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Company Affiliations: Day Company of Canada (Daycon Mechanical Systems Ltd.)

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Summary: Retired sheet metal worker and general foreman for the Day Company of Canada Barry Pauluk discusses his career in the sheet metal trade and his interactions with the grain industry across Canada. He describes the main kind of work the Day Company did regarding grain elevators, including dust control equipment installations, maintenance of metal equipment like spouts and bucket elevators, retrofitting, and even elevator construction. He shares the history of the Day Company as well, his work as an apprentice as a young man, and what conditions were like working around elevators. Pauluk discusses his move into management, hiring employees and contractors through local unions, his most challenging job reconfiguring the Cascadia Elevator in Vancouver, and his work supervising the construction of four country elevators. Other topics discussed include the need for dust control because of elevator explosions, changes to equipment and technology in elevators, the abrasiveness of moving grain, the modern process of sheet metal apprenticeship and schooling, and the grain industry's critical role in Thunder Bay's culture. Pauluk ends the interview with a short commentary on some historical photographs, like that of the *Bannockburn* disappearance and the installation of dust control on Pool 6 and UGG A.

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Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: Introducing an interview with Barry Pauluk, which is taking place at his home on Admiral Crescent in Thunder Bay on August 2nd, 2012. I'll have Barry introduce himself and just briefly tell us how his career relates to the grain industry.

BP: Hi. My name is Barry Pauluk, and I started work with what was then the Day Company of Canada as a sheet metal apprentice. All of their work for the most part was in the grain elevators for all these years. I served a five-year apprenticeship with them and became a journeyman sheet metal worker. Shortly after that, they ran out of work for a little while, so I was hired by G.M. & H.O. Homes, another sheet metal contractor in town who had just obtained a large year-and-a-half-long project installing dust collectors over at the Stewart Elevator. I was asked to be the foreman on that project, and it went well. After that, I went back with the Day Company because they got more work and generally was a foreman all the time running smaller projects within the city and within the grain elevators for a number of years. And then around 1996, I started getting asked to go out of town to do projects. I was in Prince Rupert for over a year in 1996 refurbishing grain cleaning equipment, that kind of thing.

After that project, there was a company in Manitoba that had a contract to build three large grain elevators, the kind with the steel bins elevators. They got about 30 percent into that project building all three simultaneously, and they found that they were in way over their head. They didn't have engineering capabilities, that kind of thing. So what was at that time Daycon Mechanical Systems, which was the same company but just a different name, we were asked to take over finishing the completion of those three elevators, which took us another year and some. I started out in Regina looking after that one, and then after a little while, I was asked to look after all three, completing them. So that meant a lot of travel from one elevator to the next over the next six months or so.

After that, the Daycon Mechanical Systems got a request to build a grain elevator in Brandon, just outside of Brandon, and I was asked to be the project manager on that. That was another year and a half almost building an actual grain elevator. So that was four grain elevators in maybe four years that we built, quite a challenge given the mechanical end of it. And then after that, I was asked to go out to Vancouver and spend a little over a year out there refurbishing Cascadia Grain Elevator. All new grain cleaning equipment, reconfiguration of the bin bottoms, which was a tremendous amount of closed work—confined space work, rather. So there was a tremendous amount of new equipment involved in making that happen as well. Then after that, my wife decided that was enough out-of-town work. It was almost ten years of it, and I just found that I should retire after that because there wasn't much going on around town.

NP: While you were away, were there still small contracts in Thunder Bay the company was dealing with?

BP: Oh, yes. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, the company did still work in the grain elevators here. They just wanted me to be out there looking after these projects. They had foremans in town that looked after the smaller ones.

NP: Okay. Now, before we started the interview, you said that you grew up in Port Arthur.

BP: Yes.

NP: So did you grow up close to grain elevators?

BP: Well, you're never far away from a grain elevator when you live in Thunder Bay. [Laughing] I grew up on Empire Avenue in Port Arthur as a young man, and then when I married, my wife, and I lived on Mary Street in Westfort for a while and then in Northwood and then out in—what do you call it?—Vickers Heights. We lived there for 17 years, and now we've been here for four.

NP: Just to take you back a bit, do you recall when you first saw a grain elevator, even not if you were working in one.

BP: Well, it would have been as a young boy, I guess, because you drive down Fort William Road, and you see them everyday. But I was a young man when I started. I was only 18 years old, so.

[0:05:05]

NP: And that was in--?

BP: 1965. That's when I started my apprenticeship. I was 17/18. About 18, I guess.

NP: So tell us about a couple of a things. You had mentioned that elevators quite often have their own sheet metal workers, and your company was hired on contract. How does sheet metal fit into elevators? Because we often think of elevators as being concrete.

BP: That's very true, and you often think of sheet metal workers as being people that install furnaces and air conditioners and things like that. And that's a question I was asked often when I was young when I said what I did. A major, major portion of the installations that go on in a grain elevator are considered sheet metal work. It's spouting–heavy, heavy wall spouting with liners for all the grain transfer. It's grain cleaning equipment, dust control. Dust control played a major, major role in our work over the years because I'm guessing back in the early '90s or late '80s, the elevators were forced to start cleaning up the dust situation, and, given the fact that the Day Company back then was the major grain elevator sheet metal company, we did 99.9 percent of the installation

of dust collectors right across the city. And we can maybe mention it later, but out west, there was 52 elevators built, small grain elevators, and we installed all of the grain cleaning equipment and all of the dust control for all of those elevators.

NP: Now, when you're talking about small elevators, you're talking about small--.

BP: Country elevators with the--.

NP: Not the old country elevators, but the more major western terminals?

BP: Yeah. They would tear down 20 wooden ones.

NP: The wooden ones.

BP: And built one cement structure with maybe 10 or 12 bins.

NP: And those were the ones that you installed?

BP: Yes. We didn't build any concrete ones. The ones that we built were significantly larger, but they had the steel bins that maybe the new elevators use.

NP: When you were doing your apprentice work, elevators are big, tall things, and the spouts come from sometimes quite high up. Did you do any of that work?

BP: Oh, sure. Yeah.

NP: So what was it like to work--?

BP: It's a little scary sometimes. Safety wasn't as much of a factor back in the early years, especially when I was an apprentice, as it became after. You know, you didn't have things like safety lines or whatever. One of the things as a young apprentice that I would have to do very often was go into what's called a bosun's chair. It hangs on a rope pulley, and it's simply a piece of wood about 12 inches wide by about 24 inches long tied at a V and hooked on a hook. And you sit in this thing, and you go up 100 or 200 feet on the wall of a building and do your work, whatever it is you're going to do, and then lower yourself down with the pulley down to the ground again. That was scary sometimes when you were up very high.

NP: Can you recall the first time you had to do it?

BP: No, but I can recall the scariest time.

NP: Okay.

BP: It was at Pool 7A, which was the biggest grain elevator here in Thunder Bay and still is. The very top of the workhouse is approximately 220 feet high. And what we had to do was, using this bosun's chair, just kind of drop off the edge of the roof and hang on and hope that everything stays hooked up. [Laughs] Once you were over the edge of the roof it was fine, but that was a scary moment.

