

**Narrator:** Maurice Poluyko (MP)

**Company Affiliations:** Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)

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**Interviewer:** Ernie Epp (EE)

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**Summary:** Grain door department foreman Maurice Poluyko details his 38 and a half years of work in this niche railroad department. He describes what grain doors were used for on boxcars, how they were attached and torn off, their dimensions, and what was done with the damaged and undamaged boards. He discusses his promotion to foreman, the increased responsibility of this role, and the eventual erasure of the grain door department when hopper cars were introduced. Other topics discussed include being a member and steward for the union, the size of the grain door department at its peak, safety equipment and working conditions on the job, occasionally tough relationships with CPR officials and supervisors, the ethnic diversity of his crew, and happy memories with the men on the job.

**Keywords:** Canadian Pacific Railway; Grain door department; Grain doors; Boxcars; Grain transportation—rail; Thunder Bay terminal grain elevators; Intercity elevators; Current River; Port Arthur; Westfort; Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks (BRAC); Labour unions; Labour organization; Hopper cars; Health and safety; CPR Station

Time, Speaker, Narrative
EE: Well, it's a great pleasure to be here this afternoon with you, Mr. Poluyko—Maurice, if I may. Perhaps we can begin by your giving us your name again for the purposes of the recording.
MP: My name is Maurice Poluyko.
EE: And could you tell us something about how you came to work in the grain trade, or in association with it?
MP: Well, I was working for the city, and everything. Young fellow, young fellow. I got fed up with that. I went to the Great Lakes Lumber. Great Lakes Lumber, there was a Japanese foreman down there. It was all Japanese foremen. He called me and one other

fellow out. He said, "Come out with me." Went outside, there was a big ditch. Ditch about six feet deep, three feet of water. He says, "Go dig." "With what? Where's the rubbers? Where's the shovel?" And he's smiling, "Go dig." Well, I swore at him. I said, "You go dig." Took my lunch pail and away I went. And this kid with me, "Maurice, where you going?" I says, "I've had it. [inaudible]." Got the bus and then went straight to the Unemployment Office. At that time, it was on May Street. I see "grain door repairer." Right up my alley. I soon find out it's not what it's written there to be. You go inside the dust when you start on there. Eating dust like hell. Well, I was 18 at the time. Every fall time, you get laid off, late fall. I stuck it out 38 and a half years spent with that company.

EE: Right. And so the company you were working for was--?

MP: CP Rail [Canadian Pacific Railway].

EE: CP Rail.

MP: Yes.

EE: So you were actually employed by the railway?

MP: Right.

EE: And since you'd given me your birthdate in June of 1930, this was 1948 then that you began working there if you were 18 years old, was it?

MP: Uh, yeah.

EE: Sorry, '31.

MP: Right, right, right. 1948, yes.

EE: Was it '48?

MP: Yes.

EE: Okay. Yeah, because I'm sorry, it is June of 1930.

MP: Yeah, because I was referring to these pictures when it says '65, that's when they took over the Intercity.

EE: Okay. So you were working for CP Rail, as you said, for 38 and a half years from '48 through to '80--.

MP: '86.

EE: '86. And you've brought some pictures with you of the crew that you were in charge of starting in '65.

MP: Well, that was the day crew. That's only half of the bunch there. The other half were at the elevator.

EE: Right. So what did you work--. What were you doing then when you were employed by CP Rail? Was it the same type of work all the way through?

MP: Well, it was actually the same type because when you start out, you're a junior guy, and they send you to the elevator. You've got to--. When the elevator dumps these cars, they've got these grain doors there. You've got to take them off the wall, stack them, and then an agent comes and pulls them, you pull them out, you take the spikes out, and those that look good, you load them. Those that are bad, you take them out, and you repair them.

EE: So this was the work then of handling the wooden boards that were used to block off the doors on the boxcars?

MP: Right, yeah, yeah. And at that time I started, he says, "Bring in a saw, hammer, axe, and a crowbar." So when I come there and I start asking the different departments, "Do you bring your own tools?" They said, "No, the company supplies." So I went to the union, and I said, "Either higher pay, or supply us the tool." Well, they figure it's cheaper to supply the tools, so everybody got tools.

EE: Right. I see. What union were you with?

MP: Uh, Jesus. Can Lodge 1446, whatever it was. The thing that Mazur was the head of.

EE: Okay. So the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, Steamship et cetera, et cetera, Clerks. BRAC.

MP: Yeah. Right. Yeah, that one. That's right. BRAC.

