

Narrator: Brian Mallon (BM)

Company Affiliations: Manitoba Pool Elevators (MPE)

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Summary: Retired general manager of terminals for Manitoba Pool Elevators Brian Mallon discusses his long career within the grain elevators of Thunder Bay. He describes getting his first job as summer relief in the car shed of Pool 1, and he explains the variety of roles in the car shed boxcar dumper and hopper car unloading operation. He discusses his work on the grain cleaning equipment, shovelling boxcars at other MPE elevators, and dealing with grievances as the union shop steward. He recalls working with the skilled trade professions in the elevators, Canadian Grain Commission inspectors and weighers, and outside coordination groups like the Grain Transportation Agency and Lake Shippers Clearance Association. Mallon then discusses his move into management first as a foreman, then as assistant superintendent and full superintendent of Pool 3, then general manager of all terminals. He recounts the major challenges of his time in management, namely the closure of Pool 3 and the amalgamation of MPE with Alberta Wheat Pool and eventually with United Grain Growers. He discusses some of his other work in management, like sitting on safety committees, touring MPE country operations, implementing employee training programs, negotiating with the union, and meeting with other elevator managers on the Lakehead Terminal Elevator Association. He recalls the major changes during his career, like the downturn of grain movement through Thunder Bay, automation of elevator equipment, and the downsizing of staff. Other topics discussed include year-end bonuses for staff and management, workers' compensation programs, his pride in showing off the MPE operation, and his part time work during lay-off periods. He ends the interview by looking back through photographs of the MPE terminals.

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Time, Speaker, Narrative

EE: Let's get underway this morning. Perhaps I can start by you giving your name.

BM: My name is Brian Mallon and I worked for the Manitoba Pool Elevators [MPE].

EE: Perhaps you can tell me how you came to work at the grain industry.

BM: I started on July 4, 1963, and it was kind of interesting how I got my start. I was, happened to be delivering bread for one of the local bakeries that day, and I was working in the area around where I lived. My dad was coming home for lunch and he seen me and stopped the car and he said, "Would you like a job at the elevators? They're going to start hiring." And I says, "Yeah, it sounds good." The money was good. I knew that. He says, "Well, they are going to be hiring quite a few people. So why don't you come back to work with me this afternoon. You'll get a good head start on the seniority list." So I informed the driver of the bakery truck that I quit and I went back to work with my dad that day. It turned out that I was the only one hired that day, and the next morning they hired 40 more people. So it gave me a good head start on the seniority list. I was ahead of 40 people. That helped me over the years on the seniority list.

EE: Could you say something about what your father was doing at the time?

BM: My father was the general foreman at the time, and he had been working at the elevator for I think about 20 years, at that time. He was, I guess they just opened up the new plant at Pool 1 and put a big expansion on it and they were--. Just got it working properly and they were going to put on a second shift, and they needed some employees to cover that second shift. So they started to hire some people. So I was fortunate enough. My brother was already working there. I guess when they opened up the terminal, they had quite a few people working there. They all had sons looking for work, so each employee was allowed to give one name of a son or relative, and they hired them first. They used that all up the second round, and I happened to get on and was very fortunate because I spent 39 and a half years working in the grain business, all with MPE, except for the last few years.

EE: Your father wasn't actually in charge of the hiring?

BM: No, no. He just heard that they were hiring.

EE: Had he talked about his work at the elevators over years? Had you thought about becoming an elevator, a terminal, employee?

BM: Not really, no, just I graduated out of high school. He didn't talk too much about the elevators. Although after when we started working there, and things changed quite a bit, we had a lot in common, so we did discuss a few things. He always mentioned to us that he was the boss and he's not your father. He says, "I have no sons working in the elevator." Just we're all employees and everybody was treated the same. So that was a big asset. There was a little pressure on a lot of us. A lot of the management people had relatives working there and they expected you to be good and do a good job. So it had a little added pressure for us, but it didn't seem to bother us. We all did our job and I guess it paid off because we stayed there that long and had a good career with the company.

EE: Were any of the employees terminated, generally or perhaps particularly, any of the ones that started in this way with the parents, fathers, at the upper level?

BM: There were a few. A few fellows just couldn't take the dust and didn't like the job, the noise and whatever. A lot of people were just there for the summer—summer relief—and went back to school, university or other jobs or other careers. There was, I guess, actually when I started the paper mill was looking for employees. The post office was looking for employees, and all the other grain elevators were looking for employees, summer relief, and they were all adding shifts. I think at one time there were just no employees around. You just couldn't get anybody to fill the vacancies. It was good for us.

EE: Real competition at the time. You said '63, so this would be four years after the Seaway was completed. Was MPE expanding in terms of greater business to be done?

[0:04:59]

BM: Well with the expansion of the elevator, I think the crops were getting larger and larger and business happened to be peaking a bit early in the late '60s, and there was a big demand for grain. I remember after just working there for four years, at the end of the year we brought home our T4 slips and I had earned more money than my father, and he had been there at that time almost 25 to 30 years. And I made more money because of the hours of overtime. I worked a lot of overtime and management didn't get paid overtime. He just got a salary, and he took my T4 slip and went to the management, phoned Winnipeg and said they were going to take a look at it, and lo and behold they changed the whole structure system for management. It turns out I ended up being in management, and they did quite a good job because the pay was quite good at the time when I got into management.

EE: So that was the point at which you were promoted into management?

BM: No, I was still an employee. I was only there for four years. Actually, I spent 21 years in working in the union.

EE: Why don't we traverse those years. Why don't you tell me stage by stage the sorts of things you did from the beginning? People will be interested in the actual, the best word picture you can give us of what you actually did.

BM: Well, my first day was, like I say, was just half a day. I went in. I was brought for a tour around the elevator, an introduction of what they do and how things work and everything. The next morning, we started, and we just sat around while they were hiring the other people, and they took us in groups of six or seven and brought us to different departments to learn that area. And I had been working in the track shed at the time—the car shed—where they unload the hopper cars. They just had a new automated unloading system, and our job was to sweep the cars out, and some fellows, when the cars were empty, to ride the cars down the track and stop them and come back and wait for the next one. And other fellows would learn how to hook the cable, or the winch, onto the car so they can position the car over the dumpers. Other people were trained to run the automatic dumpers—a job that I eventually did at one time. But you had to work at the bottom and work your way out, up. I guess about after a week or two, they moved you into a different department.

EE: Can I ask about this area a little more? So there were a half a dozen of you required to unload the cars. The automatic dumper would still require a good deal of human--?

BM: Yes, you still required quite a few people actually at a--. Well, I guess you needed a dumper. You needed a person running the winch, the cable, to pull the cable. Then you needed a brakeman, or a rider they called them. We called them brakeman, but they were called riders, to ride the car down. You also had the sweeper. A lot of the cars were hopper cars, a lot were boxcars, I guess. Most of them were boxcars at that time. Sometimes board and paper would fall out and you had to pick that up. That would be the sweeper's job. At the very end, when they finished unloading the car, there would be maybe a shovelful, a wheelbarrow full of grain at the door, so you'd sweep that into the hopper, so the cars would be completely empty. And they also had a foreman who would make sure everything was working right, the equipment, and also had shunt slips or slips of car numbers he would give to the dumpers, so they'd be unloaded in sequence. They had a red and green light system for unloading the cars. The cars would be positioned over the dumper and all set up ready to be unloaded. The first process was to unload the grain, but you couldn't start until you received the green light that meant the system was okay. The first process was bring the car into the hopper and elevate them upstairs on a conveyer belt and weigh them.

EE: This is the grain being weighed? Each car would be distinctive as far as the cargo was concerned. You couldn't assume that the next car had the same kind of grain in it.

BM: Each car actually on the shunt list, or the list of the cars, it had the actual car number and the quantity of grain inside the car. Every car was kept, recorded individually, their weight and their grade. As the grain was being elevated upstairs, grain would pass underneath a magnet. It would pull any metals. There might be some nails or some metal strapping from the car, up to a depth of eight inches in the grain. Grain was only about six inches deep, so if there was any metals in the grain, this magnet would pick it up. And also, while it was being elevated, there would be an automatic sampling system. So you get an average sampling of the car as it was being elevated. And while this grain is being elevated upstairs, the samplers would come and take it and bring it into the office, and by the time that the grain was completely unloaded, and once it was unloaded, the fellow operating the dumper would press a red light signaled to the operators upstairs that the car was completely empty, and it's up there. When you finished weighing it, they would give a green light and start the process over. By the time the grain was elevated and weighed, the inspectors would put a preliminary grade on it, and at that time if it was a type of grain that they were cleaning, they would put it in bins above cleaning machines. If it wasn't, they would put it out to storage and bring it back and clean it at a later date.

EE: The inspectors doing this work up there, were they MPE employees?

BM: Yes, we had both Manitoba Pool employees and government grain inspectors, special grain inspectors. The official grade was recorded by--. You had to take the government inspection reports. We were working along with them, and I would say 99.9 percent of the time our grades were compared to them. We were allowed to put the grain anywhere. If we wanted to call it a different variety of something, you could do that, but the official recording and your inventory would be recorded on the inspection of the government grades. Also, the weighing was overseen by the government. We'd work along side with them. The official weighing was the government weights, and that's the weights recorded to our inventory system, the weights and the grades. We would have to come up with that grade when it come time for shipping. All these reports would be forwarded on to our company and to the Canadian Wheat Board. They owned the grain. We just processed it and handled it for the Wheat Board.

[0:12:03]

EE: I just wondering, this would pick up later knowledge you would have later, but did the quality, the grade, matter to MPE, in terms of the compensation, what they received from the Wheat Board for moving it?

BM: Oh yeah, the grade was very important. You had to put it in the proper grade. A higher grade, you wouldn't want to lose any higher-grade cars by degrading to a lower grade. Start blending with other grades and then if you had to ship it up to get your stocks of that grade, and you had already blended or mixed it, you'd have a problem getting that variety because there were certain standards to be met, so you made pretty sure that it went into the proper place. It was very expensive to do it. But you could eventually over time blend it back into it. There was certain--.

EE: Did the higher grades of wheat pay more? Did MPE receive more for moving higher grade grain?

BM: No, I don't think we--. I think there was a set rate for handling grain. I guess the farmer would, is the one that owns the grain. They'd get paid based upon the variety of grain, the way it was graded.

EE: It's enormous concern to the farmer to get the right grade.

BM: That's right. There was always a process in place for grade if a farmer did think his grade was degraded for any reason. He had a chance to appeal. And there was always samples kept of every car unloaded, and I think they kept them for up to a year in the Grain Exchange. And the samples would go up to the Grain Exchange, and there was a time that they could appeal the process, and they would bring a sample of that car and have it re-inspected. And sometimes they were changed and sometimes they weren't.

EE: It must have required a great deal of storage space actually because how large would the sample be?

BM: Actually, the sample bags, I guess, they would keep maybe a pound. I might be wrong. It might only be two or three months they would keep it. But it was kept uptown at the Grain Exchange. They had a rotating basis. There were a lot of cars being loaded at that time.

EE: We will have to ask some of the inspectors about that which we anticipate doing for this project. How long did it take to unload a car?

BM: Actually, the boxcars would take anywhere from four and a half to five and a half minutes.

EE: It was that fast!

BM: It was that fast. I guess actually when you first actually started unloading it, or started winching the car in, and to the actual, all the grain has left the hopper, maybe seven and a half, eight minutes before the whole process was done.

EE: That is quick.

BM: Yes, it is quick.

EE: You'd do maybe half a dozen an hour?

BM: We would. We'd do an average of 100 cars a day—25 on each, or 50 on each dumper a day, 50 in eight hours, six an hour. Our tracks would hold only about 25 cars behind the house. We had two dumpers. During the noon hour we're on lunch break, the railroad would come and take away the empty cars and refill us up with new cars. Sometimes they were a little late or had a little trouble pushing the cars into the elevator, so you might have lost a half hour here or there. So, it fluctuated, but on average, we did between 90 and 100 boxcars a day. And then the tankers started to come into play.

[0:15:42]

EE: And they unloaded much faster.

BM: Much faster, and they were almost twice as large as a boxcar. A boxcar would hold roughly 2,000 bushels of grain and the hopper cars would hold almost 3,300 bushels of grain or 90 tonnes.

EE: How long would it take to unload one of those?

BM: Well hopper cars, actually, it was eight minutes. It was pretty good. They improved the unloading facilities for the hopper cars when they came into play—made the hopper larger and opened up some access, more hopper grates, so they could open up more than one compartment at a time. You used to do one compartment at a time, but they extended the hoppers so you could unload two of the hoppers at one time. And it took a little longer because you had to keep winching it ahead to get them going.

EE: Are those hopper cars compartmented inside?

BM: Actually, no they're not. They're wide open. There's a hopper on the bottom. Some of them might be split in half and you'll have two hoppers on each side of the car. But most of them have a separation one about halfway up in the car, and it's wide open on the top. Usually, you only put one grade in them. And if I recall, eventually later on, they did make them all separate compartments because we used to get one variety in one compartment and three varieties of grain into the other compartments. And they were well-identified. You had notification well in advance that those cars were coming. And they always--. What they call the no-brake end, you had to identify where was hopper number 1,2,3, or 4. So wherever the brakes were on the car, the other end was called the no-brake end because there was no brakes on that end, and that would be compartment No. 1. So if they say this certain variety of grain is hopper No. 3, compartment No. 3, then you knew. So you unload the other three hoppers together and save the last one and do it separately. It was well organized, and the paperwork was done really good.

EE: It would have to be because once the grain is up in the bin, you want to know exactly what grain it is. What are the other things you have done over the years?