NP: Did you ever consider quitting because of that?

BP: No. No. I was young. [Laughing] Young and foolish!

NP: Was everybody as lucky or as fortunate as you that they didn't mind it? Or did you lose people?

BP: There weren't many of us that were willing to do that kind of work. There was some for sure. I mean, you felt safe enough. It's not like you were afraid every time you went in. We were comfortable with the equipment we were using, and we were careful or as careful as you could be. Interestingly, I've often said that I was amazed that there weren't more accidents given the risks that we took just to do everyday work. Not just us, but other guys working in construction, at least in our industry, there was very few. Very rarely somebody got hurt. So we were just very lucky, I guess.

NP: Careful. You can still be careful about--.

BP: For sure, yeah. That's a given.

NP: Mmhmm. So tell me a little bit about the company that you were working for. Where was its head office? Because I heard the display that you mentioned that you visited that we had at the Marina this summer, we had a few people stop by that had worked for either Simon Day or Daycon or Day Company. So tell me a bit about that company because they specialized in--. And have been around for a while.

[0:10:21]

BP: Oh, sure. They've been--. I'm trying to think. There was a sign when I started on the building that said they'd been around for 50 years. So that's like 80 years now, I guess, they were in business or some--. **[*… audio skips*]** Incredibly well.

NP: Were they a Thunder Bay company at that time, or--?

BP: They were. Head office for many, many years was--. Well, they started out an American company, actually, out of Minneapolis, and they took on a project out in BC that was very similar to the one that I finished my career on, and I guess because of poor management on the site, they lost a lot, a lot of money on it. And the American owners just said they didn't want to do this anymore. They just couldn't afford to. So then it was bought by someone. I'm not sure who owned it back then, and they owned it for a number of years, and that was--. I think it was called Emerson Carter way back. It was Hard Carter for a while, and then it was Hard Emerson Carter. But it was owned by Americans for a number of years, and then it was bought by Canadians, and then eventually—I think around 1988—a gentleman by the name of Ed Buchik, who was a Westfort boy, he bought the company. And I should say--. **[*… audio skips*]** That manufactured the grain cleaning equipment. They became a sister company to the Day Company. So they ended up in a situation where Northland Machinery would manufacture all of the grain cleaning equipment, and Daycon would do the installation of it all. So it worked very well. Ed ran the company for a number of years, and then he passed away, unfortunately, in a car accident in China on a business trip, and it was bought by a gentleman from Toronto.

At that time, the grain industry was doing very poorly as far as construction was concerned. There was not much going on. All the equipment had been installed and was running okay. So this gentleman from Toronto bought the company for very, very few cents on the dollar, I'm guessing. I don't know numbers, but he got a pretty good deal on it. And I think he could see the writing on the wall for all the grain elevators that were going to need to be built across the Prairies, and they were all going to need grain cleaning equipment on the road working grain elevators. And he did very well, I'm sure. And then that work all got caught up, that 10 years' worth of work. All the grain elevators right across Canada now had brand new equipment in them, and they weren't going to need anything done for a while. So the story I got was that the bills just didn't get paid. The bailiff came and put locks on the doors. By that time, the head office was still Thunder Bay, but there was a major shop in Winnipeg, and there was a smaller shop in Vancouver, and all three of them got the doors shut. That was about a year after I retired.

NP: Where was the operation in Thunder Bay?

BP: Just off Montreal Avenue by Can Car–Bailey Avenue. There was a plant there. That was where it was at the end. As I said earlier, I think the original plant when I started with them was on Vickers Street, North Vickers, which--. **[*… audio skips*]** There

was a Quonset hut in the back where we had our welding shops. We stored some material up on the second floor, and if you wanted to go up to get something, there was an elevator, but it was rope driven. You had to pull a rope up and down this elevator, it was that old and that rickety. [Laughs] And the windows were all broken upstairs in the grain elevator portion of it. But it served its purpose for us. The company wasn't that big back then. *[Note: I believe the elevator he refers to is the Davidson & Smith one that is on North Vickers today. Editor NP]*

NP: Do you know anything about the history of that elevator? Who owned it?

BP: No, I don't. No, I don't. I'm sorry.

NP: You can see the paint on it with a name on it, but it's so faded that I haven't really gone and investigated.

BP: No. I haven't really paid much attention over the years. I know it's still there, and there are some other businesses in there, but it doesn't look any better than it did back then. [Laughing]

NP: But it's still standing!

BP: It's still standing, yes. They built grain elevators well in those days.

NP: Yeah, yeah. So you'd be familiar with all of the elevators in Thunder Bay, then?

BP: Yeah, yeah. I've worked in all of them–pretty much all of them, maybe not the really, really old ones—the Pool 8s and the Pool 9s and that kind of thing. They weren't operating during my time.

NP: So did they have different--. **[*… audio skips*]** Engineers who designed them?

[0:15:02]

BP: No, I don't think so. By and large, they're all almost identical. P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] is a very tiny elevator, so it has its own little idiosyncrasies.

NP: It's sometimes hard to define the idiosyncrasies, but if they come to mind as you go through the--.

BP: Well, one example would be their bins were all inside the elevator, and they were all open on the tops. And so, we were walking on platforms doing whatever you were doing, and you were looking down a long way into a bin sometimes, and there weren't always hand railings, those kinds of things. So that kind of thing. And of course, everything was very old. So it was just in that way. When I say idiosyncrasies, I mean, just different dramatically in certain ways like that.

NP: Were there elevators that you found a pleasure to work in for whatever reason?

BP: All of the newer ones. You know, because, as I say, they're all so similar. **[… *audio skips*]** Systems are not all maintained the same back then, so, sure, there were some that were much dustier than the others.

NP: I had heard that.

BP: [Laughs] I'm sure! There are a lot of people that complained back in the old days about dust, people that lived near the grain elevators especially. The dust that was blowing over depending on which way the wind was blowing. People smoked in the grain elevators back then, and they'd show us films about how dangerous it is to do that kind of thing, but smokers have needs, and things like lightbulbs in bins. If you were working in a bin on top of some grain making some holes in the concrete or something like that, your lightbulb wouldn't have any kind of protective cover over it, so that was a serious hazard for fire. But thank goodness we never, ever did have one because I've seen pictures of elevators that have blown up here, and it's a terrible, terrible thing.

NP: One of the reasons you had work was because the last of those was 1952, so there were probably a couple more disastrous ones in the States that finally got them--.

BP: That's true. That's true. Yeah. There were some. In fact, there was some over at what used to be Searle Elevator. I think it is. They had an explosion that blew out one wall. Not a big explosion like the more serious ones, but nonetheless, it blew a hole in the wall quite large, and there was a bucket elevator right--. It was a bucket elevator that caused the fire apparently and the explosion. Just overheated somehow. And that happened, I don't know, maybe 20 years ago. So that's not just back in the '50s, and it can happen today.

