

Narrator: Wally Madill (WM)

Company Affiliations: Alberta Wheat Pool (AWP)

Interview Date: 23 June 2013

Interviewer: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Recorder: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Transcriber: Sarah Lorenowich (SL)

Summary: Former CEO of Alberta Wheat Pool Wally Madill surveys his education and professional career that led him to the top position within the Wheat Pool. He describes his family's agricultural history in Alberta, their connection to the formation of the AWP, and his own interest in agriculture, economics, and global food systems. He discusses leaving the farm due to allergies, and working first in a bank, then for Union Oil in California, then as AWP's first economist. Madill describes his hands-on education of the grain system in the Winnipeg Grain Exchange and terminal elevators, and his interactions with farmers, elevator managers, and terminal elevator operators in information meetings. Other topics discussed include the importance of banks to the Canadian international grain system, the development of Canada's complex export system, the uniqueness of the Canadian Grain Commission in the world, the AWP's office buildings in Calgary, the joint Pools takeover of Federal Grain, the dismantling of Pool 9 Elevator in Thunder Bay, and his involvement in labour relations disputes on the West Coast.

Keywords: Alberta Wheat Pool (AWP); Agriculture economics; Farmer cooperatives; Grain farmers/producers; Futures markets; Futures contracts; Futures trading; Terminal grain elevators—British Columbia; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Winnipeg Grain Exchange; Agriculture financing; Canadian Wheat Board; Canadian Grain Commission; Bank of Montreal; International trade; Grain marketing; Federal Grain Company; Pacific Elevators; Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Manitoba Pool Elevators; Alberta Pool 9 Elevator—Thunder Bay; United Grain Growers Elevator A—Thunder Bay; UGG A collapse; Grain elevator disasters; Grain elevator demolition; Labour relations; Labour unions; Strikes; Automation; Contract negotiations

Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: Nancy Perozzo moving along on my zigzag tour across western Canada, and today I am in Calgary. I'll have our narrator or interviewee of today introduce himself and just a very brief statement of his history in the grain trade.

WM: Yes, my name is Wally Madill. I was raised on a farm in southeastern Alberta near Foremost, grew up on that farm, and went on to take a degree in agriculture. Then in employment spent most of my career working for Alberta Wheat Pool.

NP: Good. And I know from talking to you before the interview that that was an extremely truncated history of your work career. [Laughing] But I like it when somebody that I'm interviewing has farm roots because there's a certain richness to their understanding of the industry as a result of growing up on a farm. So I'm going to start right back then and hope that you're able to tell me about your family's homesteading history.

WM: Yes. My grandfather, John Dinsmore Madill, homesteaded. He came from Ontario, in the low area of Ontario, and homesteaded in the Foremost area. This area north of Foremost is, about in the 1909-1910 period, the homestead pattern is established then, so this area was down in the dry part of what's so-called Palliser's Triangle and was primarily a grain growing area.

NP: Did you ever know why he pulled up stakes from Ontario and came west to Alberta?

WM: Well, yes. He had worked in the west for Pat Burns. He knew livestock because he had had that kind of business in Ontario, and he liked the west and really, I guess, followed those instincts that this was a growing area, and he came out this way. Now--.

[Audio pauses]

NP: With that then too.

WM: Okay.

NP: Okay. We just did a little adjustment of our equipment here to better pick up sound. So your grandfather moved from Ontario, and did he set up a farm, or did he just work helping sort of with the livestock of other people?

WM: Well, he came out and worked with Pat Burns, who had a sizeable ranch in this Calgary area. He knew livestock, and he liked the area, and that's really where he started. Then he did go back east again, but the woman he married--. My grandfather was Irish. She was a Scot, and her family came to Calgary in 1887, and she was just a schoolgirl then. Her father, Simon Jackson Hogg, was on the first town council in Calgary. She was going to school here. Unfortunately, Simon got very ill and died, and they went back to Ontario where she had met my grandfather, and they got married. He wanted to homestead, and they moved back west. So that got them started in the Foremost area. But as a connection here of--. Both Anita and I are—because of the time that my grandfather

was here, great grandfather was here, and my grandmother were here before 1887—we are now members of the Southern Alberta Pioneers Society because anyone that was here before 1890, inclusive or as direct descendants, qualifies. We discovered that we qualified, so we put in an application for membership, which was accepted, and now belong to it.

[0:05:08]

NP: Did your grandfather live for a long time? So were you able to overhear him talk about the stories of what it was like homesteading?

WM: Oh, yes. We were living on the same farm, and of course, he was working then. But you know, the families were living together in different homes there. He ran into health problems though. And we were going to one of the country schools just a quarter of a mile away when he got a serious bout of pleurisy and died, and I was going to school then. So that put the farm really—and its operations—into my father's hands.

NP: You said that certainly being around as early as your grandfather was, he and perhaps even your dad would have been around for the formation of the Alberta Wheat Pool.

WM: Oh, yes. My grandfather was a great supporter of cooperatives and was, in fact, one that went out and worked towards establishing the Wheat Pool by holding meetings and working with them and was an original contract signer when the Pool was formed. He was one of the-- . And then later was a delegate from his district of Alberta Wheat Pool, as was my father later on.

NP: I've read some of the histories of the various Wheat Pools and a little bit about why farmers felt that it was important to take more control of the industry. Did your grandfather and father ever talk about the kinds of things that were going on that they felt needed--?

WM: Oh, yes. In fact, I guess there had been a big drop in the market for about that time, and this was hurting. But they felt that by working together, hopefully they could coordinate their activities enough to perhaps influence that market. That was a strong feeling then. There was a real concern with the hardship they had with the low prices of grain at that time.

NP: Did they feel that those prices were manipulated, or--?

WM: Yes, they did. That's another story too. [Laughs] But yeah, there was real concern about the marketing aspect.

NP: Now why do you say, “That’s another story too”?

WM: Well, we use futures markets today, and we had some very capable people on the staff of Alberta Pool that were very helpful in marketing our non-board grains that had to go through that and doing an excellent job. I learned from Jeff Griffin. He was a great man at Winnipeg. But one of the reasons I chose Stanford for graduate work was that they had put out a series of volumes, *The Wheat Studies*. They had put out a bound big volume of one every year, and there were 20 such volumes, *The Wheat Studies*. One of the professors there had a lot to do with it. Her name was Helen Farnsworth, and she worked hard with me to--. They had a very detailed way of presenting information history accurately and well, and so part of getting a master’s degree at Stanford was you had to really master that technique that they were using in your reports towards the--. Were part of not just the exams, but a big part of the--.

[0:10:02]

NP: The papers you prepared?

WM: Yes. The papers were to be prepared as though they would be fit to publish. She really worked hard with me. She was a great person. And the other thing is, they had a brilliant--. He was a brilliant mathematician, Holbrook Working, but he knew the futures markets inside and--. Futures markets were his specialty. I learned a great deal about how those markets worked from him. I think they’re, in a sense, they’re complicated. A lot of people didn’t understand them, but they are a price discovery mechanism, and we’re still using them today.

