Narrator: Roland Mann (RM)

Company Affiliations: Lakehead Shipping Company Ltd., Hamilton Shipping Company, Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company Ltd. (P&O), Lloyd's of London,

Interview Date: 12 December 2008

Interviewer: Ernie Epp (EE)

Recorder: Owen Marks (OM)

Transcriber: Sarah Lorenowich

Summary: Former owner and ship's agent of Lakehead Shipping Company Roland Mann discusses his career in ocean shipping in Thunder Bay's harbour. He begins by describing his early ship schooling, his work with Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company, his shipping experience during WWII, and moving to the shoreside with Lloyd's of London as a cargo surveyor. He discusses learning extensively about the logistics and administration behind shipping before moving to Canada to work for Hamilton Shipping. He explains his project to determine Thunder Bay's fitness to handle ocean ships through the newly constructed Seaway, as well as becoming the owner of Lakehead Shipping to implement the needed infrastructure and organizations for the ocean trade. He shares a brief history of the building of the St. Lawrence Seaway, and shares stories of the first ocean ship in Fort William, the building of Keefer Terminal, and the growth of the ocean trade in Thunder Bay. Mann explains the process of drawing up and signing a charter party for ocean ships, describes a typical day of a ship's agent during the navigation season, and recalls his interactions with a variety of organizations, like the Lake Shippers Clearance Association. He discusses the common cargos carried by ocean ships, their overseas destinations, and the variety of costs associated with chartering a ship. Other topics discussed include his travel during winter months to visit ship owners, the downturn of the grain business in Thunder Bay, the ocean port at Churchill, and a story of a ship taking damage in the Kaministiquia River.

Keywords: Lakehead Shipping Company Ltd.; Hamilton Shipping Company; Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company Limited, Lloyd's of London; Grain transportation—ships; Ocean-going vessels; Ship's agents; Ship owners; Charter parties; Bills of lading; St. Lawrence Seaway; Lakers; Great Lakes trade; International trade; Ship's pilots; Linesmen; Tugboats; Harbour commissions; Ship inspectors; Stevedores; Package freight; Bulk carriers; Grain varieties; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Keefer Terminal; Grain export destinations; Canada Steamship Lines; Lake Shippers Clearance Association; Shipping Federation of Canada; British Royal Navy; WWII veterans; Churchill; Ireland; England

Time, Speaker, Narrative

EE: Well, here we are on the 12th of December, 2008, at your lovely apartment. So, I'd like to begin by asking you, Captain Mann, to give us your name and to describe how you came to work in the grain industry, although that may have taken a little while. So, your name please.

RM: Roland Barry Mann. I didn't start in the grain trade. I was in ocean shipping. That's where all my experience comes from.

EE: Good. Right. I understand that you were born in Ireland. Did you begin your ocean shipping experience out of Ireland?

RM: Not really. There was a ferry service between Dublin and Liverpool, and I got involved in it when I was barely a teenager because I could help load live cattle into ships in places where the cattle drovers couldn't reach.

EE: Because you were--?

RM: Because I was long and skinny.

EE: I see! Right. So, you didn't have any farm experience, it was just your--?

RM: No, no. But I knew how to use a stick with a nail on the end of it!

EE: Right, yes. The cattle don't get much kindness if they're not moving in the right direction.

RM: That's right.

EE: And so, you were driving them onto this ferry boat?

RM: That's right, yes.

EE: How long were you involved with that?

RM: Well, that was just a part time. I didn't get paid or anything. I was just a helper. I was interested in ships, and that was how my shipping experience started. Then I went to a marine college when I was very close to 15, 14. 14 and 8 months, 9 months.

EE: Did your family have shipping experience? Was your father in shipping?

RM: No, my grandfather was in shipping, but not my father.

EE: Your grandfather was. Right, so you went to the college and--.

RM: I went to the marine college, and it's an interesting place. In England—this is when I went to England, and this is why I more or less have an English accent—I went to England, and this college was overflow for the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy had a college in Dartmouth, and it got about four-fifths of its officer personnel from Dartmouth. But the remaining fifth had to come from some other source. Instead of starting at 13 in the Royal Navy base, you started in one of these other colleges like Pangbourne when you were 17. You then went into the Navy on what was called special entry. But the Navy had done another thing. They had made certain that all the cadets in Pangbourne were members of the Royal Naval reserve, and that has a bearing on my life, a very big bearing on my life.

EE: And what was that bearing?

RM: Well, there when I was 17, I went to sea in a firm called the P&O, in other words the Princess Line.

EE: Yes, the Peninsular & Oriental?

RM: Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company Limited.

EE: Good old P&O.

RM: Started and did on for quite a number of years. The Princess Line is very famous for its cruising. When I started in the P&O, they ran services in those days to Japan via the Suez Canal and to Australia via the Suez Canal. My first experience was to be shot at by a small, I think, really overgrown trawler, a small warship with a gun on the front of it from the Spanish Civil War. Everybody in the ship was saying, "Where is the Navy in Gibraltar? They're all having cocktails!" [Laughing]

EE: This would be, what, 1930--?

RM: This would be in 1938.

EE: ’38, yes.

RM: I went on, and my next experience was assigned to the Japanese war, which I saw some very unpleasant things in Shanghai. Again, in 1938.

EE: All of this in P&O service?

[0:05:03]

RM: P&O service. I was what was known as an apprentice or a cadet. An apprentice in the Merchant Navy is considered the lowest form of animal life in the ship.

EE: I daresay. [Laughs] Not things that we need to talk about at any length, I don’t suppose.

RM: Not really. But just as the war was starting, I got a call from the Royal Navy to say would I join their naval port, which was Portsmouth. The ship which I joined was *HMS Victory*. The whole port was known as HMS Victory. It had nothing to do with the ship, in actual fact.

EE: Oh, yes, I see. No. Just the way the Royal Navy operated.

RM: Yes, you could go look at the ship anytime you wanted to. But that was the limit of that. Then I served all the way through the war.

EE: In the Navy?

RM: In the Navy. After though, I went back to the Merchant Navy for a while. Then, by chance, I just sat for my master’s license and completed it and was doing my extra master’s license, when a fellow I’d known since—and he’d gone to a different college to me—but met me on the steps and said, “Would you like a part-time job?” I said, “Oh, yes, I would like a part-time job!” It cost you a lot of money in those days to get these certificates. You had to save up to do it. So, I got this part-time job. To cut a long story short, that resulted in me giving up totally on my waterboard, if you like, marine career. I joined this company as what was called a Lloyd’s cargo surveyor, and then as I went into what was called the ship’s agency and the master stevedores, did all the land side of ships. This was where, of course, I first met up with grain. Grain, we used to look after grain ships coming in with barley for a little organization called Guinness’ Brewery.

EE: Ah, yes! Guinness is good for you. [Laughing]

RM: That's right!

EE: Good old malting barley from Canada you were handling? Yes.

RM: Malting barley. There is where I learnt all the stuff—my nautical education went out the window—and I came to know all the marine side of chartering, ship owning, you name it from the shore side. Having had the practice of--.

EE: The first involvement, Lloyd's, would be the insurance business?

RM: That was Lloyd's, as a Lloyd's cargo surveyor. If the cargos had gotten damaged and the owner of the cargo would complain to Lloyd's, and Lloyd's would then telephone us and say, "Would you send a surveyor round to see what it's all about?" Then you wrote a certificate for the owner, who could then present it to the insurance company, and they would settle on whatever the basis was. I didn't get involved with that.

EE: No. No, Lloyd's is a very interesting business. We won't spend time on it because you weren't in it, but what were the people called who were--? Lovely term for them. Unlimited liability if you join Lloyd's.

RM: Oh, yes.

EE: Some Ontario people got drawn into Lloyd's and discovered along the way that they had to pay up when there were losses suffered.

RM: Oh, yes. What is that called? I know--.

EE: There was a lovely noun for it.

RM: It'll come in about 10 minutes.

EE: Yes, it'll come back to you, I'm sure. Any case then, this was your first involvement with grain crossing the Atlantic down for an important destination?

RM: That was the first I met up with grain. Grain, as I say, there was malting barley, which if I remember rightly came from Canada. But once you got into the grain trade, although we were at the end of it rather than the beginning, I learned quite a lot about grain and how to handle it, and what the problems were.

[0:10:10]

EE: Were any of the damaged cargos you ever surveyed of grain, or not? Or do you remember now if any of them were?

RM: I'm just having to try to think that. I'm not certain. I did an awful lot of damaged cargos of various kinds. I could have done a grain, but I just don't remember it I'm afraid.

EE: No. More than likely not. I mean you could ship some, water--. Some grain might get wet, I suppose, but--.

RM: That's the sort of thing that would happen. I'd have, say, the bottom foot of a cargo which was wet or something like that.

EE: In any case, you learned all about the land side of the business?

RM: Land side of ocean shipping.

EE: Yes. And what sorts of things are involved on the land side of marine activity?

RM: Well, first of all, you've got the ship owner. Then you've got possibly the charterer of the ship for a cargo, or a charterer of the ship for time. You could rent a ship at so much an hour or so much a day. You could put whatever cargos you wanted in a ship once you've rented it. Or you could be the owner of a cargo and go to a ship owner and say, "I want to load my cargo into your ship. How much are you going to charge me for it?" A thing called a charter party, which is part very much of the grain trade because it's part of the price. If the grain cargo is sold CIF—cost, insurance, and freight—then the shipper of the grain, or the owner of the grain, could be either, is very interested in what the freight is. You have very substantial negotiations sometimes going on for days before you finally get an agreement to--.

EE: Of what that will aggregate to, I suppose.

RM: Yes.

EE: The basic cost of course--.

RM: I learnt all about that for the grain trade, but also many other trades—fruit trades, meat trades, general package freight, you name it.

EE: Were there partnerships involved in this business in the 20th century to any extent? Or was it--?

RM: What do you mean by a partnership?