NP: So you mentioned cleaning equipment, and you mentioned chutes. What other pieces? Keep in mind that--. **[… *audio skips*]** In an elevator, so.

BP: Well, being a general contractor as we always were, our work wasn't just sheet metal work. In fact, most of the projects that we did required millwrights to come in and do the mechanical work installing the actual equipment. We didn't always use them, but we did quite often as time went by. We used ironworkers for a lot of the high structural things, hoisting with cranes, and things like that. We did a tremendous amount of crane work over the years just installing these dust collectors because they'd go up on the outside of a building on a roof somewhere. And interestingly, way, way back, they used what they called cyclones for dust control. So there'd be a fan that was pulling the dust from a building, and it would pull it through like an upside down teepee almost. And there was hundreds of them hanging on the walls of the grain elevators, and they took a little bit of the dust out of the air. They took it out of the grain elevator, but--. **[*… audio skips*]**

A lot of the work for a great many years was taking down those cyclones and replacing them with bag filters, dust collectors, that kind of thing. So along with the bag filters, you have to have tight dust control piping to go from inside the building to all the machines. Every machine has the piping. And the piping starts out quite small at the machine then gets progressively bigger as it gets up to the fans because of the velocity of the air that has to go through there. Then it's collected in the bag filters and taken away by a little conveyor at the bottom and dumped into a bin. And they worked very, very well.

[0:20:04]

We installed bucket elevators. I'm not sure if you know what a bucket elevator is, but it's a belt-driven pulley, I guess, you could say. They'll run from the ground. The trains come in, and they unload grain. They go onto a conveyor into the elevator. From that conveyor they go--. **[*… audio skips*]** It has buckets on these belts. They're not very wide, the belts. They can be two, three, four feet wide with buckets across them. They fill up with grain, it's taken to the top of the elevator, and then once it goes over the top of the elevator, it dumps it into different spouts, different chutes, and is transferred then to bins. And we've done a number of those things, and you use millwrights for that as well as the sheet metal workers because unionism has dictated that certain trades do certain portions of the work. Everybody tried real hard to play fair in that way. There was enough work for everybody, so it kept a lot of fellows busy for a lot of years. And a few ladies, I might add. I had, not so much in Thunder Bay but out west, many ladies working for me as labourers and welders and that kind of thing. They pull their weight just as much as the men do, so I never had a problem.

[*… audio skips*]

NP: Part of your company, or was there another company of millwrights that you hired as subcontractors?

BP: Not--. Usually, we would, as a general contractor, we would hire them to work for us. If I was the fellow who was responsible for the project, I would have a millwright foreman, an ironworker foreman, an electrical foreman—whatever trades were involved—that would report to me on a daily basis, and that way we made sure their work was done properly.

NP: And did you do the design as well? Your company do the design?

BP: Oh, yes. Our company had that full engineering portion to it. They had CAD guys that did all the drawings. We did all the engineering ourselves.

NP: Do you remember some of the names of those people, the engineers that worked for the company?

BP: I don't think they ever actually had an engineer, a professional engineer. I don't recall any names.

NP: An engineer technician, or--?

BP: They had one or two techs, but a lot of them just learned as they went-smart, smart fellows. I never worked in that end of it, so it wasn't really--. I was in and out of the office all the time, but not really having much to do with the engineering. I was more just managing the projects.

NP: So one of the projects that you did a lot of was the installation of the dust control, and attached to that project, I guess, was taking out the old systems. Could the elevators continue to operate while you were doing this work?

BP: They would have to shut down a small portion of the equipment while we were taking down the equipment. Like if we took down ten cyclones, they might have to shut down four or five machines for a week or however long it takes us. Their busy time--. It was all in the fall and in the winter and in the spring where they weren't busy, especially in the winter. Most of it took place in the winter where they were almost shut down anyway.

NP: Well, tell me about working not as the foreman but actually when you were doing your journeyman work in the wintertime on the outside of the elevator. Or even the inside! [Laughing] It's probably colder inside than outside.

BP: It was. Inside you didn't have to deal with the wind, that was the only thing. But probably the one work that I happened to do that sticks out in my mind when I was an apprentice, we used to have to build these cyclones up on the roof, up wherever they were going to be installed. They came in separate tapered pieces that you would build a cone shape out of, and they were riveted

together. Of course, when you're the kid, you're inside with a handful of rivets. You're putting a rivet in the hole, and then the journeyman outside is smacking it with a hammer to set the rivet. Well, when it's 35 below and there's no heat, of course, in there, it makes for a pretty cold day. You can't work with gloves on when you're doing that. So that stands out in my mind. And of course, there were lots of days when you were up there on the roof, the wind's blowing like crazy, and it's 25 or 30 below. You could go home if you wanted because there was a minus-25 policy, but you didn't get paid if you went home, so most of the time you stuck it out. When you were young, you could get away with that kind of thing.

[0:25:08]

NP: Tough work?

BP: It's hard work. It's hard work, yeah. It can be depending on what it is you're doing, but you're lifting, and you're carrying, and you're hammering. It's very physical.

NP: Did you have a favourite thing that you liked to do in that physical work? Like, you moved into sort of managing the operation, which might have been more your favourite, but the actual physical work, were there things you really liked to do or things you really didn't like to do?

BP: No, no. I loved the trade. I loved the work. I was happy to go to work everyday, and not many people can say that. But I will comment that when I was 23, and I was offered that job to be a project general foreman, I liked that the best because now I could sort of--. "Well, I have to go and look at the drawings in the trailer. I'll see you guys in a while," kind of thing. [Laughs] "Try to stay warm!" And I'll admit that was part of what drove me, but I've always sort of felt like leadership was what my calling was. So that's sort of what drove me, I guess, to where I ended up.

NP: Well, and I never even asked you how did you get into sheet metal work? Out of high school, I assume, or out of school.

BP: Actually, when I left high school, because my father passed away and I wanted to help my mom, I got a job through a gentleman by the name of Jerry Blazino who had some connections in town. He got me a job at what was back then--. What the heck was it called? It was a marine company. It's over where Venshore is now on Northern Avenue. But anyway, they sold boats and repaired boats. So I was a shipper and receiver first, and I worked there for six months, and that was a pretty dead-end job. And that same Jerry Blazino, his father owned a sheet metal shop, and he asked me if I wanted a job as an apprentice. He was a good friend of our family, so he was helping me out. And that's how I started my apprenticeship back then.

NP: When you were hiring people to do the work for you, was it easy to find well qualified people in town?

BP: Not always. Not always because in the city, like in Thunder Bay and in other bigger cities, as I mentioned before, unionism is very powerful, and there are always people that are better than others. And with a lot of the unions, you have to take the top person on the list when you call the hall, and they're not always somebody you want. That might not sound very nice, but you know people over the years. You know who's good and who isn't because they've worked for you before. The sheet metal union here in Thunder Bay is the only one, or was then, that there was no hiring list. In other words, if there were 20 names on the list of people that were looking for work, you could pick the ones you wanted. There were those that tried to fight that, and generally they were the ones that were having a hard time finding work. I don't know if to this day they've changed that or not, but I always thought that was just terrific for the contractors because they stick their neck out a long way when they're bidding these projects. You're talking millions of dollars in many cases, and if you can't get good people, then you've got a lot of problems.