[0:18:29]

BM: Actually, I worked almost in every department. I worked in the cleaning machines. We had I think 24 cleaning machines in the area we were working at, various types of machines. We can clean approximately 8,000 bushels of grain an hour. So, we can pretty well keep up with the amount of grain that was unloaded in a day, especially if it was one variety of grain. You just keep filling up the bin and keep the machines operating. The grain would, once it's clean, the same thing as the unloading process, it would be elevated on a conveyer belt with buckets up to storage bins. You had people handling the clean grain up on the scale floor. They would set up bins, and management would tell them what bins they wanted to use for this type of grain. The employees knew what conveyer belts those bins were on. They would work with the people in the storage area. Everything worked on a red and green light system that we're going to put this grain out on this conveyer belt at this time and away you went. Get the system working the way it should be, and you had the green light to go, and they just let the grain go.

EE: How did the cleaning machines work?

BM: There were several different varieties of machines. There were Superior machines. They were cylinder machines that grain would be put down little spouts into the cylinders and there were indents in the cylinders and it would separate the wheat and the chaff. The cylinder would be turning, and they'd have little trays inside where the light products would fluff up and be caught in the air and be dropped into these little buckets. That would be your wheat heads and wheat chaff and small pieces of grain. Your good grain would keep rotating and the cylinder would force it out the end. It would be your clean grain. We had other types of machines. There were shaker machines where the grain would flow on a gravity machine with different indents on the cylinders where the smaller grain would keep falling through and the bigger grain would stay on top. Your wheat head and your chaff would stay on top, and the larger wheat would fall through. You have another set of cylinders with smaller holes where the small broken grain and seeds would fall through. That was all separated.

EE: Where there still other approaches to cleaning?

BM: That was pretty much it. You would change cylinders or change the volume or the speed. It depends on what variety of grain you're cleaning at the time.

EE: We can all understand very well getting those big, plump heads, or kernels, would be the goal, but you are suggesting that some of the other screenings, some of the other screenings would have value or did most of the screenings have some value, some market?

BM: Most of the screenings had--. All the grain value except the wheat heads and the chaff. That was all put into the garbage. At one time we used to have an incinerator. We used to burn it. Then the laws changed, so it was just put out to storage and every once in a while they'd haul it to the dump. But the broken grain and the seeds and the dust was all collected. The small broken grain, we had small machines in different areas of the plant where we'd process that grain and salvaged all the good grain we could possibly get and made what was called 1-feed screenings. That went out, sold by the company to different millers. And the seeds and the dust and that was collected and put into a dustbin where we had a pelletizing plant where we manufactured our own pellets. We had a marketing department that sold the pellets to mostly overseas or to feed plants.

EE: So MPE was producing its own pellets?

BM: Its own pellets, yes.

EE: Out of these processes. There was an overseas market?

BM: Yes, there was an overseas market for the feed pellets. Most of it did go overseas. Some of it stayed in Ontario, to other feed plants—a lot of cattle feed. A lot of farmers bought. Some went back out west. Some of it went back to Manitoba or Saskatchewan, you know. A lot of pellets were loaded by rail to back west or down east, you know, to different farmers.

EE: Would they be shipped west on the railway cars?

BM: Yes, yes.

EE: Otherwise, I suppose, the cars would go back west empty, largely a one-way traffic?

[0:23:24]

BM: Yes, at the time. It was usually a one-way traffic. If there was a better market for the pellets, then they would put them on these empties and bring them back. The Grain Transportation Agency [GTA] was in control of all the boxcars and all hopper cars. They had a one-month process. They knew how many, they knew what grain was being sold by the Wheat Board. Everybody worked

together. We knew in advance, a week in advance, what cars we had coming the following week. The GTA had control of all the cars. They knew what grain was being shipped and where it was coming from. So, they'd make sure the cycle of cars and work with the railroads. Once these cars were empty, they had to get back to get back in the system to be loaded. The process, there was just this vicious cycle going back and forth. It was well organized.

EE: It sounds that way. There are probably other aspects of the elevator for us to talk about, but I am just wondering at this point whether you have a sense of where MPE here in Thunder Bay fitted into the system of the GTA was handling? Which cars would you be getting as against let's say Sask Pool, the biggest operator on the waterfront?

BM: I guess at the time when I first started, they didn't have the pooling system, a system where--. Maybe I'll just step back to when I first started. All the companies at that time, 1963, were handling their own grain. The grain was loaded in Manitoba from Manitoba Pool elevators. It came to Manitoba Pool elevators, and I guess the Wheat Board was selling the grain, and there were times when there wasn't enough grain in the port because it all belonged to Manitoba Pool. Other elevators were sitting empty. Their grain was going west, or they had a bad crop. So they come up with a pooling system where the elevators all got together, and they shared the cars coming to the port. They had come up with a system, I didn't know at the time, but I do know now, that the origination of the amount of grain that you loaded to Thunder Bay would give you a percentage of the volume of grain that you'd get of the percentage of cars that were in town. So, I think we went from a low of maybe 5 percent to a high of 29 percent over the years. So, if there were 100 cars coming to town that day, we were allotted 29 percent of the cars, but there were a lot more than 100 cars. That's how the process worked. Everybody had a percentage.

[0:26:10]

EE: It was reflective of what they handled in the line elevators. It was still designed to be quite fair and would, in a sense, overall reflect the business that the line elevators, MPE, was doing or were doing?

BM: Yes, it actually did, and for all companies, actually. It was very busy and there was an awful lot of grain coming to town. So, at peak times there wasn't a problem, but when things got down to being tight, and there wasn't much grain around, and you didn't make any money unless you were unloading cars. So you tried to make sure you got every car that was allocated. Some days there just wasn't enough grain to keep them all working, so the GTA had their numbers and maybe today one company would get it. "There's going to be 50 cars in town. Well, you get these 50 today. There's another 100 coming tomorrow, so you'll get 50, you'll get 50." So at the end of the week, they made every effort to make sure that all the elevators received their car allocation as close as possible. And they were running numbers. If your terminal was down for a certain reason, you had some mechanical problems with

the dumpers, you couldn't unload, you wouldn't lose those cars, you would just be backlogged and eventually you'd get caught up. The system worked very, very well.

EE: And the system was designed to be transparent and fair. Does this mean the grain handlers, the workers themselves, would be off for the day?

BM: No, if the time come that were no cars around—and you sort of had a heads up—cause they knew a week in advance, there was always a lot of maintenance to be done, a lot of cleaning to do, or you always had a backlog of dirty grain, so you could get caught up on cleaning grain or cleaning the elevator, or do some overhauls, maintenance overhaul. If it did come to it, there was a slowdown, and then there would be some layoffs. They would go by seniority. Or they would shut one of the terminals down. They had four terminals when I started—Pool 1, Pool 2, 3, and 9. Over the years with new regulations of pollution coming into effect, it just wasn't feasible to keep Pool 2 and Pool 9 operating. It would just cost too much money to bring them up to the new regulations of pollution. So, they eventually shut those places down or closed them down. They offered some retirement packages, and a lot of people were close to retirement age. With the opening of Pool 1, it took a slack of some of the people with the extra shifts. And over the years a lot of people retired, and it was-- We needed a lot of-- When I first started there was 1,400 to 1,600 employees working in the elevator. Near the end of my career, I think it was down to 300 and 500 total of employees.

[0:29:19]

EE: We might, once you get into management, you'll have other things to tell us. Let's hold some of that. In these earlier years you were a member of the union. You were assigned to one of the elevators or did workers move between elevators?

BM: Actually, I started at Pool 1, and I spent most of my career at Pool 1. There were times when layoffs were coming, and they would start laying people off, and everybody had a job according to seniority. As you got near the bottom of the list, and they needed shovellers, so I would end up shovelling grain. I didn't shovel that much. In the winter months when I didn't have much seniority, I would be transferred over to Pool 2, or Pool 9 at that time, and we had to shovel cars by hand, automated cables, called the sweat board—It was just a board on cables—and you would pull it back. They had an automatic winch system that once it kicked in it would pull, and you would hang on and clean the cars out by boxcars. We would have to do 10 cars a day.

EE: The older system and the others how--? Why don't you sketch that again?

BM: So, when the layoffs come, I would go back. My seniority would be low enough that I would be transferred to Pool 2 or Pool 9 to shovel cars by hand. We had a system where you had to do 10 cars a day and then you could home. I wasn't a very good

shoveller and thank God I only had to do it for two or three weeks and there would be more layoffs, and I'd get laid off and I wouldn't have to do it. I only shovelled for the first three or four years of my career, in the winter times only. I didn't have to shovel too much in the summer times. I had enough seniority to position myself back at one of the other plants and new employees that were hired or parttime helpers end up doing the shoveling of the cars until such a time that--.

EE: It's a young man's job.

BM: Yes, yes. I wasn't very big at the time, but I got the job done. I didn't want to quit. My dad was a boss, and I didn't want anybody to say, "Your son's a quitter or he can't handle the job." So it was tough, and there were some nights I would go home and go right to bed. I wouldn't even have supper. I was so tired. But you eventually got used to it. Actually, you felt pretty good after a while. You got good at it once you did it every day for three or four weeks, and then you wouldn't do it for eight months, and then you'd come back and start all over again.

EE: Good conditioning for the hockey season. Did you play hockey?

BM: I played hockey. We actually started an elevator hockey league. Yes, we just happened to be outside one day on our lunch hour, fooling around. The slips were frozen and across the slip from us was United Grain Growers. We had a little scrub game going, and then somebody got the idea why don't we start an elevator league. So we put a newsletter out, and we ended up with four hockey teams. We ran an elevator league for about seven years.

EE: When was this?

BM: This was in the late '60s early '70s.

EE: So Manitoba Pool--.

BM: Sask Pool had one, UGG, and Canada Malt.

EE: Where did you play?

BM: We played at the arena and the Gardens. We booked ice. We had a committee that would go and book ice. We played Sunday mornings because we didn't work too many Sundays, especially in the wintertime. And there was an odd Saturday night game, late at night that started at midnight.

EE: Did this produce a real rivalry?

BM: Yes, it was good, actually.

EE: Winning and cups--.

BM: We had trophies. We had a little committee. We even started up a baseball league, the same group. That lasted for quite a while. Actually, the hockey was pretty good for about the first four or five years and then with the hiring of the summer help there was a lot of junior hockey players coming and then these guys, they couldn't get enough hockey, so they hired them, or put them on the roster for the elevator league, just for some extra training, and it got a little rough. These guys were big and strong, and they sort of ended up ruining the league. They started knocking people over who were just there for fun. Actually, I got hit one day and had to take two weeks off work. So I just decided to pack it up, and then the league itself said it's just--. They were getting out of hand and there were fights going on and

EE: Practising for the NHL?

BM: Yes, probably, and they all played junior hockey and it kind of ruined the league, so we kind of just folded it up. It was probably for the better. We were getting kind of old then at that time.

EE: It was still a very, very interesting interlude. I suppose I'm tempted here to pursue, well, we want to say more about the union. With the ice frozen, with the slips frozen, you can't be loading any ships. Let's hold the ships over until later and go back to the union a little further then. The union was important to you I expect?

BM: The union was very important to us. You know, I end up working on the negotiating committee one time. I became a shop steward or a union rep for the employees at our terminal and started attending meetings and went through a couple of strikes.

EE: What strikes were those?

BM: I can't remember. There was one in the late '60s. There was a strike actually. I think I had been married only two years, and I got laid off, and I think we were off seven months that time. It was pretty tough. But it was hard to keep the morale up. But I enjoyed working with the union.

EE: Who leading it at the time? It was Lodge 650.

BM: I think the fellow's name was Mitchell, at the time. And Frank Mazur come. He would be in the '70s, early '70s or so. There was two or three fellows that were there, going back quite a while. I think the name Mitchell was one of them. I got good training with the union. I enjoyed the union. Enjoyed being the shop steward, being the representative between the company and the union.

EE: Would there be one shop steward per terminal or more than one?

BM: There would be one per terminal. And we had a system. We had sort of a little committee within ourselves. I was the chairman of that for, not all the time. I took it over for about three or four years. We really didn't have any big issues, but it was good. You got to know management. Although I knew them, but you could talk to them. Actually, it gave me good training when I became a manager, working with union and working with management. You knew the system very well.

EE: People so often don't have a real appreciation of the fact that a union has at least two functions. One occurs at the time of negotiating the agreement which sets the conditions of employment and obviously wage rates and benefits and so on, and the other is the ongoing work of administering the agreement ensuring the grievances are dealt with. That second part is so often missed by people. Did you have a lot of smaller grievances?

BM: We had some minor issues. Overtime was a big problem. A lot of people think they should get it all and back then, too, everybody couldn't do every job. You had seniority and so there was sort of at one time given to the seniority people, but then the union said it should be divided equally. Eventually over time it was divided equally. We had some issues with people that did hunting and fishing and didn't want to work certain weekends, especially during the summer, but wanted to get caught up. So, hunting season would be another one, and so we would monitor that. If they were off because of that, or refused it, we counted it as if working, as if they had actually worked when they refused to work. So it would end up that it didn't become an issue too much. After it took quite awhile to get it in place, but once everyone knew the system and we were doing it as fair as we could.

EE: I am guessing the "we" in this case might already reflect some of your management experience in terms of rating it as if they had actually taken it. Or did the committee in the terminal work with management to establish that?

[0:38:09]

BM: Actually, management came out and said, "You know, it's really not fair that we should be forced to give this guy overtime when they're refusing it." We sat and listened to their arguments, and we agreed with them at times. Sometimes we didn't. I think

sometimes we had to not agree. You know this is the way they system worked sometimes. But most of the time we had a good relationship with our company. We very seldom had too many grievances. If we did our job and they did their job, there wasn't many issues to deal with. But then I'm not saying we didn't have any grievances. There were grievances, nothing serious.