EE: Well, my own marine experience is all definitely land-lubber sort, but my graduate professor Frederick Lane was an authority on Venice and on late-Medieval Early Modern era shipping. There was a great deal of merchants joining in partnerships so that they would have shares in a cargo. So, they would have shares in a number of cargos, and if a ship was lost all of them would lose a bit, but no one would be losing everything because he owned that cargo outright or that particular--. It was a venture. They thought in terms of a voyage, a venture. Was that sort of thing still--?

RM: I don't know now because I've been retired for so long, but up until the time that I retired, a marine movement of a cargo was a venture and was still considered a venture.

EE: I suppose corporate organization would mean that there was a sharing of the risk in that sense.

RM: Yes. You could put two cargos in one ship, or three for that matter. You could put sometimes--. Usually what happened was a company X chartered the ship, and then he went around to all his pals and said, "I've got a ship going from Thunder Bay to Rotterdam on approximately February the 15th. Have you got any cargo for her? Any grain cargo?" It was for grain, so they'd have to stick to grain cargos. Usually he got a full cargo, or he had to go and buy some more cargo to fill the ship anyway. That part I didn't get involved with very much.

EE: It has at least a vague resemblance to this, a number of merchants joining in a venture, sharing the risk and so on and so forth.

RM: That's right, yes. I mean, there's a document called a bill of lading, which is a document of title the same as for a house. I might issue as much as 100 bills of lading for one ship. Now, that might allow him to sell cargos to people on the other side. He might try to sell cargos to people on this side, whatever suited him.

[0:15:25]

EE: That is very similar, it's just a development in terms of the actual form—the paper involved—the bill of lading because it does involve just that sort of sharing of things.

RM: Yeah.

EE: So, you worked at this activity on the landward side for a good many years in the British Isles?

RM: A number of years. Then I realized that business in Ireland in the firm I was with, I'd reached the top of it or whatever the peak of it was. I started looking around, and somehow, I got a phone call from a man I'd never met offering me a job in Canada.

EE: You'd been based in Dublin through--?

RM: I'd been based in Dublin since--.

EE: This was, of course, the Guinness Brewery in Ireland and so on and so forth. So, it was business bound for Dublin that you were primarily involved with through the--?

RM: Oh, that was entirely with stuff for Dublin.

EE: Right. So, you had this call--?

RM: See, Ireland was a separate country.

EE: It was, of course, yes. The Republic of Ireland.

RM: I was involved in handling tea. I was involved in handling lumber from Russia. The best lumber we could get was from Canada. It was some of the best cargo. It was lovely lumber, particularly from the West Coast.

EE: West Coast via the Suez Canal, or did it use the Panama Canal?

RM: West Coast via the Panama Canal.

EE: Panama Canal to get to the British Isles.

RM: Yes.

EE: So, you had a call from Canada?

RM: I had a call from Canada. I talked to my wife about it, and we decided there was no future staying in Ireland. It's a very small country, and the shipping business was not big. There was a shipping company owned by the government, and unless you had yourself tied in the right political thinking, you didn't get any jobs in that one.

EE: Yeah, politics can be allowed to influence it, and does sometimes.

RM: Oh, very definitely it did in Dublin.

EE: It did there, right?

RM: Oh, yes.

EE: So, the call from Canada came from whom?

RM: From a man called Fred Ellis, who owned Hamilton Shipping in Hamilton.

EE: Which did primarily a lake business, or were they out on the oceans blue water fleet as well?

RM: He was in ocean shipping. He started—I'm open to correction on this one—but around about I think 1956. Might be maybe a little earlier.

EE: Was he anticipating the completion of the Seaway?

RM: That's right. He realized that the Seaway was opening, so he thought this marine stuff and got the Hamilton Harbour Commission to convert one of their sheds into use by an ocean ship. Then the first ships started coming up. They were little ships and they had to use the—what was the name of the canal?—the Lachine Canal.

EE: Yes, that's right, the old Lachine Canal.

RM: That limited a ship to basically a lift capacity of 2,500 tonnes.

EE: They were basically the old canallers still at that point, were they?

RM: The canallers were--. The thing with the canallers was a canaller could only go as far as the St. Lawrence.

EE: Right, so he was bringing in ocean ships, but they had to be small ones?

RM: They had to be less than 2,500 tonnes lift capacity.

EE: But two or three years later--.

RM: But in 1959--. But before that, I'd better tell you what happened.

EE: By all means!

RM: I came in as what I thought was his general manager. By this time, I had a lot of technical knowledge on how to run and operate ships and everything involving the ship from the shore side of it. This isn't really what he wanted. Curiously enough, he was married, had a second wife but he had no children. His child was Hamilton Shipping.

[0:20:14]

EE: His baby. [Laughs]

RM: His baby. He brought me over telling me that he was 65 and retiring. He never did retire. He died at 78. [Laughs]

EE: In 1978?

RM: No, at the age of 78!

EE: At the age of 78. [Laughing]

RM: In steering harness.

EE: Right, and so under a misapprehension you'd taken the job.

RM: Yeah, I'd taken the job. In 1958, he told me he had a firm called Lakehead Shipping. The manager of it had died, and would I go up to Thunder Bay to see what was—well, in those days, Fort William-Port Arthur or the Lakehead—see what was going to happen with the ocean ships. So, I came up here and, quite frankly, the twin ports were not organized in any way to handle ocean shipping whatsoever. It's a very different operation to handling a laker. He asked me to write a report, so I wrote a report and said, "You've got to get somebody who really knows the shipping business up there." Then I lost interest in him because I was being offered a job in New York. It was one of these things where they kept on saying, "Well, we'll let you know in a week's time. We'll let you know in a week's time." This sort of thing.

EE: And the weeks passed?

RM: So, the weeks passed. I finally gave them a notice, I said--. In the meantime, I think I ought to say, Fred had asked me if I would go up to this part. I told him what I thought of it. I said, "Really, I'm not that interested." I said, "I've only been in Hamilton two years. I've got a wife and two kids, and we've bought a house. We don't really want to start moving again." Well, he said, "You write your own ticket." To cut a long story short, I wrote a ticket which meant that I owned the Lakehead Shipping company.

EE: And he bought it?

RM: He bought it.

EE: Or he sold it?

RM: He took it. [Laughing] Signed it.

EE: So, in a company that he controlled or owned, he essentially sold--?

RM: To me!

EE: To you. Or gave to you or whatever?

RM: It's a story itself how it all happened.

EE: I dare say, yes, which we might pursue, although I think I'm maybe more interested in your thoughts about what the Lakehead needed to have in order to handle ocean shipping. The content of your report in a sense, in what you then pursued as the owner of--?

RM: Well, basically, the first thing I said was, "You have this huge port with 25 elevators, but there's no harbour commission, for starters." I found that if you wanted to have anything done with the lights, you worked with the—with lights or ice breaking or anything—you worked with the Department of Works, I think it was called.

EE: Federal Public Works?

RM: Federal Department of Works.

EE: Public Works.

RM: I can look it up. I have it.

EE: Rather than the Department of Transport?

RM: The Department of Transport had very little to do up here, but they did control the lights. So, I said, "Well, you know the light on the breakwater's gone out." "Oh, thank you very much! We'll fix it," is the sort of thing that--.

EE: And would it be fixed?

RM: Usually. But if you went to the Public Works or so it was called--.

EE: Department of Public Works of Canada.

RM: If you went to the Department of Public Works and said, "Now look, instead of having the Kam River at 25 feet, how about dredging it to 27 feet?" You might as well have talked to the wall!

EE: Were you involved in any dealings with members of parliament at the time in this connection?

RM: Not really. I was still very much an immigrant. With only two years, I hadn't--.

EE: You came here in '58, and this is a year--.

RM: 1959.

EE: Oh, '59 actually. The report was written in '58. Two years, in '59, after the defeat of C. D. Howe who'd been the first Minister of Transport back in '35.

RM: Well, C. D. Howe was still in office when I came to Thunder Bay, and an NDP-er--.

EE: Well, CCF. Doug Fisher.

RM: Doug Fisher, yes.

[0:25:13]

EE: I defeated him in the '57 election.

RM: Doug Fisher, well, Doug Fisher was--. In '57 you defeated him?

EE: I believe it--. Well, we can check that too. When you say that C. D. Howe was--?

RM: Because I used to--. One of the things I did was I socialized with the local people once I got this thing moving, and I asked him for lunch onboard an ocean ship on a couple of occasions, Doug Fisher. So, I remember him quite well.

EE: Well, I was interested in the Howe era and what impact that might have had on government operations here, but the more significant thing is that from your experience, a single organization that controlled all of these activities--.

RM: But a harbour commission didn't exist!

EE: A port commission was necessary. No.

RM: Not only that, but there was no pilotage organization. There was no--. Ocean ships, there was an appalling inefficiency in the development of the Seaway. That's a story in itself!

EE: Relevant to what we're doing though.

RM: Possibly relevant, but yeah, it was--. I shudder now to think of the things I had to do.

EE: Now, had the lake shipping activities not—the lakers—not required some of these services?

RM: They required tugs, but the tugs were all owned by lake firms. If I wanted a tug, I played second fiddle. I didn't get one if it was any lake ships moving.

EE So, part of it was really creating your own infrastructure. The infrastructure that you would need with Lakehead Shipping for--.

RM: Totally. The only thing was the shipyard. The shipyard didn't seem to mind if it had an ocean ship or a laker in it. A ship was a ship.

EE: All steel of more or less good quality, and the welders went to work I suppose.

RM: Basically.

EE: Or whatever had to be done.

RM: Yes, they were good. Then there was two or three other companies—there was Northern Engineering and Western Engineering. Western had a couple of very nice tugs which I liked very much, but I might as well have talked to the wall to get them because they were always used for lakers. The tugs were owned by Paterson. [Laughs]

EE: Yes, well, Western I thought was a Paterson company. We interviewed Robert Paterson, and we didn't talk about tugboats come to think of it! Anyway, so here you were in--. '59 is the year the Seaway went into operation.