EE: Yours was lodge--?

MP: 1446. Can Lodge 1446.

EE: 1446. Can Lodge. And that lodge included all the CPR employees who were involved unloading the cars?

MP: Well, it even included the freight office. The freight office, they're included.

**[0:05:03]**

EE: I see. They were employed by the railway rather than the grain companies in the elevators to draw the distinction. And so you had the tools supplied to you, and the boxcars would come into an elevator.

MP: Well, yeah. The crews would push them in, they'd unload them. Some elevators had dumpers, some they had to use the shovels. You know these shovels are just like a--. Well, they had holes in there for handles, and they were just a board like that on chains.

EE: Yeah, we've heard about those shovels. They were, I guess, the boards were sort of almost as wide as the boxcars was wide, and you climbed in there.

MP: Well--.

EE: Or were they smaller than that?

MP: You're talking about the shovels?

EE: Those wooden shovels.

MP: Well, the shovels, they were maybe about three feet wide.

EE: Oh, I see. They were--.

MP: Yeah.

EE: And so you'd climb in with one and shove it down into the grain.

MP: Right.

EE: And then the chain on it would pull it, and your job was to sort of keep it upright.

MP: Not me. The guys at the elevator.

EE: Oh, yes.

MP: Yeah, the elevator employees.

EE: Okay.

MP: They did that. That was their job.

EE: Your concern is--.

MP: When they come out of it.

EE: Opening the doors so that they could do this.

MP: Yeah.

EE: And then handling the wood.

MP: After it comes out of the elevator, out of the car shed, then we go into the car and strip those grain doors off the walls and put them in two piles.

EE: I see. Right. It's a very--. One particular specialty that we really hadn't thought about that the CPR—and I guess CN [Canadian National Railway], the other railway companies--.

MP: Yeah, CNR same thing, but they had wider doors. Theirs were about 22 inches wide. Ours was only 16.

EE: So you had to have a specialized crew just to handle that, people who--.

MP: Right, right. Yeah.

EE: So you'd be taking these wooden boards. Had the fellows in the elevators unloading actually got the board, they'd opened the car up?

MP: They opened it, and after they threw it back in the car any old way, and out it comes.

EE: And that's when you took over?

MP: Yeah, yeah.

EE: So you were involved in ensuring that when the boxcar with these door partitions went back--.

MP: They had to be cleaned, yeah.

EE: They had to be cleaned. They had to be in shape so they could be used again. Were they nailed against the boxcar, or did they just set them in as the grain--?

MP: No, no, no. They were nailed. Yeah.

EE: They were nailed. All the way up to the top or--?

MP: Yeah. They used four-inch nails. No. One side to the top, and the next side, the other side, was not because they had to put spokes in there to put the grain in it.

EE: Yeah. And you had to be able to get into it to open them up, I suppose.

MP: Right.

EE: So that was the business then of--.

MP: A dirty job. Dirty, heavy, but everybody was happy.

EE: How heavy were these boards?

MP: Well, it all depends. When I started, we had duplex, and we had hopper bottoms, they called them, but they went out because they were 40-tonne cars, you know the small cars? They went steel cars 60 tonnes, so those went out of the way. Those are the ones that we got later on.

EE: And the picture shows the steel cars, is it?

MP: Steel car, yeah.

EE: Because you were working with the old wooden boxcars earlier.

MP: Well, after we cleaned them out, we called it the dump. Then we had to load it into the cars. At first, we started 1,000 doors into a car, and it was too much down there for the elevators, so 250 on a flat. You see the other ones 1,000 or 750 was what were going.

EE: So you'd load 250 of these boards into one car?

MP: Grain doors, grain doors.

EE: The grain doors. It wasn't that each boxcar went back with its own allotment, but--.

MP: No, no, no.

EE: I see. So that when the cars were being loaded, they had to be sure they had a stock of these boards at each of these country points, I suppose, was it where they were loaded?

MP: Well, yeah. The country points, they had to phone in if they wanted a car. Well, it was there at the siding. They take the car in there. But when you loaded 1,000 doors, it was too much for this little elevator, you know? It was too much for them.

EE: Yes. Yes.

MP: One had too much, and the other one had nothing.

EE: Right. So it was better distribution?

MP: Yeah.

EE: Yes. How many boards would one boxcar require? How wide were they?

MP: Well, the ones that we were, they were 16 inches wide.

EE: And it was, what, two by--? Two-inch lumber or--? How thick?

MP: You mean the thickness?

EE: Yes, the thickness.