EE: Inevitably an organization will produce friction, people moving around bumping into each other.

BM: That's right. Seniority was a big thing when it came to layoffs and that. They had seniority but they didn't have the qualifications. They came up with a new system where you had to give them training to learn the job, if you had the seniority.

EE: The seniority list was a single list for the whole terminal?

BM: A single list for the whole company—whole company between the four terminals. So you could have a fellow with seniority wanting to bump a job. We had a job category. We had classifications with levels A, B, C, D, and E. You could bid for jobs within your category or lower. A lower fellow couldn't bid up high on a big job if somebody was in there with less seniority, but that job's classification put him that position. We had a lot of problems with summer relief and that. There weren't enough employees. They'd move employees around the company. "Well, I kind of like this fellow. He does a good job. We'll put him over there." But he didn't have the seniority, and this fellow would want to take that job because when you got moved up, you got more money. So that was a big issue for the grievances was money, and it was only, I think, five cents difference in wages, but over time and back then it was a lot of money over a two-week period or a one-month period.

EE: The classifications were skill related, I suppose. Are different parts of the terminal--?

BM: There was--. You had your millwrights and your electricians was a separate group, a skills trade. And actually, the company set up an apprentice program and offered it to anybody who was interested. Most of the millwrights, they weren't certified, took the training, and they all ended up being certified millwrights. Half of the electricians weren't certified, and they all took the apprentices courses, and they all ended up being certified electricians. And that was through the company and through the union.

EE: So the company had been employing people doing millwright and electrician's work who hadn't actually apprenticed outside?

BM: That's right. I say half of them were apprenticed, were trades people when they were hired, and they did on-the-job training and they'd overseen all the projects. As long as you had a trained millwright there working with you, you could do the job.

EE: I suppose that could be part of the system. The journeyman or whatever and these were apprentices coming in. This wasn't offensive to the union in these skilled trades?

BM: No. They come in and they offered. I guess the employees asked, "Is there a chance to be trained to become a certified millwright?" And they looked into it with the help of the union, I think, and they did offer it. And they offered a one-time thing, and they all took it.

EE: Was the provincial ministry of labour involved with that or whatever the provincial organization--?

BM: I'm not sure. I can't really recall. I know the company paid. They got the system going. There was schooling, and they did schooling. They might have to go away for two weeks. It was done locally. They'd go away and sometimes they had to do it on weekends. They'd do it and back on-the-job training. And eventually, I'm not sure how long it took, a couple of years, I think, before they became certified, you know.

And there were other areas. We had a pelletizing plant. We had employees training to get their certificate, their Class D certificate in boiler, operation of boilers. The company paid. Engineers, 4th class engineers, they had to have that to run the pellet plants, so the company paid for their training. You know grain inspecting was a big thing. I ended up taking an inspection course where they took us off the job for two or three weeks. I went to the Grain Exchange. They had programs. I did that for a couple of months every year to get my certificate and took a course at the end of the year and passed it, received my certificate and ended up being an inspector at one time during my career for the company. And that came in advantage for you later on in management when you knew the system, and you had to have those qualifications for loading vessels in management.

[0:43:29]

EE: How many of the employees would be unskilled labour? As the system developed did pretty everyone have a skill, a certification?

BM: Everyone was skilled in their own departments, but just your millwrights, electricians, and your boilers were the only ones that were certified, and inspections, inspection department, had a certificate of any kind. But I think that would only be about 20 percent of the staff at that time. The others were, well, they could do their jobs very well. They didn't have a certificate. They didn't need one. And they were good at it. The fellows were very good.

We had a good relationship with employees. I even noticed just growing up it became a family. We had a lot of Christmas parties. We had barbeques, and kids' Christmas parties, summer picnic for the kids. The company is very good, very supportive. We, later on, they came out with monthly newsletters out of head office. We had a committee in town that would supply the information locally and send up there. We started profiling employees over the years, once a month or once every four months. We had a pretty big company. It was very interesting, you know, over the years.

EE: Elevator operation, we've traversed through various parts. I guess we've got the grain in the bins and obviously it's got to get to market. So there's still a number of things to do in the elevator to achieve that. You probably worked in some of those areas.

BM: Once all the grain has been unloaded, and it's been cleaned, you have to put it out to storage. [Phone interruption] Once the grain is put out to storage--. Every morning there was, one of the staff in management would record the inventory. They knew how much grain they cleaned overnight. If they had one shift going or two shifts, or at one time we used to have three shifts going, we'd do an inventory of all the grain in the bins. Every morning, they would prepare a sheet of clean grain ready for shipment. That report was sent to the Lake Shippers Clearance Association, who was the organizer of handling the Wheat Board grain and allocating the vessels where to go. They knew how much grain was in the port, and they also worked on the percentage of shipping, who was going to get. We were entitled to so much shipping. But all this grain was cleaned and put out to storage. I worked in the storage areas. They're just conveyor belts with a machine attached to it. That would ride up and down these railway tracks and go over to the bins. The bins were all numbered. They varied in different sizes from 2,000-bushel capacity to 30,000 bushel capacity. All the bins were 110 feet deep and made of solid concrete, which kept the grain very fresh and clean and cool, which it required.

EE: These were the silos, were they?

BM: Yes, there were various sizes. So, if you had small quantities of grain, special boxcars would hold 2,500 tonnes, an average boxcar was only 2,000. So, you can segregate that one variety and put it in that special bin. They would be recorded on a blackboard. We'd record the date that the grain went in, the type of grain it was, whether it was clean or dirty. They had dirty grain you looked on the blackboard and you had nothing to do, you'd look around and if there was a variety needed to be cleaned, you'd take it out and clean it.

EE: On a slow day.

BM: A slow day. But we were quite busy. But anyhow, the smaller grains would maybe five box--. The smaller or next size bins would hold maybe five boxcars of grain and the bigger ones would hold up to 12 or 15 cars of grain. So you mostly had large volumes of the same variety of grain, and that would be done on purpose. There'd be a ship coming for a certain variety of grain, so

the country elevators would load that variety of grain. They knew what was coming. And the odd time the smaller country elevator didn't have grain, but they're allocated cars to fill up, so they had to fill them up with something. So that's where you get your odd varieties of grain.

We handled several varieties of grain. Actually, Manitoba Pool was, they called it a wheat house. We handled strictly wheat and durum wheat and a little bit of flax. No barley. Pool 3 was the barley, oats, and Wheat Board grain. And Pool 9 at the time was strictly flax and canola, and by-products. Pool 2 handled anything. It would be they'd only use it as an overflow. When things were very busy, they'd open up and use it for extra storage. Because you got paid, the company got paid for storage, even though the grain wasn't being shipped out at the time, you did get paid for storage. That's how the company made money over the winter months. You'd have to get the grain in to get any money. So the big thing was unloading cars. But over the winter months to help pay expenses, the Wheat Board paid the company storage fees.

[0:49:27]

EE: So the more silos that were full come navigation season the better off the company was?

BM: Well, they'd keep going and fill you right up. In the earlier years when it was quite busy, the Wheat Board sales were quite large, we'd load vessels out by rail, clean grain by rail. The Seaway froze up right down to the export elevators in the St. Lawrence Seaway.

EE: So there was grain that moved out of here in the wintertime by rail on the CPR and CN?

BM: CP, CN. That was in the earlier parts when it was very busy. And later on, as the years went by and changes to the elevator system, automation started coming in, building of new grain elevators—new high throughput elevators in the Prairies, out in the Prairies—and they started cleaning their grain and caused a little bit of problem out there. They didn't know what to do with their by-products. With the downsizing, with the upsizing out there and the downsizing here, we ended up closing one of our terminals. But they took the cleaning machines from here and brought them out to the country elevators.

EE: Was that the main point of those big throughput elevators? I grew up near Culross where Paterson and Consolidated used to do the business in two line elevators. Down the road at Elm Creek was where Cargill built, I think, one of the very first throughput elevators. Was the point of those--? They did resemble the terminal elevators here at the Lakehead?

BM: Physically a smaller version of it, but it was.

EE: Was the cleaning equipment the key point of that?

BM: I don't know what started it all. Everything was going along really well. There was a cycle of grain. Thunder Bay would be a very busy port. And all of a sudden, percentages would go out to the West Coast, and they were down, and it would go out and it might come back. But every time the cycle went around, we would lose three or four or five percent volume of the grain. I guess the Pacific Rim countries were buying more grain and less in Europe. But the changeover, I think the young farmers coming up, highly educated, where the other farmers weren't. They just knew their land, knew they had to grow and that's all they were interested in.

But the young farmers coming up, taking over the land, wanted to do more and make more money. They start losing interest in wheat because there was other products they could be growing to make more money. They were educated and also the new changeover in management. They just thought that they were a younger group and maybe we should start doing this out in the country. "Why are we sending all this grain to Thunder Bay, when we can clean it out here?" I guess they all started building the country elevators. I knew one time they built five country elevators in this one area. I think it was near Selkirk. I'm not quite sure, but over the course of a year and a half there was five of them, and there wasn't enough grain to keep two of them going. But you had to build them to be competitive. And they were--.

EE: One in every town.

BM: One in every town or one on every corner, it seemed like. And they were all fighting for the grain. They were all lowering their prices. And they weren't making enough money, even. The farmers were the big winners, you know. They were charging less to handle the grain, almost handling it for nothing, and once it's been unloaded and graded then the farmer would get the proper grade. But they had incentives to bring it to their different elevators. That was the beginning of the big changeover.

EE: What was the pattern in your promotion in the company?

BM: Over the years I worked in almost every department. You got to know everything. Management was getting older, and a couple of guys retired, and they come up with taking some of the union people and assisting the foreman. So the union came up with the category of assistant general foreman, but still in the union bracket. And they come up and you could stay in that position for three months. If you stayed longer than three months, you had to become management. And the company liked that because for the summer relief, they would take people. So, they would pick and choose people that worked in all areas of the department, so

they had a good knowledge. I was one of the fortunate fellows. I had worked in almost every department. So, I would come in and act as the assisting foreman.

EE: This was a management decision?

BM: Management decision. They decided, yes.

EE: You didn't apply.

BM: No, it eventually, I guess, it more or less become an appointment. It didn't become a union category although they put it in and put a wage beside it. If anybody wanted to grieve it, I guess you could grieve it because it was in there. But we never seemed to have any problems. I was one of maybe four of us did it on and off because I knew the elevator. We were just told we had our instructions. We couldn't enforce any of the management policies, but you know, they gave you a job to do. You keep the employees working, you make sure they're working. Not hiring or firing, but in charge of work is being done, employees were doing their job, and the machines are running. It was a good training process because eventually when the time came for management, I happened to land one of the management jobs. There were six managers had attained 40 years' seniority, 1984, or late '84 going into '85, they were all retiring. So they had to replace these six, so I was one of six employees that were taken into management.

And I remember my first day. They had an ingoing-outgoing party for the new management coming in and the manager at the time come into the room and he says, "I want to meet, I want to speak to the six new employees, management people in this other room." So we were having supper, so we went into this other room, and he walked into the room, and he says, "I'm going to give you a little bit of advice about management," he says. He said to us, "You look after the troops, and the troops will look after you." And he walked out of the room. That's all he said to us.

EE: Who was the person who said this?

BM: Actually, it was my father. He was the general manager of all the terminals. And I've never forgotten that.

EE: So John Mallon told you what was what.

BM: He told all of us, yes. If you want to succeed in management, you look after the troops and the troops will. So we talked to him after about that when he said that, and he says, "You know, you're now management. You don't do any of the work. The

employees do the work. Let them do the work, and you do your job as managing, and they know what they are doing. They are all good employees.”

[0:56:56]

EE: And what was your work as a manager now that you had achieved that position?

BM: Well, I first started out as a foreman, and as a foreman I just--. I didn't do any of the hiring. The superintendents did all of the hiring. But I got training in how to load vessels. I learned the varieties of grain. And I learned tolerances of shipping grain, different varieties of grain, how the systems works, how to load vessels—all done from previous bosses who passed on their knowledge to us. They were very, very informative of giving you all that information and anytime you asked, they had a bundle of knowledge. They passed it all on. And you learned as you went along.

EE: Did all six of you learn that or was this the area in which you were specializing?

BM: The area that I was actually--. A couple of people went to Pool 3. I stayed at Pool 1. And we had different people on different shifts. So we learned and we all worked with the different shifts, rotated because you're not working with the same people all the time. And management people would shift one way, and the union people shifted. You were always rotating with the same people. The union staff would go from days to 4:00 to 12:00 to midnight. And then management staff would go midnight, 4:00 to 12:00 to days.

So you had the circle going so you're always, you know, work with a lot of people the same, but over the years you worked with different people. It was good for training for you. Everybody had their own style of management. We were very fortunate. We had good management people and all of our management people come from within the union. We had no outsiders. Everybody earned the right to become into management. And everybody had a good knowledge of the union because they all worked in the union, and you just had to learn the trades of management and the training from head office and what's expected of you. A different system but nothing really changed. You just didn't do the work anymore, just seen that it was done.

[0:59:02]

EE: The list of things you were giving a few moments ago suggests that it was very important to ensure that the right grain moved properly, efficiently onto the ships and out of the port. That was ultimately where the money might be made or lost.

BM: That was the key. You couldn't afford any mistakes. You had to know what you were doing. You would pass this on the employees in the basement tunnels where they open up the bins. As a manager you would tell them what bins you would be running, and you had some other varieties of grain that you would blend with them. This was what they wanted, and you would blend these grains or and you'd tell them what percentages you want the bins to open up. And once you told them once, they were very good at their job, and they kept it going and their job--. And you had to be sure that when a bin went empty, you had to have another bin open right away. They would have a list of bins, the ones that we were going to be pulling on the vessel that day. They'd have them in sequence. We would tell them which order, and you just walk around, and they were always out on the job, doing the job.