NP: Now, because you went on from beyond the education level that your grandfather and father had, I take from what you’re saying that you had a broader view of what was happening when the Wheat Pool came into being than your ancestors may have. So I’d like to discuss a little bit about this because you can verify for me whether some of the conclusions that I’ve drawn about that time are accurate or not.

WM: Mmhmm.

NP: Okay?

WM: Okay.

NP: So my understanding is that farmers were really upset, and they felt that they were not getting a fair deal.

WM: Yes, that's right.

NP: And that there was cheating going on related to what they were paid for grades, monkeying with the scales, and some collusion in prices that they got. Now, that's one side of it, and as a result of that, they were instrumental in getting some commissions, federal government commissions, to take a look at dealings. From my reading—which is very limited—those royal commissions or whatever they were called at that point didn't uncover large-scale cheating. Not that there weren't incidents of it, but that there was more happening that was causing the low prices than dirty dealings by the grain companies. Okay, so that's my uneducated, amateur take. [Laughs] So what's the real story?

WM: What the real story is, it was probably both, you know? There was enough of this to really justify it. And some of the stories I heard is that when the Pool was formed, part of it was getting their own elevator system because delivery went to the northern line at Burdett-Bow Island, a long distance. I heard stories that, well, farmers would hook up their horses to the wagon and take this long trip into--. The price wasn't--. You got him there, is he going to take it back? They used that to **leave** their price a bit, and they felt that they were taking advantage of the fact that, "Here we had them. You've got a long way to go to go back. He's not going to take that. He'll take my price." So there was some feeling that there was that kind of thing going on. That was a strong feeling about, "We want our own elevator system. We want our own people to deal with us when we bring that load of grain in to get sold." Yeah, that was there. Mmhmm.

NP: It was happening.

WM: It was happening.

NP: Was the Grain Exchange a den of thieves? [Note: a famous quote. NP]

[0:14:41]

WM: Oh, I don't know. I've got to tell you this too, and I'm jumping ahead here. But when I started working for Alberta Wheat Pool and Burt Baker was my boss, he put me through a rigorous training course. He said, "You're going to learn this business inside out. The way it is." He says, "I'm sending you to Winnipeg." Well, we just moved to Calgary. My wife was very pregnant. First child on the way. There were no telephones available. It was the middle of winter. We had one car, so he tootles me off to Winnipeg. We had a wonderful person in charge of our Winnipeg Office, name was Jeff Griffon. Jeff was from Bawlf Grain. Bawlf had a history, and Jeff knew the futures markets inside and--. He was a great intellect. He was a great gentleman. He was a great

person. And this guy took me aside and put me on the floor, and I met every guy that was there. We had lunch with them. I spent weeks out there, and he was a real mentor. It was a great experience. Now, we bring him into a meeting here, and it was just hanging on. "This is what's happening in the market, and I was up against this kind of situation, and here's how I handled it. Here's how I made the trade for you." And we had an open book to the exact things. I was fascinated with that, and I still am. I don't trade futures on my own. [Laughs]

It was a great experience. Part of it, and it was mid-winter, "You're going to go out to Thunder Bay. We've got a terminal there, and we want you to spend some time with them." And I did. I was there quite a long time, but it was mid winter. The lakes were frozen, and my God, it was cold. You're in the driveway at an elevator, 20 below, and the wind's blowing. It's not a great place. These guys would take me through the plant from one end to another, and I was fascinated by it.

NP: Was that your first time in a terminal elevator?

WM: Yeah.

NP: What fascinated you about it?

WM: Well, it was where things happened. This was the end point. And the complexity of this, which as I learned more, I really had more--. That's the place I had a lot to do with.

NP: The Vancouver--r?

WM: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

NP: But an elevator is an elevator. A terminal elevator is a terminal elevator in most instances.

WM: Well, the first thing the guy in Vancouver did is take down his stock sheets and he says, "I've got limited storage here. I've got to put this on that boat, do this." And he says, "You've got over 40 grades of wheat in this elevator right now." I said, "40 grades? You can't--." "Oh, yeah." You stop and think. It's hard Red Spring, it's hard Red Winter, it's durum wheat, it's soft White Spring, and then you've got all the multiples of grades within that, and then you've got the off-grades. Yeah, you can get that many grades. And he said, "This needs very careful management between us and your guys out on the--. We've got to work together on this or we really get tied up."

NP: We're jumping ahead of ourselves a little bit, and I'd like to come back to this because of the experience that you had in Vancouver, but if we're looking back—just sort of to stay on topic here with the Grain Exchange—my question was was the Grain Exchange a den of thieves once you got to know them?

WM: No, no.

NP: So a question of things going on and people that the farmers out west just didn't know and then are likely to distrust?

WM: Well, you know, you get in any kind of conflicts business association that is workable, that there's certain people who will deviate from it. It's no different than any other, and I really didn't see much evidence of that. In fact, Jeff, he was a--. You trusted him. He was ethical, and here he was, I thought, a master of knowledge in that particular area. And really a respected gentleman in that community. That was one of the best things that happened and that gain--. Burt put me out there. And Jeff was a unique kind of guy. He made sure that we met all these guys, and they responded because of him. They spent time with me.

[0:20:40]

NP: He was respected.

WM: Yeah. You bet he was. Very respected.

NP: You mentioned he worked for Bawlf. What do you know about the Bawlf Company?

WM: Well. [Laughs] I just finished reading Bill Parrish's book, and I guess the indication there is the Commodity Exchange started, their company and Bawlf were the formative forces and people that got it going. Bawlf, I don't know if it was one of the ones that went by the way as smaller companies and things consolidated. I don't know how he came to be, but he was managing our Winnipeg office. You couldn't have had a better guy to do it.

NP: Was Bawlf a native westerner, do you know?

WM: I don't. I think he was, but I don't have the history of that.

NP: Yeah. Because they had an elevator in Thunder Bay as well.

WM: Yes, they did. Yes, they did. Bill Parrish could tell you all about Bawlf, I'm sure, and I know Bill. [Laughs]

NP: Yes, we've interviewed Bill, but I didn't realize he would have been a wealth of knowledge on Mr. Bawlf. I should have asked him.

WM: I think he would know, yeah.

NP: Yeah.

WM: But I'm not sure. I just don't. It was way ahead of my time.

NP: So you spent the time in Winnipeg, and we've already leapt ahead of talking about the formation of the Alberta Wheat Pool, so I'd like to come back to that. We got there because I was saying were the concerns of the farmers legitimate or was part of the reason that they were concerned that they were quite far removed from the system, being the commodities market, that there's a distrust that builds up as a result of just not knowing other people or other systems? And your answer was, "There was both."

WM: Yeah, I think so. Oh, absolutely. But you know, part of it was the--. You remember things too on a farm, and one of them was the one year on that farm the total crop came back in three bundle loads of unthreshed rack loads. That's all that there was, and the price was 36 cents a bushel. How did it--? They lived off the farm, lived what you grew, and you got--. The people in the community, the store people, they carried you, and then you paid later on. It worked. I mean, hm.

NP: Did you ever overheard your grandfather and father talking about how easy or difficult it was to sign people up for starting the Wheat Pool?