MP: Oh, about three-quarter inch.

**[0:10:01]**

EE: Okay. So they weren't planks, they were boards.

MP: No, but they were doubled. Double.

EE: You said duplex earlier, so that was the duplex they were--.

MP: Well, duplex was the old ones. These 40-tonne cars.



EE: So two of these cars—two of these boards rather—nailed together would make up one of them. So it's an inch and a half. Well, it's actually pretty close to 2-by-16 then, but they--. Of course, a 2-by-16 plank would be hard to find, so doing it with boards would make sense. And your job--. Did the fellows unloading the cars damage these boards frequently?

MP: Well, the ones that had to shovel them, they had axes just like fireman axes. The bottom ones, they cut them in half. You can't help it. You've got to get the grain out, eh?

EE: Sure.

MP: So we put the good ones on top and the ones they smashed on top of them, and then when they come, we took them out of the cars and we burnt them. Well, lots of firewood. Lots of firewood.

EE: And you actually just disposed of it there with your own fires?

MP: Right.

EE: You could have sold the firewood, I suppose.

MP: Yeah. But I don't think you could have got away with that these days.

EE: No. [Laughs] I would think not. And so that was the--. And you worked at this business particularly as long as boxcars were used? This--. Did it change or were they always using boards in this way?

MP: No. They come out with one car that had an eight-foot wide, so they had to make a nine-foot door.

EE: Yes.

MP: Still 16 inches wide, but when you loaded them, they were top heavy because you've got them on your back, and you went up a ramp.

EE: I see. When you were putting the boards into the--.

MP: It looked just like that jackass, all those grain doors on our backs.

EE: You said earlier that the doors on the various grain boxcars were various widths, now you're saying eight-foot, and I think that's the size I'm most familiar with myself.

MP: No, that was later on.

EE: Yes, but the earlier--.

MP: We didn't get very many of those cars.

EE: The earlier ones were--.

MP: Well, the earlier ones were about six-foot wide.

EE: Okay. Even narrower. Yeah.

MP: And the first one when I started, well, they called them duplex, the door. Four-by-five.

EE: Quite narrow doors.

MP: Yeah.

EE: Yeah, I guess--. I remember one boxcar every well. It was loaded with plywood out of BC—this must have been the early '60s in Winnipeg—for a lumber company. Plywood comes in three-inch thick paper-wrapped packages, slides very easily and so on. I remember unloading that boxcar on a hot, sweaty day, and I think it was steel boxcar with eight-foot doors.

MP: And every sheet of plywood was there?

EE: And every package of plywood had to be slid off and down onto a truck.

MP: Oh, because some were missing.

EE: Oh, yes. That's my memory of one particular boxcar. So there they were then, up to eight feet wide with these later ones. And the work didn't change particularly as long as boxcars were in use?

MP: No, no. No.

EE: And the crew that was required, was this work done at every one of the elevators then?

MP: Every one. Every one. And later on, before they come out with these hopper cars, they had paper grain doors. It was made from carboard with steel straps nailed into the corners of the boxcars. They were hard to pull. Really hard to pull.

EE: Yes, and I would--. And when the boxcars being transported from the Prairies, it's just as craft paper, I suppose, or cardboard. That's all that was in the door, or was there a steel door that?

MP: No, no. That was the inside door that was holding the grain in.

EE: Yes. But then there was also--?

MP: Well, the outside door they call. Storm door, yeah.

EE: The outside door that closed it. Yeah. And how many would be working at each of the elevators? Would it depend on the size of the elevator, the number of cars being unloaded?

MP: Well, I don't know. Our gang used to vary because the Intercity at one time, we had these school students. On the three shifts, they had 100 men.

EE: On three shifts?

MP: At one place, Intercity. Just the one place. 100 men.

EE: Among the Intercity group of elevators?

MP: Yeah. On three shifts.

EE: Okay. And did the cars come together at one particular location from the various elevators then for Intercity, or--?

MP: Well, yes. When the engine went to pull them out, he went and pulled like this. Say, pull McCabe, then Pool 1, and if he didn't have enough cars, he'd go double up into P & H, you know?

**[0:15:01]**

EE: Yes. And so--.

MP: And he'd pull them out, and we'd dump those grain doors out, and away we went.

EE: Right. And this was all being done in that sort of overgrown, somewhere in the overgrown area inland from the terminal elevators?

MP: Yeah. They got right now, they built that where the firemen train, over there at Intercity.

EE: Okay. So that's where it was done.