At the time the vessels are being loaded, the grain is also being inspected by the Canadian government. And they're always giving you a heads up, you know, everything is fine. You'd check up, and if there are problems, and sometimes there could have been a mix of grain in a bin that nobody knew anything about. Sometimes a car gets away on you or somebody makes mistake, he doesn't say anything. Things happen and so it does happen. So we go down and try to look and see where this variety of grain is coming from, what bin. We ask the guys to go down and we start checking. So we look and we knew what elevation a leg was coming on—three conveyer belts going at one time. So we pin point it to one area and search each bin until we found it. And then shut that bin off and bring it in and clean it and check it later. You couldn't afford to have any mistakes. It was very costly to tie up a vessel or to have it off-loaded. It was a bad situation that the mix was so bad that you would have to stop loading and bring it to one of the unloading terminals where they'd self-unload it, and then you start over. But you paid for that.

EE: A few expletives might happen in those circumstances I suppose, when that kind of a thing happened. I can see the costliness of it.

BM: You might get away with it once, but it does happen. You know there are mistakes being made. And a lot of people are afraid if they do make a mistake, that if they don't say anything nobody will know. And they'll never find it. But you do find it. But we always encourage our employees to let us know because it is better to know because we can run that bin of grain until that grain starts showing up. At least we can get rid of half of that bin or something before it starts showing up. So, we were very fortunate, our employees were very good. When they did make mistakes, they did tell us. But not all the time. A lot of times maybe you didn't know you. You might see you had a Mayo spout or something where the grain is diverted from a scale into a cleaning bin or out to a storage bin. A fellow might have put the wrong spout of the wrong conveyor belt and it's going out on the conveyor belt, and it shouldn't be going on along with other grain you know. But things do happen.

[1:02:30]

EE: It takes a lot of monitoring to ensure that a terminal elevator works properly. I could see that.

BM: Yes, it is very important. Everybody took pride in their job. We had good staff, both management and union staff. And everybody was proud of their work, and we had a good company to work for, you know.

EE: So this work as a foreman and management work was operational, for quite awhile, I suppose. When did you move before this?

BM: Well, I actually I think around '84 late, '84-'85, where I got to become a foreman. And then around the late '80s, early '90s, through retirement—a couple of superintendents retired—so they started moving people up. And I was offered the position of assistant superintendent at Pool 3. Back then you had a choice of taking it. If they didn't take you, they'd take another foreman. Well, I wasn't going to let anybody jump ahead of me. So, although I hadn't worked too long at Pool 3, I did take the job. I went over there again. It was a challenge. Although an elevator is an elevator, it was a different setup and new employees. You knew a lot of them. I knew most of the management staff. But you had a style, and they had a style, and you had to get used to their style. I was well received when I went over there. A couple of foremen took me aside and took me through the elevator. It wasn't long before I caught on to the system and dealing with different varieties of grain, now I'm back into barley and oats, which you didn't handle too much. And we had an interchange between Canada Malt.

We handle grain for Canada Malt. We actually had a process where we could deliver grain from our terminal to their terminal, and they could deliver grain from their terminal to our terminal. We had a little bypass area where we could divert grain and we'd clean grain or ship grain for them, you know. So it was a good system. But I was treated very well. I spent about four years as assistant superintendent. And then the superintendent retired, and I was automatically moved into the superintendent's position, which is another new system.

You had to learn. Had a lot of meetings to attend and you'd be the head fellow overseeing your budgets of your terminals, although you did a bit of that as an assistant superintendent. You're now looking after doing the hiring and being the liaison between the manager and watching for layoffs, set up layoffs if the grain isn't coming down and, "We need layoffs." "How many people you need?" Talk to the staff and going to have to cut back, and how many you need to keep this place going. This is what we've got planned for the next couple of weeks. We'd do our layoffs and attend a lot of meetings. Safety became a very--. As I was just getting out of the union, safety was a lot of changes in pollution systems and safety in general. Safety committees were always there, but they weren't doing too much. But around the mid '70s or something the committees were all formed and actually worked very, very well. I ended up being in safety both on the union and the management representative, even as the superintendent. I attended all the monthly safety meetings and any issues that they had. It actually worked out very well.

[1:05:58]

EE: When you were in one of these safety meetings as the superintendent, who would be driving the committee on? Where was the energy?

BM: We took turns. They had a safety committee chairman and management. So, every monthly meeting somebody from the safety committee would chair the meeting, and the following month somebody from management would. It didn't always have to be the superintendent or the safety chairman. We had an agenda to follow. We just rotated and took turns. It worked out quite well. We kept a running log of issues that we had and things we had to get done, and we also had instructions from the federal government. They would come and do annual inspections or quarterly inspections. They would come in and go through your plant. So somebody from management and somebody from the safety committee would walk around with the federal government and do a safety inspection, a plant inspection, I guess.

EE: Which department of the federal government?

BM: They were from the--. It was the federal government. It was a fellow from the weigh division. He was appointed as the safety. Actually, they had their--.

EE: Was it the Department of Agriculture?

BM: The Department of Agriculture. Now they had a name for them. I forget. I can't even remember what it was anymore. It been quite awhile. But they had their own department, and they would tour all the elevators, and they'd come in. Donald Dyck, or Jim Fiddler was a fellow. But they come in once a year, I guess, annually. But sometimes they come every three or four months. They'd come unannounced and want to go through your terminal, so you get somebody from the safety committee and somebody from management, and then they'd just go through, and they had their agenda and what to look for. And you know check everything off and they had a quick meeting of some of the issues. They sent you a statement, both to the union and the company. They had guidelines to do certain things. And when they were done, you had to phone them, and they had a re-inspection. They come back and so that kept you pretty busy. We never had any real serious problems. We had a few issues, but they were all, as long as you did them and looked after them, you know. It was good. We also had some problems. There was a lot of--. The union wanted an awful lot of stuff. And some of the stuff was just--.

EE: Frank was a pusher, was he?

BM: Frank was a pusher and maybe it was Herbie Daniher, at the time. Herb, too. You know some requests were just out of this world. You just had to say no, you know? They just wanted everything. But everything worked out. We had no real, real issues. I can honestly say, too, after I became superintendent, I was promoted to manager, following in my dad's footsteps, which made him very happy. In 1998, I became the manager, which only lasted for a couple of years because there was a merger, but management again was another--. The buck stopped here, I guess. But it was good. I had good training. I remember the day I got appointed, my dad came down to see me to congratulate me. He had already been retired and brought me a pen, pen and pencil. "Put that on your desk," he says. I've still got it. It was very good. He was very proud that day. But that was again a new system. You're dealing with head office. Now you got full control of three terminals, two terminals, at that time, I guess. We had just shut down Pool 3. It closed down because of the--. Just the volumes of grain and downsizing, just the way the system was going. That was one of the hardest things.

I was on the committee. We had 140 employees losing their jobs. And with the federal government, the provincial government, and the union, and I was the company representative, we had a system, a program--. It lasted a year for training, tried to get the employees to go to school. We had to convince them that they weren't coming back. They were through. They were through. They always thought it was going change and come back, and we said no. The company had to put up, I think it was \$200,000 for training. They had all kinds of programs. We met monthly. We had a facilitator that overseen everything, and the employees would come to these sessions and try to get them going back to college, get them new careers.

I say 70 percent did it, went back to school, got new careers. As long as they were in the program, signed up in the program and still going to school, they could keep their pogeys until such a time that they were finished their schooling. A lot of people tried to jump on board in the 11th month of the 12 months, and they weren't allowed to. That was an agreement between the companies and the union and the provincial and federal governments. They told them they can't come onboard, and I guess they tried to. They helped them out as best they could for those last two months, but eventually their pogeys did run out. But they looked after them very well, the ones that took. A lot of them coming back and thanked you because you were on the committee. And a lot of support from the union, the union was very helpful in that situation.

EE: Was it based on seniority?

BM: Yes, yes, it was seniority because we're down now to one terminal, and there was a seniority list. And they offered some great packages for people who had to leave and even lowered the retirement age and helped bridge some of the gaps for some of the older fellows, for the senior people and keep more of the younger ones. And it worked quite well. They did a couple of packages. They knew before they were going to close the terminal that they offered a package to help to eliminate some of the problem. A lot of people did take it because there were a lot of people close to that age. And then again, they offered it again. A lot of them did

take it, a lot of them didn't, because the money was pretty good in those days. We worked a lot of overtime. I remember one time they worked 79 days in a row. I don't think I was part of that group. I was in management, but we didn't work every day, but the employees worked. The union employees did 79 days in a row. A big, big crop year. That was in the late '80s, I believe.

[1:12:55]

EE: Did management get paid overtime?

BM: No, management never got paid overtime. It was just a flat salary. It was good. I have no complaints, you know. I'm not saying the union boys who worked a lot of overtime didn't make more than us, but it didn't happen too often. They were very good, you know. They were very good, you know. We had a couple of fringe benefits, some gas allowance that would help cover the overtime. You'd be back with them, and they're getting paid overtime. So, they give you a gas allowance, a monthly gas allowance, and a few other incentives. Bonuses, the company was very fair. Everybody got a bonus whether you were management or the union. It was very small, \$50 or \$25, but they'd treat everybody the same, which was good.

EE: Was it a reflection of the success of the crop year would it be?

BM: Yes, yes. It depended. [Phone rings]

[Audio pauses]

EE: You were describing the--.

BM: Christmas bonuses or something. I was just a thing the company would come up with and everybody in Winnipeg and everybody in Thunder Bay got the same bonus. The odd time I think one time in the early years before I was in management, they used to give some bonuses. They'd depend on the success of the company that year. I think the biggest volume of money we made one year was \$39 million profit. And that was one of the boom years of the late '80s, or something. There was a big rush. But the average year, I think, the company would make between \$5 and 9 million, and that was just through good management and a good system. Everybody did their job. That money, the profit, some would go back to the farmers, and I think half would go back into budgets for upgrading the terminals, or for maintenance or whatever. The lower the profits, the less maintenance work you had the following year. So, everything had a meaning to it. The company was very good. They didn't treat anybody any different. They were very good, and it worked out pretty good. The employees kind of liked that, knowing that management got the same that they did.

EE: That would be a morale booster.

BM: I think that was, that's why we were so successful, and I can honestly say too that when I was in management for those 19 years, I don't think there were three grievances that had to go the full system, and I think two of the three, that when I was in, only one involved me, but it was a medical issue that had to go this process. A real issue, and that was between lawyers, whatever. But we had no real problems of grievances that got any further than the first or second level, which was minor, because like you look after the troops, the troops will look after you. We did that. We made every effort to abide by those rules and we did. We very seldom had a grievance.

EE: You mentioned Winnipeg, of course, the farmer owners on the Prairies in Manitoba as well. At what point did you become involved with, you'd be aware, I guess, of the dealings with head office and so on? What were you involved yourself in?

BM: I guess when you're in management and we started talking one time, and it wasn't me, it was one of the other managers says, "Well, we read about the system in the West Coast or out in the country elevators. How does it really work?" So they started up a program. There was, I think, 20 of us management people in town, and every year they'd send five of us up to Winnipeg. They'd take five of the country elevators. We'd get together and have a meeting and we'd take a bus tour and go around and check the system in the country elevators. We also visited the Grain Exchange in Winnipeg, see how the Grain Exchange worked. We went to a couple of different companies. We went to the Wheat Board and watched them. We went to the inspection office. We went to Lake Shippers Clearance Association. They did a tour of all the grain facilities and what they do up there and did the tour of the country elevators. Didn't get to all of them. But did an area and visited a couple of farms and was fortunate enough to go on there about five times over the 19 years. The late '80s into the '90s. It was very informative for us, and then they would come down here.

Every year a busload of farmers would come down here, two busloads actually. And we would give them a tour of the terminal—let them know what was being done with their grain and how our system works, and they also started bringing some of the country management people down just to see our terminal and actually how big it is. They see pictures, but when you see it in life, it is a lot bigger than you think. They sort of get a little feel for it when they started building the high throughput elevators. But the farmers are very impressed with the operation. Some of them still had a thorn up their side, figuring that the grain elevators were stealing their grain, but we weren't. I think my dad mentioned, with me sitting there, that the farmers owned the elevators. We just work for them. And anything that comes in goes back to the farmers, and we just collect a wage. Some are very good.

I remember one time attending a meeting, also we, every year, there's an annual meeting where representative of the terminal would have to go up, and as a superintendent or a manager, I did attend a few of these meetings. In one of the years, I was up there. I

didn't want to go. We were on strike at the time. And of course, there's going to be a few questions about the strike and the farmers aren't moving their grain. It's sitting on the fields. And of course, one farmer got up, and he started mouthing off, "I think we should go down to Thunder Bay and run those elevators ourselves." He says, "To heck with them!" And a fellow at the podium said to the fellow, "I can't see. Would you mind turning on the light switch?" He said, "How the hell do I know where the light switches are in this place?" He says, "Well how are you going to go down and run a terminal? You can't even find a light switch." And that kind of dulled. And everybody got a good laugh and that was the end of that. Actually, I never forgot that. That was pretty good. It turned out that we got a lot of compliments because we did make a lot of money that year in the annual report. So that kind of kiboshed the idea of anybody from the country coming down to run the elevator. It was quite interesting. They gave him a little applause, the fellow that--. It was good thinking on his behalf. But we were well received when we went up too because we always had a pretty good year, you know. And then things just changed. I don't know why. Actually, I didn't even see the mergers coming. When they eventually did come, it was a shock to us.

[1:20:17]

EE: Had there any indication?

