed and this Ricky said to him--. He told me he said, "It's turned down." The guy almost fainted.

Apparently, it went overseas, and they stored it away for a year. No one would buy it. The superintendent almost lost his job over it. That's the story. How true all this crap is, I have--. That's what they told me because I refused to work there. Well, after I got married, I worked a couple of times on overtime. I wouldn't work there. But most of the time it wasn't like that, and it only lasted for a little while. A couple of years.

NP: Until it got to be really well known. Well, then the person would be moved, right?

RM: They moved the guy out. Yeah, they moved him out and made sure another guy went in there. Like I said, even I used to let the odd thing go. They'd say, "We got 50 bushels to go." That's out of 2,000. "We're just going to drop it okay?" I'd say, "Yeah. Let it go." What the hell? Fifty bushels? I mean, that's 60 times 50. Whatever that is, 3,000 pounds? I'm not going to get myself in a knot over that! Not on something that holds 23,000 tonnes.

**[01:00:02]**

NP: Yeah. You have to use a bit of discretion, not being ridiculous because you could get the other side of it. You could get the person who doesn't care. Or—in the case that you were saying—who actually was almost in cahoots with an equally dishonest elevator operator. And then you can get the person stops ten cups of the wrong stuff going in. [Laughing]

RM: Actually, I worked with an inspector who did that. I couldn't believe my eyes. He kept it separate. I said, "What the hell are you doing?" "No one's going to care!" I said, "Do you realize the foreman's been in trouble before?" What happened is he read the order wrong. Normally 3 Red wasn't protein. And this time it was. So he ran some without the protein. This inspector had me keep it separate. What the hell for? Let's find out how the blend goes. I said to him, "This guy, he's been in trouble before. He made a mistake before." [Mumbles]. Me and him didn't get along too good that day. I feel guilty now about it, but—what the hell—it was a long time ago.

NP: It was a long time ago. Now, you did say earlier on that you never wanted to work there to begin with. But it was a good job, good pay—at the Grain Commission being an assistant inspector—but, at a certain point you decided you were going to like the job. What was it that sort of changed the--?

RM: A wife and two kids. I just figured you can't go around with a long face all the time. You're either going to enjoy it or it's time to move on. By that stage, I was almost 40. I'd been around for 15 years or--. No, I guess I wasn't that old. I don't know when it was. I wasn't that old. I spent 11 years at the sample room, too.

NP: At the which?

RM: Sample room. Do you know that in the old days, up until recently, the way it worked was every car that was unloaded in the harbour was sampled by the CGC, right? You knew that. They kept those samples for a month. The law was 20 days, but they kept them for a month. That way whoever owned the car could appeal the grade. Where they kept them was the main office in a big storage room.

NP: In the one with the moving--? Yes, been there, got the grain tins.

RM: Yes. And they kept boat samples. Salties they kept for six months and lakers they kept for two years or a year. I forget which.

NP: What did you do in the sample room other than just moving tins in and out?

RM: Your daily routine was, in the morning all the samples that come in from the elevator--. As I told you everything was sampled. So, from Pool 7, when it was boxcar days, every eight-hour shift--. The day shift was 180 boxcars. If you had a 4:00 to 12:00, you did 80 on 4:00 to 12:00.

There was 25 elevators when I started. I forget what there was when I was there. All the samples from all the unloads come uptown. All the boat samples went to the boat floor. Then we'd put all these things in the tins with their cards and put them away by elevator and date. If it was a double check—DC—we put that over to the 5s. All the Sask Pool cars went to Sask Pool inspectors. Alberta Wheat Pool cars went to Alberta, and P&H cars went to him. If he thought he had a chance on a raise, he sent that down to them guys.

**[01:05:02]**

NP: On a raise being able to up the grade?

RM: You made a 2 Red, maybe it's a 1. Barley, 2 Feed, maybe it's a 1 Feed. We made it a 1 Feed for too much wild oats—or whatever the hell. Maybe if you do special cleaning, we can make this into a 3 CW, too, like that sort of thing. They'd bring those over to the walking bosses. Your DCs went over there, Sask Pool stuff went--. Anything they could get. Alberta Wheat Pool guy, he sent his stuff over there. Plus, the guys from Winnipeg—that's the companies—could send what we called wires. They'd come up and they'd have for re-inspects. REX 1, re-inspect. REX re-inspect. You didn't get them too often, mostly REX 1's. So, you went and found all those cars. Remember, you had 20 to 30 days to get them re-inspected. We brought those to the 5s. As an assistant, what they would do is they'd say, "Oh. They made this 1 Feed Barley because maybe if we do special cleaning, we can make this a 2 or 3 CW, six-row." They'd tell us to do that. Heated. He'd made it because of heated. Okay. Check heated. I was very poor at heated when I first was new. I was on the check bench. By the time I was finished, I knew how heated was.