NP: So if we took a sort of average sized elevator and a normal retrofitting for the--.

BP: Like a machine upgrade?

NP: Well, let's say a dust control system.

BP: Okay.

NP: So you said millions. Is that $2 million or $4 million or $10 million?

BP: Well, I did an upgrade in Vancouver—my last project—at Cascadia Grain Elevator, and that was our most major upgrade. It was around $15 million. The four grain elevators we built on the Prairies were close to $20 million. So there was a lot of money invested. [Laughs] Around town, I'm guessing $5 million, $4 million, $3 million on an average.

NP: And they would have been earlier on in the process too. Like, they would have been several years ago.

BP: Sure. That would have been back in the '70s when all the new grain dust control equipment was going in. You know, one grain cleaning machine back then probably cost $200,000. So it doesn't take long to get to $1 million.

NP: Talking about the machines as opposed to--. Well, maybe all of them. You talked about the different shape of the cyclones versus the bag system. So what changes did you see over the years in the machinery that you were putting in?

[0:30:17]

BP: It always got better. Every time you installed new escalating equipment or anything like that, say, five years apart, everything was better built just because you see the things you didn't do so well when you were manufacturing them in the beginning. And grain cleaning equipment is always a work in progress even to this day as far as coming up with something a little bit better, something a little bit more efficient, and something a little bit more cost effective because cost drives everything.

NP: Did design change for, let's say, a bucket elevator, or did it pretty much stay the same?

BP: No, I think--.

NP: Did materials change?

BP: Bucket elevators, I think, have been pretty much the same ever since they stopped using rope pulleys. You know, they've got big motors on them. The belting has changed a little bit. The buckets are attached to what it travels on. The buckets, they used to be steel and now they're plastic. They were in my time. I'm not sure what they're made of now. They're probably still some form of plastic. I can remember Northland Machinery years and years ago used to manufacture the buckets, and there was one fellow that for I don't know how long, for 25 or 30 years—however long he worked for them—that was his job, to sit at a machine and rivet buckets together. I used to think, "I don't know how anybody can do that day after day after day." [Laughing] But he was so grateful to have that work, so for him, he had a good job.

NP: Now, when I hear switching from metal to plastic, I think, "Whoops. Problems with maintenance." But not so?

BP: No, no. I don't know if it's really plastic. It was a sort of a--. It had a little bit of flexibility to it. It was pretty strong. It actually stood up way better than the steel. They'd have to come, lots of times, if too much grain got into a bucket elevator, and it jammed. It would just tear all the buckets up, and then they'd have to shut it down for whatever the length of time it was to replace those buckets. These plastic ones seemed to stand up way better to that kind of thing.

NP: So what would cause overloading like that?

BP: Just too much grain coming in at one time. It only has a capacity to take so much at a time as it's coming off of a conveyor into the bucket elevator at the base of it. These buckets can only take away so much of that product, and if for some reason too much

comes, then it just starts filling up the bottom of the bucket elevator. It just runs all over into the base of it, and then it compacts and becomes plugged.

NP: So that could be an operator error or some fault equipment elsewhere?

BP: It could be that, or it could be damp product. A damp product might--. You know, when it comes off the field, we don't know what the moisture content is. There's all kinds of reasons. A mechanical failure. The bucket elevator could shut down for some reason, and the grain would keep coming, and then someone would restart it with the bottom of the bucket elevator full of grain. You know, those kinds of things. There's lots of human error that took place years ago. Not so much now because computers and electronics monitor things better than they used to.

NP: Did you get into that as well, then? Into the changes to the control mechanisms for the machinery?

BP: Not so much. Our company, through their design would do it, but we would have people come in to do that work that that was their skill.

NP: Were you involved at all, then, when they switched over scales? Was there involved with your trade?

BP: We did some of that. We removed some of the old scales and installed new ones and installed liners in the new ones. Back in the old days, very little places where grain would travel—whether it was spouts or bins or anything steel—wear was a tremendous problem because grain has the ability to wear out steel in a very short period of time.

NP: What would you say a short period of time is?

BP: If you poured grain constantly on a piece of quarter inch thick steel, mild steel, constantly for a year, it would wear it out completely. It would wear it out completely.

NP: I've seen pictures of, I guess, pieces of metal that have come out of chutes or whatever where they're all worn, and quite a lovely pattern with holes here and there.

[0:35:08]

BP: Yeah. It's very unique looking. They started out way back in the early days putting liners in, removable liners that, instead of wearing the actual spout out, you would wear the liner out and then just change the liners. They were just using mild steel in the early days, and they wore out quite quickly, so then they went to what they called HR plate, which is a much harder steel, and that lasted quite a bit longer. Then they went to Rhino Hyde, which is a--. I don't know how to describe it. It's like rubber, plastic, all kinds of things mixed together to form a really, really strong, flexible liner, and that worked really well. I'm not sure what they use anymore, but that was what they were putting in when I was working.

NP: And when I think of things wearing out that way, then you're also getting whatever is coming off the sides of the chute or whatever contaminating or at least mixing in with the grain, but not in enough--.

BP: No. It would be so insignificant over time that it wouldn't be noticeable. But it wasn't just spouts that wore out. The dust control piping would--. **[…** ***audio skips*****]** Abrasive as well. And anywhere there were elbows where it would go around a corner, that pipe would wear out, and they'd have to be replaced as well. That was done a lot by the maintenance people if it was easy to get at. If it was a small job, they'd do it, but if it was a 36-inch diameter elbow 160 feet up in the air, they would call us in, and we would do that kind of work.

NP: What was your most challenging job would you say?

BP: I would say the one in Vancouver, my last one, just because there were so many trades involved. The people working inside the bins that were doing the bin reconfiguration, safety was a huge, huge issue because it was confined space. If you know anything about confined space, there's just a lot of costs and a lot of protective procedures that have to be in place. Because this was a from-the-ground-up restoration—you know, everything from the absolute basement right to the very top floor was changed—so it was a multi, multi-level project of different work. There might have been ten contractors onsite that worked for us.

NP: Now, who owns Cascadia? Is it one of these ones that there's a couple of companies or three companies that went together in one?

BP: It probably is now, but back then, it was just Cascadia Grain. And I think it's the biggest grain elevator in Vancouver. It was as big as our big grain elevators here.

NP: When you're talking about reconfiguring the bins, what's involved there?

BP: Well, a concrete bin is 100 feet high usually, and at the base of it, the base is tapered so that the grain flows to, in a lot of cases, just out the bottom.

NP: Like a hopper car?