WM: I think there was good support for it from what I gathered. He was pretty active, my grandfather. In fact, I did hear Dad say, "There's things that need to be done here on the farm that got neglected," because he was out there doing that kind of thing.

NP: They worked hard.

WM: Oh, they worked hard. Yeah.

NP: Did your grandfather sit in on the famous Shapiro speeches in 1923 when he came up from the States to encourage the Pool to happen?

[0:25:15]

WM: I believe he did. He went to see the--. Hm. I really don't have a good handle on that. There was a lot of talk about, well, I guess the people who came up from the States to tell us how this thing was going to work, and they paid a lot of attention to it.

NP: I think that's what surprised me most about the Pool movement was the fact that it actually came up through the States.

WM: Well, Sunskist Oranges were a co-op, and they worked just fine.

NP: You didn't stay on the farm.

WM: No.

NP: What happened there?

WM: In what respect?

NP: Well, why didn't you farm as your father had?

WM: That's a good question. I guess because both my brother and I—well, my sister too—had some grain allergies, and they could be quite severe at times. I never let it get in the way of me, and the guys, they knew. They'd grab--. "Come on in here. Here's your mask. Come on with me. Here's your mask. Let's go over here." It was part of me, and it was a part that didn't get in the way of me dealing with those guys at all.

NP: But it did mean you moved off the farm to take on a different career?

WM: Yeah, yeah. And really, Anita's got a piece of her family farm. That one's gone. I never got that opportunity to look after it either.

NP: Where did you go from the farm? How did your career expand?

WM: Well, let's just say I went through the loops with the bank.

NP: Yes. And we don't have that on tape, so we need to have it on tape now.

WM: Well, as I say, having worked at the farm and then it was a struggle with the dust at times, and my father could see that. He just kind of came in one day and said, "There's some pretty good opportunities at the bank. I think you should take one." And it happened. So you started as a junior carrying this and that and the other thing, and doing some ledger work, and finally through working into the teller's cages and getting a feel for what's going on and that. The bank was in Foremost. It served a large agricultural community. To the east it was to the Saskatchewan border. There were no banks. So it served a very big clientele, I should say. It was a reasonable sized operation in terms of the volume they were handling. There weren't many banks around that community then. So that was an interesting experience. That was going very well. They moved me into Cranbrook early, and then I moved onto university.

NP: And what did you decide to take at university?

WM: I took agriculture. I'm still--. I had started earlier, thinking, "Well, the oil business is starting, and they were punching holes all over southern Alberta." I'd go and talk to their--. And I thought for a while I'd take geology, and when I did get started, it didn't work. I dropped out. I guess I felt that later on I still wanted to go back and try it. Really what I was interested in was agriculture. And it did. I got a degree with distinction when I finished that one.

[0:30:14]

NP: Did you go in thinking that you would specialize in agriculture economics? Or were you not quite sure what you wanted to do?

WM: Well, the first two years were a general science background in agriculture, where you were exposed to--. They didn't push you hard about, "Use these experiences to make your judgement," which is a valid way. But I got fairly early in the game into wanting—maybe it was with the bank background and whatnot—that I wanted to be an agricultural economist, and we headed that way.

NP: You mentioned banks, and in our project, we're focusing on the development of Canada's export grain trade as opposed to the development of the west and farming. Always on the periphery of that, the export market, is the financial underpinnings of it. So how important are banks to developing an export grain trade?

WM: They're a very important part of the grain handling system. In fact, the system that we had with the Canadian Wheat Board [CWB] is that you were an agent of handling their grain on their behalf, but you owned the facilities. You hired the people. You were spending the money upfront. So it took very large amounts of short-term credit between the time you paid that farmer for his grain to when the Board settled with you because we didn't get paid until it was delivered to the Wheat Board and on its way. But the rates were favourable. It was a carefully supervised system, and all the banks were in it. We had big accounts with all of them, and you got to know them pretty well too.

NP: How did the Wheat Pool—and again this is jumping forward—how did the Wheat Pool decide which banks it would work with? Or was it deliberate that they worked with all the major banks?

WM: It wasn't quite deliberate. When they first--. There was one bank particularly that was very supportive and very involved all the way through. That was the Bank of Montreal. It got so though that these—you're handling a lot of grain, and a lot—these other banks got involved too and it was divided up more so eventually--.

NP: Was it a really competitive market where you just do hardnose negotiating for--?

WM: No, it was an established rate. The banks would have liked to have gotten better rates than that, I'm sure, but it was government supervised. [Laughs]

NP: Okay. So without the banks' involvement, would Canada have been able to manage an export grain trade?

WM: Well, it certainly financed the ability to move it. Yeah. And then to make the transactions in the interim to sell it. Yeah. Banks were a big part of it. Sure. Yeah, the banks were.

NP: And why do you think the Bank of Montreal was more involved?

WM: Well, they were part of the interest in seeing it involved and were the first in line to--. I'm a little hazy on that right now. But certainly they--.

NP: They must have been involved from way back.

WM: They were.

NP: So they were familiar with it and not so afraid of--.

WM: They were. They were involved right from the start. Mmhmm. Yeah.

NP: Agriculture economics is a fairly broad field in itself. What did you specialize in? What area were you most intrigued by?

[0:35:05]

WM: That's a good question. I guess it was taking a trend to mathematical, and I didn't get involved in that. It was generally the broad basis of economics. Hm. I took virtually all the broad courses in it, and I took a lot of courses, basic economics courses, too. Money and banking, international trade—these were Faculty of Economics provided, not Agriculture.

NP: I'm going to ask you a question that requires you to think way back to that time, and so if you can't recall what you were thinking, that's perfectly understandable. [Laughs] You went on to work in a company that did all kinds of work related to international trade, but when you were first learning about international trade, what were some of the surprises to you? Most intriguing aspects?

WM: It was a fascinating business, and it was really, well, I guess it was a combination of getting immersed in how is the trade working in Winnipeg. The Wheat Board was part of that. It wasn't just Jeff Griffon. Larry Kristjanson, PhD guy—all of them were [laughs]—said when I was working here and when I was a junior, "Come on down and spend two weeks with us. Find out what we're doing. We'll move you around." And he did, and they did. So I spent two weeks. I guess it's been in my--. I'm just fascinated with it. First it was the exposure to a listed futures market that's causing a lot of problems, but it's got very--. It's complicated. It's fascinating. It's interesting. And then it's the other side of it. I thought it was important.

The other issue is when I did get out to these opportunities to get involved in foreign aid programs, you saw people starving. It makes you think that the food industry is pretty darn important, and there's lots of things that we can do better and whatnot, you know? Sure, if you want to make ethanol out of grain, it'll do it just fine and make money on it, but there's still people that aren't getting fed properly, and I've seen it, and it bothers me.

NP: Is that situation—the fact that we burn food to drive around and other things that you use fuel for—is that just a natural offshoot of our economic system?

WM: I don't know. Really, the things that farmers grow have a great complexity to them. I'm not saying you shouldn't use them for a multiplicity of uses because there sure is potential there to do things with them. And I guess making fuel is one of them. But--.