NP: I know it might be hard to estimate, but would you say that the majority of 1s that were re-checked were found to be as originally checked? Or was there quite a large percentage of re-checks that were actually graded differently?

RM: I couldn't tell you. It seemed to me most of them were left. Then for the REX one, what you did was--.

NP: REX? I don't understand that?

RM: Re-inspect Winnipeg. What would happen then is you'd cut the sample in half, and you'd send a 500-gram sample down to Winnipeg, where they'd reinspect it there.

NP: Did you like that job?

RM: I got to the stage where wife and kids--. You will like it. It also became interesting. I learned lots about grain.

NP: Regular hours?

RM: It was 7:30 to 3:30. It was supposed to be 7:30 to 4:00. I worked lots of overtime from there. I was a militia guy, so it worked pretty good for me because I wanted the time off.

I got real good at oil seeds. Mustard seed. At the time, I was up there in the '80s, Western 10—Maurice's place. They didn't have a staff there. What they did was they'd get the samples. Now, whether it was SGS who made them or not, I can't remember. They'd

send samples to us, and we'd grade them. It was mostly mustard seed and canary seed. What happened was, I found I was allergic to canary seeds. I got cankers under my eyelids from it. I tried to avoid canary seed and I started doing mustard. The guy who was teaching us how had been doing it forever, and he was telling us from memory. One day, he wasn't there and me and Janice Andrews couldn't remember how he told us to do it. So, we looked it up in the book. Oops! Then me and her got really good at it. It seemed to me I worked with Johnny McIvor on that stuff, too. I got really good at doing mustard seed.

NP: What were the special features of mustard seed?

RM: The way you grade mustard is--. The way you clean it is—you know—over the sieves and all that other stuff, but when you're grading it--. One of the things I did all the time was I broke it down to five grams, put it under the microscope, picked the damage out. So, you picked out everything except distinctly green. You picked out--.

NP: What's the distinctly green?

RM: Distinctly green. The kernels are distinctly green. For instance, if you had a sprouted kernel that was distinctly green, then you wouldn't pick that out. It'd be shriveled. It'd be sprouted, totally covered in this white rind, that stuff. You'd pick all that under the microscope. Then you took your five grams, and it held 100 seeds, this stick. You pour your five grams on the stick, you put tape on it—you did five of those—and you crush it. Then you counted distinctly green. It's graded by so much damage including so much distinctly green. That's how you grade it. Some guys would whammy it. Just guess. I wouldn't do that. A lot of times they were wrong.

**[01:10:09]**

NP: What happens when inspectors are wrong?

RM: They re-inspect. The guy who owns it knows what it's supposed to be.

NP: Again, like in other jobs, are there some people that are more often wrong than others?

RM: It depends on the year. How do I put this? For instance, when we were doing the mustard seed, if there was a year where visual damage wasn't that big a deal, then you could guess it. If there was a year when it was a big deal, then you should've picked it. It depended on that. I don't know if I should be saying it this way. I might be wrong.

NP: But they didn't come back to you with re-grades very often?

RM: No. I signed them. What they were doing before the days of computers was Ernie Duda would go through the certificates. If I did x-number of samples, he paid me for the month as an inspector, which I thought was really nice of him. The only reason I signed them myself was because I was too lazy to go find somebody.

NP: Worked out in your favour then. Are there any changes that occurred? You mentioned the computers came in and the way that the automatic sampling came in. Any other changes that took place that--?

RM: Around 1970—if I remember it correctly—they went to grading by grade and protein. Before then, wheat was graded, 1 Northern, 2 Northern--. Well, 1 Hard and 1 Northern, 2 Northern, 3 Northern, 4 Northern, 5 Wheat, 6 Wheat, Feed Wheat. They did away with all those grades, went to 1 Red, 2 Red, 3 Red, and Feed Wheat. Then they segregated by protein. That made a big difference.

NP: What kind of difference did that make?

RM: First of all, the tolerances changed. I forget. 1 Red was the top. One was 1 Northern, 2 Northern, and top 3 Northern, I think. 2 Red was 3 Northern, 4 Northern. Something like that.

NP: And the protein was determined by the protein lab? They did the testing?

RM: No, we did it there.

NP: Oh, did you?

RM: We had--. I forget how many varieties. Is this the fourth generation of protein machine we've had? The original one, you ground it up and you put it in the machine. We got lots of flour and everybody loved that flour for cooking.

Originally, you just brought the sample in at the end of the car. Then you had to send them a grab. As soon as you had enough, you sent it to the office. You either brought it in by hand if it was a small place, or they had machines going. That was sort of when they started putting more machines in because you had to bring in two samples for every Red Spring car. A lot of places were mostly Red Spring. Then you did a protein on the grab, and then told the elevator. You didn't tell them what the protein was because the protein lab, what they did was they gave us the bands they would change every so often. Say it was 13.5. Okay. 13.5 for 1 Red will

be between 13.4 and 13.8. Anything in that range. You told the elevator, "1 Red, 13.5, and it might be different for 2 Red." And if it was a 2 Red, then you'd say, "1 Red, 13.5. 2 Red, 12.5." Then the elevator guy would put it in whatever bin he wanted to put it in. Then we did the whole sample. Then you would put a final, real protein on the clean sample.