BP: Like a hopper car. And it doesn't build up on the sides, as little as possible anyway. **[… *audio skips*]** Way is to spouts. They would have openings in the bottoms to a sloped portion of the base that would be directing grain to where the grain cleaning machines are. You may have four openings in the bottom of a bin base going to four different machines. Well, when we put in the new cleaning machines, they were in different locations than the existing ones, so the existing openings had to be completely patched. The base of the bin had to be reconfigured as far as slopes and the direction of flow so that the grain would go to where the new machines were going. So that was a large portion of the project. It probably took seven or eight months to do that work. It was a company called Master Blaster in Vancouver that did that work for us, and they were a pretty big company out there, and they looked after all the security for it as well as far as drawing up the procedures for safety.

[Laughs] One thing that--. A guard used to come every Friday—Thursday or Friday—to do an inspection on the site. And you know, when you've got 50 or 60 workers, you can't keep an eye on them all the time, so due diligence is important. But I know they said to me on a couple of times, "You must be paid pretty well because your neck is stuck out so far as far as being sued if somebody ever got hurt." I hadn't really thought about it that seriously until they said that, but you do the best you can and hope for the best. And I was lucky that nobody got hurt seriously during all of my career. Touch wood.

[0:40:26]

One thing you might find interesting going back to my apprenticeship when I started, I actually made more money--. Mars Marine was where I worked before I started, and I was paid like minimum wage, whatever it was. So when I started my apprenticeship, the first year apprentice was paid $1.25 an hour, and that was more than I made there, but less than what the guys that were--. **[… *audio skips*]** $1.24 or $1.25 an hour, to when I retired, a journeyman sheet metal worker was making over $40 an hour. That's pretty dramatic. And it's more now, for sure, with benefits and that. But I tell people, especially younger people, that when I started, I made $1.24 an hour, and they just can't figure that out, you know? [Laughs] "How did you manage?" But it didn't cost that much to live back then.

NP: No, no. A lot of the trades these days are experiencing a shortage of skilled people to fill in for the Baby Boomers that are coming through.

BP: That's what I hear.

NP: Did you find that as well?

BP: Not during my time so much, but I have a very good friend of mine who was a sheet metal worker growing up, Ed Shetua. He went to work up in Fort MacMurray, one of those places up there, and I don't cross his path very often anymore, but every time he does, he says, "Barry, you've got to come up there and work." He said, "They are just crying for supervisors," because they've got lots of people--. **[… *audio skips*]** People, and I think that's true all over Canada and the United States and getting worse.

NP: Mmhmm. Making it more difficult even to get apprentices because there's nobody to take the apprentices on, which is required.

BP: Yeah. I know our company for a while went through a period where they didn't want to hire apprentices because their attitude was that they did the job costing at using journeymen, and "Why not use journeymen?" was their logic. And I always argued that "I've got journeymen working for me that aren't as good as some second-year apprentices and are getting three times the pay." I had a hard time convincing them of that. But when I was doing the hiring out west and anywhere else that was up to me, I hired who was the best, and it didn't matter. As long it was within the union.

NP: In your mind, then, how would you describe a good sheet metal worker? What do you think--. What do you look for?

BP: Well, they'd have to be obviously--. They'd have to have a ticket. They would have had to have gone to trade school. And trade school now--. **[… *audio skips*]** Toronto twice for ten weeks. And it was good, don't get me wrong, but you didn't need the education to get into it. You could become an apprentice back then. It didn't matter what your education was. If you knew somebody, and they wanted to hire you, you became an apprentice. Nowadays, you're hired through the union hall, from what I understand. You have to have at least your Grade 12. You have to pass a written exam now to see if you qualify because there are so many people that want to get into the trades, from what I understand. I'm not talking big, long lineups, but if you're looking for two, there might be ten young people. They're, I think, a lot of times the sons of sheet metal workers, or in other unions the sons of iron workers or whatever, that want to follow in their father's footsteps and that kind of thing. So the quality of the people you're getting as far as education and training is much better now, I think, than 20 years ago. Having said that, you have to be somebody that wants to come to work everyday.

NP: Hold it a sec here. Okay, sorry. I was just looking at this, and it didn't look as if the timer was going.

BP: Oh!

NP: But it's interesting you say, "You have to want to come to work."

BP: I think it was better then than it is now, from what I understand talking to businessmen in general. Some will say the work ethic is terrific today, and others will say if there's a dance, they're not coming to work. Or a party. I never had that problem primarily because the people that I hired understood, you know, if you're not going to come to work every day then you're not going to last very long. So that's one thing. They have to come to work every day, and they have to be prepared to work hard. My motto was, "Eight hours' work for eight hours' pay. If you're not prepared to do that, then this is not the place for you." Because I think I mentioned earlier, it is hard work. It's very physical, more so than some of the other trades. I always did say, though--. **[…** ***audio skips*****]** Gentlemanly of the tradesmen. They were never boisterous, generally speaking. I mean, certainly, there's some in every crowd, but generally speaking, they were always non-argumentative, listened to their supervisors and treated them with respect. I've had people say to me when I've had ironworkers working for me, "Aren't you afraid to work with these guys? Like, aren't you afraid to talk to them for fear that they'll poke you in the eye or something?" And I always said, "You get treated the way you treat other people." So I'm biased towards the sheet metal workers for sure.

[0:46:00]

NP: Now, given that you might be biased, how would that happen?

BP: How do you mean?

NP: Well, how would a trade have an ethic of gentlemanliness and one not? How do you think that develops?

BP: Just your--. **[…** ***audio skips*****]** A particular tradesman and says, "I need you to move that truck because we have to get through here," or "I hate to tell you, but you've piled all that stuff in the wrong place, and you have to move it." Some of the trades are more prone to—generally speaking, not all of the members—but they have a reputation for saying, "Yeah, I'll do it when I get around to it. I don't have to listen to you."

NP: So how does that happen? How does it happen that one trade gets that way, and one doesn't? Like if you think--.

BP: Some think that they--. I'm trying to think of a nice way to put it. [Laughing] The word prima donnas comes to mind. Some think that they're just a little better than others, and the world revolves around them, and things will happen in their--.

NP: So is there a pecking order in the trades in general, do you think?

BP: They all think that they're the best in their own right, but I will say that I've heard a lot of people comment about the sheet metal workers as what I've said. **[… *audio skips*]** Group of people, you know--.

NP: Respectful.

BP: Respectful. You know, they're not drunk every night in the bars when they're working out of town, that kind of thing, generally speaking. Respectful is probably one of the ways I would put it.

NP: Now, I'm wondering. I can see in Thunder Bay where you grew up, and you had your career. You got to know people. You knew people who knew people, so when you're hiring a new person, you could always ask around, "What's this person like?" But when you're working out of town, especially, let's say, on the Prairies where people would be coming from everywhere, how would you make your selection?

BP: Building those four big grain elevators that we built, one was in Regina, one was in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and one was in Nokomis, Saskatchewan, and the other one was in Brandon-all very rural, no close union cities around– Like Winnipeg would be the closest one, but by and large, Winnipeg was so busy at that time, and nobody wanted to come stay there, and there was no really good place to live, so we used a lot of rural people. And that was difficult at times because you always had somebody standing at your office door wanting a job, except during planting and harvesting. Three weeks in the spring and three weeks in the fall they were just gone, a lot of them, and you dealt with that. But most of them were very hardworking people. And when you need people, if they seem like they have some skills, you give them a try.