MP: Everything's knocked down. There's no more of--. We had these repair shacks, they're teared down. [inaudible] shacks, there's nothing there. Nothing.

EE: No, no. These repair shacks were the buildings in which you worked?

MP: Well, repaired the doors, yes.

EE: Yes. Yeah. And so you said three shifts. In the summertime when things were busy, working around the clock then?

MP: Oh, yeah.

EE: Eight-hour shifts. And you worked at this for '48 to--.

MP: 38 and a half years.

EE: To '65, and then you became a foreman, and you were foreman for the next 23 years or so, was it?

MP: Well, from '65 until '86.

EE: Or 21 years, right. Yeah. Did you enjoy being a foreman?

MP: Well, I'll tell you this much, I didn't push the men like the bosses used to push me. If he's doing his job, leave him alone.

EE: Whereas your foreman did a good deal of pushing did he?

MP: Oh, did he ever. He's in the picture there.

EE: Okay. Well. You want to mention this gentleman's name or--?

MP: A Pollock, Ilshuski [sp?]. The guy on the left.

EE: Had a smile on him, but he was a mean--.

MP: Bill Ilshuski. Well, we just finished loading a car of grain, that's why he's smiling.

EE: Oh, yes. So this is the picture in which three of you are standing there with four of the boards behind you.

MP: I'm in the centre.

EE: You're the one in the centre?

MP: Yeah.

EE: Well, it's a pleasure to have the car loaded. This was loaded with the boards now for sending back west.

MP: Yeah. And this picture here, there's nine of them that's not with us anymore.

EE: Yeah. I can imagine. Did he like pushing you?

MP: Pardon?

EE: Did this Pollock like pushing you?

MP: Oh, he had a son working in that gang, and he pushed us all. Oh, I felt sorry for the guy. I felt sorry for the guy.

EE: So he liked to ride his workers sort of, eh?

MP: Then that poor fellow died. And they says, "Maurice." "What?" "Nobody was at the funeral." Well, could you blame the guys? I said, "Look what he did to them."

EE: Yeah. Kind of sad. Really sad. This other picture is of two, four, six, eight, ten, is it? Twelve? Twelve men, by the look of it. And they're standing in front of a Canadian Pacific Railway steel boxcar, and I guess those are boards stacked up that they're leaning against.

MP: Yeah. Yeah. The grain doors, yeah.

EE: Yeah, the grain doors that are--. Right. Maybe ready, maybe not, but getting ready to ship them west. When the hopper cars began to be used, boxcars were still in use through that?

MP: Yes. Well, it was grain doors, and then they changed it to paper doors, then grain doors went on the way out. And then when the hopper cars come, well, that was it.

EE: Yes. How long were the grain trains mixed? They continued having boxcars for a while, I suppose, or did it change over completely to hopper cars?

MP: No, it was a gradual change. It was a gradual change.

EE: So it was--.

MP: So less and less guys, and then they come to us and they says, “Well, there’s going to be only a few of you guys left. You’ll have to work like you started in ’48.” I said, “Hey, I was 18. And you want me to do the same thing as when I was 18 years old?” I says, “No way.” I says, “I’m out. Give me my pension.”

EE: Yeah. This was in ’86?

MP: Yeah.

EE: When they said to work in the same way, but the same work wasn’t needed--.

MP: No, how could you?

EE: I mean, it’s a way to encourage you to retire, I guess. Full pension?

MP: [Laughs] They beat me out of \$300 a month on pension.

EE: Oh, yeah. Sounds like the CPR, eh?

MP: I had two years. I don’t know if you know Ian Rob. I went to him, and for two years he was at that office there, and he says--. I shook his hand, and I said, “Forget about it.”

**[0:20:11]**

EE: I’ll survive?

MP: I’ll survive.

EE: Yeah. Won’t make as many trips as I’d like to, but--. Yeah. So I guess in your work there probably was a kind of a typical day. Were the days pretty well all the same?

MP: Well, the days were all the same, but for the hard work. It was really bull work. And the guys were happy. Joked with each other, laughed, you know? although we had those tough bosses. But they weren’t with us all the time.

EE: No. When you became foreman, what kinds of new responsibilities did you have? How did it change your own work?

MP: Well, I was a timekeeper.

EE: For the crew?

MP: Pardon?

EE: For the crew?