RM: I was here when the Seaway opened. My first ship was the one that went into Fort William, the *KORTHI*. If you want just a little story--.

EE: Tell us the story!

RM: Well, I moved up here and I found myself an office in the old Cooper block. I called a ship up. Radio wasn't very good, but you could if you got the ship in certain places. You could get a radio message and you could talk to the captain. So, I got a hold of one of these—I've forgotten how I did it—but it wasn't on the phone. I think I got a special piece of equipment. It was quite complex. Anyway, I got a hold of the captain and told him that he was first ship into Fort William, and would he mind having some coffee or tea or possibly some drinks ready and get a ladder over the side as soon as the ship docked? Well. He docked and it was a cold, miserable, early May day. Wet! I had all the dignitaries, most of the city council, and the mayor. Mrs.--? Lady--?

OM: Sippola?

EE: Sippola?

RM: Sippola! Sippola, Sippola. On the dock. The ship turned around and we waited, and we waited, and we waited, and finally a decrepit gangway was produced. It was lowered down. We got them all onboard, and they were going to present top hats and gifts for the captain and all that. The captain was there in a pair of dirty pants, a shirt with rolled up sleeves. Finally, I just said, "What about the coffee?" "Coffee? What do you mean coffee?" I said, "Haven't you gotten anything for drinks?" I said, "Have you got any drinks onboard?" "Oh, no, no, no. I haven't gotten any drinks." Fortunately, I had brought three or four bottles of scotch with me, [laughing] knowing what would happen!

[0:30:25]

EE: You had some fears!

RM: So, ultimately, I finally went down and told the chef or the cook. I said, "Look, have you got any hot coffee?" He said, "Oh, yes. I've got hot coffee." I said, "Well, bring it up to the captain's cabin or the saloon, and we'll give it to these people." He came up, the cups were all dirty, and he wanted to know whether he would serve Greek coffee or American coffee. Greek coffee you stand the spoon up in it! In American coffee, it was the same coffee, but it had canned milk in it. [Laughing] Anyhow.

EE: Espresso or something of that sort, with American coffee.

RM: Finally, I got the whiskey out then, hoping that would warm them up. By this time, it was about 10:00 in the morning. Finally, I said, “Captain, have you got any cups?” “Oh, yes.” Finally, with very great reluctance, produced about six dirty glasses.

EE: I’m tempted to ask where this ship was from, but maybe I shouldn’t. [Laughs]

RM: Yeah! Would you like to have a guess?

EE: Out of the Mediterranean?

RM: Oh, yes. It was Greek owned under the Panamanian flag if I remember rightly.

EE: Oh, yes. Flags of convenience.

RM: Flag of convenience. It was an old liberty ship. It had been damaged coming up the Seaway. The damage was exactly what I had warned ship owners about before the Seaway opened.

EE: Namely?

RM: Namely, it had two dents, one on either--. Just where the turn of the bow went down to the straight sides of the ships there were two dents, one on either side of the ship where he just hit the wall too hard.

EE: I see. I suppose over the years many a dent--.

RM: Oh, many a dent! Don’t get me going on pilotage in the Seaway because it’s a historical disgrace!

EE: Is it really?

RM: Oh!

EE: Well, we won’t pursue that today, but I presume that pilotage and whatnot at the Lakehead became much better than that.

RM: Well, yes. I had private pilotage. I had two men piloting, and I think my pilotage service lasted from ’59 to ’62. I think the government decided in ’63 that they could take it over. So, I said, “You take over my pilots.” They said, “Oh, no.” They said, “They aren’t qualified.” I said, “You don’t want a pilot who’s qualified. You want a pilot who knows the port!” I said, “It doesn’t matter what his qualifications are. The main thing is to be able to handle a ship.” The two guys were beautiful ship handlers, and they knew the port like the back of their hand. If they did do any damage or anything—there were some births which were pretty dicey, you might get a little dent or something—they were, oh! It creates a catastrophe. They were first-class guys.

EE: So, that was one of the requirements, a pilotage service.

RM: A pilot service, I provided it.

EE: What else was needed to operate well?

RM: The lakers used the crew to dock the ship and on the dock. The ocean ship doesn’t. It won’t. It hasn’t enough crew to have people on the dock and in the ship as well. What we had to do was provide linesmen. That was another thing I had to produce. Ship’s chandlers for food and stuff, I couldn’t get a ship’s chandler. They were all being told by the lakers, “Don’t service the ocean ships.”

EE: You’re kidding?

RM: Finally, I got one of them who said he would.

EE: Yes. Was there that sort of a dog-in-the-manger attitude towards the opening of the Seaway?

RM: I’m sorry I’ve lost my track.

EE: Well, this attitude of the lakers, the firms here locally. Paterson and Company and the others--.

RM: Yes, I had one firm—yes, I remember now—I had one firm who I visited. I tried to visit all the people here. I visited and they said, “If you don’t get out of here in three months, we’ll take you out.” I’m still here, and they’re long gone. [Laughing] Lakehead Shipping’s still going strong.

[0:35:25]

EE: Yes. This kind of attitude obviously wouldn't have served the development of the Seaway well at all.

RM: The best thing that could have possibly have happened—I'm saying this sarcastically—was the mayor, mayoress, and party on the *Corthic*. I think after that, they decided they wanted to have nothing to do with ocean ships. Ocean ships did develop quite a bad reputation, I think.

EE: Yes, I suppose they would all be foreign, whereas the lakers were all Canadian ships.

RM: And they run a beautiful operation. They were far advanced technically, and the way they thought and the way they did things. The lakers were and are a very efficient organization.

EE: So, part of the challenge of developing Lakehead Shipping then was to—I'm tempted to use a football metaphor or something of that sort—running interference for these ocean-going ships that came in here to justify the creation of the Seaway, I'm tempted to say.

RM: Yes.

EE: Although, the lakers also, of course, expanded inside the--. They began running--.

RM: Well, of course, you've got to know how the Seaway started. The Seaway didn't start as a planned thing. What happened was the two governments agreed to build hydroelectric stations on the St. Lawrence. I don't know who, but somebody came along to them and said, "Look. Why don't you put in a seaway as well while you're doing this? You're building all these walls and things. We couldn't afford to do it just as a seaway thing, but the cost between the two countries wouldn't be so great." It was part of the--. So, they said, "Yes." They went to the architects, and the architects said, "We're halfway through the thing. We can't produce the plans for this in time." They said, "Do it! But," they said, "if you would take the plans of the Welland Canal and let us use those, we can." So, that's how the Seaway got started.

EE: The plans were expanded though? They're larger canals than the Welland are they not?

RM: I don't think they're very much larger. I don't know.

EE: Really? Because it was certainly Ontario Hydro and the New York Power Authority would have been the ones who were going to share the power capacity of the river.

RM: That's right, yes.

EE: Lionel Chevrier was the minister [inaudible] put in charge, or was he actually--? He may not have been a minister, but he was the one I think who--.

RM: I can't remember who the minister was.

EE: I have a book of his somewhere which describes all of this, and I must look at the beginnings of all of that because, of course, there had been interest pushing for a Seaway for decades. I've got Steven's book from the 1930s about building it, but the US railways, I think, had been opposed and the Eisenhower administration wasn't particularly interested either until they realized that it was going to happen, and they better get in. Or so I understand as part of the--.

RM: I wouldn't dispute any of that. But the thing with this, when you went to the Department of Transport here, in Canada, they said, "Oh, no. We're not interested in the Seaway." I'd say, "Why not?" "Well," they'd say, "it's to let the lakers out, not to get ocean ships in." Well, of course, if you can let lakers out, it doesn't take too long for the ocean ships to come in too! They've already been practicing with these little ships.

EE: Right. Water runs in one direction, but ships can move in both. [Laughing] Upstream too.

RM: That's right. The organization for handling ocean ships was non-existent. Literally non-existent in 1959 when the ocean ships came up here.

EE: Were there other things you had to establish? You were into a list, I think, of about four. The chandlers were the fourth one.

RM: The chandlers.

EE: What else?

RM: Well, I had to establish a towage. I finally got a firm who went in with the lakers, and he had a couple of very small tugs. Bought bigger ones later on.

EE: Who was that?

RM: Stiff. Oscar Stiff.

EE: Oscar Stiff.

RM: Right. Yeah.

[0:40:00]

EE: I was wondering where Oscar Stiff would come in. So, Oscar Stiff's business grew in support of ocean shipping?

RM: Ocean shipping. They basically depended on me. I was their primary customer in a big way.

EE: Well, well, well. And other services?

RM: Well, you have safety things which you have to do with ocean ships if they're going across the Atlantic. In those days, you don't have the same--. The ships are differently designed now, but you used to have to build the bulkheads and hatchways and things like that just so the rain didn't shift in the void, which meant that you had to get a certificate from a government official. So, I went to the main department and said, "Could I have somebody who would do this work?" And they said, "Well, we haven't got one." So, he said, "Well, fine. We'll ask the ministry." They sent a man called Captain Finley up here. He was the first, and he was very good. But again, I needed him. Then, of course, we found that we had to look after and make sure that the ships had no bugs or beetles in them. [Laughs] I said, "Well, how do we deal with this one?" So, I went to the Department of Agriculture and said, "Have you got an inspector who will come and inspect?" "Oh, no. Oh, no." "Well," I said, "I've got to have one. We've got to have one." They said, "Well, we have someone who does the lakers, but you see, he's out on a farm in Kakabeka or somewhere. But if you drive out there, you can tell him to come in and do it too." [Laughing] Very nice chap, and he was very helpful to us. I think his name was Elchuck.

EE: He would walk his way through a ship looking to see if there were any insects in there?

RM: Yes. Then, of course, I had to find a company to fumigate the ship, if there were too many bugs and beetles in it. So, we had to get--.