NP: Did you ever think—and we're sort of really leaping forward now to your CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] projects—did you ever think that other than government intervention, food to the starving just wasn't going to happen?

[0:40:06]

WM: No. You had one stint with the Ford Foundation, and that's a commercial organization. They had top notch people in it, and they were right into--. This was the era of Norman Borlaug and the Green Revolution, and his breakthrough in getting high yielding crops. It wasn't just the crop. To make it work too you needed the chemical fertilizers. That's another aspect of it. You needed irrigation. That's another aspect of it. You needed a complex business system to make it go, and it's there.

NP: But people are still starving.

WM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

NP: Why?

WM: Distribution mainly. Yeah, it's--. I guess the ones that are starving don't have the resources either, is part of it. General economic development. It's a tough one.

NP: Mmhhh. Oh, how did we get off onto this? [Laughs] We veered into the Wheat Board. Oh, I know. We were talking about banking and the importance of banking, and the Wheat Board, because of its size, it would have been very much using banking services. Now the other thing we were talking about there was which way your interests went when you were taking your university degree, and you were leaning towards economics and the international trade, and so on. I'm going to ask a question now that I usually ask near the end of it, but since we're talking about international trade, I think this is a good place to ask the question. Canada, in spite of a lot of hurdles such as low population, poor climate—relatively speaking to other producers—distances from ports, managed to become a fantastic exporter of grain.

WM: Yes.

NP: How do you think that happened? What pieces were necessary for that to happen?

WM: Well, I think historically it was part of developing the Prairies and this vast expanse and putting a railroad in to make it happen and getting the country from coast to coast. How do you use these resources? Despite the climate, it's a climate with a particular variety of grain makes it one of the best for grain milling purposes, for food purposes.

NP: So research to get that type of--?

WM: Yeah, that's part of it. And I guess it was a general kind of--. Not just related to Canada, I mean, it worked across the States. I watched a film on the Dust Bowl. They were breaking every piece of sod they could to get more grain because the markets were there, the food needs were there, and you had the technology to move it, to handle it, and to get it there.

NP: What about the organizations that were built up? Did they have any impact?

[0:45:06]

WM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, they did. Yeah. The organizations--. I think Canada, developed through the Grain Commission, one of the best systems to support a quality type of product and differentiate between the different grades. But not only that, but the warehouse receipt system for trading grain and all this. Pretty interesting stuff. We've made our system more complex than some of the others, but Canadian grain isn't just your average quality from some of these other places that just turn it out the way it comes off the farm. It's a variety of specialized products.

NP: Now, you say that the Canadian Grain Commission's system is one of the best. Which others from your experience would be comparable?

WM: Oh, I don't know whether I can really compare it to a lot of others. It's the one I've had the most familiarity with it. But I know that when I used them as a resource for work I had to do in other areas, it was one of the best resources I could get, and they were very cooperative, and they were very helpful.

NP: Did they have an international reputation?

WM: Yes. Yeah. They put on a program, and it was a combined—and I had a part in that—in Brazil one year to the general trade on the Canadian grain handling system, the whole Canadian grain system, and how--. To a pretty broad audience. I had a little part of making a presentation there. [Laughs] But sure, they were recognized. In fact, Brazil was relying on--. See, they only had a small

part of the big, huge country that you've got that was down in the southeast corner of it of what was temperate enough for a good grain crop. The rest was all tropics. They were really relying on Canada for the technology to develop and use this. And that was part of them having this conference in Brasilia that time. Yeah, it was quite the experience. They flew us all over the country too. [Laughs]

NP: It's interesting you say this, and it's the first I've thought about this. Was Canada shooting itself in the foot being so cooperative with countries that could then compete with them?

WM: Not in the cases that I had anything to do with. In reality, I think that it could have been supportive. No, the Brazilians weren't in it for--. They were exporting soybeans like you wouldn't believe. Like that's soybean country. That's not our--. No, that's not our ball of wax at all. We were not competing. If you're working in that kind of an environment, yeah. Now, there are countries that have climates something like ours with very much different political systems. I think you know who I'm talking about, and that's Russia. [Laughs] I've been over a lot. I've been in Russia quite a bit. I like the Russian people when you get down to sitting down with them, and it's an interesting country.

[0:50:20]

NP: From your experience—and we'll go more into talking about terminal elevators a little later on—when you were visiting these various countries, were there terminal facilities that had been built by or designed by Canadian engineers? Because I know that, well, probably Banett-McQueen, but certainly C. D. Howe Company did built terminals outside of Canada.

WM: Yes, they did. Yeah. Yeah.

NP: Can you recall where any of them were?

WM: Oh, boy. No, I can't really put my finger on it.

NP: Yeah. I'm going to try to track all those down because that's a special interest of ours is how far these tentacles of building terminal elevators went.

WM: Yeah. Well, we tried it with that slope design in Brazil, and they built a few of those there, but that never really, really took hold.

NP: Was that with C. D. Howe?

WM: No, it was on our own. It was while we--.

NP: On your own. Oh, the--.

WM: Yeah. We used C. D. Howe for local but didn't really get much involved with them offshore. The Saskatchewan people did, I think. I don't know. They built terminals in Poland and what not, but they were abandoned later.

NP: Okay. Well, I'll talk to Mr. Turner would know about that.

WM: He'd be an excellent--.

NP: Source of information.

WM: Have you seen him lately?

NP: No, he's going to be my next victim. [Laughs]

WM: I like Ted. When I left the Pool, he would be--. Well, both he and Milt, they were belonging to these West Coast trade organizations, and the plane always stopped to change here in Calgary. Without fail, if it was Milt, he'd call me. If it was--.

NP: Ted.

WM: Ted, he'd call me. I miss them. [Laughs]

NP: You need to have a reunion! Unfortunately, Milt isn't around, and I'm sorry about that because everybody speaks so highly of him. I would have loved to be able to interview him.

WM: I have a great deal of respect for Milt. He and I were good friends.

NP: We're a little bit all over the map here. Fortunately, we can cut and paste and put things together. I'm going to--. We were talking about your undergraduate work. Now I'd like to go to your graduate work. You said that you had picked Stanford, and that's--.

WM: Food Research Institute.

NP: In Connecticut, or have I got that wrong?

WM: Oh, no. It's in California.

NP: In California. I get them mixed up. There's a Sanford and a Stanford.

WM: Yeah, it's in California.

NP: You mentioned the series of papers they did, the wheat papers. What was happening at Stanford that they were so interested in wheat?

WM: They were interested in commodities generally. That started way, way back, and it was one of their strong--. They were interested in the global food situation, the Food Research Institute. Not so much the technology of the agriculture and the rest of it, but feeding people, raising the commodities to do it, and where it was and how much of it was where it was and how it was done differently in each of the countries. They followed the major exporters and what they were doing very carefully. They knew what was going on in Argentina, for example, inside out. They knew what we were doing too. So they were really into the game, and I mean, these are a great record.