**[01:14:30]**

NP: Would you say that the trade-off in effort was from having to get rid of--. You got rid of the number of the grades and that was replaced by having to do these protein tests. Was it a saw-off or was it much-- more complicated and time-consuming to do the grading by protein than by just recognizing various grades?

RM: I think it was sort of not that much different. The work for the lower-rank guy did. There was more lower rank guys needed. Before, you got the whole sample, and you cleaned it. Then for the Red Spring, the inspector graded it. Whereas now you needed a guy to do this protein test. There also was more guys working because you sent downtown--. I can't even remember anymore. Did we send an envelope sample for every car? We might have. They checked them downtown to make sure the machines were working right and make sure all this blending--. I can't remember how the protein lab worked. I should, but I don't remember.

NP: The computerization. Big change?

RM: Huge change. Because the machine couldn't do what we used to do we had to change what we did. That was my impression.

NP: What was that?

RM: The machines sometimes couldn't do everything that we were doing, so we had to change what we did. That was my impression. I sort of thought computers were stupid, but I didn't--.

NP: For some paperwork it would have been almost--.

RM: They said it was going to cut down on the paperwork. Before, you used to do five sheets, and on that five sheets you'd have eight to twelve cars. The sheets were this long, this big, and there was five copies. We did away with that. So, for every car we got two sheets this big. One went in the sample, and one went to the elevator.

NP: Because you could--.



RM: Well, I guess so. I don't know what the hell--. This seemed so weird. We had so much sheet work for the boats. There was print outs. I never really was very good at computers.

NP: Was it hard on some of the older guys? Because sometimes bringing in computers into an operation is very difficult for people who aren't inclined towards learning new technology.

RM: I had an awful time, and I wasn't that old. Actually, a funny story is when I was going to retire, I missed the retirement seminar because you had to apply for it online. I didn't know how to do it, and by the time I worked up the nerve to ask somebody, it was too late. [Laughs]

NP: We only have about 40 minutes left. At least on this one. And, unless there's some other things that you'd like to say about the job, I'd like to ask you more about the elevators.

RM: I'm going to be brief. To me, I became a believer because the way that the system worked—checking it coming in, checking it going out all the time—kept the standard up. I didn't like the job, but I became a believer. The idea of the Grain Commission was--. One of the things was to keep the integrity of the Canadian grain system. Where I am, I don't see that happening.

NP: That's a big change. This occurred--. When did you say you retired?

RM: I retired in 2003 and the biggest changes happened within the last couple years.

NP: Tell me a little about the change that's occurred. I've interviewed a lot of people who were senior to you, but not a lot like you that retired just before the changes occurred. From what you understand, what are the changes?

RM: One of the biggest changes is that there's no supervision by the weighing staff anymore. So, if there's any dispute about a car being short, who investigates? If you load a car, and the car gets to the other end and it's short, who investigates? Who? Nobody! If there's any problems—just that part—just with the weighing staff. When they load boats now, they have a private company do exactly what the Canadian Grain Commission used to do. Why did you do that?

NP: For less money?

RM: I have no idea.

NP: Normally that's why they do it.

RM: Yeah, but for the savings they make it doesn't seem any--. The same with the inspection. I understand that some elevators they actually have Al Coffey's gang in there doing what we used to do. I don't know, but that's the impression I have. Whereas, at my elevator, we unload a car, and we send it downtown. Some of them, if it needed to be inspected, the company asks us to send it to Intertek and they inspect it.

NP: Most of those private companies are staffed by former CGC employees?

RM: Yeah. One of the things I find—for me—is you don't get an instant answer. At Pool 7, the way it used to work—I wrote a letter to the ministry even on this—when they were thinking of going to centralized grading, I said, "You don't understand how the system works." The elevator guy gets a grab, he makes a quick grade, and tells them where to put it.

NP: A grab being--?

RM: A quick sample. Soon as he got off to see what it is, but he don't get the whole car. The Grain Commission got the whole car. They had guys looking at it for everything. Then we gave them a print-out to tell them what car one, two, three, four, five, six was. Here's exactly what it was. Now, if you put it in the 2 Red bin and it's a 3 Red, then you know, and he knows why. So, that when blending time comes, he knows what he's got in the bin. But he has no idea what's really in the bin. Like, they start cleaning over there--. They drop it into the house bin and the cleaners are going. He said, "Okay, throw it in bin one, and then throw this one in bin two. Okay, put that one in bin one. Put this one in bin whatever." They're cleaning and they're coring and it's going here and it's going there. By the time he finds out that he's screwed up, man, it's in the annex bin. What do you do now? Where did it go? I don't know, none of my business. I'm on the dark side now. I don't care.