EE: Yes, extermination services.

RM: Whatever it is. Then, of course, we had ship repairs to do. Curiously enough, I hadn't too much problem getting that. There were three of them here—Northern Engineering, Western Engineering, and the shipyard, Port Arthur. They were all competing with each other, so I could usually get somebody to work on that for me. Then, of course, there was the whole stevedoring operation for handling package freight for ocean ships. Package freight for lakers? Yes, they had a service from I think it was Toronto to Thunder Bay in those days, CSL [Canada Steamship Lines]. That was a very efficient operation.

EE: Yes, CSL would have developed that out of the Northern Navigation business, the big ships.

RM: Yeah, that was very efficient.

EE: Was there a certain amount of package freight coming in by ocean shipping?

RM: Oh, yes. I, again, had to find a warehouse. That was fine, so I went to the most suitable place. They said, "Oh, yes." They thought they can do it. Week before my ship was to arrive, they said, "Oh, sorry. We can't take the ship." "Why not?" "Well," they said, "We're renting the terminal," which I was going to use, from I think it was the CN. I've forgotten. One of the two railways. "They have the right to name who will be the stevedore and who will handle the goods in the shed." I said, "I don't want any of that. This is a very different thing, taking foreign goods direct from a ship, from a foreign--. I've got to put it into a warehouse and then get the Customs Department before it goes anywhere. I don't want a third person who knows nothing about it doing it," I said.

Finally, finally, I found the old Edible Oils dock, and that was my first terminal in Thunder Bay. The loading doors were on the backside, not on the frontside. Just to show you the type of thing that went on, my master stevedore phoned me one day and said, "The truck's gone through the dock!" I said, "What do you mean the truck's gone through the dock?" He was a bit inclined to have a liquid lunch, so I figured that this was one of these. "No!" he said, "I'm absolutely serious. A truck's gone through the dock." So, I said, "Sounds very odd. I've got to find out a bit about it." I went down to the dock, and sure enough the dock, this truck had been loading steel directly out of the shed. We got an advance clearance for it because [inaudible]. Steel is steel sort of thing.

[0:45:35]

EE: And heavy.

RM: And heavy. He got it half loaded, and the dock had just collapsed! There was nothing underneath the dirt surface. So, fortunately I'd used the ship's derricks and lifted the whole lot up. They got the truck to drive slowly forward until it was on hard ground again. [Laughing] I said, "I don't think you better put any more on this truck."

EE: No! That's a different way of going through a dock without doubt!

RM: I could go on with stories like this all night!

EE: Did Keefer Terminal eventually solve these problems?

RM: Oh, Keefer Terminal, that's another one. I heard about Keefer Terminal, and I found out they started to build that I think about 1960, 1961 when they started.

EE: After the Seaway was completed, but only in operation, eh?

RM: Completed and operational. It was about 1961 when they started. I got into the Keefer Terminal and rented one of the sheds in 1963. I have a picture in the other room—I'll show it to you—of several ships tied up alongside the new terminal.

EE: We'll look at it later.

RM: I had signed my contract with the harbour commission, but the CSL hadn't. Within 48 hours of me putting these ships all around the dock, the CSL contract was signed. [Laughing] They were afraid I was going to take over the whole place! I'd had to threaten them. I said, "If you don't let me into the terminal as ocean shipping, I'm going to blow it in the newspapers that I'd been stopped."

EE: Go to the media.

RM: "That ocean shipping can't handle cargos properly in Thunder Bay. This dock had been built only for the benefit of one organization."

EE: CSL.

RM: Yeah.

EE: You mentioned the harbour commission in passing there. Had it been created then by this time?

RM: The harbour commission, I think I'm right in saying it was completed in either 1961 or—I think more likely—1962. I could probably find out. I probably have documents.

EE: So, to put it in one phrase, the Lakehead cities were involved in playing catch-up after the completion of the Seaway. They hadn't really prepared for it.

RM: Not at all. There was nothing. Nothing. I had to go find a doctor for the ship's crew.

EE: And C. D. Howe's long service as MP and minister in charge of Trade and Commerce, as I remember in the later years--.

RM: All I knew was there was a minister called C. D. Howe, that was all. That was my experience.

EE: Isn't that interesting? We probably should focus on the grain trade by this point, but this is fascinating background to--.

RM: Well, yes. The grain trade, it was a first-class operation. It was a magnificent operation. It almost broke my heart the things I had to do to get the ocean ships going in it.

EE: This is the business of the lake-shipping lines carrying grain.

RM: Yes, because I, in actual fact, I tried to keep it very quiet, but I think I had an enormous influence in what happened in this port for about 20 years. Because I had one of these things that I mentioned to you earlier: charter parties. They're nasty documents, but if you know how to use them, you can sure use them.

EE: [Laughs] And you knew how to use them, I have no doubt.

RM: I knew how to use them!

EE: How did the ocean-shipping companies, or the ocean vessels, insinuate themselves into the grain trade? How did this develop?

RM: The grain trade basically was established in two places—Winnipeg and Montreal. Montreal probably said, "Look. You're going to have ships up at the Lakehead. Why bring a laker of cargo down to Montreal or to Three Rivers or one of the other places, when you can load it directly into a ship at the Lakehead?" Which was very much to the grain shipper's advantage. Flax, for example, has a two percent dockage on it.

[0:50:30]

EE: This is two percent waste or whatever?

RM: Two percent waste. That's what is--.

EE: Wheat seeds and all that sort of stuff.

RM: Is adjusted charge when you buy the cargo. But if you load it into a ship, then take it out of a ship into an elevator, and then load it into another ship, your dockage—which is basically dust—is blown away. Instead of loading a flax with two percent, you're loading flax with half a percent or--.

EE: Clean seed!

RM: The other one and a half is dust and disappeared into the fresh air.

EE: Yes, chaff of all sorts and some of the light stuff.

RM: All of the light stuff has gone. The guy would either have to pay the fellow who took the cargo out at the other end a claim for shortage of cargo or replace the cargo with more to make certain that he'd paid for it. Two percent more for his cargo. Flax is very expensive. Malting barley is another one. Those are the big ones. Other things did, I mean, they used to--. Some of the things almost had to go down to the St. Lawrence. We would get a load every now and again for some reason or another, some special reason—wheat, oats.

EE: So, the large elevator facilities that I have in my mind—actually I saw a picture in an article recently of the big elevators in Montreal that had been closed for years—the Seaway and these commercial considerations you've just mentioned, the two percent dockage for example, were among the reasons why that business largely declined and was terminated I suppose? As ships simply moved through, or am I wrong in that?

RM: Oh, no, it wasn't. What happened was a ship would come up to Thunder Bay and load it at Thunder Bay and then just take it straight out. What used to happen was those, often flax cargo wasn't a full cargo for the ship, and she'd load something else in the St. Lawrence to get a full cargo, so she'd have a full-loaded ship. Usually wheat.

EE: But lakers, of course, would be bringing cargo down there.

RM: But lakers were bringing cargo down there, and lakers were bringing it to all sorts of little ports in the lakes. That's all gone.

EE: But the ocean-going ships had the commercial advantage of loading here and then carrying the cargo straight through and out across the ocean.

RM: Straight through, yes. That was the big advantage of it.

EE: So, it was this commercial advantage that allowed the ocean shipping to take a larger place, to fill a niche in the development here.

RM: Yes. Of course, at the start there was package freight. There was no containers. Containers didn't really come into full blast until the '70s, I would say. I think it would be about the '70s.

EE: Were ships involved in carrying highway trailers, semi-trailers at all in the '60s, or not?

RM: No. No, no. In the '60s, package freight was the same as it was back in the 1860s. You just did boxes and cases and cartons.

EE: I have this memory of sitting across the table at a wedding reception from someone who was with Reimer Freight in the summer of 1960, and he was talking about a fishy back as well as trailers on flatcars for the railway. But clearly, he was dreaming ahead of the future. It wasn't happening then in your experience.

RM: Oh, yes. There was nothing like that.

EE: No, interesting.

RM: We loaded cargos into boxcars or trucks.

EE: Yes. How large was the grain trade in the business that you were doing with Lakehead Shipping?

RM: We handled about 2 million tonnes.

EE: In a total that could run to 15 million?

RM: In a year, a season.

EE: Or more, 18 million tonnes.

RM: Out of 18 million.

EE: So, it would be a bit over a tenth.

RM: The peak was 18 million tonnes. I think when the Seaway opened, it was about 13 million tonnes. We got about a million and a half tonnes, and we went up to a bit over 2 million tonnes.

EE: So, 10 to 15 percent, perhaps, of the business here that you were doing. So, the lakers still had a lot of--.

[0:55:01]

RM: Oceans ships had become bigger, of course, much bigger now, but they'd take a lot of these specialized cargos. I mean, they take rapeseed, they take flax, they take sunflower seeds, they take peas. All sorts of things now. Or if they can take just a hold or a part hold, I haven't followed all that.

EE: No, but it was that kind of--. Because you were mentioning flax and barley earlier too, and it was these specialized cargos. As far as--.

RM: The specialized, yes. It was specialized cargos that were the main thing for ocean ships.

EE: Not much in the way of wheat? That was left to the--.

RM: Wheat was left for the lakers, and most of the barley was left for lakers unless it was going directly overseas. Then it was--. Because the barley, the husk, in loading it through the elevator used to fall off. If it hasn't got a husk on it, it won't germinate.

EE: So, it requires careful handling then.

RM: It requires careful handling.

EE: So, there we are then. One and a half to two million tonnes going through these various ocean vessels. Were there particular harbours, particular trades that they were in these ocean-going ships? Or was it--?

RM: Oh, yes. When we started, your principal freight was Thunder Bay or the Lakehead and Rotterdam. That was the basic one.

EE: Or the whole European market?

RM: Then it got extended to Thunder Bay, Antwerp, Rotterdam, or Hamburg.