BM: There was no indication. There was a takeover attempt by Manitoba Pool. They were going to take over Grain Growers. And that kind of backfired. I don't know what the thought of was behind there or who, but it didn't work. And the next thing you know, we're merging with Alberta Wheat Pool.

EE: And with UGG in, or still or left out?

BM: No, just Alberta Wheat Pool and Manitoba Pool. And there was no indication of that.

EE: From your perspective, did that merger make sense?

BM: At the beginning, I wasn't sure. At the end, no, it didn't make sense.

EE: There was nothing gained?

BM: Nothing gained. Actually, I think the merger was the start of the end of us. The first year of the merger, there's a lot of training. They spent five or six months deciding we don't need two management teams. We don't need two, everything was double. Both companies had two CEOs, and they finally managed to get one board, and this board decided who would be the CEO. And it ended

up being the fellow who was the CEO for the Alberta Wheat Pool ended up being the manager. The company changed names to Agricore, and so we took over, and they had a good management team. They were pretty good to us down here. We had a job to do.

But they started wanting to change the whole system into computers. And I think they spent something like \$35 million on computer training, which was a waste of money in my opinion, anyhow. In some areas they needed to it. We didn't have the money to do that. I think that year we made \$9 million, and they made 4. But yet they're spending all this money and started building all these high throughput elevators. And it was just a matter of time.

I was attending meetings once a month. I was flying all over the country, to go to Vancouver for a two-hour meeting or a three-hour meeting, spend two days, didn't make too much sense to me, but you had to be there. Flying to Canmore on a long weekend and for a week-long meeting with all the areas, departments within the country division. I represented the terminal division. And being a long weekend, we started on the Monday before the long weekend, and they felt bad inviting everybody away for the long weekend. They told us we could phone our wives and families, and they would fly them out. This is how they spent the money, and I think this was the end of all. My wife didn't come, although a few wives did come out and the company paid for all that. I just come home. I just, I don't know. It just didn't work. The grain still moved. The company still operated. We were fairly busy.

EE: But instead of having achieved, I think the term sometimes used in the trade mergers and acquisitions, is synergies. That you are going to save money at the top by having just one management team perhaps, one board so on and so forth. But if you load all of these expenditures into the top-heavy organization, even if it is pared down a bit, it ends up incredibly costly, and there are no synergies achieved, or very few by the sound of it.

BM: And it was scary. You know, I didn't know what was going to happen.

EE: How long did you work for Agricore?

BM: I worked for two years for Agricore. And then all of a sudden, there was the downsizing. They got rid of my immediate manager. I got a phone call from Winnipeg. They were getting rid of him, so I knew something was happening. And a week later, they got rid of the CEO.

EE: These were the managers and CEOs in Winnipeg? This is Alberta Pool just taking over?

BM: Taking over, and all of a sudden, they're gone. There's a new management system in and, "Gee, what's happening now?" And the next thing you know, they're merging with Grain Growers and become Agricore United. At that time, they had a couple another

new management team, and this fellow come down. I'd been dealing with Bill Green, the manager of UGG, and he gave me the heads up. I got a phone call at home that he wanted to see me. And I had to go to his house one night and he told me what was happening. Nobody seemed to know, and we were all caught off guard. I had to go to the staff in the morning and tell my staff that we had to shut the plant down and tell them what was happening about this merger that was going to be announced that day. Nobody knew what was going to happen.

EE: Why would he have known ahead of you?

BM: I guess he got a phone call from, because he worked for Grain Growers, I guess his immediate supervisor let him know that we're taking over, and this is the plan. And they all agreed that the management staff of Grain Growers would get a hold of the other companies and give the managements information on what's happening and go and pass it on to the employees instead of reading it in the newspaper. So, we give them a bit of a heads up that it was happening. Nobody knew. They just told us that they're taking over but nothing's going to change. We're going to hold our own identity.

EE: Was UGG taking over Agricore? Was that the way it was unfolding?

BM: Yes. They took over.

[1:25:56]

EE: Because the leader in the move, I was going to say the aggressor in the action, but the one who was doing the taking over is the one who's going to know. And he would inform the others of what's coming.

BM: Yes, it come as a shock to me, and I guess a lot of people.

EE: And you were out of it all before Viterra, when Sask Pool took over?

BM: When Grain Growers took over, I talked to the manager, and I was thinking of retiring. Actually, they sent down a fellow out of Winnipeg, a young fellow, highly educated fellow, but I think he was only about 22 years, and he had so many degrees after his name that I couldn't even read them all. And he told me he's the new boss, and he told me I wouldn't be here long. They had their own manager. "We're taking over. We're going to straighten this mess up here". And I said, "We don't have a mess here." And I says, "Who are you?" And he says, "I'm your new boss," he says. He says, "We're going to get rid of you within six months." I says, "Well that's good. I should have 40 years in. I had 39 years six months in with the grain trade." And I says, "I should have my

40 years in, in six months. " I said, "That'll be good. July 4th is my anniversary date, so that would be a good day." And he says, "Well, you'll go when we tell you." And I just said to myself, "You know what, I think I'm going to go next week," and I did. I left on January 4th—39 years, six months. I just said I couldn't stand it anymore. I phoned up to the manager here, "Who is this fellow?" I says, "You better take him over to your plant or something," I says, "before he disrupts the whole plant over here."

EE: Before I punch him out over here.

BM: [Laughing] I didn't say that. I felt like it. But so, I says "No." I says, "You know, I think I'm going to pack it up." I said, "You're the manager here. You can handle this situation." And they treated me fairly well. They were very good about it.

EE: As far as your pension entitlement was concerned?

BM: Yes, the company's very good—all the companies, even Agricore and Agricore United and Manitoba Pool especially. We had good pensions, and I got nothing to complain, you know. I had a house and raised two kids.

EE: What was this young man's name?

BM: I can't remember. I didn't even want to. Actually, I asked later, and I think he lasted two months, and they got rid of him. I said, "Why would you hire him?" I asked him when he first came in, and I said, "What do you know about the grain trade?" He says, "Not a damn thing, but I'm pretty smart, and I'll pick it up in no time." I said, "You've got a lot to learn, my friend." [Laughing] But I have no complaints.

[1:28:35]

EE: As far as the larger realities are concerned.

BM: It's just things are happening even in the earlier years. The equipment was getting larger and faster. So, you needed less people, more automated and that was part of the downsizing, too. Our company--. This equipment was coming in. Our company seen it coming and seen the age of the employees and brought the machines in as the employees were retiring. We didn't in the earlier years in the '80s, in the early '80s, when the company was bringing the new equipment coming in, and these phased out the old-timers and brought in equipment. You know, the seniority list was slowly falling, and we didn't replace. We didn't do any hiring, maybe 10 or 15 years, I guess, at one time.

EE: But you were taking advantage of retirement. People who had put in their time replace them with equipment? What, could you sketch quickly what was going on with the equipment? Larger unloading equipment?

BM: Well, no, larger cleaning equipment.

EE: I guess dust control was part of that.

BM: Yes, dust control. But the equipment itself is twice as big, and the capacity was twice as fast, and it would be twice as clean—between twice as much in half the time, with half the employees. Everything was automated. They even had self-greasing machines. They'd oil and grease themselves. So, take away a few oilers, you know. You have a cleaning area where you have four or five people operating machines manually, pulling bins and ropes to open up valves to feed the grain into the machines, now that was all automated. So you had a one-person operation.

EE: That must have involved a pretty fair investment?

BM: Yes, I'm not exactly sure what it cost the company.

EE: Head office would know.

BM: Yes, head office. We had budgets for operations, you know. We stayed within those guides. But they had conventions where these machines would be on display every year. There was a grain elevator, the GEAPS association, an international association. We had a branch here in Thunder Bay, that my dad talked about.

EE: G-E-A-P-S.

BM: I was also president of that association for two years. But they had an annual convention, and that's where they'd send somebody from management every year from all the companies, here and in the west. And you'd go and that's where the new equipment was on display, new stuff in the industry. Upper management would take a look, ask a lot of questions, and in some cases bought some of this equipment. One was called the Texas Shaker, and it could clean grain. I don't know where it came from, but Simon-Day had the rights to it at that time. And they installed it in Pool 3, and we couldn't keep enough grain in the bins to feed the machine. It was so fast, and it was all automated.

EE: And this was the local company that had the rights to install this equipment?

BM: Yes, Simon-Day. They had most of the rights to these machines. Carter-Day or what they called themselves, Simon-Day, Carter-Day. They kept changing their names, too, you know.

EE: Well, we should talk to someone from the company who are involved in all of this. It would be very interesting, too, in terms of the upgrading. As the machinery replaces people, can you say something about the grain handlers as a social and a cultural organization? It was quite a diverse group of people, I suppose. Entirely male, I suppose?

BM: Well actually, we started--. Yes, there's a good breed of people, a lot of Italians, and a lot of European people, you know, a few Finlanders, but everybody got along real well. Over the years, sons of these people came in. We had a lot of people who spoke a lot of broken English when we first started. Some of them couldn't even read, which we found out later. And I got into management, and we had some procedures that we had to follow and found out that a lot of them couldn't read. But then we got them training. Some couldn't even sign their name. They used to sign with an X or they'd pull out a piece of paper and trace their name.

EE: Did you have literacy programs for them?

BM: Yes, we did. That's how we found out. Actually, the company in Winnipeg wasn't following the visual minority procedures in Winnipeg, and so they had a session down here. And then they found out there's a few people that they were disabled. Didn't tell us they only had one eye, figured they wouldn't get hired. And through this new training process, that they found this out, and actually made it easier for the employees and encouraged them. Made sure they had their vision test. And that just started a whole chain.

The government started hiring females. We didn't have any females at the time. I thought I would never, ever see the day. But eventually the government started hiring grain inspectors, and the grain weighing staff started hiring females. Then they started to ask, well, they wanted to get into the elevator, into the union. And they said, well, the work wasn't, it was too physical for them. There's a challenge. So they come up with a program between the occupational nurse and union and management that if they could do this type of work, there's a process they had to go through, a trial area, lift a wheelbarrow with so much grain in it, and do this and that. I forget the whole training process. But if they passed that, they were hired. And they did have women working in the elevator. Although I don't think our company had any. But I believe Sask Pool had a few. But most of them ended up working in the grain, government inspection division or the weighing division, actually quite a few, although some companies did have female workers. I think Sask Pool had a few.

EE: This would have been in the mid to late '80s. The employment equity programs that Canada established, I suppose, would be the basis for it?

[1:34:55]

BM: That's right. And it was actually was good, good to have a few females around. The swearing stopped quite a bit—a lot of swearing going on. Just a guys' thing, I guess it was. But it was nice. And they were all good workers, too, actually. They did a good job, and there are still a lot of females both for the government weigh division, government inspection division. Some of them are up in the higher end of the management team there, too. But it was enjoyable.

EE: Were there aboriginal people employed?

BM: Ah, we might have had a few. Nobody ever applied. Some of them did work for us but quit.

EE: No one would have applied as an Indian? To put it that way.

BM: No, actually, out of head office, that's what started it, the visible minorities. So they did hire some of them in Winnipeg, because of our percentage, we didn't meet the requirements. We had training down here about visible minorities, and we ended up hiring a few people. Actually, one of our secretaries, who only had one lung, applied for a job—by far the most competent person—and ended up being one of the best office workers we had. Unfortunately, she only lasted about five years, and her disease came back, and she was gone. A very good employee and actually it was her first full-time job because she was sick most of her life. She got this job, and I guess she just had a new dialysis, a new lung or something. She ended up working five years for us. The first day she had enough money, she went out and bought a car. She never drove a car in her life. Two weeks later she was in her first accident. But it was nice.

Actually, our CEO out of Winnipeg was a big supporter of the Kidney Foundation and she had a kidney ailment. And he was a big supporter of the Kidney Foundation, high up in the board in Winnipeg. And every time he came to Thunder Bay, he walked in to see her first. Never went in to see any management. That was the kind of fellow he was. The CEO of the company knew her and her condition and, "How are you feeling?". And he would sit and talk with her. A very nice fellow, you know. But we had a session, a program where the visible minorities come and put a presentation on for our whole staff.

We went to the Coliseum, or the Valhalla, the Valhalla it was, where the Natives were in it. Actually, we walked into a room and all the chairs were lined up as if there was going to be a show like an auditorium. And the fellow, the leader, says, "Holy smokes, it's five to 9:00. We're supposed to start at 9:00. I'm sure you guys like to smoke, so why don't you go out for a smoke break and come back here in ten minutes." He kicked everybody out of the hall. He had all the chairs in a big circle. This is the way it should be. So

he explained all the procedures and why they had the circle and we went all day. We had the Natives. We had the blind people coming in to do a demonstration, had volunteers come up and sit you in a chair and blindfold you and tell you to light a cigarette. See how easy it is.

But we did that for quite a few of the visible minorities, you know. Open our eyes, you know. And it was good for some of the employees because we had a couple of employees come to us after. We knew one who only had one eye, but one fellow says you know I only have one, which we record all that and they made sure that every year he was getting his vision, make sure he was all right and everything was good. "You're not going to lose your job or your seniority." But a lot of them in those days they were afraid to say, even if you were hurt. If you hurt yourself, especially when you first started, you wouldn't say anything, because you'd figure you might, because there are 40 people out there looking for work, you wouldn't say anything, you know.

EE: How did the worker's comp system work at the elevators?