NP: Are there any rumours about decreasing reliability about what gets shipped?

RM: Where I am, I almost make it a point not to know. I'm an annex man. I'm a trackman. I'm clean-up gang. When we load a boat, I'm a scale operator.

NP: Do you watch them inspecting the loading of the boats?

RM: No. Where I am, I can't see anything. I'm so short I have to stand on a stool to look out the window to see where they're going even. So, I don't even pay attention. I watch my scale and sometimes I'll help at somebody else's scale if they've gone for a pee or

whatever. When I'm in the basement—I used to be in the basement—I just had a running slip. I did what I was told. Pull this bin. Pull that bin. Pull this bin. Make sure the ramps is between 90 and 95.

NP: Why did you decide not to stay retired?

RM: A combination of things. When I retired, which was 11 years ago, my daughter would've been nine and my son was ten. I left the government staff because I was mad by quarter to 8:00, well, by 8:00. I wasn't mad at quarter to 8:00. I was mad at 8:00 and I stayed mad until I went home.

NP: Why were you mad?

RM: They kept changing the rules even then. I was a 1. What the hell was I getting my poo in a knot over for? I remember I used to jog every morning. I'd be jogging, trying to figure out how to solve the problems that I think was wrong. Then I came to the conclusion, "You're a 1! Why do you care? Man, you're entry-level." So, when this buyout came, I took it. But I had no intentions of retiring. I have every intention--.

NP: How old were you at the time? You'd have been 52 or so.

RM: No, I was almost 55. My intention was not even to work in a grain elevator. I was hoping to get on with MAC Rail or something. But I did kind of want to work at Pool 10 too.

NP: How did you come to work at Pool 10?

RM: I went there about three weeks after I retired and put in a resume. These resumes are supposed to make yourself look good. So, I had been a grain inspector, I'd been in charge in Churchill, and I got a medal from the Grain Commission for being a loyal, faithful dog. All that sort of rubbish. I put that all down because it makes you look good. They didn't need a grain inspector. Then I got real desperate because I needed the money. I went there and asked him for a job, and luckily, he needed an annex man. I didn't want to be an annex man but that's what he was hiring, so I took it.

**[01:25:03]**

NP: And you knew what an annex man was?

RM: I knew what he was, but I wasn't prepared to be one. Luckily, for me, the annex man at Pool 10 isn't the same as an annex man at other places.

NP: What does an annex man do?

RM: The annex man sets the machinery up so that the grain will go in the proper bin. He also sounds the bins to make sure that the bins don't overflow. He also sounds the bins, so the foreman knows how much space is left in the bin. He also checks the bins to make sure they're suitable to receive grain. That's done by putting the light down.

NP: So, good, non-complicated, important job.

RM: At another elevator, the annex man also will choose the bins, sometimes. The way I understood it, at a big house, okay, you want the bins to be sort of at the same. Keep them not full, sort of the same. You know there's lots of cars coming in. So, say a bin gets half full and you might change the set on your own. With me, the foreman tells me what bins he wants that stuff to go into. But, again, a normal annex man never gets stuff from the car. It comes from the cleaners, normally, in those days. So, they tell him, "On 3 Belt, there's going to be 1 Red." He'd make sure the bins are like this, so that when they're shipping, they can keep pulling from these bins. That's the impression I had. I could be wrong on that. But that's the impression I had and I'm not that kind of annex man.

NP: So, it was not to have to keep switching from bin to bin because something's emptied and--.

RM: Those places they keep them at the same level. They don't fill them.

NP: Does it have anything to do with the physical nature of the bins? That you don't want to have pressure?

RM: The impression I had was so that you can pull out of all the bins and without them running out. That's my impression. Whereas with us, we will fill a bin. You know, we're not going to plug it.

NP: Well, you don't have too much choice because it's a small elevator.

RM: Yeah. I understand that before, they did it the way they do it now, the annex man would choose the bins. I could be wrong on that but--.

NP: The various elevators you worked at--. We're called Friends of Grain Elevators, right? Our group. We're interested in the various elevators. Did you grow up near an elevator?

RM: I grew up--. Do you know where the Mary J. L. Black Library is?

NP: I do.

RM: Was.

NP: Oh, the old one? Yes.

RM: I lived three houses and across the street, west. Kitty-corner was a B&B. You go three houses west, that's where I grew up. You could see them. We played down there. We played at Pool, well, beside Pool 5. One of my friends fell off Pool 5 stealing pigeons. Wasn't my friend, he was a few years older than me. We hung around. Maxner was his name. He lived down there.

NP: Was he injured?

RM: Yeah, he was six months in the hospital. Apparently, he still has the limp.

NP: Was it operating still, or was it abandoned?

RM: Oh, yeah. He was up there stealing pigeons.

NP: You would've thought they would have given them away if you'd asked.