EE: Still north Europe for the continental market.

RM: At the same time, there was quite a lot of grain going to England, and it could go to pretty well any port. If you'd like to mention any, Liverpool was a common one. You'd get cargo sale, and then you'd have, as time went on, you'd find we shipped a lot of grain to Russia.

EE: When did the Russian trade really begin?

RM: I would say late '60s or early '70s. Russia hadn't enough to feed itself, and we used to ship grain to Russia at one time. We used to ship grain to Mediterranean ports. For example, we used to ship special wheat to Italian ports for pasta.

EE: Durum wheat for Italian pasta makers? Yes, there's a trade!

RM: Durum, durum. Yes, I couldn't remember the--. I'm so old now that my--.

EE: I grew up on Manitoba farms, so some of these things—I don't think dad ever grew durum wheat—but it's well familiar that it's good for the pasta makers.

RM: I find that my memory is getting pretty slow. It'll come in time!

EE: You're doing very well. So, the durum wheat was another specialized trade, if you will, or product?

RM: Yes. The Canadian Northern Wheat, that was the big one. Now it's called Red Spring or something.

EE: I think that is the label now. And that was the lakers' business?

RM: The lakers' business was primarily wheat, about—I would guess—80 percent of the barley because there used to be a lot of feed barley. Anybody could handle feed barley. It doesn't matter what the husks or anything like that.

EE: No, no concern at all.

RM: No concern to that. They also shipped a lot of oats, and the lakers usually took the oats. Sometimes you got an ocean ship with oats, but it was unusual.

EE: Do you remember the attempt by the Russians to corner the market in grain about 1972 or '73? Does that--?

RM: Yes, I do. I remember that because we only got a couple, two or three ship, cargos of grain to Russia that year. But basically, we very often didn't know where a cargo would finish up. I mean, we might find that our charter party said, "For the charge at Rotterdam, and/or Copenhagen, and/or Stockholm." Well, that probably meant, "And/or Petersburg."

[1:00:07]

EE: Yes. Yes, I suppose so. The charter party--. The chartering is fairly secretive business, I suppose, is it?

RM: The chartering is an enormously costly business. I mean, you're dealing with--. You'd charter a ship today to load, say, 35,000 tonnes at $30 a tonne. That's a lot of money.

EE: You're in a million dollars right there.

RM: Oh, you're in millions right away. The cost of handling a ship, even in my day, the cost of a liberty ship was somewhere between $750 and $950 per day, just for having the ship lying on the dock doing nothing.

EE: In the railways that's demurrage. Is that the same term in shipping?

RM: The ships use the same term. They say that you have five days to load the ship in. If you go over that, you pay demurrage. If you go less than that, you pay--. Oh, what's the word of that one?

EE: It's a term--.

RM: There's a term for it.

EE: It's not a discount, it's a charge if you don't use the full time? Because one would have thought they should be rewarded for using less.

RM: Well, yes. I don't know whether I've got anything to remember that now. As I say, when you're 87, your memory doesn't work that well. Oh, damn!

EE: Well, I hope mine 20 years from now will be as good as your is, Captain.

RM: Dispatch!

EE: Dispatch? Oh, yes. Good. Dispatch and demurrage.

RM: Dispatch and demurrage. Yes.

EE: The two ends. Were there Canadian operators in the chartering business, or was this primarily out of Europe?

RM: Some of it was in Europe. Some of it was in Montreal. Some of it was in New York.

EE: There wasn't anyone at the Lakehead who was in that business?

RM: I was in it a bit.

EE: Oh, you were?

RM: Yeah, I did the odd charter, but not many.

EE: Right. No. Would you describe what would be involved if you undertook a charter in the grain trade?

RM: Well, what happens first is one of the people like Dreyfus or Powell or Cargill or Sask--.

EE: One of the big international grain companies would approach you?

RM: Yes, would come and say, "We've got a cargo. Have you got any ships?" So, I'd go fishing around for ships, find out what was in the area, and then say, "Yes, I've got." Say for the sake of argument they had 10,000 tonnes to ship. "I've got a liberty ship that should be here on the so-and-so." They'd say, "Well, that's a bit early for me, or a bit too late. Have you got anything else?" "Maybe I have an Empire which will do you instead." Then you go to the owner and say, "Would you take a cargo out of Thunder Bay at so much a tonne to Gdansk," for the sake of argument.

EE: In Poland.

RM: In Poland, yeah.

EE: And if he said yes?

RM: If he said yes, you finally got it all tied down, then you got each of them to sign what is called a charter party, which is a document about that long, about that wide, and three or four pages of it. Everything you can darn well think about—what they can't do, what they can do, how they can do it, where they can do it, who's doing what, what happens if they run into a war. All sorts of things.

EE: This is a traditional document, I take it?

RM: It was called a Baltimore Form C.

EE: A Baltimore Form C?

RM: Yes.

EE: Isn't that interesting. Would we be able to acquire a new one? Are they still in use?

RM: I don't know whether they're still in use. I'm not certain they are. I think they've modified them a bit. There are certain things which you could buy a copy printed, but you've changed half the darn wording. It was getting so old when I last saw them, they've probably redone it.

EE: Yes, part of the negotiation.

RM: I haven't followed shipping very much for the last 25 years.

EE: No. So, you'd sign off on this document?

RM: On this document. I'd look at what was called lay days, that's the number of days to load, and I'd say, "All right. The ship has five lay days to load at three berths." That's where another organization comes into hand called the Lake Shippers Clearance Association. They used to allocate the elevators.

EE: To the lakers?

RM: In Thunder Bay, a shipper of a cargo doesn't know where his cargo is. All he has is a receipt to say that he has a cargo "In Thunder Bay," but it doesn't say whether it's at Sask Pool or at P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] or Cargill or any of the others.

[1:05:08]

EE: Right, but the Ship Clearance Association knows where it is?

RM: The Ships Clearance Association knows where it is, oh yes. They know where they're going to get what. They'd come out and say, "Well, we haven't got this cargo in three elevators. We've got it in four. So, you'd go to so and so and so and so." I'd say, "No, I won't." I said, "Charter party say three berths." "Well, I can't." "When we finish at the third berth, I'll leave the ship there. That's all I can do because I haven't got my cargo." "Well, you can't do that. The elevators wouldn't let you do that." I said, "I don't give a damn about the elevators!" [Laughing] "I've got a charter party."

EE: There's a charge for each berthing, I suppose?

RM: They had charges, yes. Lake Shippers paid fees. All I know about it is the ones that we paid.

EE: What would the charge be typically for a berthing?

RM: I don't know what--. I'm just trying to think. The berths, I don't think we would have--. I can't remember a berth fee being paid for. It wasn't paid by--. The ship paid Lake Shippers a fee if the cargo was free in and out. That is we didn't pay for the loading of the cargo. We didn't pay for the discharge of it. We didn't pay for the use of the elevator. If the ship was loading on liner terms, which meant that they were paying for the loading, then they paid a fee. Lake Shippers--. God, I'm just trying to think how that--. I'd almost have to look up a--.

EE: Damned details! [Laughs] No, I'm just curious about your sticking to the charter agreement. I can understand that, of course, wanting to keep to the agreement, but would a fourth berth have been a particular problem?

RM: Oh, yes, of course.

EE: It would involve time and the expense of moving the--.

RM: As far as I can remember, the Lake Shippers Clearance Association, we used to pay a fee to Lake Shippers. I said it was wrong, and the Shipping Federation of Canada said, "No." They said, "You pay it, for the ship owner. It'll cause too much trouble with the grain shippers if you don't." So, I said, "Fine. If you guys--." But I said, "It's against the charter party!" [Laughing]

EE: The charter party was a global document in a sense.

RM: Oh, yes.

EE: The Canadian, the lakers didn't use that.

RM: No, they don't, no. They signed an agreement to go so many thousands of tonnes of grain over a period of six months.

EE: So, it's really a contract with the Wheat Board, I suppose, to move grain.

RM: It's a contract with the Wheat Board, yes. The Wheat Board just phoned up and said, "Look, send me a ship for next Tuesday week."

EE: Yes, very different from the--.

RM: Totally different from the operations of the ocean shipping.

EE: Yes, yes. So, the ship appears and finds its berth, and begins taking on the grain.

RM: Yes. When it gets its third berth, it just stays there until its cargo is loaded.

EE: So, the railways, the companies have to get the grain there to fill the ship then?

RM: Either put the ship, or go back to the ship owner and say, "Can I have a fourth berth?" which is what actually usually happened, and it still does. They had it just the other day there. Go to the ship owner and say, "Can we have a fourth berth?" The ship owner would say, "Yes. You pay the cost of it. You pay for everything at the elevator and anything." "Fine." "We'll add another 10 cents a tonne for giving you the privilege, just for the inconvenience to the ship." They made all sorts of deals. I wasn't interested in that. All I was interested in was I had made certain that the charter party had been complied with.

EE: Which meant the cargo in the ship ready to leave port?

RM: Yes, I had a very good reputation with the ship owners because they said, "They've got an agent who looks after our interests."

EE: Yes, which was absolutely imperative because these global operators had to depend on firms such as yours here at the Lakehead to do exactly that.

RM: Yeah. Another thing, which I don't know whether I've talked about the suppliers in this port yet, but--.

EE: You murmured a word or two, but I'm sure there's more to be said.

[1:10:04]

RM: Well, if you do anything for a ship—if you do anything to service a ship—you've got to get that receipt signed for that service. I mean, if you helped with the lines, the linesman has to go up to the ship captain and say, "Would you mind signing my account?"

EE: Certifying the activity, I suppose, of the work.