MP: Yeah. Well, all three shifts. All three shifts. I had to go to the elevators to see how the men were getting along, if they need help or not. One time I took a bike. I took a bike, and with a bike, half an hour I checked everything. Official come from west, seen me on a bike, and he stopped with his car, and he said, "You're doing nothing but playing with the bike, having a good time." I said, "Yeah." I said, "Starting tomorrow, I'm going on foot. On foot it's going to take me an hour and a half to do the same job that I did with the bike in half an hour." And he had another official in the car with him. So the following day, yeah, he's there waiting for me. So I walked by and waved to him. I'm on foot. No bike. Well, he was mad, but what could you do?

EE: So you got the bike back or did they have you on foot?

MP: No, no. I went on foot after that. I went on foot. [Laughing]

EE: Walking is fun too if you're in good health.

MP: Well, it's a good exercise, yeah, because I had to take care of eight elevators down there, have to see if the guys are okay.

EE: Yes. Were you responsible only for the Intercity group then?

MP: Well, yeah. At that time, I was. And later on, there was a layoff. There was only--. I was there and there was Joe Hardick. There was two of us, and they gave us a truck. Three-quarter ton truck, and we had to take care from Grain Growers all the way to the Mission.

EE: Right. So all the way from over in Current River, and the whole waterfront was yours.



MP: Yeah. Right.

EE: When you say you were responsible for the three shifts—the time on them—does that mean you had to be there at the--.

MP: No, no, no. I was just making their time.

EE: Making the timecards and so on.

MP: Each shift had a keyman. Instead of a foreman, they used to call them keyman, you know?

EE: Yeah.

MP: He was responsible for the men, and the men—the keymen—told me what was going on. Who's on the job, who's not on the job and all that stuff.

EE: Yes. Yeah. And were there other things that you had to do as foreman or was it--. Well, you mentioned the time and making sure everything was organized. Supervising. The guys knew their jobs, so you didn't have to push them.

MP: If they knew their job, they did their job. I didn't touch them. I did not touch them. And some guys there, well, needed a little shoving you know? But I didn't push them that they would over-exert themselves.

EE: Yeah. I suppose the people, the guys, it was all men?

MP: All men, yes.

EE: The crews that had been hired, the men knew their work. Did you ever have to fire anyone?

MP: No. I couldn't fire.

EE: You could recommend for firing.

MP: I could send to the station, and you get fired from there, but I wouldn't even do that.

EE: No. The station, this is the one--.

MP: The CPR station.

EE: South--.

MP: Syndicate, yeah.

EE: South Syndicate, right. Where it is there. And that's where the management for the CPR was?

MP: Oh, that place was loaded with people falling over each other. I was even there in the office. I didn't like the office. I said, "I'm going back out in the open spaces."

EE: Yes. [Laughs] So maybe they had some redundancy, as they say, there in employees.

MP: Well, the guy next to me was laughing. He was because he doesn't want to work, but he wants to go in the office. I says, "Go ahead."

EE: Sure. Sit around and drink coffee.

MP: Yeah.

EE: Did you have an office yourself in the--.

**[0:25:01]**

MP: Have any what?

EE: Did you have an office, a space, from which you did your job?

MP: No. A line shack. I had a desk there, telephone by the desk, and that was about it.

EE: Sure. Your job was with the men, really, in making sure everything went--.

MP: Yeah. Right. And the guys come to eat, and you're doing your job, and they're around you eating.

EE: Yeah. Why were you made the foreman? Any ideas about that?

MP: Well, when the guy retired, I bid on the job.

EE: You bid on the job. Others as well?

MP: Because it's more pay too, you know?

EE: Sure, yeah. Were there others as well that you beat out for the job?

MP: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

EE: So the company thought that you'd be a good foreman?

MP: Yeah. They figured I couldn't handle it, but I did.

EE: Yes. As you did for the--.

MP: I showed them.

EE: Yeah, for the 21 years. So basically, you came into work that had been done for decades, I guess, from the time boxcars first existed.

MP: Oh, yes. Yeah.

EE: And you did this work for 38--.

MP: 38 and a half years. Yeah.

EE: Years until it was over, until it wasn't needed any longer.

MP: Well, as soon as those hopper cars come in there. Good-bye, Charlie.

EE: Yeah. Yes. Well, a typical day, and a typical day as foreman. What would you like people to know about the work that you did over the years? Was your work more in the Intercity area than in other--? You say you became responsible for the whole breadth.

MP: Well, I worked at Intercity, and then I got bumped, so I had to bump another guy in Current River. So I went back here. That's where I started, in Current River.

EE: You'd actually started in Current River even though you lived and grew up in Westfort? You were supervising--.

MP: Well, Alexander Street.

EE: Yes.