NP: And most farmers have to have at least the basic skills to keep their machinery operating.

BP: That's right. That's right. And I never had any real issues. There was a few kids that I hired, one in particular, his father had money, owned a car dealership in one of the smaller towns out there, and he felt like he was privileged. He kept asking me for a raise, I kept saying, "When I see--." **[… *audio skips*]** He never did. He never did get the raise. I kept him on because he did as little as he had to to keep the job. [Laughs] But by and large, you just took a chance in a lot of cases. Some of them come with pretty good skills that they can tell you about. Some of them had worked for other contractors along the way working on grain elevators, the ones that the other companies were putting up. I had a few that were excellent. I had two fellows that I kept with me for about

seven years going from project to project because they were just really good young men. One was out of Thunder Bay, and one was out of Winnipeg.

[0:50:21]

NP: I think we talked--. Well, I asked you more specific questions about changes, and you've certainly, even in talking about the people you dealt with, have talked about changes. But I'll just leave it open. Over your career, were there other changes that strike you as being major?

BP: In what respect do you mean?

NP: In any respect.

BP: Like, in the grain industry, that--?

NP: Yeah, yeah.

BP: I don't know. Just the changes in technology, I guess. I think because our company was the only one doing the lion's share of the work, the changes just sort of crept up on you over the years. It wasn't anything dramatic other than the dust control systems. That was a dramatic change, and that happened rather overnight kind of.

NP: Were there--. From the standpoint of the machinery and the technology, who were your competitors?

BP: Here in Thunder Bay?

NP: Well, or that would bid into Thunder Bay.

BP: There were very few, if any. Thunder Bay had such a terrific reputation--. Thunder Bay? Day Company had such a tremendous reputation right across Canada as being sort of the premier grain elevator contractor that very often--. **[…** ***audio skips*****]** Were going to be taken advantage of, and they were comfortable that the work was going to be done as well as they would expect it to be. I remember as an apprentice, I was doing some welding in one of the little welding shops in one of the grain elevators because the--. They were very good to us in that a lot of them would let us use their welding shops for altering fittings and stuff like that. I remember this one day at Grain Growers, I had finished welding. It was the end of the day, and I was sweeping up the floor and just

cleaning up around where I had been working, and the millwright superintendent said to me, "You must have worked right from the beginning at Day Company because those are the only guys that clean up after them when they're using our stuff." And that's sort of an example of how, I think, they felt about our company. So they were very generous to us at all the grain elevators.

NP: Now, I think you may have mentioned this, but I'm not quite sure. So from your time with the Day Company, who were the managers there or your supervisors?

BP: When I first started, Tony Kovak, a Westfort boy, was the mechanical superintendent I guess you'd call him. Jerry Blazino was the general foreman. Then there were other foremans over the years—John Nachuk, John Fogolin. John Fogolin was a layout man and a foreman in our shop for many, many years, and his sons followed in his footsteps. A gentleman by the name of Johnny Vic was another shop foreman and a layout man. These guys were all in their seventies or eighties if they're still around now even. I'm trying to think who else. We've had several managers over the years. As the company changed hands so many times, you know, out with the old and in with the new kind of thing as many will do it. And they all did a good job, I guess. The company stayed solvent for many years, but I think that's partly due to the staff they had.

There were probably six or seven of us that became foremans at a young age. Jim Mucha, Jimmy Hinsberger, Kenny Mazure [sp?], a few others like that that worked for the company for as long as I did. They got to go out of town to do some of the projects too. Not the big ones, but big enough. And they were all very capable guys, and I think that was one of the things that kept the company solvent for all those years aside from the management end of it. They had good people that they could count on. They'd send a guy out somewhere in the boonies to do a $1 million grain elevator project, and they're so far away, they have to hope that he's doing a good job. [Laughing] And they were lucky. They had men that could do that. Not every company, I guess, could say that.

NP: No. And they had a lot shorter life, unless the business was really good, and you had to take whoever you could get. Have you talked about your major challenges would you say?

[0:55:11]

BP: Building those four grain elevators were the biggest because there was work that I was responsible for there that I had never even heard of before. For example, the bins that we built, the bigger ones—the steel bins that were maybe 50 feet in diameter and 50 feet high—had to be all sitting on pilings. So we had machines coming into the project that would drill piles down into the ground, 30 feet down into the ground, and would have to be filled with cement. That kind of thing. Lots of forming work that, as a sheet metal work, I never really had to deal with, but fortunately, there was always an engineering representative from the owner of the elevator, whether it was ConAgra Grain or whoever. They were generally somebody that had a lot of experience in that kind of

thing, and I could lean on them. Which meant, then, that my job was one more of just making sure everything came together as far as timing and scheduling and generally overseeing things were being done. But if it was something that I didn't have a skill set at, I had people I could go to. And even our engineering in Thunder Bay, if there was something I wasn't sure the right way to do it, I would just have to pick up the phone, and they would get the information to me. So they were very helpful that way because nobody knows everything about everything.

NP: And the most important thing is that you recognize that.

BP: I guess, yeah. [Laughing] Yeah. I've always said that to be a good manager or to be a good supervisor of any kind, you have to surround yourself with people that have knowledge in many skills. And if you do that, your job is a lot easier.

NP: Yeah. I'm going to shift gears here a bit and ask about the elevators and just the grain industry in general because you were very closely tied to, even though you weren't a grain worker. I'd really like to get some of your thoughts. What do you--. I'm going to make a statement, and you can disagree with it or agree with it as you'd like. I think that Canada, given its size and its population, has done quite a fantastic job in developing a grain industry over a lot of odds.

BP: Absolutely.

NP: And I think given all these people I've spoken to in this project, that each of them has had a part in making that world-class grain system. So what do you see as the sheet metal worker's contribution to Canada as a global player in the grain industry? What have you done and people like you that have made sure that success was possible?

BP: Well, our company and its employees over the last 60 or 70 years, however many it is, have built that reputation I mentioned of being a company that does very quality work. And the engineering portion of it at Northland Machinery with their design, with the upgrades of the machine designs and that kind of thing, the making grain transfer much quicker than it used to be, the cleaning process, and everything else. Technology, in that regard, mechanically has just gone leaps and bounds. And not just the sheet metal workers, but the sheet metal industry itself. And I say industry because, by and large, in my view anyway, our sheet metal company did the bulk of the work when it comes to the grain elevators as far back as our company has been in existence, you know, because we did--. Back in the old days, unions weren't a big issue, so the sheet metal workers installed all the grain cleaning equipment, they installed all the fans, they did--. They didn't do electrical. We're too smart to think we're that good. [Laughs]

The company just used sheet metal workers to do everything. The work that iron workers would normally do now, we did it all. The work that pipefitter and boilermakers and iron workers did, we did it all for years and years and years and years. It was

probably only in the ‘70s--. You see, the other trades always thought that the grain elevators were too dirty, and they didn’t want to work there. And then work dried up in other parts of the country, in other mechanical situations, and then they started thinking, “Well, maybe I can stand to get a little bit dirty because I’m hungry.” And once they got their foot in the door, they started realizing just how much work we were doing that they could be getting. So that’s when things changed dramatically.