RM: Okay. Now, once he's done that, he's done a job for the ship, but the ship owner doesn't say, "I'll take that receipt and pay it." He goes to the ship's agent, and he says, "Would you check this receipt, see if it's okay? I'll give you some money, and if you think it's all right, you can pay it." I could never get across to people that I wasn't paying them, the ship owner was paying them. I don't know whether I've succeeded, even now. I used to write regular letters saying, "If you perform a service for a ship, you pay for the ship, you do not perform the service for Lakehead Shipping."

EE: But they couldn't see your company as simply an agent for the shipping lines, could they? Or for the cargo operators. That was the difficulty. They saw your company--.

RM: I was everything, yes! [Laughing] There was nobody with any knowledge of that.

EE: No. It's interesting because I can see the temptation that you as the principal of the firm would have to be a major corporate figure in this city, when in a sense the global reality was that you were a humble agent serving the--.

RM: That's right! Yes, that's right. I was, as you say, the humble agent.

EE: Of course, on the local scene--.

RM: Then, if I didn't like what the bill was or something, I would tell the guy before I ever went to the ship owner with it. Just the guy would say, "Hey, that's what I want." Then I'd go to the ship owner and say, "I'll need an extra $2,000 to pay this bill. Are you willing to accept it?" If the owner says no, I have to go back and have another fight with the guy. If he says yes, that's fine.

EE: Right, or end up digging into your own pocket?

RM: Oh, no.

EE: No?

RM: Oh, no. I won't. You haven't given me any service.

EE: That's true! And you don't have deep pockets to handle exorbitant claims either.

RM: Oh, no. No, no. I never pay. If the owner says, "Don't pay," I don't pay.

EE: Right. Might I ask where the—I suppose there's not much profit in this business—but your income as principal of the firm would be based on a percentage of that?

RM: Sometimes we were paid by percentage. There are substantial fees to being ship's agent.

EE: Your fee to the ship owner?

RM: To the ship owner, yes.

EE: For handling these services over and above--?

RM: Yes. Oh, yes.

EE: Was there some standardization of this? Or would that involve negotiations as well? Because that would be part of creating the charter party, I suppose, serving as the agent. Of course, there would be other agents as well.

RM: Yeah. In the early days, it was basically you said to the ship owner, "My fee is so and so." But the Shipping Federation stepped in, and as far as I can remember, said I think it was a percentage. They set of a fee scale. I know that.

EE: Percentage of the value of the cargo?

RM: I can't remember how they did it.

EE: No. Shipping Federation, this would be international?

RM: No, Shipping Federation of Canada.

EE: Oh, of Canada, I see. To which the ocean shippers were subject to--?

RM: No, not the ocean shippers, but all the ship's agents and stevedores, they're all members of it.

EE: Ah. Oh, yes, I see. So, this was the organization created by all of you as agents to deal with the shipping lines and the--?

RM: Yes. Yes. [Phone rings] Excuse me.

EE: We'll just shut it off for a few moments. Pause on top. That should freeze it.

RM: [Phone conversation]

EE: Oh, it's just a few moments. We'll just carry on. Owen can ignore that sort of thing. The Shipping Federation had its own organization, I suppose. Did you--?

RM: Yes, it had its own organization. I was a member of it.

EE: Yes, did you serve on the executive along the way or--?

RM: No, no.

EE: It was based in Montreal, I suppose?

RM: Montreal is the main place for it. Montreal only has a short taxi drive at the worst. Here I've got about 1,000 miles to get there, so.

[1:15:09]

EE: Right. You could fly or take the train back in those days.

RM: Yes.

EE: Could you do your business pretty well entirely here based at the Lakehead, or was there travelling involved for yourself?

RM: Oh, I used to travel quite extensively. It's changed a lot since I was in it. I used to work with the ship owners in Europe. Now, as I understand it, people work mostly a sub-agents of firms in Montreal or Vancouver.

EE: So, your firm now with Bill Hryb as the principal is almost a sub-agent, then?

RM: He's a sub-agent now, yes.

EE: One particular firm in Montreal, or--?

RM: Oh, no. He has several firms. I don't know what he's got now.

EE: So, it's really more a change in the relationships in terms of activity, but not necessarily in corporate organization. It's still an independent--. Well, hardly independent, but its own entity here at the Lakehead.

RM: But I think--. Is your machine still going? I think, as far as I can remember, the Lake Shippers Clearance Association was if his cargo was free in and out, we didn't pay any Lake Shippers charges. If it was liner terms, which meant we paid for the loading and discharge of the ship, then we paid Lake Shippers a fee. But that took a long time to get it. At first, we used to pay the fee whatever happened. But I don't think they pay it now at all. I think it's gone.

EE: So, you've taken over the firm in 1959. How long were you the principal of Lakehead Shipping?

RM: For 20 years. I sold the business in 1977.

EE: 18 years, going on 20. Two decades. Right. Did you see changes in the business? Well, I guess there were lots of changes, actually. [Laughs] I'm sort of breaking out of the questionnaire format. Maybe I should drop back to asking was there a typical day on the job for you?

RM: In a sense, it's very erratic.

EE: Unpredictable.

RM: One day you'd have five or six ships in, and for the next week you'd have no ships in!

EE: Sort of sit around waiting for the ships to come in?

RM: Waiting for the ships to come in.

EE: Let's take a busy day.

RM: Well, a busy day, well if you have five or six ships and all of them looking for everything you can think of, and on the top of that your owners all want to know what the ships were doing. It was pretty hectic.

EE: Communications largely by telephone or--?

RM: Telephone or Telex.

EE: Telex as well.

RM: Telex.

EE: Of course, there's no faxing through your period, so it would be--.

RM: I think I had the eighth Telex machine in Thunder Bay.

EE: The eighth?

RM: I think it was the eighth.

EE: Right. And it was clattering away?

RM: It was a great communicator.

EE: Right. And that would be your main communication, I suppose?

RM: Either that or a long-distance phone call, which costs lots of money too.

EE: Or long-distance phone calls. Yes, yes, they would indeed, if you're talking to Europe.

RM: Oh, yes. It was 5:00 or 4:00 at night and you to know whether the ship would work overtime, well the fellow you were talking to was in Greece. He's six- or seven-hours' time difference! By the time it was 4:00 in the afternoon, it was 1:00 in the morning for him. So, you had to try and get him out of bed. Oh!

EE: And you were doing that? You were rousing people to get permission?

RM: In desperation, I've had to get people out of bed, but I tried not to. I tried to foresee it before.

EE: Telex machines in their bedroom would've been a good--. [Laughing] That Greek ship, initially, I forgot to ask whether that was one of Aristotle Onassis' ships.

RM: Oh, no. Oh, no. Some little--.

EE: Some little tramp steamer?

RM: Tramp steamer company. Probably long gone out of business.

EE: So, here are the five ships, shall we say, in harbour, and you've got the charter document of the party and so on.

RM: A good example, for example, is say you have a ship loading at United Grain Growers [UGG], another one loading at Richardson, and a third one loading at Cargill over at the entrance to the Mission. Then say Westland Elevator up in the turning basin of the Kam River, and on the top of that you had a package freighter at the Keefer Terminal.

[1:20:17]

EE: Yes, and the captains are calling, or--?

RM: Oh, the masters are always looking for something. They have no mercy on an agent. They have to be up at 4:00 in the morning because the ship happens to be steaming somewhere. So, as far as they're concerned, the agent can be up at 4:00 in the morning.

EE: The first thing you would do when they were all gone would be to catch up on your sleep, I suppose, because there must have been some very short nights in there when the ships were in--?

RM: In the early days there were. It settled down in the course of time. It wasn't too bad in later years. But the first five or six years, yes. You needed to sleep whenever you could get a chance. [Laughs]

EE: How large was the organization you had? Yourself, obviously, and office staff?

RM: I started off with myself, a secretary, and what I called a runner. He was a sort of messenger boy. We used a taxi company, Lacey's, as it was called, to do a lot of delivery work for us and go and pick up people. We'd say, "Go and pick up three seamen off the so-and-so at so-and-so." Lacey's or Jessie would just take the call, and she'd tell me when they'd taken the three to the doctor or something and made certain that they got their prescriptions and taken them back to the ship again.

EE: Would you be involved in meeting all the needs of the seamen on the ships in terms of their business in the city?

RM: Pardon?

EE: In terms of what the seamen's needs and desires in the port, would you be contacted in regard to all of that?

RM: Not a great deal, no. There was a Mission to Seamen, and they serviced them mostly there. If they got sick or anything, yes, then we got--.

EE: Right, well you mentioned prescriptions, so.

RM: Prescriptions, yes, oh yes.

EE: Medications and medical treatment.

RM: Any medical condition. I mean, a fellow may have cut his leg or broken his--. Well, I say broken his neck, he might've done too! You never knew what you were going to get. Or he might have got the chicken pox for all you know.

EE: Yes. Did you have physicians sort of on contract?

RM: We had Cecil Dodick was our ship's physician. He was very good.

EE: And that wouldn't be full time for him?

RM: Oh, no. It was only a part-time job. He had a seaman upbringing. Of course, seamen, for various reasons get fed up with their ships and everything else, and the only thing that's the matter is they're bored stiff. They'd go in and it's very hard to tell whether you had to send a guy back or whether he was just faking it.

EE: Right. So, sort of psychiatric services, if you will.

RM: Almost a psychiatric service. Then, of course, the package freight side in my day was quite extensive. We had what was called the Ocean Shed at the Keefer Terminal, which I rented from the harbour commission.

EE: And the cargos came in. I'm guessing that liquor would be one of the items? I'm thinking of boxes I have seen. [Laughs]

RM: Yes, we used to get liquor cargos for the Liquor Boards of Manitoba, not Ontario curiously enough. But we got Manitoba and Saskatchewan. They said that the best place they could ship the cargos through was Thunder Bay because the damage was about half of one percent. Where if they shipped it through Montreal, it was about five percent.

EE: Damage on liquor cargos and the possibilities that come to mind almost immediately--.