MP: A job was a job.

EE: Yes, of course.

MP: I liked Current River.

EE: Very. We hadn't talked about the seasons of the year. You'd begin work when the grain began moving in the--.

MP: Spring. Well, the breakup of the ice, you know? Then you start hiring. Elevators would get more busy, so we'd get more men. And during the summer, it would go, and then late fall, close to winter, things would slow down.

EE: Really, would it increase through September, October when the crop was being taken in on the Prairies?

MP: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah, yeah.

EE: That was really busy.

MP: Oh, yeah.

EE: And then it would be beginning to slow down in November, December?

MP: Well, slow down after the shipping season closed.

EE: Yeah. Well, that's--. When did it close in those days?

MP: Well, sometimes before Christmas.

EE: Yeah.

MP: Yeah.

EE: And other times it ran into January?

MP: Oh, yes. Because I remember the Christmas season aboard the ships.

EE: Oh, yeah. And then you would be laid off for three months?

MP: Well, first, I don't know, about ten years or so, I was laid off all the time, but you get back. The guys go on pension ahead of you, so you move a few steps up.

EE: And then you had a year-round employment?

MP: Year-round, yes.

EE: What did you do as foreman then during the winter? Was it kind of marking time, or was there work for you to do?

MP: Well, if there wasn't that much in the elevator, they send you on a mission to check the cars to see if they're leaking, doors open. And snow about yay-high. A lot of deer there. I'm thinking, "I'm not going to walk through that snow." So what I did, I walked on top of the boxcars, and then checked from the top. Not much snow up there.

EE: No. [Laughs] Oh, to be young and able-bodied, eh?

MP: Not now.

EE: No.

MP: Barely could crawl. [Laughing]

EE: Yeah. So that would keep you busy. Who was your own superior? You were a foreman, but--.

MP: Well, I'm going to tell you who was my superior, and he should have not been one because he didn't have nothing up there. The guy that I told you, Andy Antonyshyn, he's the one that carried the load. The head guy was Frank Yurkoski. Did you know him?

EE: No.

MP: He was a switchman. Nobody liked him. The only way he got that job, his sister was working in the superintendent's office. That's how he got the job.

EE: So she put a word in for him with the superintendent?

MP: Oh, I'll tell you.

EE: And then--.

**[0:29:56]**

MP: He'd come up with stupid ideas, you know? And I says, "Frank, where are you getting all these ideas from?" I say, "You staying up making eggs?" I said, "Man, oh, man." He told us to pile up cardboard up against the elevators, these work sheds. "And then what?" He says, "Well, we're going to get it in the morning." "Have you got 25 trucks?" "Well, why do I need 25 trucks?" "There's 25 elevators! They're not going to wait for you, you know, to take that cardboard out." I says, "When we start at 8:00 and 8:00 the cars are coming out, you're out of the way." And I said, "Besides, did you get permission from the superintendents of the elevator?" "Why?" "Well, the guys can't smoke inside. They come outside to smoke, and they're going to toss a cigarette in there. Who's going to be responsible? You or me?" Shut his mouth. That's just a few things. Well, lots of things.

EE: Well, the difficulty was, of course, that as a switchman, he hadn't worked on your job. He really didn't understand what was involved.

MP: No. He shouldn't have never been a foreman. Never.

EE: No. You mentioned Mr. Antonyshyn who is still--.

MP: Andy Antonyshyn?

EE: Yes.

MP: Oh, he was number one.

EE: And number one in this case do you want to say a little bit more about--? He was the lead foreman or--?

MP: He was assistant to Yurkoski.

EE: Okay.

MP: But he carried Yurkoski.

EE: Yeah. He should have had Yurkoski's job?

MP: He should have had it. He carried him.

EE: Right.

MP: He did all the paperwork. Timesheets went to him. He did the time. He did everything.

EE: Right, yes.

MP: He was on the ball, that guy.

EE: Yes. I've approached him, and he's just not able to--. He's still with us, but he's not able to do it any longer.

MP: He's in the 90s, yeah.

EE: He's well on in his 90s.

MP: Well, he was a number one guy.

EE: Yeah. It's a shame that we didn't catch him earlier because obviously he'd be able to tell the story.

MP: Oh, he'd tell you stories. Oh, yeah.

EE: Do you remember some of the stories he'd tell?

MP: Ho! [Laughs] He told a lot of stories, but I tell you, I couldn't remember them. No, I don't think so. We used to take care of the stock yards.

EE: The stock yards?