[1:00:28]

But in my opinion, by and large, it was driven by sheet metal companies right across Canada because they’re the ones who did almost all the work for a long, long time. And there’s not much in a grain elevator that isn’t related to our type of work somehow. As I say, the machines are made by a company that’s owned by a sheet metal worker or used to be anyway. They’re installed by sheet metal workers generally. They’re maintained in the elevators by sheet metal workers to some degree. So yeah, again, I might be a little biased, but I’m very proud of my trade, and I’m very proud of the people that have served in it over the years. I’m certainly proud of all the other trades that have worked with us, but they haven’t, in my opinion, been as involved over the years.

NP: I have a question, and I don’t know whether it’s an intelligent one or not, but that hasn’t stopped me before. [Laughs] Because you have to do things to retrofit elevators, are you able to tell the difference between good concrete and bad concrete?

BP: Yeah. Yeah, you can. There are people that are certainly better at it than I am, but--.

NP: Like, do you drill into elevators and say, “Oh, boy.”

BP: If it’s soft.

NP: Yeah.

BP: If the concrete is soft or easy to drill through. Like, we must have drilled millions of holes, literally, over the last 50 or 60 years because every time a spout goes into a bin, it’s never where there was a spout going before, so you have to patch up all the old holes and drill new ones. And as you’re drilling, some concrete is definitely much harder than others. The newer the building, the better the concrete, I think, is a fair statement. The quality of the concrete that they’re sending out to jobs is better than it was years ago, I think. And also, there are engineering people now that are checking the quality of concrete when it comes on a site. When I was building one of those grain elevators, we were pouring a ramp so trucks with grain could drive up into the scales and dump their grain, and it was a concrete ramp. They have what they call a slump test. This concrete didn’t pass the slump test, in my opinion, so I called the owner’s representative over who knew a little more about it than I did, and he agreed. And we sent the truck

away. The owner of the cement company wasn't very happy because he had driven about 40 miles from where his plant was, and then he had to come back that day with proper concrete. So I think that's an indication. There was no such thing probably as slump testing back in the early, early days, and so the concrete is better, I think.

NP: We'll talk about concrete and Hinsperger after we turn off the tape. [Laughing]

BP: Okay.

NP: Do you feel it is important to preserve and share Thunder Bay's grain trade history?

BP: I do. I do, very much so. It's been such a significant part of the culture of Thunder Bay, I think, I don't know for how--. You'd know better than I when, but I think it was back in the 1920s, I think, when the first grain elevator was built, wasn't it? No?

NP: 1884.

BP: Was it? Oh, I guess that would be those really old ones. I'm thinking more of the Grain Growers of the day and that kind. They were around in 1925, I think, weren't they?

NP: Mmhmm.

BP: Something like that. But anyway, if it goes back to the 1800s, there's significant culture in a relatively small city. I mean, 100,000 people. It's been 100,000 people, I think, forever. And I remember hearing Sask Pool not that many years ago had 3,500 employees, and that was just one corporation. Now they're down to probably 300 or less maybe. So when you've got that many---. I think there was 26 or 27 grain elevators. You'd know better than me. But when you think of the number of people that were influenced by the grain industry, and not just the people working there, but the ripple effect—the stores that they had to buy things from and the suppliers. I can't even begin to imagine how much money it generated for the city and how much happiness for families. People go home with food on their table every day. And back in those days, it was like when you got a job at the grain elevator, it was sort of like a papermill. You thought it was cash for life. There was no such thing about being worried about being laid off, other than maybe during the winter or during their slow period, which people acknowledged and were prepared for. So yeah, I would have to say the cultural effect has just been huge, huge, huge. It's affected our city so dramatically.

[1:05:36]

NP: So from--. **[*… audio skips*]** Get a National Historic Site set up because we feel it's national significance, not just--.

BP: Sure.

NP: And you might be able to comment on that, given that you've seen the Prairie system feeding into our system as well. What aspects of the--. Just imagine a little part of a National Historic Site dedicated to sheet metal working. How do you think we could do that?

BP: Well, I guess the history of the Day Company of Canada, the original. That was the name when I started. Because of their significant contribution, I think that they should play a significant role, their history, and Northland Machinery. There are other smaller companies around Thunder Bay that have done work. Nu-Tech Metal Industries has done, not on a huge, huge scale, but they're in there doing maintenance work and things like that. There are other companies that support.

Photographs. I'm sure if one wanted to talk to the right people, there must be all kinds of photographs out there that I don't have access to of our history in the grain--. As sheet metal workers. And not just Thunder Bay, but across Canada. Vancouver has had a history of sheet metal workers doing work in the grain industry forever. Winnipeg to some extent, but I would say Thunder Bay and Vancouver largely, and none bigger than Thunder Bay, obviously, because we have the greatest number of grain elevators anywhere in Canada.

NP: Perhaps that's something we could talk about off tape is some people that we might or some way that we might be able to find out if people have some memorabilia like that. And with the ability to scan these days, that means we don't need to take it.

BP: That's true, yeah.

NP: We just borrow it. Because a lot of people—and I can really relate to it—are willing to give them away. Their kids, on the other hand, are a different story. [Laughs]

BP: I guess.

NP: What were you proudest of?

BP: In what regard?

NP: In your career.

BP: In my career?

NP: Yeah.

BP: I guess the longevity of it would be one thing. [Laughing] You know, I worked for 38 years in the grain industry, and 30 of them with the same company. I reached a management level as far as project management goes. And I think I've—if I can blow my own horn a little tiny bit—I think I've garnered a certain amount of respect for how I treat people, whether they're contractors or whether employees. I've really worked hard at trying to treat people as I want to be treated, as I mentioned earlier. It goes so far. So I guess that's really--. I'm just happy to have the career that I've had. It was good to me. I raised a family. And as I said, I looked forward to going to work every day.

NP: Did--. Was your--. **[*… audio skips*]** They didn't build it or the railway or--?

BP: No. My father was a window cleaner for a living. He passed away young at 47, unfortunately, but that's what he did for a living. And my mother, she worked part time at Sears for years.

NP: Well, I'd like to just quickly talk on tape about the photographs and items that you have here, just so that I have you talking about them. We have about five to seven minutes to go through.

BP: These are photos that I got from a friend of mine, so I'm not that familiar, but it says on the back of this that it's taken in 1910. I'm not sure what elevator that is even. Through your work--.

NP: Ogilvie.

BP: Is that what it is?

NP: It's Ogilvie, yeah

BP: Okay. I was thinking you'd be more familiar with them.

NP: [Laughing] That's a great photograph.

BP: There's this one, and on the back of this one, you'll notice that there's a notation, a little written thing.

NP: Oh, yes. Actually, could you read that in?

BP: Read this?

NP: Yeah. Just read that into the tape.

[1:10:00]

BP: I'm not sure how to--. **[*… audio skips*]** I guess.