NP: And again, I apologize, but just on hoping that some things might pop out into your mind about it, you said that they were watching the Canadian situation closely because we were exporting grain. What did you learn about the Canadian grain trade from being in Stanford that you might not have known from Canada?

[0:55:12]

WM: What I did learn—and I think to put it a different way—is the American farm support system and parity pricing and all this kind of thing, they were kind of, well, they were free-marketers and critical of a lot of their own. It was fascinating to get into some

of that detail because that's a big business down there too. I mean, the Americans export a lot of grain, and they grow a lot of grain. Well, I thought it was a good piece of the puzzle.

NP: And I would assume if you talk to Larry Kristjanson and would you have been in touch with Jim Leibfried then too?

WM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

NP: So there must have been some interesting discussions there about talking free enterprise and yet highly subsidized--.

WM: Yeah. Hm. Yes, I had quite a bit of contact with all of those. Yeah. So.

NP: Do you really feel that--. Or should I say is it accurate to say that Canadian farmers were not subsidized to the extent that Americans farming the same crops were?

WM: I think so, yeah. Sure.

NP: That's not just an empty statement?

WM: No. The price support systems, I mean, they were very extensive and going through the farm--. You know, being retired now, I'm kind of distanced from it, but certainly they were well supported south of the border.

NP: Were you ever personally involved in any of the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] agreements?

WM: No.

NP: Or negotiations or--.

WM: No.

NP: Okay. Now, let's move to your--. Well, before we leave the Stanford experience--. So when you finished there and came back to Canada, what did you bring with you that served you well or set your mind on certain ways of thinking when you came back to Canada? What--.

WM: I think it broadened your outlook to the whole issue of the grain and food industry, and the perspective and the complexity of it in that way. I thought it was--. I've never regretted the time spent there. I thought it fit quite well in many respects.

NP: Mmhmm. I would think so.

WM: It did. Hm.

NP: So you're back in Canada, and maybe even in between here you had started with Alberta Wheat Pool because I don't think we ever got the story of how--. When we left your career, we were actually talking about the bank in Cranbrook. So how did you end up with Alberta Wheat Pool?

WM: Okay, that's good. All right. It's related in one way or another. I mentioned about how my grandfather was an original contract signer and went out and got others to do it, and my father then was a delegate too, and I was on the farm working, and he was out. He had his own meetings. Of course, I was going to UofA then too. Smart ass kid and this kind of thing. [Laughs] So I went to his meetings, and the one that he took me too, Burt Baker—who was CEO, or general manager was the title then—had a big farm in the area. It was very well run. One of the best in the--. And Burt was a very astute guy. He was on the board of the Bank of Nova Scotia, and he was Eastern Rockies Conservation board, and oh, countless other things. He had some association with the University of Alberta too, board of governors, at one time, I think.

[1:00:54]

He says, "You've got to come and listen to this man." Burt, he was struggling. We didn't have a union at the West Coast to begin with, and it had impacted him. It was a bit of a burr under Burt's saddle and all this kind of thing. He was going through the details of what was going on in this organization, and I was really impressed. My dad said, "You've got to go and listen to this guy," and he had a lot to say. I was very impressed with him. In fact, he was going into all kinds of details. A piece of paper--. Dad came back, and he says, "You know, there wasn't a single word on any of that paper." He says, "Those papers were all blank. He was just talking to you." [Laughing]

And so, I thought, "Well, it would be nice to work for that guy or with that system if they're really that way." And so, when I finished at UofA and were making the rounds, that was one of them. And I did talk to him. They were up in the old Lancaster Building here, I think, or the one across the street from it. He said, "No, I don't think we can take you on now." But he could sense that maybe there was a fit here somewhere. So I'd taken that job with Union Oil and really didn't like the vicious business climate of that. The way those guys operated down there is much different than we do.

NP: Now, we talked about this off tape, but we didn't talk about it here. So after you had your graduate degree from Stanford, then you took a position with Union Oil in--?

WM: In Los Angeles. Well, they were a good going company, and they had some good people on it. They had very well qualified people. But again, we were kids off a farm, and the environment in the Los Angeles massive--. It was a big change for both Anita and I. So I worked through the year there, and we were taking a holiday down here and stopped in to see Burt Baker. He says, "Yeah, I think we can take you on now." And he offered the same price I was getting down there. "Well," I thought, "we'll do it." [Laughing]

NP: Now, you said you were not too impressed with the way of doing business down there compared to here. You said it could be vicious.

WM: It was more aggressive.

NP: Aggressive.

WM: Well, I really--. No, don't really mean it in that sense. It was a very aggressive--. Well--.

NP: Can you give an example that would sort of illustrate the difference in intensity, let's say?

WM: Everything that you did was—socially—at any time to succeed was directed towards that end.

NP: Joining clubs and--.

WM: And entertaining and whatnot. You played bridge with the same people. You do this. You do that. Hm. I don't want to--.

[1:05:04]

NP: Yeah, that's okay. It just gives an idea of--.

WM: I mean, they were good people. Fine.

NP: And there are organizations--. I remember a friend of mine whose husband's career was in the army, and it was the same thing. You had social responsibilities if you wanted to--.

WM: Oh, absolutely. Now, the other thing, of course, is that California was really struggling with the smog situation then, and they really hadn't got to grips with it. I remember driving over in from Bakersfield to go over into the Valley, and here's this dirty yellow layer. You couldn't see anything. You just--. It was like that all the way in, and every day after every day. They said to me one day, "Well, we'd like you to take a group of our--." It was like our United Way kind of thing, but they called it the City of Hope. They had some ladies that were canvassing and taking part in this. You drive them out to Pasadena. Well, I got out on the freeway, and the tears were running down everybody's face, mine included. It was just--. We stopped, and two of those girls did not come back with me. They took them over to the hospital. That's how bad it was.

NP: So it was good to get back to the clean air.

WM: There are parts of California that I really like, but living in the middle of that was pretty--. And it was day after day like that. We were in a community called Monterey Park. It was just south of Pasadena. Of course, you had these horrendous car commutes everyday. Ours wasn't bad, but some of them were. But still, you were getting up real early, driving in, and coming back, and that was your day, and you were done. But one morning we woke up and looked out the back, "Where did those mountains come from?" They were close. They were beautiful. We'd been there three or four months, and we had never seen them. And then one morning the wind had changed, and God, they were beautiful. Yeah, that's--.

NP: Now, you mentioned Burt Baker.

WM: Yes.

NP: And you went on to work with him.

WM: Yes.

NP: So tell me about him and why you admired him so.

WM: Well, he was a man of principle. He had a sharp mind. He was a good administrator. I mean, he was the right guy for that job. There were things that he did that I followed up on that I thought illustrated this very well. One of the programs, we had country elevators all over the place that they developed that we would meet face to face with these guys every year.

NP: Every elevator manager?