BM: Oh, very good. It, you know, especially our company and most companies. They're all the same. If somebody got hurt, that's the last thing you wanted. So, you make sure they got the right treatment, although there were the odd case where someone would hang on forever and ever, compensation. You learn after, being in management, if you're not back after six months, there is a likely chance you wanting to come back, you lose that, and you don't want to. So we started a program where we started light duty. Get the employees back to work. They had to come back to work, meaningful work. But you get him used to coming back to work. We had them used to come in the morning to get him used to getting up and coming to work. He might spend an hour this week. Two weeks later, they spend two hours. You try to give them jobs. Some of them didn't want to get into, but a lot of them did. Eventually they, "Well I think I'm ready to come back to work." So you come back to work. And I mean you had to get a doctor's report, and if the doctor said no, well that's fine. But all the companies started these light duties to get them back on the job. And it was pretty good. We had a lot of people stay off on compensation, not a lot.

EE: Were you involved in the assessment system that Workers Comp had?

BM: No, no. We had a safety coordinator, hired strictly for safety and looking after the WSIB claims and training, you know, worked on the safety committee but investigated all the claims, all the injuries. We'd go with them. If there was a compensation, of course, the government would move in, and we'd do an inspection, and the safety coordinator would look after everything with the WSIB or the workers compensation.

[1:40:59]

EE: I was thinking also of the charges to the company as employer. Were you involved with the rating system?

BM: No, the safety guy did that. He kept, made sure that we were all up to date and dealt with Winnipeg because there was another fellow higher than him out of Winnipeg that looked after all that. And I guess the manager was kept aware of it. I didn't have any when I was a manager. They were already in process before I got--. Didn't get anybody get hurt. But any of the old original claims, they dealt with Winnipeg. They had a safety coordinator who looked after, and lawyers, you know, and the occupational nurse. At one time each company had one, and then we had one for the Lakehead Terminal Elevator Association. We hired an occupational nurse, that went around and did the hearing every year for all the companies. You went for your physicals. So, it was quite good. And any compensation claims or injuries, she would follow up with him, the occupational nurse. And she also had a lot to say about getting back to work. She had a good system and it worked well.

EE: Well, I think we have done a marvelous job working through your career. But there are, of course, the questionnaire has "What kind of work did you do? Describe a typical day on the job, what did you do, et cetera," which there were different things, but I think we traversed that. Then we come to such questions as "What would you like people to know about the work you did and the places you worked?" And I'm suspecting that we probably answered that one as well. Unless there is something you would like to say in regard to that?

BM: No, I enjoyed my job. I enjoyed going to work every day. Every day was a challenge because there was always something different, something new. But the employees were good, and you know, you felt good. If you did your job, and they did their job, everything worked good. That's just a policy that we had. We were taught that. And, you know, I just enjoyed going to work every day. Even when it was down to, became into management. There was a new office staff that you had to get to know. You knew them by name, but you didn't know--. And they had the same feeling. They accepted you and you accepted them, and they all did their job. Everybody was treated the same. We didn't have any favourites. So, it worked really good. That was thing about our company, you know.

EE: Tougher when the guys are out on the picket line and you had to walk through, I suppose?

BM: At times, you know, I think first, early, when I was in union, there was a picket line. There was, there just seem a rivalry between union and management. And, you know, that's just the way this system worked. And over the years, it seemed to change, at least with our company. Because I remember one time, I was in management at the time actually, and we had a strike. And the picket lines were up. I didn't even know they were striking. I come to work one morning, and the picket lines were up, and of course, they let you in. I have every right to be in because I had to check the plant and make sure it's good. And that's right too, if

you had any problems, if there was a situation and the union's on strike, you just make the phone call and they're over in there. They don't want their livelihood, something to happen. I don't think it ever happened.

I got in, but this one morning it was quite cold, so they let me in. There was only about half a dozen of them out there, so my office happened to be pretty close to the roadway. So I says, "Would you like a pot of coffee?" "Geez, that would be really good." You had a good relationship, so we brought the coffee down to them, and I said, "Well, why don't you leave it down there." We left some coffee. They had plug-ins there because the parking lot was there for the winter months. All of a sudden, the union rep come by and seen me giving them coffee. Well, did they get a tongue-lashing! I had to take the coffee back and they said, "Thanks very much, but you better not do that anymore." But it was, but we had a good relationship. We had no friction at the last strike, just waiting it out.

[1:45:37]

EE: Was there an organization among the manager or among the companies in negotiating with the union? Why was there a strike this last time?

BM: Well, I guess, we'd meet as managers. Also, each manager, we have our representative out of our head office out of Winnipeg, plus a lawyer. You start to negotiate. We're going into negotiation. So before we'd go into negotiations, we'd sit down and look at some of the things. We had to come up with some proposals. We know that they're going to come up with proposals, which is always money, more holidays, better pension plans, and, you know, all the necessary things that you had to have that we wanted when I was in the union. And we had to come up with some proposals, too. So we'd sit down and discuss proposals and sort of get a sense of agreement, "Yeah, that's a good idea." and knowing that the downsizing and trying to figure out what they're going to come up with—all the companies, all the companies.

When you go to the negotiation, we're all sitting at the table and our lawyer would call the shots. You know, and our management people, and there would also be a couple of stats people. Because when you start talking about pensions and percentages and that, we had one person that had all that information. So we'd sit down. We figure we had our proposals, and we sit down and go to a meeting and the lawyers would talk. The lawyer did all the talking. Pass the proposals back and forth. And of course, the procedure was well we'll look at yours and you look at ours.

Actually, my very first negotiations happened to be in town. We were meeting in town here at the Valhalla Inn, and it was on a Thursday. We had to meet the next day, but the hotel was full. So, we had to go to the union hall for the meeting. I don't know if it was a set-up or not. But they told us you had to go through the front door, when you come down to the union hall, the Labour

Centre. So the management people, we met for breakfast. We're coming down and here they had the picket lines up there. All the union management people went through the back door, and we all went through the front door. I remember the very first walking in there, and there was a fellow by the name of Joe Major, and he was on the, worked for Sask Pool. "Boy, Mr. Mallon, that's a pretty nice suit you got there. I bet that cost a \$100, to wear that suit. Look at me I got torn coveralls, and I don't even have a job. Shame on you," he says. "I wonder what you're having for supper tonight? Steak? We're probably have nothing. I don't have a job." Those were some of the comments.

EE: He had the right. He was holding you up.

BM: They were holding us all up. Eventually the union reps came out and said, "Oh, we're negotiating here. You've got to let them in." So I think that's the first and last negotiating we ever had at the union hall. They were waiting for us. There was about 50 of them there. Actually, they were all Sask Pool employees at the time if I recall.

EE: Would Sask Pool be the pacesetter on negotiations?

BM: They were because they were largest. In the early years when I was in the union, all Sask Pool employees, because they had an awful lot of employees. When you go to vote a negotiating committee, everybody put their hand up for the Sask Pool, so the Sask Pool employees would vote for the Sask Pool. We had a tough time getting other companies to get on the negotiating committee. Eventually they came up with a proposal that they should have other than Sask people because there are other companies. So they did. So I ended up getting on the shop committee and negotiating committee for the union. It's the same on both sides. You sit and you'd squabble. You know, you try to be fair. Who knows what fair is? It all worked out and you had an arbitrator if things didn't work out. In the latter part, it was mostly wages and pensions were the big issues. It was kind of hard. Job security was even when I was in the union and also management. But you just couldn't guarantee in the grain trade when there's so much layoffs and uncertainty.

EE: Is that what led to the strike in the last case?

BM: No.

EE: Because usually a union won't strike simply on wages and benefits because you lose money when you're on strike.

BM: Yes, you lose. You get your back time and that, but you lose money every day. Both sides.

EE: So, you need some other good reason to go out.

BM: I think it was another successful crop year, and it looked like another good crop year the following year. And the last negotiations they didn't get a whole lot of wages or as much as they wanted. So things were good, and I think they wanted to catch up. They had a few stickling issues, but they want to catch up. And I don't think they were out too long the last time, but they were out for a while.

EE: That's the other side of it. If you could achieve your objective in a fairly short stoppage, and you may not lose that much. But if it drags on for months

[1:51:28]

BM: I wish I would have--. I had all the information for all that stuff, but it stayed in the elevator. I should have taken some of that stuff when we closed. Because they had all the information. I was even trying to think the other day what my starting wage was. I can't even remember, you know. I know it went down from as low as \$3 up to about \$18 top job when I switched over from--.

EE: Even in the early '60s the wages, the hourly wages wouldn't have been all that great, I wouldn't think. The numbers were small.

BM: I remember my first negotiations. I think we settled for three cents. Nothing the first year, two cents the next year and one cent the third year. It was a three-year contract for three cents. And they accepted it. I think there was some other stuff. I can't remember. But I remember that. And then I think the big, long strike, I think the wages went up like \$4 an hour or something. We were off for seven months that time, and I'd just got married just before that.

EE: After seven months you really need to gain from it all to make it worthwhile. What might interest or surprise people most about the work that you did?

BM: Well, I don't know about surprise. The grain trade was a thriving business. There was a lot of interest. A lot of people didn't know how important the grain trade was. The City of Thunder Bay did, because in the boom years, '70s, there was some great years. They developed a program where we had tours through the elevators through the Chamber of Commerce, through Sask Pool and Manitoba Pool. We had an average of 50 people a day all summer long, going through. And that brought a lot of profile to the grain trade. We got a lot of nice letters of thank you. The Canadian government got on board and did a program with inspection staff and a presentation on the varieties of grain, what they do with the grain, the products that come out of these grains.

We used to set up a program at the terminal. One year when the Boy Scouts Jamboree was here, on our parking lot we rented, didn't rent, we set up a whole program and had tours of the elevator, two elevators. I guess they went to the paper mill and the Keefer Terminal. We had government inspection department had a presentation in one of our storage buildings, of all the different varieties of grain and they had products and we had bread, fresh bread from one of the bakeries, and different types you can make and what you do with canola seed and all that. And they had packages of products that come out of the varieties of grain, and that took half an hour to go through that so. It was very good back then.

There was a lot of promotion done. I promoted the grain trade. My dad even mentioned, too, the other day that he felt proud to be in the grain trade, because it was a big business, the same as the paper mills and the forest industry at the times, you know, very proud. I am very proud. I always wore my Manitoba Pool shirt. And when I went out, I always made sure I had a Manitoba jacket on if I had one.

EE: Was that issued to you, or have you bought it?

BM: I bought this one, actually. No, this one was issued. It was a special one they made for Thunder Bay. One of our boom years they gave everybody. It was always Manitoba Pool. And so, they made one for Thunder Bay. They put a crest and they put Thunder Bay on it. That was our Manitoba logo.

EE: We've got to get a picture of you wearing that. Let's remember that. I don't have the camera.

BM: But they came out with promotional items for the employees at times, especially when safety started taking over, and you go your million hours without an injury. Everybody got leather jackets. You made a purpose of promoting safety, and there was always benefits to the employees and the company in the end. You were rewarded with a hat or a jacket or something of some sort. We always had little gimmicks going out to employees you know.

EE: You've already said in a variety of ways what you are most proud of, I suspect, or what you are proud of. Do you want to add anything to that?

BM: No, no, I just, everywhere I went if there was an opportunity to promote the company or the industry, I would. A lot of meetings you go to, a lot of people didn't even know, have any idea about the grain trade, special meetings through safety or whatever. And you would invite some of these people back for a quick tour. And a lot of visiting dignitaries coming through shipping companies or railways. Manitoba had a good reputation of being hospitable, so we always got a lot of calls bringing groups through or any dignitaries at the time and give them a quick tour. We had a little program where we'd bring them through,

especially if there was a vessel loading. You seen pictures, but to be there and to see the grain going, being unloaded in the track shed and watching the process and out onto a vessel. It just means so much and giving numbers and values of what a shipment of grain is worth. It is just mind boggling for some of them. Millions and millions of dollars that you deal with.

EE: You must have had some almost professional guidance for these activities. I'm thinking of the 50 people a day coming through, that could be a disruption in operations.

BM: No, we had employees. We had employees, we had a few sweepers. We would have to take the sweepers off. And we had sort of a set program. We had the same guy doing it. Once they got into a routine, then they kind of enjoyed it too, because it took them off their job of sweeping, and it gave them a little break. You get a little extra coffee break when it was over and they kind of enjoyed it. And they were, like I said, everybody was kind of proud of the company. So they took. A lot of people didn't like doing it. If we were really busy, happened to be loading a boat and there weren't too many people, some of the management people would take them through, you know. Sometimes, the odd time, we had to turn them down. We used to get a lot of visitors from Manitoba, farmers and that. We asked them to come back if were not--. But most of the time we were accommodating. We'd always find somebody to come through, you know. It was quite interesting.

EE: A couple of the questions, "Do you think that the work you did contributed to Canada's success as an international grain trader? In what ways?" I don't think I have to ask you to answer that. You have already sketched that. You sent the farmer's product in clean form off to world markets. And obviously the connections between your work and the work of farmers growing the grain is equally obvious, isn't it, from what you said. There are a couple of sections on changes, challenges, and a third one, significant events. What major changes can you point to perhaps in the 39 years that you worked?

BM: The downsizing. The downsizing was a big change, you know. We never thought it would ever happen, especially to us. Manitoba Pool being right next to Manitoba, we figured if any company was going to last the longest, we'd be the company. And, actually, in reality we were one of the first companies to start closing an elevator, other than Sask Pool were downsizing some of their older elevators. They just shut them down. But we were actually the first one to shut an elevator down.

[1:59:42]

EE: And the reason for that was?

BM: Just that the trade, you know, business wasn't there anymore. Over the years a lot of changes in product and equipment and changes to the system. But over the years the volumes weren't there.

EE: The volumes moving east into the Atlantic market?

BM: Moving east and apparently a lot was going across border from Calgary down to Mexico, and you know, Saskatchewan down by rail. I didn't know that. I found that out later. A lot of grain was going that way.

EE: Manitoba grain too was going to the Mississippi?