RM: The average longshoreman handling liquor knows exactly how to empty a whole case of liquor without any glass getting in it. He knows exactly how to drop it so the necks break, and he always has a bucket available. He just pours the case, and you don't even know it's been touched!

EE: [Laughs] And there were expert stevedores in Thunder Bay as well were there?

[1:24:59]

RM: There were a few who--. They weren't as expert as the ones down east. Maybe they knew I knew a thing or two about how to do those sort of things. [Laughing]

EE: Liquor came to mind, what would some of the other cargos and package freight be?

RM: Machinery for farming, farm machinery. Harvesters, combines, you name it. All that sort of thing.

EE: Oh, yes. Package freight, we lay people always think of something like a big or small Christmas gift thing, but this could be pieces of machinery. Automobiles? No, I suppose not through here.

RM: No. Although curiously enough, I was the agent for Volkswagen.

EE: Were you now? But it would be parts primarily that came through?

RM: No, I was agent for their ships. The ships used to discharge their cars down in Toronto and then come up to the Lakehead for a cargo of grain back to Rotterdam or--.

EE: Back to Hamburg or--. I see. Is there more to be said about a typical day? Obviously, you're running around and answering all the calls.

RM: Well, then of course, you usually have a bit of chartering going on. The operation is seasonal. It starts in April and finishes in December. In the months of January, February, March, you let everybody have vacation, and of course you do all your solicitation and that sort of thing.

EE: You can't go down to Florida and just put your feet up for three months. There's a lot of work to be done.

RM: Oh, no. Oh, no. First of all, I've got to get all the bookkeeping for the season finished. Then you've got--. In my day, you had to go and see the ship owners and just talk nicely to them and that sort of thing, and maybe you've got various freights and things that people were interested in.

EE: This would take you to Europe, I presume?

RM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

EE: A certain amount of your winter was spent in Europe then, I suppose. Good grey Europe!

RM: Oh, yes. Yeah.

EE: The low countries, the British--. England, I suppose?

RM: My usual visits were Scandinavia, northern Europe, England, very occasionally I would go to the Mediterranean but not very often.

EE: This was partly keeping before--? You were the only one providing this service up here? There's no competition for you in this, or was there?

RM: Oh, yes there was a little competitor.

EE: Who was that?

RM: A man called Henderson. But I handled 85 percent of the ocean ships into the port.

EE: He was a local person, I--.

RM: He was a local guy.

EE: And saw--.

RM: He worked as a sub-agent of a firm in Montreal.

EE: I see, who wanted someone up here.

RM: Who wanted somebody up here, yeah.

EE: And were prepared to keep someone going doing that then. Right. Well, let me see. What would you like people to know about the work that you did? Obviously, we've already got an hour and a half or so of very interesting information about your life and your activities and so on, but if you were faced with a question—which I've just given you—what do you think is important for people to know about the business of the agent that you performed here with Lakehead Shipping?

RM: Well, I think that the development of Thunder Bay as an ocean port, I think I had more to do with it than most people had.

EE: And that people know and then the appreciation of, I would think, the role that you played. A history to be written, I suppose.

RM: I've got two books of stuff.

EE: Which you might put in an archive perhaps?

RM: Well, what I was going to do with it was I was going to—I've got three copies of it—one each for my sons, and one for either a museum or some other organization.

EE: The university archive perhaps?

RM: Well, I don't know which is the best one to put it in really.

EE: Well, it's worth some careful thought. I won't make a suggestion here as to where it should be done. It could be part of our ongoing discussion about a centre for the grain trade, a national grain trade centre which is what provides the context for our own work.

RM: Thunder Bay is a totally different place to what I had when I started. The grain trade was the main activity of Thunder Bay when I came here. Now it's just another business.

[1:30:16]

EE: A shadow of what it was as well.

RM: A shadow of what it was.

EE: That's very true.

RM: The foreign shipping seems to be holding up fairly well, and I think that it will continue to be a grain port simply and solely because of the problems of handling speciality grains. So, I think it will continue.

EE: The Lakehead is good at doing that.

RM: Oh, yes. They've got some beautiful elevators. They've modernized the elevators. The biggest problem they've got with the elevators at the present time is that the city taxes on the elevators are very high, and the elevator owners have been closing elevators and reorganizing the big ones.

EE: Yes, and that has its impact on city revenues without--.

RM: That has a big impact on labour, amongst other things.

EE: Yes.

RM: When I came here, there were about 2,500 people directly involved in the elevators. There were all the railway people involved with the elevators, which was probably another 5 or 600 at least.

EE: I would think so.

RM: Most of that is gone now. I think 250, might have 100 in the railways.

EE: It's interesting, you say 2,500 about 1960 shall we say.

RM: Yes.

EE: By a quarter century later, or around '84, my sense was talking to Frank Mazur who headed the lot 650 of the—

RM: Oh, I know Frank, yes.

EE: Of the grain handlers.

RM: Is he still alive?

EE: No, he's passed on some years ago.

RM: I thought he had.

EE: It was down to perhaps 1,800 or so. I suppose that would have been a result of the dust control and all the rest of the automation, the mechanization of the elevators that went on through the seventies while you were still--.

RM: And of course, the market for grain, the standard grains—wheat, barley, et cetera—has shifted. It has now gone to Vancouver. If a farmer's going to sell his grain in Hong Kong, there's really not much point in sending it to the Lakehead and then trying to get it to Hong Kong.

EE: No. The Pacific Rim really displaced the Atlantic markets, didn't it?

RM: Yes. But there is still a speciality market.

EE: There is indeed.

RM: From what I read, I think that speciality grains may become even more established in Thunder Bay because there's a shortage of grain foods in the world, or just about.

EE: Yes. I daresay you're right that in this era we're entering with the shortages that you've just referred to, there's bound to be opportunity there. What might interest or surprise people the most about the work that you did? You've surprised me once or twice in terms of the Lakehead and its lack of readiness.

RM: Well, I think the people would be surprised to realize that an ocean ship coming in needs a representative in the port who is a local person to deal with all the things--. I think people have no concept of that. In this port, to say that we have a nice package freight trade would be entirely incorrect. We do have package freight still, but it's all by 500-tonne items. The Keefer Terminal is very much suited to heavy-lift material, and the railway clearances are slightly larger on the CN track to our berth than the CP or the tracks from Alberta to the West Coast.

EE: What you're alluding to specifically to those whose eyes may not have seen the photograph in the Chronicle Journal recently of huge reactor--. Whatever these huge devices are that are being shipped to Fort MacMurray through the Lakehead on railway cars, that's what you're alluding to specifically.

RM: Yes, yes.

EE: 500-tonne objects.

RM: We used to do that with pieces of 50 to 100 tonnes. But I've never handled anything of 500 tonnes.

EE: No. And they're able to get them through. It's astonishing to think of the size of these things with no doubt.

[1:35:07]

RM: Oh, yes. There is one reason that I think Thunder Bay will keep going as an ocean port is the fact that there are these slightly better dimensions on the railway from Thunder Bay. East of Thunder Bay here from Montreal or Toronto to Thunder Bay, you have the same problem as you have from Vancouver to Edmonton or Calgary.

EE: Or Prince Rupert, I suppose.

RM: I don't know about Prince Rupert. I would think so.

EE: Yes. Presumably involved a good deal of investment there to bring them up to scratch, up to these requirements.

RM: Well, of course, they've done a lot of work there because they've got the container traffic moving through there now.

EE: Yes, because Vancouver can become such a bottleneck.

RM: Yeah.

EE: What are you most proud of in the work that you've done?

RM: Proud?

EE: Bringing the Lakehead up to snuff, I suppose, for this business?

RM: Well, I suppose, really the greatest thing I've done is my influence and effect on developing the Lakehead as a port, as an ocean port.

EE: Were you a prime factor in bringing the Harbour Commission into existence?

RM: No. It just came into fruition almost by degrees. First of all, there was a secretary, and then there was I think a harbour master. Then there was a commission. I think that's the way it worked. [Laughs]

EE: It had just sort of grown as the [inaudible] book has it.

RM: Yes, it sort of grew.

EE: Because it was needed. You'd known that at the outset, but gradually people came to realize that that needed to develop?

RM: The port was run extremely efficiently by the Department of Public Works and the Department of Transport.

EE: For the old well-established purposes?

RM: Yeah. I don't know--. Harbour commissions tend to be—how shall I put it?—find a lot of political appointments.

EE: Well, I was going to say, they sense I have absolutely as an old lay person, a historian of course, is that harbour commissions are very political and that--.

RM: Extremely political.

EE: There's a whole history that we wouldn't want to go into about the federal government's dealings with these commissions and changes—establishment of port authorities. We'll just leave all of that aside, but there is a history there as well, isn't there?

RM: Oh, yes.

EE: I hardly need to ask you about the contribution you've made to Canada's role in the international grain trade. [Laughs] Obviously the ocean part of it.

RM: Apparently, I must have had some effect on it! I think, I hope, favourably.

EE: Well, the companies for whom you served as agent, who were involved in these charter parties, clearly thought so. Was there any reason why you left or retired in 1977, if I may ask?

RM: Well, I was 60.

EE: You were 60 at that point? Or, 22--. 65?

RM: I retired. I stayed on as a manager for four years, and I actually retired in 1981. I was 60.

EE: But someone else was the principal after ’77?

RM: But when somebody came along and said they wanted to buy the company, I--.

EE: And who was that?

RM: Uh, I’ll leave that question.

EE: All right. Okay.

RM: I think if you get it from Bill Hryb, it would be better than coming from me.

EE: I’ll ask Bill. [Laughs] Right. What major changes—I’ve got changes, challenges—changes have you seen in the work that you’ve done? Is it changed in character over those 20 or almost 20 years? Were there changes that occurred in how you did your work, or was it really within the standard mould, if you will, of serving as a ship’s agent?

RM: When I came to Canada, I had nearly 10 years’ experience in the shipping industry from the shore side.

EE: Yes, in Europe.