MP: Well, we had stock yards over here.

EE: Livestock?

MP: Oh, yeah. Livestock come to be unloaded here, and he'd feed them. And then after that, put them back inside the stock cars and ship them either east--. No, they were going west or east.

EE: So this was livestock being shipped for feeding or to market or whatever?

MP: To market, to market.

EE: So it was his responsibility?



MP: Well, that's before he went to the office. That's where he was.

EE: I see. So he'd come through that part of the--.

MP: Yeah, yeah.

EE: Where were they? Out towards Rosslyn?

MP: No. You know where Athabasca Street is?

EE: I've seen the name.

OM: In the East End?

MP: Yeah.

EE: Yes, in the--.

MP: Right across the tracks, just on the other side.

EE: Okay.

MP: The stock yards ran from Pacific Avenue to Williams Street at that time. They were that big, you know?

EE: I see. So this would be a place where the cattle were being fed, watered, and so on and so forth to be able to--.

MP: It was cattle. They'd have horses there too . They would bring horses.

EE: To be able to handle the trip.

MP: But mostly cattle.

EE: Right. So he'd come through that part of it. I suppose the connection of these animals to the grain trade was that they were eating some of the feed, enjoying feed before moving on. Yeah. Do any other thoughts come to mind about story--. He would tell stories from the stock yards then, I guess, would he?

MP: Well, all kinds of stories, but it's hard to remember, you know?

EE: Yes. But he told good stories. That's--. [Laughs]

MP: There's some really bad stories, but, you know [inaudible].

EE: Yeah. What might surprise people about that work that you did?

MP: Well, what surprised people is we says, "We work railroad, one department, grain doors." "What's a grain door? What department is that?" People didn't know! They didn't know what the hell we did.

EE: Well, it makes perfect sense as soon as you describe it. It was necessary to handle all of this. But--.

MP: Well, we had to because if they didn't get the doors, they wouldn't unload those cars.

EE: Right. But people tend not to think very deeply about the business.

MP: No. A lot of people didn't know. Lots.

EE: No. But the CPR and the other railway companies moving grain, they needed your skills.

MP: Yeah. If you were a railroader or worked for the elevators, you'd know.

**[0:35:02]**

EE: Yes.

MP: Otherwise, you wouldn't.

EE: Right. I'm interested as a farmer's son from Manitoba who has helped to--. I don't know whether I myself ever hauled grain to the elevators, probably not. My father used a trailer that he put on a car chassis at an early point to haul grain into the elevator, and I'd been there with him. Later he had a truck as well. And so, I think of the boxcars. We didn't pay any attention. I mean, they were out there, the grain was being loaded into them and so on, but obviously the boards would be needed there to block off the doors as the boxcar was being filled.

MP: Yeah, yeah. Right. On one side they could put seven or eight. On the other side where the spout went in they'd maybe put about five or six.

EE: Yes. Yes. And would it always be the--. I mean, you'd just have to--. A boxcar is sort of unisex, they--. Or is it? Or is there--? No, I guess not, actually. They have different matings at the two ends, so a boxcar--. Or does it? This is another detail of structure. Yeah.

MP: Coupling?

EE: Yeah, the coupling. Is it--?

MP: They're all the same.

EE: They're the same at both ends?

MP: Yeah, yeah.

EE: So they are sort of--. So depending on how the boxcar was positioned--. Of course, when it came to the elevator, the terminal elevator, the boxcar would have to be positioned right. You'd unload always on the same side?

MP: Yeah. Well, the side that they load it on, that's the side they put less grain doors on.

EE: Yeah, so you can get into it.

MP: On the other side, you could put it right up at the ceiling, you know?

EE: Right.

MP: And as far as the coupler goes, all the same.

EE: Yes.

MP: All the same.

EE: I'm just wondering whether when the trains arrived at the yards here in the city, would the cars all be positioned so that they'd go into the elevators right or did there have to be turning around of some?

MP: No, no. They didn't have to turn them or nothing like that, no. They had the cars, which elevator they were supposed to go to, and they pushed them in.

EE: But somewhere or other, care would have to be taken to make them up so that they would arrive at the elevators right. Because I'm thinking that not every country point elevator is going to be positioned the same way. Or would--?

MP: No. But over here, they all went in.