RM: You had to get up there to get them, eh? I went to school with his sister, and my brother went to school with his sister. We played on the step bridge, and we played on the old slab.

NP: What was the old slab?

RM: You know when you go into Maurice's elevator there?

NP: Yes.

RM: You go across a cement slab.

NP: Wasn't that Western elevator?

RM: No. Pool 5. Next to Pool 5 was the slab. Didn't anybody ever tell you how the slabs worked?

NP: No.

RM: During the war, they didn't have enough storage space. You see the slab by Richardson's, too. What they did was they made wooden bins and covered them with canvas. So, the grain was stored—according to my dad—was stored in these wooden bins that they made on--. They poured a slab, made wooden bins, poured the grain into these things, and on every one of those slabs there was holes. Maurice told me--. Is it where the road is? We used to play in there. Down below, a belt ran into the elevator. The impression I had was that when they emptied the bins, they'd shovel it into there, and it would go into the elevator. That's where they stored the grain during the war.

**[01:30:12]**

NP: I'm just trying to think of where that is because Pool 5 was next to him. So, where was this?

RM: You know when you go in the gate?

NP: Yes.

RM: Right there. There was a slab there and--.

NP: That was their wartime storage?

RM: For Pool 5. I think there was a slab at Paterson's. There was a slab at Richardson's.

NP: Every one of them, I think, had a war-time storage. It was quite amazing, but I didn't realize that that was where it was. I'll look more closely at the ground when I go in.

RM: Yeah, but all of them, they filled in that because the bums used to stay down there, and we played down there.

NP: That's pretty creepy.

RM: No, it was fun. It was fun playing around there. My dad told us how to be--. He knew we were going to play there, so he told us how to be safe around the railroad yards. I told my kids, but they didn't play down there. Suited me.

NP: What kind of direction did your dad give you for staying safe?

RM: Stay away from those cars. Stay away. They're dangerous. Stay away. But he let us play down there and told us not to go on the river in the spring. Stay away from the river in the spring because the banks collapse. My dad learned to swim in the Kam. Did your dad, too?

NP: No. He probably learned at Chippewa. His family used to go out to Chippewa. So, hard to say.

RM: My dad said when they were kids, they'd stand on the rail of the swing bridge. And when the Yanks would come by, they'd drop their swimming suits and then jump off. He had more nerve than me. I would never jump off that thing.

NP: Pulling your pants down is another story. [Laughs]

RM: I don't even think I'd do that. I don't think I'd even stand on that rail.

NP: There are tunnels there for Pool 5 still open. Are there not?

RM: No.

NP: Those have been cleared up?

RM: You can't get from Pool 10 to Pool 5 because--.

NP: No, but you can get into the tunnels at Pool 5?

RM: Yeah. On the river end—I was told—that the bums were living down there. Scotty said that. I didn't see it. He said they tore off the covers and went in there. I just took his word for it.

NP: The various elevators that you worked at, what are your comments on them? Did you prefer certain elevators to others? I mean, other than busy versus non-busy.

RM: For some reason, I never was that happy at Manitoba Pool 1. It was the nicest place and the people who worked there were real nice people. But for some reason, I was not that happy there. I don't even know why. Pool 3 was a nice place. It was okay. I don't know why. I will say that a lot of the elevators—though they're all the same—some were different. I was just thinking you might want to know this. Pool 6 was backwards. Their D-Floor wasn't the same as everybody else's D-Floor.

NP: What do you mean by D-Floor?

RM: Distributing floor. You know where the Mayo spouts are? Well, Pool 6, they didn't have Mayo spouts on the distributing floor, they had turn heads. And they had a cross belt up there. A turn head went to the high spouts. A turn head went here, there, and everything. On their bin floor, it was like a distributing floor. They had Mayo spouts on their distributing floor. You know how most places when you're on the distributing floor, you lift up the lid and there's a spout under there. But when you opened up the lid at Pool 6, there was air. That was a different setup there.

NP: Do you know why it was different?

RM: I never got a chance to ask anybody. I just thought it was so weird.

NP: They were a mill as opposed to an elevator, but--.

RM: They were?

NP: No, sorry. I'm thinking Pool 8. It was very old.

RM: Pool 6 was old.

NP: Maybe that was the difference. It was just, they thought it was better to do the other configuration.



RM: I really don't know. The only elevator left that has a river-end now is ours. Whereas when I started, the Lakehead and Federal Fort William—Northwestern—they had a river-end.

**[01:35:48]**

NP: What do you mean by a river-end?

RM: You know, at our elevator you can bring it to the workhouse? Or you can send the grain down to the other end where we have a scale floor on the river-end?

NP: Yes.

RM: There was the Lakehead, Federal Fort William, which was Northwestern, Pool 10, Pool 11, Westland. They all had a river-end. No, not 11. 11 didn't. Their shipping bins, they used to--. They shipped it out through the annex. Whereas, we have one end that ships.

NP: What was Pool 11?