WM: Not every. We would take half the province one year and half the next. You were sitting--. There were two things about this. Well, first, it was a very astute movement. These guys would do anything for you, and they were great guys. A French-Canadian community, you put a French-Canadian guy in there. Ukrainian community, you put a--. Mormon community, you put a--. That was one of the--. But they were good. They were a collection of very fine, capable people. Now, this started out as a means of, "Well, this is what it's doing," and kind of making presentations to them, and that was important because when we got into the fertilizer business and then the farm supply business, these guys were grain buyers. They knew it inside. "Hey, this is another complexity that they--." And they really wanted to--. We had some good guys. Allan Sorensen, Dick Clavke both has master's degrees, I think, best in the country. One fertilizer, the other plant science. The guy above them in the seed division, he was a good administrator. He put together a good group of--. So we put together some darn good programs for these guys.

[1:10:25]

But Burt Baker had developed this. "We're going to talk to these--." We were the only ones doing it at the time. It had a good strategy. Then we changed it. A guy that says, "Well, you know, you've got to get up there and tell them part of your story." But he says, "I think you should sit down with them in small groups and let them tell you their issues." We'd make a morning of general presentations, and then we'd say, "You guys are split up into little groups. Several of you at a table. Make a list of the issues that you really think are important to you today, and you want issues on. We're going to circulate and sit down with you in these small groups, and we're going to allocate them, the ones that have the background, this question, this question, this question." Eyeball to eyeball. Boy, that worked.

These guys were putting their stuff on the table. The issue--. This was very important. You didn't walk away from that and say, "Well, we had a pretty good time," because they'd all go back and say, "Well, what are they going to do about all this stuff we told them about that we need?" We had to follow up on all of that and come back the next time and say, "We're in the interim too. Here's what's been done here, here, here, and here."

NP: So can you think of some of the issues that the elevator managers were able to bring to head office's attention?

WM: Oh, sure. There were all kinds of them. Oh. Part of this game was that we weren't unionized, and the elevators in Saskatchewan got unionized. Our attitude was, "You're going to get treated at least as well as they are and a little better, and we'll

prove it to you.” That worked too. You could see the business in the--. It was one of the best businesses. Those guys had control out there, and they had the farmers, and we were beating the competition all up.

NP: Who was the competition in the--?

WM: Well, Cargill was one. United Grain Growers [UGG] was another. Some of them were pretty--. They had good people too. They started to pick it up doing the same thing we were doing. [Laughs]

NP: Well, in a sense, it was very much like the delegate system where they were finding out what the farmers’ concerns were and dealing with that.

WM: Yeah.

NP: What was Mr. Baker’s background? He had big farm, you said.

WM: Yeah, he had the big farm. He was going to take medicine at university, and he got into the pre-med, got finished that, and then things got tough on farming, and he came back and stuck with the farm. But he was a great community person, and he was a great supporter of the Wheat Pool. So being on their board, I guess it was--. I’m not clear. When the general manager of the day retired, Burt had a background that the farmers themselves were quite comfortable with, and he knew enough about the business himself that they made him general manager. He did the job very, very well.

[1:15:01]

NP: I’m going to ask you a question that relates to these early days with Mr. Baker and you coming in as an economist, was that your first--?

WM: Yeah.

NP: Okay. Think back to those first years that you were with Alberta Wheat Pool, which was ’58, I think, you started?

WM: Yeah.

NP: Yeah. Think about the office. Think about how big it was, the kind of people that were there, where they came from, and then I'd like you to compare that to what it was like when you left in '89.

WM: That's a good question. We had a couple of floors in that Lancaster Building and the penthouse on top, and the Pool was packed in there tight. Had some stuff down and computers in the basement because they were big heavy things then. So Burt hired me. He says, "I haven't got an office for you yet." The boardroom was small. He says, "Put your stuff in there, and you can use that boardroom. We'll make other arrangements when the board needs it." So I did, and I worked, and I did work around. You could see where kind of coming in, "Who the heck is this guy? And what's going on?" It was a break in the--. And finally, he says, "We've got you an office." It was moving in with the employee relations. Not the employee relations, the public relations end of it. It was a tiny little office, and they split it in half, and they were in one end, and one--. Oh, boy. [Laughs] They didn't like that either! But you worked through it.

NP: The new kid on the block.

WM: Yeah. The new kid on the block.

NP: Probably more highly educated than a lot of the people on the other side.

WM: Yeah, yeah. He's taking part of our room, and now our office is smaller kind of thing. Anyway, Burt was working on--. "We can't stay at this building." He got them to buy a piece of land down by the--. When he told me, he says, "We're going to build." And they started building the Alberta Wheat Pool Building then.

NP: Which is near where?

WM: Which is downtown. Second and--. It's still there. That's going to be a new office building, and that's when we all got decent offices.

NP: So there was a public relations group?

WM: Yeah.

NP: And there was your new responsibility as an economist.

WM: Yeah.

NP: Who else were in that old building?

WM: Oh.

NP: Like what other divisions were operating?

WM: There'd be the construction and maintenance guys. They were up in that penthouse in the top. Then Ross Humphreys, who was a controller, he was another who was just way ahead of the pack. He got the Pool into computers real early in the game, and those were those big monstrous ones. They were so big they were down in the basement. So you had the key punchers. You had a room full of key punchers, but we were one of the first that--. And that was Ross that did it. Ross kind of was a mentor to me too. He'd stop, and there was always this kind of friction between the guys in the operating side and the office kind of people, you know? The operating people knew the operating business very well. But Ross was, in the financial end of it, a pretty good controller. Anyway. I'm getting off the track.

NP: Well, no, we aren't because now we go to fast forward to 1989 when you left. What did the office look like? How many divisions, types of people, size of building?

WM: We were in the new building, and first the top floor was wood panelled, and they were finishing it off just before we were ready to move in, and it caught fire. So we didn't move in, and so we stayed in the old one for a long time. Finally, they got it rebuilt, and I had an office. Of course, working with Baker, not initially next door to him but eventually I was. This is--.

[1:20:25]

NP: And eventually you took over his office.

WM: Yeah.

NP: So when you left, you were on the top floor in a wood panelled office?

WM: Yeah, in the corner office.

NP: How many more divisions were there by the time you left from when you started?

WM: Well, you see, what the biggest change that had happened was the Wheat Pools working together to acquire Federal Grain, and that was a big, big move. So that added a lot of new employees in the country, new facilities in the country, some more terminal facilities. That was a big move for the Pools.

NP: When did that takeover occur, do you recall?

WM: Oh, boy.

NP: Was it early 1970s? '73-'74?

WM: Something like that, yeah. I'd have to look it up.

NP: Now, were you involved in those negotiations?

WM: Oh, yes.

NP: Okay. So can we talk about that?

WM: Mmhmm.

NP: I talked to Mr. Searle, so I have his comments on it, so now I'm interested in how that unfolded. [Laughs]

WM: Oh, how did it unfold? Well, Ira Mumford was the CEO at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool then, and Sask Pool was the big player in the game. I was fairly new to the position too. Bob Moffet was CEO at Manitoba Pool and me were kind of involved in the--. Yeah, and Stew Searle was probably one of the main guys on the other side that we dealt with. I think they had a sense, and my sense is that they had other opportunities—Federal did—that they wanted to get into that they would do better in than the grain business. So they were ready to sell.

NP: They made the--. They reached out?