NP: From a newspaper it looks like.

BP: From a newspaper, I think, it looks like. It says, "Fort William, December the 1st, 1902" possibly. That's what's written on here. "No further news of the whereabouts of the steamer *Bannockburn* has been received here. None of the boats arriving daily have had any tidings of the missing vessel whatever. Captain McMaugh of the *Algonquin*, which was in port yesterday, says that the vessel was possibly sighted the *Bannockburn* on the morning of Friday, November 21st. He was heading up the lake for this port, and when nearing Passage Island, saw a boat about halfway between Passage Island and Keweenaw Point. He looked through his binoculars and saw the boat, which he took for the *Bannockburn*, making good headway with a southwest wind going towards the south shore. He looked again in about five minutes, and the boat had disappeared. Captain McMaugh said that he remarked to his wheelsman at the time that they had been lost sight of in the mist that was hanging over that part of the lake. He gave no more further thought to the matter. When the boat had not been reported at Soo on its trip down the lake, concern arose. Vessel and grain men at this port are afraid that the worst has happened, and that the *Bannockburn* has gone down in Lake Superior, the mystery of the loss never to be known."

NP: And can you read what it says in handwriting there?

BP: I don't know for sure.

NP: It's pretty tough, eh?

BP: It's handwritten. I think it's "Freighter *Bannockburn*. Capacity 85,000 bushels. Replenished 1,620 tonnes. Built in--." I'm not sure what that--.

NP: Probably would be 18-something.

BP: Yeah. 1893. I'm not sure what that word is.

NP: Yeah. 1893.

BP: Built in, I'm not sure where.

NP: It might be the place. Yeah, so let's forget it then.

BP: Yeah. "Captain George Moorhead, crew of 20 men, drowned. Left Port Arthur Friday morning November 20th but didn't get out of the harbour until early Friday morning November 21st."

NP: And it's dated 1902.

BP: Right.

NP: The reason I--.

BP: And is that the *Bannockburn* on the other side?

NP: "Steamer *Bannockburn* at Fort William."

BP: That's the vessel that went down, they think.

NP: Yeah. And it's interesting that--. Like, the student that's working with us this summer, she's also splitting her time with the Museum. And you may have seen the article in the newspaper about the woman who's researching shipwrecks.

BP: Oh. No, I never noticed.

NP: So that would be very interesting. Okay.

BP: This one is the harbour, or part of the harbour. I guess that's the Kam River, probably.

NP: The Kam River. These are the CP [Canadian Pacific Railway] elevators. There's probably coal docks down there somewhere. Okay.

BP: And that was--.

[*… audio skips*]

NP: "Opening of navigation." Look at the boats!

BP: I know. I know.

NP: Wow. Okay.

BP: So that's it for the old stuff.

NP: Mmhmm.

BP: In around 1978—and you could research it if you wanted to—this is Pool 6.

NP: Okay.

BP: And that was a major upgrade of the dust collection equipment. I was the general foreman on that project, and we got this 35-passenger helicopter. It was flying from Toronto to BC. They were going to use it to haul people from the oil rigs back and forth out in Vancouver, and rather than--. It would have taken us three months to install. Like, this is a base of a dust collector.

NP: Okay.

BP: So they're lowering it down into the steel. And you can see that there are iron workers ready to put the pins and bolts in once it lands. The helicopter pilot told me, he said, "There's a lot of turbulence around elevators." And he said, "If my helicopter is at risk,

I'm just going to drop the load." Scary when you've got people there ready to accept it. But that was an interesting project because we had to have 45-gallon barrels of fuel, dozens and dozens and dozens of them. He was here for three days because he could only carry a small amount of fuel, and to be able to carry the weight of the dust collector pieces—the heaviest one was 5,800 pounds—so he'd have to take a trip, come back. We'd have to put more fuel in it, make another trip, and on, and on, and on, and on. And of course, because it was a jet helicopter, a jet assisted helicopter—that's a Sikorski SkyCrane—the turbulence would stir up the dust in the landing area, which would be at risk of getting into the jet engine's portions of it. So I had to have the city water trucks there constantly watering the landing area to keep the dust down. So it was a big operation. We did in three days with a helicopter at a cost of approximately $10,000 what was scheduled to take three months. We didn't make any money on it. We didn't save any money by doing it, but we saved three months' work and--. **[*… audio skips*]** people through doing it the hard way, you know, with little bits of cranes and the little ways we--.

[1:15:38]

But there's an example of one of the cyclones that was still there that we did hundreds of. That was done--. I worked for E. S. Fox at the time, doing that project. They're still here in Thunder Bay. I don't know how good these pictures are for you, but these are pictures of when we did work. That's just some pictures of the elevators. But these, this was Grain Growers in Port Arthur. A major, major installation of dust collectors. You can see all the dust collectors we put up on the wall there.

NP: So this is the Current River?

BP: Yes, yes.

NP: Current River UGG [United Grain Growers].

BP: And there's examples of the piping that's related to it, and you can see all the piping that goes up the walls and into the buildings.

NP: Amazing.

BP: And that's pretty high up.

NP: Yeah, you don't--. A lot of photographs just don't really give the idea of how massive and high those things are.

BP: This is dismantling, and it was being shipped out to China or somewhere.

NP: I was going to ask you. Where did the old stuff go when you changed the scales and--.

BP: All over the world. Well, a lot of it was just scrap. Lots of it was scrap. But if it was machinery and it was still running, it sold all over the world. Out west, western Canada.

NP: And did your company arrange that, or was there a special company that--?

BP: It was through the grain elevator itself. It's within Sask Pool across Canada, for example. The small country elevators, if they needed equipment, it would be sort of hoarded out in the fields here as it came out and covered, and if they needed it—or any elevator if they wanted to buy it—they could buy it. And some of it was shipped overseas, any best way they could make a buck on it is what they'd do and try to salvage something, you know.

NP: And this last one, is that your--?

BP: This is--. We built three like that.

NP: For what company?

BP: This was ConAgra Grain. Actually, all four were ConAgra Grain. We did three like that that took--. That's the ones where we built them simultaneously. **[…** ***audio skips*****]** Bigger actually.

NP: Great. Anyone else that we should interview?

BP: Vic Bobinski. We started together with the Day Company.

NP: How is that spelled?

BP: Here's--. I used him as a reference.

NP: Oh, Bobinski.

BP: He was more of an in-the-shop and in-the-office management kind of guy. He gravitated that way, where my work was generally in the field, although I did work in the shop some.

NP: Any people senior to you still around?

BP: Mark Albanese, and I can give you his email address. As I say, he was the--. Yeah. I'll get it for you right now. The computer's on.

NP: Okay. Well, before you do that, let me just--.

BP: Oh, are you still taping?

NP: Yeah.

BP: Sorry.

NP: Let me just say thank you very much. It's been a wonderful interview.

BP: Oh, that's good.

NP: All kinds of definitely knowledge for the respectful sheet metal trade.

BP: Well, good. I appreciate you having me.

NP: Thank you!

End of interview.