RM: In Europe. I applied most of that when I got to Thunder Bay. I was influenced, of course, by things that the Canadians did down east and that sort of thing.

[1:40:15]

EE: Were they up to the European standard, if I may ask?

RM: Yes and no.

EE: Some firms were, and some weren't? Or some practices were, and others--?

RM: Some firms were very far ahead, and some things were not--. I think there were very few people who really knew as much about the inside workings of the shipping industry than I did. There were a few who had a pretty good idea.

EE: It was most of the ones that you met in what became the Shipping Federation then, would have been Canadian people? Canadian-born, raised, learned the trade, or learned the activity.

RM: Oh, yes. I would guess that 95 percent of the Shipping Federation of Canada are Canadians.

EE: So, this would have been an interesting--.

RM: Canada lacked a lot of shipping people when the Seaway opened. The staffs were well-established, and there were a lot of regular routines.

EE: Which weren't up to what was now needed, I suppose?

RM: Well, they had been needed and they didn't, so I come up and get changed right away. Hamilton was run on a basis which I wouldn't have run it, but it worked. But it was quite unusual.

EE: Yeah. What were the challenges that you faced on the job? Major challenges.

RM: Well, I think the principal challenge was to get the message across that ocean shipping had come to Thunder Bay, and it was probably going to be staying there for quite a while!

EE: The city had to--. Well, that certainly could make for an interesting study, how the city came to gradually recognize and respond to those realities. I don't suppose I should ask you for major challenges facing the grain industry over the years, although--.

RM: Well, one of the challenges, of course, is Churchill. Everybody says that Churchill is going to take over, but there are snags to Churchill which the average person doesn't realize. The Hudson Strait could best be described as iceberg alley.

EE: I could imagine.

RM: The underwriters charge very heavily for ships to go through the Hudson Strait. There's nothing wrong with Churchill. It's a good port as far as I can make out. It's got a good elevator, and it certainly could handle more cargo. But that's one of the reasons that they can't get any ships to go there is the Hudson Strait.

EE: Is getting there and out again. [Laughs]

RM: Getting in and out. Not in the loading of the ships or unloading of ships or anything like that. But the other thing of which is also a problem to them is that the railway track requires and enormous, apparently, requires an enormous amount of maintenance. I question whether they can overcome that problem.

EE: Well, now it belongs to another company entirely, doesn't it? And runs across a lot of muskeg, I suppose.

RM: I don't know. I've never been up there.

EE: I'm guessing. It wouldn't be that different from sections of northwestern Ontario, but the track in northwestern Ontario is mostly older by 20 to 40 years.

RM: Oh, yes.

EE: That probably makes a difference in maintaining it. I don't suppose Churchill has ship's agents either, is there--?

RM: Oh, yes, they do.

EE: Oh, is there? Are there some there?

RM: There's somebody up there doing the same job as we are.

EE: I see. I guess it's just absolutely vital to have someone doing that.

[1:45:00]

RM: Oh, you've got to! I mean, you get an Italian master who knows nobody and doesn't speak very good English, he has to have somebody who can tell him what he can do and what he can't do.

EE: Right. Who knows the business and can sort of decipher--.

RM: Knows all the local stuff.

EE: Right. Yes. Do you have any vivid memories of your job?

RM: Oh, yes.

EE: You gave us the one about that first ship coming in [laughing] and getting it properly welcomed, but there would be lots of others I suppose.

RM: Oh, yes!

EE: Want to give us one or two?

RM: Well, there's the *Zenia*. That's a sad one in 1963, May. I got a message saying my father was dying in Ireland, and the Seaway, we had a ship in who'd been in two or three times. I thought it would be quite safe to leave the ship. We hadn't got the flood of ships coming in yet. May is always a very busy month. I said, "Well, I'll go say goodbye to my father. It'll take me four or five days." That's all I went. I got back to find that this ship had loaded deeper than I liked ships to load in the Kam River. I left instructions that the ship shouldn't, but I don't know. She was deeper than she should be. At least as far as I was concerned. As far as the charts and everything went, she was well within the limits.

EE: Should be all right, eh?

RM: Yeah. Anyhow, he went down the river, and at 1:00 in the morning I got a phone call from the captain saying, "I've got a problem." I said, "What is it?" "Well," he said, "my draft forward is now 25.10." I said, "What? You couldn't have been. It has to be 25.6." "Oh, no," he says, "it's 25.10." I said, "Well what do you think? What's happened?" "Well," he said, "I don't know." He

said, “But it was pretty tough getting down the river.” I said, “What that tells me is that you’re breaking water somewhere.” So, I said, “All right. I’ll have to get you back into the harbour.” I had to deal with the port manager to get the ship in somewhere. Of course, he could hear on the same phone—there was no difference in wavelength—he could hear everything that I was saying. I said, “Well, if you’re not over 26.6 going through, I think that we can get you in at the south entrance and put you on the sandbank between the entrance and the Keefer Terminal.” I said, “That’s about the best we can do.” I said, “Once you’re on the sandbank, you can’t go any further.”

EE: No. No further sinking.

RM: So, we said, “Okay. We’ll do that.” I said, “Report to me.” “All right. 25.10, 25.11, 26 feet, 26.4.” “Oh,” I thought. He had to go slowly. I thought, “Are we going to get him through there?” “It’s okay! I’m through the breakwater.” I said, “Get her over.” She had a pilot in those days. I said, “We’ll put her on the sandbank,” and said, “she’ll be safe there. If she goes down--. She’ll always come off the sandbank because we’re going to have to take cargo out of the ship.” Sure enough, we did that, and we got divers down and we repaired the bottom of the ship. It had been badly damaged.

EE: Coming down the river?

RM: Coming down the river. I said, “What depth were you when you left?” He said, “23.6.” I said, “That’s fair enough.” I said, “You’ve got 25 feet going down the river.” He said, “Well,” he said, “I’ve hit something.” He said, “It looks like a boulder.” Sure enough, we went down the river and searched it, sure enough we found the boulder. It’s still over there now at International Harvester.

[1:50:06]

EE: You pulled it out of the--?

RM: We pulled it out of the--. I brought it up. Well, she’d gone down and gone over the boulder, and of course it had rolled down the whole length of the ship. When they got the ship back to England, they found that the damage was extended to the whole length of the ship, and she was written off as a constructive total loss.

EE: I’m tempted to say rivets popped or whatever. I guess the steel had actually been ruptured all the way down?

RM: Oh, the double bottom had all been ruptured. The bottom of the hold had been ruptured. I had to take out, oh, I took out all of Number 1 hold's cargo and I think some of Number 2 hold.

EE: To get her across and out?

RM: Well, I repaired it all and then put the cargo back in.

EE: So, this was work for Port Ship, I suppose, was it?

RM: Oh, Port Ship, yes. They did some of the repairs. Not all of them.

EE: That must have been a pretty costly cargo or voyage, venture, for whoever--.

RM: Oh, I don't know what that all cost. I just sent the bills I had! [Laughing] I had a very good relationship with the company, and they were very good about paying everything on the spot.

EE: I was smiling at the first part of this because I could see this could be a Kaministiquia River sandbar story, you know? You can't clear the sandbar at the mouth of the river, which would take us back 130-40 years.

RM: No, just a boulder, as I say.

EE: Just a boulder! [Laughing]

RM: As I was saying, we still can't see the boulder.

EE: Right. Well, I daresay--.

RM: I think you're almost out of time, aren't you?

OM: Almost, yes.

EE: From what you were saying earlier about the binders you've created, preserving the history of the grain trade and your part in it—and more than just the grain trade obviously—is important to you. You think that this history should be known by people?

RM: Yes, I think so. I think that, really, the history there's much more to it.

EE: Clearly!

RM: I can just show you. You needn't have the machine on. I can show you some of my stories that I can find for you, but I don't think you've got enough time now to do another story.

EE: No, I guess not. Are there any questions that we just didn't think of asking that you would've loved to have answered?

RM: There probably are, but I'll think of them in a couple hours' time. [Laughing]

EE: Right! Well, thank you very much Captain, this has been very, very interesting and illuminating about so many things in shipping generally as well as the grain trade. I've learned a lot just listening to you this afternoon.

RM: Yes. There's not many people here who really know very much about the shipping industry!

EE: I'm sure there aren't. One of the things that I found interesting, of course, is having two years of lectures from Frederick Lane about various parts of international shipping six, seven hundred years ago. Of course, there's to build on that foundation.

RM: Well, I'm the last person in a senior position alive who was here when the Seaway opened. I was in a top management position when the Seaway opened. I probably know more about what went on in those days than anybody living does. I shouldn't say that probably, but. [Laughs]

EE: So, I'm trusting that Ellie Warner's work on this history will be thorough?

RM: Oh, I'm sure. She's pretty good.

EE: Yeah, I may have a chat with her about being sure that she--. Interviews with you have gone into the things that you've alluded to.

RM: I don't know how much she's done. I know she had other work that she was doing as well.

EE: There could be a romance of the Seaway, but there are also hard realities that you were talking about.

RM: She wrote a very good book on the Fitzgerald. It was very well-researched.

EE: Good! Well, I must take a look at that. I hadn't come across it. It's available in town, I hope.

RM: I've forgot, what was the name of the Fitzgerald? The first name?

EE: Edmund J.

OM: Edmund.

RM: What?

EE: Edmund G. Fitzgerald.

RM: Edmund G. Fitzgerald. She'd written a very good book. I've read it.

EE: Good. Well, that's a real commendation when it comes from you.

RM: Yeah, of course, there was actually one about the little cruise ships that broke adrift at Grand Portage, and the tugboat went out there and picked it up. That was a superb piece of seamanship. Absolutely superb piece of seamanship!

OM: The one that went on the rocks?

RM: Well, she finally went on the rocks, yes, at Isle Royale.

EE: Yes. Well, thank you very much again. There's obviously more time in there than we realized!

End of interview.