WM: Yeah, yeah. I think Ira on the other side could see that this is a good thing for us to take in too. So it did. Just spent hours on it. It evolved and happened.

NP: So all three Pools were involved?

WM: Mmhmm.

NP: So what kind of negotiations went on between the three Pools as to what assets who had and what would be jointly managed?

WM: Well, we were, again, we were operating in different provinces for the country facilities that it boiled down to whatever they had in Alberta was Alberta Pool, or whatever in Saskatchewan, and whatever in Manitoba. So that wasn't really an issue. The terminals were different. They had the big operation at the West Coast, so we eventually took that over jointly, but we as Alberta Pool operated it for them eventually.

NP: They had at least one elevator in Thunder Bay.

WM: Yeah. I'd forgotten about that because you knew what happened to this one, I suppose.

NP: Well, let's finish this off, and that's where I was moving to next.

WM: That wouldn't--. I think I'm rusty on this. I'd have to--.

NP: I wonder if Manitoba Pool took that one.

WM: Who did?

NP: I wonder if Manitoba Pool did?

[1:25:00]

WM: Manitoba Pool, when we were kind of a small player or any player at all at Thunder Bay, were running things for us when we were using them. They were running our terminal at the end for us. That worked okay.

NP: Were they difficult negotiations with Federal, or they were keen to sell, you were keen to buy, and so it went pretty smoothly?

WM: It went pretty smoothly. The issue, of course, was the terminals at Vancouver sitting out there. That was a little harder kind of issue. I think not once it happened but--.

NP: What was the--?

WM: They weren't involved. That organization that ran that terminal there was not involved in the negotiations. It was a done deal.

NP: What do you mean it was a done deal?

WM: Well, when it was--. [Laughs] When it happened and was agreed upon--.

NP: When what happened and was agreed upon?

WM: The Federal deal was done.

NP: Takeover, okay.

WM: And we agreed on it, they called in the top, Jack Gage, who was in charge of the Pacific Elevators. He didn't know why he was coming in. [Laughs] These guys, they looked at me, "You're going to go in and tell Jack Gage we just sold his elevator." It wasn't much fun.

NP: So was that elevator separately owned? Or was it--.

WM: Jointly.

NP: Jointly owned with Pacific?

WM: They were handling grain for all of them, but it was a separate company.

NP: Okay. A subsidiary of Federal then.

WM: Yes.

NP: Because that's how they could sell it from under them.

WM: Hey, when we got into it, we had fun with it too. It was an older plant, and it was really a conglomeration of three different elevators that had been put together. But it handled a lot of grain. It was a biggie out there.

NP: So what happened to Mr. Gage? Was he kept on, or he had his buyout package.

WM: No. He had a package.

NP: Okay. That's good to have that information. Let's go onto terminal elevators, and I've got a question about one that I just found out about, or an issue. In Thunder Bay, back in 1932 apparently, there was a fire in the Alberta or Union Terminal, which I think became--.

WM: That's right.

NP: Okay. So what can you tell me about that history? Because I had never heard of the 1932 fire.

WM: I haven't either. I can't tell you anything about that really.

NP: Now, is this elevator that we're looking at back at this picture here—which I've taken a picture of—when was it built, do you know?

WM: That was the Union Elevator. It wasn't built by us. We bought it from Union, I believe.

NP: And who was Union?

WM: I don't know. I don't have much background on that. But you know what happened out there?

NP: No.

WM: Well, the elevator on the right is United Grain Growers, and I had been out there several times, and there were foundation problems.

NP: With?

WM: With both of our elevators.

NP: Okay. With the United Grain Growers and yours.

WM: It fell down.

NP: I knew that. [Laughs]

WM: Now, Burt Baker was GM then, and that outside annex if you look at it, it started to move, and you could stand at this end and look at it, and it was going way out into the water. I'm not kidding. I stood out there and looked at it. So what do we do? They got C. D. Howe in, and they got others too, and they put in sheet piling, and it blocked it, and it stopped it. But then it still left the darn thing. It was quite a site. I'd done this more than once. Stand back here on the--. And look at it and say, "Jeez, it's gone a long way out into the water." It stabilized.

[1:30:22]

Now, that was for the time being. C. D. Howe was looking the plant over, phone rang and said, "You've got other problems. Now you've got a very unstable foundation under your workhouse, and we think it's very, very bad." So I got in an airplane, went out there, and they'd cut a whole bunch of holes in the floor. It was just like soup. I mean, there was no--. What do you do? "Well, maybe you've got to tear the workhouse down and put another one up." That was the end of the terminal. We dismantled it. That was really getting to be very, very risky. Stopped it. Until you saw it, you hardly believed it. A whole bunch of holes cut, and cripes, you could put your hand in there and slop them around. That was your foundation. And they said, "This thing is moving too." Well, where do you go, and how do you do it? In the interim, Manitoba Pool's elevator was the same thing, and it collapsed into the slip.

NP: The UGG?

WM: Yeah. I mean, yeah, UGG. The same problem. Same problem.

NP: And what happened to the land, the property? Did you sell it off?

WM: Phew, that's a good question. I don't remember because it--. And of course, if we needed to--. Anything we--. **[Audio pauses]** I don't recall what they--.

NP: Okay. I'll put it back on now.

WM: I don't recall the details on that property, but I do know that from that point on, any grain that we handled through Thunder Bay was through Manitoba Pool Elevators and sometimes Saskatchewan, both.

NP: Did your own group take the elevator down? Because you had a construction--.

WM: No. We would have had someone else do it.

NP: Do you recall when that was approximately?

WM: Hm. I'd have to look it up.

NP: Okay. If you could find it relatively easily that would be great because that's one of the things we're trying to keep track of is--.

WM: Yeah. I don't know whether I've got it in here or not, but I don't think I have.

NP: Oh, don't worry about it. It's not one of those things that we can't track down with a little bit--. [Telephone rings] **[Audio pauses]**

WM: Yeah.

NP: So that's the story of the Pool 9 in Thunder Bay, one of the first new-ish elevators to go down. The records of your terminal elevators—not just Thunder Bay but elsewhere—were they archived somewhere?

WM: Hm. I don't know. There may be--. Hm. I don't know where'd they go if they did.

NP: Glenbow Museum perhaps?

WM: I'm not aware of it. Hm.

NP: Okay. What can you tell me about your terminal elevator sort of construction group and your terminal elevators elsewhere?

WM: Well, that gets into my--. I think I told you—or did I—that the West Coast was always a labour situation, and we'd had several strikes and the like out there. Maybe I've mentioned this before.

NP: Off tape. Just off tape.

WM: But I think it was McNamara called Burt Baker one day and said, "We're concerned about the operation, your plant out there. It can do a lot more. It's not performing. We need it. What can you do about it?" And Burt—I was in his office—and he told me about this. The pressure was on. I said, "Can I take that on?" And he just didn't pause. He says, "Okay." Well, he can go back and tell McNamara he's got it in hand, and if I screw up, I'm out the front door anyway.

[1:35:30]

NP: Now who was McNamara?

WM: He was head of the Wheat--. Was that him at the Wheat--? Whoever it was was chairman of the Wheat Board then.