RM: Pardon me? Which one's Pool 11? That's the Elevator E. The yellow one. When I was there, the way it worked was they elevated in the workhouse and then it went on the annex belt to the shipping bin. That's how it worked there. I wasn't there when they had a high spout. And Westland had a river-end, too--the workhouse where they received, and they had a workhouse that they had scales down on the river-end.

NP: Did it make much difference to either the employees of the elevator or to the government staff whether there was a river-end or not?

RM: I was too young to know. I was still learning.

NP: You mentioned Lakehead?

RM: Yeah, the Lakehead was the first upriver.

NP: So, used to be at one point called the Electric?

RM: Could have been.

NP: I think so.

RM: It was a Federal Lakehead when I started. When I started—I think the winter of '68 or '69—it burnt. They might have even been tearing it down when I started. I'm not sure. I worked at the Northwestern the winter of '68/ '69. I worked there then.

NP: I think Purves owned the Lakehead at one time, because I have a picture of something, "Purves for Service" written on the outside of the elevator.

RM: Oh, I'll be darned! Yeah.

NP: So, I don't know when that would have been.

RM: Like I say, I don't know.

NP: Northwestern was Federal right?

RM: Yeah. Federal Fort William was the official name of it when I started. Just like 7B was Federal Port Arthur. And Federal Searle. That was the three Federal ones I remember.

NP: Federal Port Arthur was--.

RM: 7B.

NP: 7B. Previously the Stewart Elevator. Then you said Federal--. What was the other one?

RM: Searle?

NP: Federal Searle. You worked through the time that they were closing down the elevators, too. What was that like?

RM: The first big cuts—like Pool 11 and that—I didn't have much to do with that. But I was involved when they shut down Pool 6. I was involved when they shut down Pool 8. I was involved when they shut down Searle, when it was Sask Pool 15. I remember the amazing thing for me at Pool 6 was there was so much brand-new equipment in Pool 6 when they tore it down. It was brand new! The paint shone on the new equipment. When they shut down Westland, the story went that they shut the wrong one down. Somebody made a mistake. They had stuff that was supposed to go to Westland, and someone made a mistake out west and shut down the wrong one. They were supposed to shut down either Pool 8 or something else. That's what my dad told me. How true that is, I have no idea.

I was there when they shut down Pool 8. I was catching samples for the cars. Somehow, I have the feeling it was in 1988, but I could be wrong. When they did the Searle, they brought the samples uptown, and that grain was--. It had been in there for a while. I learned how to grade some weird stuff.

NP: In where? In Searle?

RM: Yeah. Well, Sask Pool 15 when they sent the samples downtown to be graded and--.

NP: When they were shutting down? Because they were shipping out what was left?

RM: Yeah. They had to empty it out, eh? At Pool 6, when I was there, they couldn't load anything the day I was there because everything was buggy. That's what I was told. They sent me home. Or not sent me home, sent me back somewhere else. And I missed Pool 4. When they shut that place down, I don't know. I remember when they shut it down, but I wasn't involved. I couldn't believe they shut that place down. Then they shut Pool 3 and Pool 1 down. I just was--. I still can't get over that. I don't know why they did that. It made no sense.

**[01:40:15]**

NP: Which ones?

RM: They shut down Pool 4. I don't know why they shut it down. There must have been a reason. For our guys that was one of the busiest places, and for our point of view, they could do more stuff there. They could ship 3,000 tonnes an hour, and they could ship as much as five different grains at a time. It was a hard place for a guy catching samples to keep on top of, because they could switch so much, eh? They were fast. At least whenever I was there. Apparently, at a time at the end they slowed down, but you had

to really know what you were doing when you worked at that place. Maybe the foundation or something was no good. I don't know. I don't know what to--.

NP: I think you might be right because I was just reading something about it. No. You know which one was that, and I haven't gotten to the file on Pool 4 yet, but Alberta Pool 9.

RM: Yeah. I remember when that one died off.

NP: That was its problem was foundation problems and to correct them would've been too costly.

RM: Yeah. Especially because when they used to load a ship there, if you wanted to go in 6 Hold, they had to have the bow was over at Pool 4. I worked at Pool 9.

NP: Why?

RM: The ship was too long for the slip. So, to get in Pools they had to--. I remember seeing the bow go across the slip. I guess it was not worth the while to spend the money for a slip that was too small.

NP: No. Exactly. And very similar to the ones that shut down on the river. That upgrading would be expensive to begin with and the ships were getting so big that--. Maurice is a marvel that he manages to keep the ships persuaded to come up the river.

RM: They would shut down Pool 2 because of that stone. They even had a gallery there and they still didn't have enough water. I was there. They just had a gallery there with one belt. They only handled Red Spring there. I remember anyway. It was a nice place. I was only there a bit. That's part of the winter, I think, I was there. Manitoba Pool had really nice places. The people seemed to be civilized, and they kept them clean, but that was just my impression.