BM: Manitoba grain was going across the border into the States in Minneapolis and then down through the river system, barges or whatever. We didn't know that at the time.

EE: Who told you that?

BM: Well, we just, we started attending these meetings, and then we were just looking, "Well, where is all the grain going?" And then you start looking. We add up all the numbers and it ends up being quite a volume of grain going cross border. And a lot of grain was coming up, too.

Farmers in Winnipeg buying U.S. wheat. It was cheaper. I don't know how it worked, off trading, a lot of cattle, horses, a lot of feed grain and hay and whatever. It wasn't only grain. But just the changeover in the system, and the downsizing, and development of the high-throughput elevators, and even after every strike, it would cost them money, so they'd find ways to cut back. And so, they'd start looking at ways. Well, that's when new equipment started coming in. You get rid of six employees. And like I said earlier, our company's very good about it. Looked at seniority lists and see who's of age and try to work into a program where we're not going to lose too many employees.

But the time came that just wasn't enough grain, and we had only the two terminals operating at the time, Pool 1 and Pool 3. I was working at Pool 3, and of course I was fighting to keep Pool 3 open, and the fellow at Pool 1 was fighting to keep Pool 1 open. It turned out that Pool 1, being the newer facility, opened up the new section in '63, was more modern, and so they decided they would shut it down. And taxes too were getting up high.

EE: Shut down--?

BM: Just close 'er down and lock the door.

EE: Pool 1?

BM: Pool 3.

EE: Pool 3.

BM: We ended up with Pool 3. Pool 1 won the case of staying open. So they decided that we didn't say anything too much to the employees at the time. I was in management at the time, and they just started slowing shipping out and then laying people off and just said the business isn't there. Then the next thing you know, we transferred everybody over and then brought crews back just to empty the elevator out and start taking some of the equipment out. If they said they were going to close it in advance, they were afraid of theft and whatever and damage to the equipment and that. So, they just sort of phased it out. They thought it out quite well and brought the employees back and explained what was happening. They were going to shut it down and why and started all these programs with the government and the jobs. It worked out alright and people come to accept it, you know.

EE: But it's not as much fun as regular operations.

BM: No, it was hard, you know. I gone back a couple of times since my retirement to say hello. You miss the guys. You don't the job. I do miss the job, but not that much. You miss the guys because you were a big family back then, you know. And I wasn't home much in the early--. I worked every bit of overtime I could because you were laid off for five or six months sometimes, sometimes only two, so you didn't know. So, you always worked as much and put the little money aside because you had bills to pay. I was fortunate to find a part-time job in my earlier years. I think the first seven or eight years I was laid off and then after that very seldom did I ever get laid off.

EE: Did you have any specific kind of part-time job?

BM: I guess whatever come along. I'd do anything. I very seldom collect poge. I was always doing something. I got a job, friends worked in the shipyards. I happened to get on there one time. They were hiring, had a few vessels in.

EE: What did you do at the shipyards?

BM: Actually, they were putting an extension on the dry dock. So I was working for Thunder Bay Harbour Improvements, just as general labourer, bringing in lumber for the millwrights, holding pipes with the plumbers, and concrete. I was sanding the walls

after concrete was poured and took the forms off—just a general labourer. I worked all winter one year. And it was quite interesting, and it was kind of in the grain trade if you want, you might want to say. It was good. It was--.

EE: Very definitely.

BM: It was nice. And I delivered papers one time. We used to go down to the harbour there. We used to--. I had a fellow had a big paper route. So we used to go down. He'd give me a few dollars. Sold fruit. In the earlier years, when I was first married and the fruit trains would come in, and you'd go down there and sell fruit, you know. It was just a part-time job, make a few dollars, but always was something. I always found something. The pay wasn't all that great, but it was enough to pay the bills. Just married, and, you know, a young family and you had to do something. My wife was working, you know, and so it helped.

EE: Was she employed most of your working years?

[2:05:50]

BM: Yes, back then when the kids were born, she stayed home until they were in school fulltime and then went back to work.

EE: What did she work at, if I might ask?

BM: She worked at the insurance adjuster at first and a lawyer's office and now a credit union. She's still working. She likes her job, office work. She's a manager of a credit union, Thunder Bay Elevator. Keep the elevators in the company, in the business, in the family.

EE: Where is the Elevator Credit Union?

BM: It's right across from the Moose Hall on Fort William Road, right besides Don's Shell. It used to be Don's Shell Service? It's right next door. There's a little building there. There's the CN Credit Union and Thunder Bay Elevator Employees Credit Union. She went there 27 or 28 years ago for two weeks and been there ever since. She was going to fill in for somebody.

EE: Well, that's what happens. Well, the impact of the changes you also sketched already, the downsizing, and all the rest of it had a very dramatic effect on employment in the industry and so on. Besides dealing with change, what other challenges did you face on the job? Do you have anything to add? You've done a very good job of describing what major challenges the grain industry faced over the years.

BM: Well, finding business. I guess we had to go out and look for other markets, too, ways to make a dollar. And there were markets handling specialty products, peas and fava beans and corn. We did corn one time. I guess peas were a big thing, very dusty, very hard on equipment, though. It was very heavy and very dirty. Just even dealing out west, trying to coordinate things were challenges. We ended up, I guess, in later years almost, not physically fighting, but trying to convince head office that the grain should come to Thunder Bay and not out in the country because we'd have our case, and they'd have their case. They were farmers and they wanted to keep the grain close to them and make the money from the by-products. And eventually their by-products out there, they couldn't handle it. They'd fill up the elevators. Instead of good grain, they were full of by-products. They started loading down the by-products to us by rail. We'd process them. Then we'd bicker on who's going to get the money. Should it go to 50, 60 percent split or whatever?

EE: This is the kind of stuff that could go into the pelletizing plant.

BM: Yes, pelletizing plant and also to a feed plant, the feed screenings. We used to ship a lot on vessels. There was quite a market for 1-feed screenings at the time, for feed plants to blend in other products with their feed in other parts of the world and down east, especially down east. There were a lot of miller plants down there. But just the big challenges, just how big the industry tried to get--. And they shouldn't have expanded as quickly as they done, and there was just challenges, just going to work and what's going to happen today, especially once the first merger started, or the first closure started, when we first started closing and then other companies followed suit.

EE: Your own experience is primarily the impact these mergers on you and operations here. You don't have any inside knowledge of what the heck was going on at those head offices?

BM: No, no idea.

EE: There's a story to be told there.

BM: Yes, I don't know. I don't know who has that information. Even, like I said, the education of the new farmers coming up and the Wheat Board had control, and the Wheat Board did a great job. They had the sales. They had the salespeople. They had full control. Young farmers wanted control. They are still trying to get rid of the Wheat Board.

EE: Well, those are the fellows, many of them, I suppose, who are Conservative Party supporters, these days, who find the Harper Government amenable to their arguments. They should have control of it.

BM: I think the Wheat Board eventually gave up the barley, let the farmers handle their own barley. And it probably is a good thing. They know what they're doing. But the Wheat Board to us was advantageous, in those days. There was an awful lot of grain moving, and you had to have somebody calling the shots and they had a good system, and it worked well for many, many, many years. But like anything else, I guess, it's got to change.

EE: It was a very interesting development, wasn't it, from 1935 when the Wheat Board, the current one, was born, really. There was earlier more experiments during the Great War and there was experience. But here was now an organization that would be doing the pooling that farmers had struggled over in the 1920s, control the whole business. That would do the marketing and so on. There'd been a central selling agency, I think it was called, actually, in the late 1920s. Now the Wheat Board would be doing that so that the Pools and the other companies which might like it less—the Richardson's and the others—might not want to lose that control. But really, it was going to be services that wouldn't be provided by Manitoba Pool Elevators. And you've been describing the services provided here at whatever charge to the Wheat Board or to the farmers ultimately, for whom the Wheat Board was working.

[2:11:36]

BM: And it worked well. I mean there was a system in place, and everybody knew the system. Everybody knew the rates. Although we did have, and every other company had agents, you know, looking for business, specialty products and that. I know one who was Warburton wheat out of England, a variety of wheat, very specialty bread flour, a variety of grain that demanded care. We happened to land a contract with them, although it only lasted for a couple of years. They come over here, and they met with our company, met our terminal, come through our terminal, seen our procedures and went out to the country to see procedures out there, who was going to grow, their land, what their land was like. We had a contract with them. We worked with them for about three years. And this was going back in the late '80s, I guess. So, I think there was something like a couple of million bushels of grain that we'd grown for them and processed, handled and shipped over to them. They were pleased with it. I think the bread sold back then like \$3 a loaf in England. So, it was a specialty bread, very high-fibre bread, I guess, a variety of grain.

EE: What would have brought about the end of that contract, inability to grow, to continue to grow it on the Prairies?

BM: I guess demand or something, or people going for the bread getting pretty expensive and people looking to cheaper varieties of bread, or something. Maybe they started growing it over in Russia or other places in Europe or someplace. Who knows? We had a contract. I think they said they had to do it for a couple of years. They weren't just going to do a, do it for a year. It had a minimum. So it worked well and then it just phased out, didn't do it anymore or maybe another company got it. I never heard any more about it. I don't even know if they are still around anymore, Warburton Wheat. It was quite interesting. They were very good, but they, it

took them a year or something to land that contract. But the company is always looking at ways or something to do other business, anything to make a dollar, because it's tough to make a dollar. Good money in their early years, but later on we had an awful lot of layoffs. Always kept a small crew working. Always liked to have extra people around. We always kept it at a minimum, but that was just to survive, I guess.

EE: What are your most vivid memories about your job?

BM: I guess, just going to work every day and just watch the changes, you know. When you go back and think about your career—when you first started, a young 21-year-old, shovelling grain and looking at—you never really thought much about the grain trade, just started working, just what a wonderful career I had, just going through all the system. And when you think about it, and you try to tell other people, even my son—he worked there, I think, two weeks and didn't like it. The dust got to him—how proud I was of working there. And just watching changes and the people you meet. How the system changed from too busy, too slow, too busy, too big, too small, and the people you met and the different organizations you met in the grain trade. I didn't know too much about the Wheat Board, the railways, how they fit in the program. The different companies who made the equipment. But you got to know these people. You shared ideas as we got on in life. At one time, the grain industry people wouldn't talk to—. One company wouldn't talk. You were in competition and that was it. If you got caught talking to somebody else—. Later on, we met, all the managers met. “Any ideas? Anybody seen any new equipment?” We met monthly, weekly on new ideas. Everybody got along.

EE: Did that begin--? Obviously, it had to have a beginning, but do you have a sense of what started it?

BM: Oh, I think it started, I would say in the '70s, mid '70s or something, because my father talked about it. Somebody asked him something about some cleaning equipment. "Well, we're cleaning this way." "Oh, do you? Do you mind if I come over and take a look at your equipment?" So that started, got things going. And then "Oh gee, John Mallon got this new equipment. It could clean flax," and wanted their own, or canola seed or rapeseed they call it. It used to be rapeseed. They call it canola. But one of our millwrights developed a machine, and they come over and took a look at it. So they started meeting together and discussing ideas. And then I guess one thing led to another, you know. And the managers all meet, I think, when I got into there, we used to meet every Thursday—the managers.

[2:16:29]

EE: Weekly?

BM: Weekly.

EE: Year-round?

BM: Yes, year-round. We just go have lunch, have a luncheon meeting. "How are you?" "Do you have any problems with--?" Somebody might have an issue with the union or something, or you had any other issues, or cleaning problems, or equipment, or "Anybody know a good cleaning machine? I want to do something," or any issues. Or talk about negotiations that are coming up. Or, you know, "Are you getting your share of cars? Is the railroad treating you right?"

EE: That's a nice question, whether the companies at the Lakehead should be regarded as competitors or whether they were, in a sense, agents of the Wheat Board, providing services as efficiently as they could, so that everyone should be learning from the most efficient, in order to achieve the same standard. That's kind of the question that one could ask. I gather the sense is more the latter.

BM: No, it wasn't. It was a competition in a sense. I guess you want to see who could make the most money maybe. Who could be the best. Everyone wanted to be number one. But it was kind of hard to compare because Sask Pool was so big. You couldn't compare money, profits, or whatever. But maybe on an equal basis, percentage wise, you'd probably be comparable to them. The amount of employees we had, the profits we made per employee and the profits they made would probably be very comparable. But no, we were agents of the Wheat Board. The system worked well. At one time they were in competition. I guess you might say. In the earlier years, my dad's talked about it. But all the times I was in, the companies got along real well.

EE: And the relations with Richardson's and Cargill when they came in, were similar?

BM: They were very similar, even the new--. When the railroads and the Grain Transportation Agency got in, and it did a great job by the way, too! You sort of had, we tried to get people controlling it ourselves. Actually, we ended up doing it, when they got rid of the GTA. So the companies got together, and we took turns sort of chairing a meeting. But the railways would give an indication of the number of cars that were coming down. And we all seemed to know our numbers, our percentages. So, we sort of worked the meetings out. Alright, I get so many cars, you get so many. Everything seemed to work out, but it wasn't as good. You had nobody if you didn't get what you wanted. Where would you go to? You always had the GTA to go to, be the negotiator.

EE: Why was the GTA closed down?

BM: I guess it was just a government decision, downsizing. Maybe the companies said they don't need them. Maybe some of the companies said they weren't getting as good a service as they expected, especially when the grain cars were tough, and downsizing

near the end. So, they just phased out one of the employees. I think there was two of them working and left one fellow there. And he was getting near retirement, and then they eventually phased him out. The companies started running the business themselves.