NP: Probably McNamara.

WM: Yeah, it was. And so, I went out there under some very interesting conditions, and we'd had labour consultants and whatnot. The issues were usually money, money, money, and classifications and the like. But what Burt had done was a great thing. He said, way back, he said, "I want you to get involved in this labour situation. We're negotiating as a group out there, and we need a recorder for these sessions, and I think you should go out and do that." So yeah, I did. Well, that was some experience.

NP: Tell me about it.

WM: Well, Ed Sims was head of the--. Ed was a tough guy, but I got to know these guys later on.

NP: Ed Sims was the head of--?

WM: The union. He'd say, "The gun's on the table." [Laughs] He was tough. He was tough as nails. But anyway, I'd spend the day, and they'd be going back and forth, and we had a consultant that was speaking on behalf of us all. I was the guy keeping track of it. He said, "You're keeping a lot of details. They don't know that we've got a record this good." He says, "Keep it up." Well, I'd work all day, and then I'd work all night getting on a Dictaphone doing it all over, give it to the gals in the office, and we had quite a record.

NP: So what do you think was--. Was it just strictly a money issue?

WM: No, no. There was a lot of issues, and I found that out. Anyway, one of the things, though, that came out of being, "We want more money," is the consultant was saying, "You don't have--." They didn't have a pension out there then. They were resisting this. I said, "You're just going to take our money and put it in your pocket." They didn't--. They were opposing putting a pension in the union. So Burt got up at a banquet one day, and he held these for us, and he used that as his pulpit, which was a mistake because these are all union guys, saying—not our guys out here—about "You should get this pension." Ooh. That was like pouring gasoline on a fire. So that's when it got to the--. Thing were breaking down. Productivity's going down, everything.

NP: So what were some of the other issues beside the--?

WM: Oh, there were lots. But the first thing I did is this was the hot button, and I was out there new and Burt always used the--. I said, "I want to meet with your shop committee. I'm going to meet out at the plant." I set it up. And jeez, I walked in there—these are all our guys—and the place was wall to wall. And as soon as I opened my mouth, *Ar, ar, ar!* Oh, they were wild. I thought, "My God, I'm not going to get out of here." They were really worked up. I find this guy behind me, and he says, "Wait a minute. Just wait a minute. Let's see what this young man has to say." It stopped.

[1:39:54]

So I went through it carefully. I said, "You will need these pensions. This is one of our motives in doing it." I said, "We're not taking your money." I went through—I knew quite a bit about pensions at this time—that, "This is supervised as to what we have to invest it in. It's supervised on the performance by office superintendent financial institutes. Your money is protected, and we want you to have this." Silence. Well, from that time on, I went out to the plant, things started

to change. I was working with them, and they listened to me, and I wasn't raising hell about anything else. I was just getting in there. "What's happening?" Getting on your turf. "You're not coming to me. I'm going to you." The shop steward there, his name was John Gault, a Scot-[inaudible] And they were all for the union.

One thing I had to do because I knew we were very top heavy in employees. I'd gone down into the States, and some of the co-ops there had started to automate. One of them, the big ones, we went through their plant. I thought—I had my engineer with me and all the rest of me—that there's parts of this that we could adapt to our operation in Vancouver. So I get going. This is the day, none of these fancy chips and whatnot—these were all relay systems. Well, they had a lot. They would work, and they were making work down there. There was lots to be desired. They don't work like they do today. They were glitch here, glitch there.

NP: Automating the elevator systems?

WM: Yeah. John Gault, he was the head weighman as well as shop rep there, and he was sitting there watching this darn thing. I came and set down a chair. "John, how are things going?" "How is it--?" I'd get a list of expletives for about 15 minutes listening to him, then we'd talk. I did that every gall darn time I went out there. [Laughs]

NP: Now, comparing West Coast labour relations to Thunder Bay relations.

WM: These were more--. These were a bigger problem at the West Coast.

NP: More militant, would you say?

WM: Yes. Very much more. But you know, what else happened out of this, we'd had a--. Well, and then they had a strike. Lots of--. The labour consultant said, "Well, the union had always provided watchmen." Well, he says, "You don't put union people on work when they're on strike." He says, "The superintendents do this. You get your superintendents to do the watchmen." I thought, "Oh, wow." So I was out there then. And so, it starts. I thought, "These guys are sitting out in that plant, and it's not running, and they're out there watching it." I get in my car just before midnight, and I go out there, and I sit down with them, and I spend most of the night with them. I do that the next night too, and I did it several times after that. I thought, "By God--." A terminal that I loved, and they've vibrant, they're

going, and all you hear is the rats running around. [Laughing] And I tell you, it's the spookiest thing you ever--. Out there on that waterfront, I thought, "These poor guys."

So I went out there several times, sat up with them. I was getting a little bushed in the game too. [Laughs] But it started to pay off. We got the plant up and running again. These guys, one by one, they were good, our supervisory crew. "This is how we worked the shipping," and it was complicated. "Take me through it step by step." They started me at the top, they took me through that plant, they showed me everything they could go about it inside out, and it was the best. Then I'd go into the office, and of course, the office is unionized too. Bill Pollack who was the accountant, "Come here," he says. "You. I want to tell you how we arrange all the contracts and the shipping and this." That was complicated, and they took me through that part by part by--. These guys were helping me out.

[1:45:40]

NP: And they were proud of what they did.

WM: They were damn proud. They should have been proud of what they did. I would not have succeeded any other way. They were detailed, and they took their time with me. [Laughs] Okay.

NP: And you were interested.

WM: That too.

NP: Like you were doing Mr. Baker's--.

WM: Yeah. And you'd be surprised how performance turned around in it. The thing that bugs me in terms of--. Maybe I better not get into this.

NP: Why not?

WM: Well, have you read Bill Parrish's book?

NP: Gee, no. I couldn't get a copy.

WM: He was pretty hard on the board administrations of the co-ops and why they failed, but he was supportive of guys like me and even gave us accolades. That terminal is so critical, and there were guys that came in later that didn't understand this. Well, I'm getting carried away now, but I told you about the meetings we held with country elevators. I thought, "You get an empire here, an empire here." Well, the guy in the country says, "Just ship that, and the terminal can look after that. That's their problem." Or the terminal guy says, "Those S.O.B.s are bugging up my terminal operation." I thought, "We've got to get these guys together."

So I bring—and he was a firecracker—the top guy at the terminal in at one of these meetings, and one of the things that is hard to avoid is the grain gets mixed. The terminals are required to make the separation, and to make the financial settlement on either part. Well, the country elevator guys know this, and so, I guess the issue was, "They were kind of taking advantage of us, aren't they, at the terminal?" They kind of admitted this. Ken was out there and one of these [inaudible] admitted, "Yeah, if we want to get rid of it, that's how we do it." And when Ken got up at the end and made his report, Lloyd Nellon, who ran it, he was a good guy, but he was tough as nails too.

NP: Who was Lloyd?

WM: He was in charge of the country operations under me, of course.

NP: And his last-- [the recorder stopped working]

End of interview.