NP: It's interesting to interview some of the senior people like the managers and then to interview staff at various levels. By putting together all their stories you get a sense of what actually was the atmosphere of a place versus what one person's opinion might be about the atmosphere, or how so and so was to work with, whether it was just the sort of--. Sometimes you just don't get along with that person. But you hear enough stories from enough people, and you start to get a sense of where it was a pleasant place to work because people got along. And where it was a good job, you got paid well, but you really didn't--.

RM: Yeah. The day was over, and you were glad. There was people on the government staff that was like that. There was some people, a shift was over before you knew it. Janice Andrews was like that. Stewart, Coffey, and lots of them guys. But there was some guys who were just--.

NP: You could hardly wait to get out?

RM: Oh, it was awful some of those guys.

NP: The two that you mentioned their names, it's nice to have a record that they were good to work with.

RM: Yeah. I got along with lots of people, and I really liked lots of people.

NP: You sort of made a comment early on that relates to this question, but I'll ask it anyway in case there's something that you want to add to it. And that is, what is your sense of the role that you and CGC played in Canada's success as an international grain trader? I'm assuming you agree that Canada is a success as an international grain trader. So, what do you think your role was in assuring that?

RM: Well, we maintain the quality. To me, we maintained the quality and kept everything honest. People used to laugh at the weighing staff, but they were there for a reason. Like I said, most people are honest, but there's the odd crook. You got people like the weighing staff watching and then you just don't waste your time being a crook, to me.

**[01:45:19]**

NP: What would you say you would be most proud of in your work?

RM: Hm, hm. I thought I did a good job at samples especially. I was kind of fussy.

NP: [Laughs] Did people used to complain that you were fussy? Or were they quite happy you were fussy? Or some complained and some were happy?

RM: Depends. I think the inspectors liked having me around because I was careful. I think that when guys like me and Darrell Sedayo and--. That those names come to mind right off the hop. It's sad that I can't remember the other guys who were really super. You didn't have to worry. That was the sample. There was no question. We were fussy. We didn't put up with any shenanigans.

NP: Did you ever think about your connections to other parts of the system? For example, the farmers.

RM: From our point of view, we wouldn't have much to do with that. I used to think we did but--. But the CGC was supposed to protect the farmer, but by the time the grain got to where I worked, the farmer usually had nothing to do with it. They'd already given their grain to the country elevator. Though there were times when we had producer cars come in. We treated them exactly the same as anybody else's. I did go out west a couple of times. Oh, once I worked in Saskatoon. No, I worked in Moosejaw.

NP: At the government elevator?

RM: No, in the CGC office where people would bring in samples. Where the farmers actually brought in samples to us. I was only there a couple of weeks. I wasn't really that sure what I was--. I mean, I was just inspecting stuff. I remember that the guy who was in charge, he was always trying to do his best for the farmer. I think the problem was that it wasn't advertised enough. I also understood that—but I could be wrong—I understood that the CGC started charging them for stuff they shouldn't have charged them for. That's the impression I had, but I might be wrong. I didn't spend enough time there.

NP: Well, almost every government organization now has gone on this fee-for-service kick that--.

RM: The CGC made enough money on weighing fees and inspection fees. That's another thing they're doing wrong right now—apparently—is my foreman's always complaining about how much they charge. Even the guys who work for the CGC are complaining because they're charging too much for what they get. That's the guys I talk to, anyways. It's insane.

NP: That's always an issue. How much of the system should be subsidized by all of Canada through taxation versus just a strict fee-for-service that--.

RM: The way I understood it is that they always made money and they didn't have to charge what they do charge. I remember guys saying that. Like Baie Commeau made a fortune on weighing fees. If you spent this weighing fees money through the whole system--. That's the impression I had, but I always been a bit of a socialist/communist.

NP: My understanding—and it could be wrong as well—is that as soon as the government said the CGC has to make it exclusively on its fees, that's when the costs really started to rise and the questions about, well--.

RM: Yeah, okay, yeah. The impression I had was that, for instance, this port never lost a cent. And Baie Commeau made a fortune enough to cover a whole bunch of other stuff. What was the name of the lab? I forget the name of the lab. They used to have a lab in Winnipeg.

NP: The Grain Research Lab.

RM: Yeah. Why are you trying to make that thing make money? That's their--.

NP: Research.

RM: R&D. Everybody does that. Any government does that. Here's my conspiracy theory. The big companies don't like being told what to do. They just don't like being told what to do, so a typical neo-con will charge, will set the thing up so that it will fail. That's my theory on the matter. Maybe I'm just being a conspiracy theorist, but it's seeming to me because--. What the hell? You might hear that from somebody else too, I hope.

**[01:50:51]**

NP: Various opinions. This project is fascinating. Did you have any connection at all with the railway?

RM: No, no. Oh, wrong. We were probing cars in the yard one winter. That was great. We would go to the yards, and they'd give us the car numbers. We'd go down the tracks and we'd probe them.