EE: Well, we're going to have to talk to someone from the GTA as part of this project. The very first interview we did was with Roy Lamore who worked for CNR. CNR for many years and a good deal of that was spent, he told us in the daily task of designating the cars for the elevators. So it was sort of GTA-type work that he appears to have done. But then, of course, the GTA was created and then the terminal companies, the elevators, were left at the end. The grain companies had to do it again, once the GTA was gone. Were the companies--. Well, they obviously deal with the railways, the railways would have the information of what was moving.

[2:20:43]

BM: Back then in the early days, the railway, they were in competition with one another, if a lot of rail was coming by CP, or CP was busy, or CN. But certain elevators only had, like Pool 3 was CN service to the elevator. Pool 1 was CP. CN pushed in to so many elevators. CP pushed in to so many elevators, especially in the Current River ward. Grain Growers, Sask Pool 4, and Alberta Pool 9, and Richardson's, I think. CP had two of the elevators, CN had the other two.

So eventually, with all of the merging of the grain elevators associations, CP and CN finally merged and said, "Why don't you service those four elevators, instead of both of us sending engines? You can go up," or they worked a system where--. And then they'd have grain. Cargill and the Mission and Searle Grain over there would be a CN, and they'd say well, "CP you do that, we'll do this one. We'll handle those." So they allowed the CP trains to go on the CN tracks. So they started working together, just like the companies started working together. But still there was at the end, CP houses pushed into the CP houses and the CN, and everything changed back again, when they got out of the pooling system.

EE: As far as the geography and the trade here in Thunder Bay is concerned, the railway lines, in relation to the elevators are part of the story, aren't they? You have just been sketching very quickly. The rail lines cross each other. Do you know off hand where CN and CP.

BM: No, they crisscross all over. Most of it is CP right now, I think. Most of the lines are CP. There are some, I think maybe there might be six or eight lines coming in. Maybe two are CN, the rest are CP as far as I know.

EE: Well, we'll try to talk to some people at the railway to fill in the picture from there.

BM: We used to have a chart, at one time. I used to have it at the elevator, and it had all the tracks in the Neebing Yards in Thunder Bay, and who owned them and who serviced them. There's a blueprint somewhere around. I used to have one at one time, hanging in the office. But there are some around somewhere. Maybe CP or CN has a blueprint.

EE: When the elevators were closed, was everything taken out, records and so on and so forth? Do you think records are still sitting in some of those offices?

BM: No, when I was at Pool 3, we took everything out and transferred everything over to Pool 1, and we also put some into storage. Some went back to head office.

EE: So, it was a stripping of the place?

BM: Stripping the plant. Sold all the equipment we weren't using. We tried to sell, and they sold it all.

EE: So you're left with walls and silos.

BM: Walls and silos, and they had to tear up some trackage, so you couldn't use it. And then dropped the taxes off until eventually they ended up selling it for \$1, I think, when all was said and done. It was a big elevator, and we thought somebody might come in and take it, another company or something, but I think there was something in the rules and regulations that they couldn't buy it for competition purposes or something. But nobody wanted it anyhow because there wasn't enough grain around.

[2:24:26]

EE: Now if it's genuine attrition, in a sense it was, you don't want new competition. The Wheat Board would be the ultimate factor in this. I suppose they, too, were interested in the most efficient elevators being used, lowest cost.

BM: When we walked away, we heard rumours they were going to build a hotel, convert the silos into a hotel. The big storage tanks there, not too many people know, but I didn't know about it until I started looking at it, but the bottom layers of those big storage tanks are from hulls from ships that were scrapped. They're six- or seven-inch metal. The bottom ring of all the--. All the from hulls of ships. I didn't know that. The ring around the big silos, the big, five six silos at the end of Pool 3. The bottom row, it's steel all the way up, but the bottom row is hulls from ships, welded together.

EE: Who would have done that?

BM: The company that built it, I guess. C.D. Howe must have got, I guess, when they need something strong.

EE: Someone else to talk to.

BM: Yes, they built these elevators, they would--. A lot of history there you know.

EE: Do you think it's important to preserve and to share Thunder Bay's grain trade industry?

BM: Oh yes, I'm glad somebody's doing it.

EE: I'm guessing you've had a hell of a good time the last two or three hours.

BM: Yes, I am.

EE: Reliving your life.

BM: Yes, I'm glad they are because it's very important to not only Thunder Bay but to Canada actually. Wheat was a major export product for the company and for Canada and to lose that. I hope the paper does the same thing and the other companies, the wood industry, the paper mills. They do it, because there is so much history there, going back. A lot to remember. How rough it was. I heard my dad talk about the earlier days and the explosions. What it was like then. People survived that and there are still a few of them around. It would be interesting to talk to them.

EE: Listening to you and thinking of our discussion with your father last week, there must be a manager gene in there somewhere.

BM: I don't know. When I first started, I was happy when, you know. I got my first paycheque. Gee this is good! I really liked the job, and I learned as much I could. And that's what my dad says, "Learn as much as you can. It can only help you."

EE: Do you feel you learned a lot from him?

BM: Oh yes, yes. Like I said, we didn't talk too much about the business until you got into it, and then he found out when he was in management, I guess, some of the other management would say, "Geez, you've got a couple of good-working, hard-working kids. They really like this, and they know the business and they know the stuff." He was gone, and I got in to be a foreman. Actually, he

was gone before I became a foreman. He was going out while I was coming in. And whether he had anything to say about it. The appointment came out of Winnipeg, you know. They might have said, "Do you have any recommendations?" or the other management leaving.

EE: But that was just to the foreman level. You rose far beyond that when he was already out. You can't blame nepotism for your success or credit it.

BM: I just enjoyed it, and I always did the best job I could at the time. I guess it paid off in the end. A lot of people, some like, a couple of our foremen, were just happy being foremen. They didn't want the responsibility. A lot of people are that way and [inaudible] are happy with the job they're doing.

EE: I'm thinking you ended up with a lot more paperwork once you moved up. You were describing all that you had to do, and it was all paperwork.

BM: At the end, yes. That was my day almost at the end—meetings and paperwork.

EE: It's cynical to talk about paper pushing. Paper had to be handled, important decisions to be made. But its very different from being down ensuring that the grain was going into the right spout. That everything was working well. It was quite different.

BM: That's right. Yes. Even my brother, he was one of these fellows that loved his job, and in the union, and he was number one. And he was in the highest paying job as a grain inspector. At that time was the highest paying job. He was there, and he loved his job, and he had a good job. And in this last management, in the '90s a couple of guys retired, and there was room for two more guys. We recommended him because he was doing a good job. He was superintendent, or he was head inspector, but knew the elevator inside out. We thought he'd be a good person. So, we recommended him, and they went to him. First, he said no, I think. So the manager at the time said, "You know, this is going to be your last opportunity. Things are changing in the grain business, and there may not be any opportunities. There's nothing wrong with management." So I guess he thought about it and he took it. He came in as a foreman, I think, within two years, he was superintendent. Because, again, he fell into a place that a couple of the people that were assistant superintendent and foremen didn't want to advance any further. So, he just stepped right up.

EE: He was the superintendent of one of the--.

BM: Pool 1.

EE: Of Pool 1. And you were general manager of the whole Manitoba Pool system.

BM: I was superintendent. I worked through management at Pool 1 as a foreman and went to Pool 3 as an assistant superintendent and superintendent. When I was superintendent, I also filled in for the managers when they were on holidays or out of town. They were kind of grooming you then, because the other superintendents didn't have any interest in becoming manager. So every time, I was the youngest guy there, and I'd always fill in for the manager, so that when the manager retired, they automatically offered me the job, because I used to fill in at the time--.

EE: Relationship between the two of you twin brothers wasn't clear to me last week.

BM: General manager, yes, of Pool 1.

BM: Yes, we got along quite well. We had our issues, too. He was always fighting for more staff, and I wouldn't give it to him. It's just part of the deal.

[2:31:18]

EE: What aspects of the history should we concentrate on preserving? Do you have any additional thoughts with regard to that?

BM: No, just--.

EE: You do have some memorabilia?

BM: I've a lot of old pictures.

EE: Let me ask you first. Are there any questions that I might have asked that I haven't?

BM: No, I think you pretty well covered it all. You got my history and I think we did a good job.

BM: Then it asks memorabilia.

EE: And you were heading for the pictures there. Bring them over here. I'll just shut this off for a moment. **[Audio pauses]** So you've pulled out some old pictures?

BM: I just happen to go through my shed here. I took a bunch of pictures when they shut down Pool 3. We, in one of our sessions with the opening of Pool 3, they took a lot of pictures, and they had pictures of the old elevators. And I found a few of Pool 1. I think it was called Reliance Elevator way back when. That's the very first section of Pool 1 and they put another addition of storage tanks on the end. And Manitoba bought it and changed it from Reliance to Pool 1.

EE: So Pool 1--.

BM: It's called the Reliance Elevator.

EE: I should say I have a book that I picked up years ago, Canada in the Great War, Second World War, Post War Possibilities. And I was looking through it, and there in the Manitoba section are the grain companies, not the Pool, not Manitoba Pool. They just sort of ignored that except in the general description. But they had each of the individual companies and Reliance was one of those. So, the first Manitoba Pool elevator then was Reliance.

BM: They might have been operating out of another terminal somewhere up the river, the Kam River. But I'm not sure. But this was the old Pool 1 Manitoba took over. It's still there, standing today.

EE: This is the one that's located--.

BM: At Intercity, right beside Parrish & Heimbecker, over at that end, the south end. And this was the first section. They put another section of storage tanks on the other end. It was Pool 1 and then in 1960 they started building the new section. It went on the other end out to the lakefront. It kind of tripled the size. It become Pool 1. We have pictures of the four elevators that Manitoba in one spread.

EE: Manitoba Pool Elevators 1965. 1, 2, 3 and 9. To begin with this one, No. 9. Manitoba Pool did not have 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12.

BM: No, different.

EE: Why was it 9?

BM: I have no idea. Sask Pool, I guess. You had to have some sort of identification of terminals, so they bought. There was Alberta Wheat Pool. Alberta Pool 9, so they just kept the number.

EE: Well, these are things were going to have sort out. It may be numbering along the lake shore.

BM: It could be. I don't know how the original numbers.

EE: Roy Lamore referred to 32 destinations for grain when he began.

BM: I think there was 37 elevators at one time.

EE: That's an astonishing number.

BM: That might be the way they got the number.

EE: There's the expansion of Pool 1, you were describing.

BM: There's the expansion of Pool 1 that we just put in here. There's the old Reliance Elevator, this first section. They added the little section behind here. Old Pool 2 is now a historic site. Heritage preserved that. That's the old pool down by the Northern Woods,

EE: Great West Timber.

BM: Great West Timber. It's an historic building. It used to be run by the Manitoba Pool. The ships couldn't get close to the elevator, so you had a long tunnel that went down the dock, up a conveyer belt, and up and off the spouts and then the boat. And then they had the, the boat was too long and couldn't get in. They had to go out and turn around and back in, so they could fill the back end of the boat.

EE: And that too was an old elevator.

BM: Yes, yes, over 100 years old I guess, Pool 2

EE: That is one of the earliest remaining ones.

BM: There's our Pool 3. That is completely shut down now. Looking from the lake, the lakeside. Intercity area. And Pool 9 has been torn down and demolished.

EE: Where was that located?

BM: In the north end beside UGG, between UGG and Sask Pool 4. It was in between. You just see Sask, UGG in behind. UGG has a pellet plant built in this area now.

EE: So this is also the Intercity area?

BM: No, this is the north end. Pool 9 in the north end. There's Richardson's, Pool 4, then Pool 9, then Grain Growers. This is a couple, a few other older pictures.

EE: This would suggest the MPE never in fact built an elevator from scratch as Saskatchewan Wheat Pool did.

BM: No, other than the addition.

EE: The additions of course.

BM: And they also put an addition on Pool 3, if you can. There's the old Pool 3 here and with the addition. I think that come in the late '50s, early '60s, the addition to Pool 3.

EE: Well, it is quite an elevator with the addition. But I was thinking of never building from scratch as others did.

BM: No, no, nothing from scratch. Here's a couple more pictures of the old terminals.

EE: Oh, yes, No. 2 out there

BM: I guess at dusk.

EE: Quite an atmospheric picture.

BM: A few more pictures, and then the new picture of the first merger.

EE: You have pictures of one and various stages. In fact, the first is the original that Reliance had. And then you had the additions clear both the inland and lakeshore.

BM: This is Pool 1. There's the Reliance is right here and then they put the first addition and then the second addition is

EE: Both of these are the inland additions.

BM: I am more than willing to give these to you, and you can take them with you. I don't have any use for them. Also have the first merger Agricore.

EE: The latter end with the Agricore name on it—ill-fated as that would prove to be.

BM: An old picture of the Intercity grain elevators taken from an airplane. That was way back. I think there's some history on the back, 19--.

EE: Yes, let me see here. Photo date pre-1944 ore dock, estimate about '41-42. Trees planted Memorial Avenue, post World War II. Annex to Pool 1. 1941. Mr. Fitzgerald May 2000. Oh yes, the sequence Parrish & Heimbecker, Davidson Smith, McCabe, Thunder Bay, Pool 7, Stewart, Bawlf, Reliance, MP3. Well, I receive with pleasure and a great sense of honour the artifacts of this sort. We're going to have to be sure to store them properly, so they remain available at a grain trade centre, which remains our hope.

BM: I'm sure I have a couple of pictures. I guess that's Pool 6 going down. I took it out of the paper. A couple of other old pictures.

EE: December 2000.

BM: Just some old--.

EE: It's quite a picture. I'd just forgotten, just before Christmas I was busy marking, I guess.

BM: Here's one of the old Manitoba Pool Cooperators. It's just an article about the new Pool terminal opening up. And there's another copy of a different program. I'll leave all that with you.

EE: I'm going to shut this down now.

End of interview.