NP: I have seen pictures—old pictures—of guys going in with a mat into the car with these things.

RM: Five-foot probe. Yeah.

NP: Is that how it's done? Describe that process.

RM: I've done that, but the only time we probed cars was when somebody forgot to tell us and loaded a damn car. We didn't get a sample, so then you'd go and probe the car.

NP: Just describe quickly the probing process.

RM: The probe we were using was--. The probe wasn't segmented. The five-foot probe I used wasn't segmented, so you'd go in there and you'd stab it one, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

NP: There was a specific process for the probing?

RM: There was a pattern. I'm trying to remember exactly how it went. So, you stab it. Though one time they loaded a car of mixed feed oats and it was right to the roof. I rolled in there. I stabbed one but it wasn't very good. The next time me and this elevator guy—Ivan, I forget his last name—we just--. It was a cardboard door on the boxcar, so we jammed it right through the door. We just poked about seven holes through the door and plugged it with paper.

NP: Then you'd pull out the probe with the sample in it?

RM: Yeah, but ours weren't segmented so you just tipped it into the bucket.

NP: Into a bucket? Was there a mat that you sat on or put your knees on or--?

RM: No. The mat was there because when they had a segmented probe, when you opened the probe, you put it down on the mat so you can see. When we were probing the cars, we had ten-foot probes, and they were segmented. The way we did it was one guy went on top of the car and stabbed the car. I think it was three times in each compartment. Every time you stabbed the probe, we had two probes. I usually went up top because I wasn't afraid of heights. I'd stab the probe, open it, close it, take it out, then I would lower this down to my partner on the ground, and he'd send me another probe. While I was stabbing, he would open it up. We had a big eavestrough we used, and we'd put it in the eavestrough. He emptied in the eavestrough. My partners told me you could see the different grades and the different levels. Then he'd pour that into a bag out of the eavestrough. That's what we used. It worked pretty good.

NP: Since the whole car's going to be unloaded and likely spirited up to a bin, what difference does it make having probes at different levels?

RM: For us it didn't make any difference at all because we just threw the sample. We were grading the cars--. You know, the whole car. We just found it interesting that you could see that the guy had done it in layers. That was interesting. It seemed to me there was a reason, but it's in the distant past. I remember going to the yards and probing a car that had been on there—on the yards—forever because it stank when we went in there. I went in there. I was the youngest, so I got to go inside.



[01:54:37]

NP: We have three minutes left. So, question. What would you say was your most vivid memory about your work career? Is there one?

RM: There's tons of them, but I was always fascinated by the power of loading the boats. That was something to see. When they had that spout on the inside, boy, the whole deck vibrated. I found that kind of interesting. I remember a guy getting killed at Pool 7, and they never even stopped.

NP: How did that happen?

RM: Baziuk's gang was out behind the track shed working on the tracks and they pushed in--. At that time, they didn't have the horns at the back, so they turned the horns on. I was in the office at that time. I was working at Pool 7's office helping the inspectors. They pushed in and the samplers never even slowed down. One of our samplers ran in and said, "Hey, a guy just got killed back at five track."

NP: Hit by a car?

RM: He got ran over. He got cut in half lengthwise.

NP: Oh!

RM: There was a chunk of his overalls still stuck to the track two weeks later. Old guy from Baziuk. They never even slowed down. I guess they must have shut down five track. I didn't even know, but it didn't feel like they stopped.

NP: What was Baziuk?

RM: Baziuk's gang used to work the tracks, like MAC Rail does now. Yeah, it was Baziuk's. I don't know what the name of their outfit was. We just called it Baziuk's gang.

NP: They just kept--.

RM: They dumped on the other four dumpers, and they never even slowed down. I can see the guy's face. I forget his name. The sampler that come in and told us. That same day a deckhand--. The mate give him too much cable when they were shifting, and the kid was too young to know to let go and the cable dragged him in between the boat and the dock.

NP: Bad day!

RM: We started looking at each other. "Who's next?" Then there was the time Don McDonald—he was first mate on the big *Paterson*—he fell between the dock and the ship at Pool 6. Ralph St. Pierre saved his life, but he couldn't get him out. There was an overhang on the dock. You must've heard that story? They pull him up and he gets stuck. So they have to lower him down again. Pull him up. He gets stuck. Lower him down. It was in April! Two years later, Don was dead. I was there and then, again, they never even stopped.

One of our guys got killed at Richardson's and they said he fell. He was leaning against the rail and the turnbuckle let go and over he went. He broke his skull. They phoned up and said, "Hey, get somebody out here!" Tommy [inaudible] had to go on the deck. Then there was--. What was his name?

NP: Gave way on the elevator or on the boat?

RM: He was standing on the boat leaning against the rail and the turnbuckle let go. So, he fell backwards onto the dock. He broke his skull.

NP: We're going to have to--.

**End of interview.**