EE: Yeah. So somewhere or other, maybe at the humping yard in Winnipeg--. Oh, that's CNR's facility, I guess. They might have to be rearranged. Another--. When you really get down to the nitty gritty of the trade or the nuts and bolts of it, the doors on the boxcars, the doors and so on, and other jobs, there would be a variety of specialty trades involved in--. A lot of it would be grain, or rather the railway company employees that would do those sorts of things though, I guess, to make it. So the surprise is that there was a crew of guys who did this kind of--. How large--? What would the largest number of men working on these grain doors have been?

MP: Well, you mean from coast to coast?

EE: Well, I'm thinking here. CPR's here in the city.

MP: Well, I mean coast to coast from Westfort down to Current River.

EE: Okay.

MP: Well, it varies. You know, it's not the same. Fall time would be the most men, just like I told you before, that the Intercity alone one time we had 100 men all three shifts. But it would be the same thing in Current River. So maybe, I think about maybe 300 men altogether.

EE: 300 men.

MP: In the busy time.

EE: Yes. And some of that would be short-term employment.

MP: And then when winter come—I told you with the truck—was only two of us.

EE: Yes. Would the 300 of you at that peak point of employment, would you know each other? Would you get together at all during the year? You were all members of one lodge of BRAC.

MP: Well, at the union meetings, yes. The boss gets transferred here and there, you know. We got to know each other.

EE: Was there any social life amongst you as members of this particular lodge? Did you--. [Laughs] Bending the elbow?

MP: Yeah.

EE: Yeah. Particular hotels that you patronized?

MP: Legions. Mostly the legions.

EE: The legion halls. Six and Five?

MP: Yeah.

EE: Yeah. So that's what helped to keep the legions going as long as they--.

MP: Clean out the dust. [Laughing]

EE: Well, yes. Now you had less concern about dust than was true in the elevators. Or was there a serious dust problem?

**[0:40:05]**

MP: Well, the guys in the elevator that used to shovel those cars, they had to use masks on. We didn't have any mask. Nothing. We didn't even have no hardhats. Later on, they told us to wear hardhats.

EE: What about steel-toed boots?

MP: Oh, we had to have that. Yeah.

EE: Yeah. From the beginning, eh?

MP: We had to have them.

EE: Gloves?

MP: Yeah. Everybody had to have gloves.

EE: Did they provide them or--?

MP: Oh, no. We provide them.

EE: How long did they last, a pair of gloves?

MP: Well, they didn't last very long, like, for me. Because in the winter, you'd have those ones, well, you called them gloves, and the other ones with fingers during the summer. What would you call them? You wouldn't call them gloves too, would you? Mitts. Mitts and gloves.

EE: Yeah. Well, mitts in the wintertime, I suppose. Yeah, yes, of course, because of the cold.

MP: Mind's not working.

EE: Well, it is working! My experience of handwear, if you will, around wood is that wood really does wear on them.

MP: Well, the wood we used to handle used to be rough. It wasn't the plank stuff, so it wore out faster.

EE: Yeah. All the faster. Because one of the--. Working in the lumberyard, I was surprised at how hard on gloves wood could be.

MP: Yeah. I worked there. Great Lakes Lumber, I worked there too.

EE: Sure. What are you most proud of in the work that you did over these years?

MP: What I'm most proud of? That's a good question. That I got along with the men.

EE: Yeah. You were foreman for 21 years.

MP: Mmhmm.

EE: That's quite a period of time!

MP: I didn't make no man mad at me.

EE: Yeah. Are a lot of the guys who were in your crews still alive?

MP: Oh, yes.

EE: Well, you were saying nine of them were gone?

MP: There's one that I visit at the Grandview who's 88 years old.

EE: Yeah.

MP: Andy there is 90 years old. There's one guy that worked with me, John Colwell, he's in the Mission BC, and he's in bad shape too. There's quite a few of us around yet. [Laughs]

EE: Sure. And what counts is quite aside from the number of people coming to your funeral someday.

MP: I don't want nobody at my funeral.

EE: The fact is that you visit them. You're still on good terms with the guys.

MP: I'm not even going to be in the paper.

EE: There's no one there to put it in?

MP: Oh, no I got a brother that's 23 years younger than I am, and I told him. I said, "Make sure," I says, "I don't appear in no obituary."

EE: Why?

MP: Well, the people know that I was born, nobody was around. Same thing now.

EE: So what you're saying is that there's no one--. Not many people that it would matter to any longer?

MP: Cremated, like my wife says, and mixed up the ashes. And I asked the funeral parlour if they could do that, and they say, "Yes. We could mix up the ashes." That's what I want.

EE: Yeah. And then put them somewhere?

MP: Yeah. Put them anyplace they want.

EE: Yeah.

MP: I couldn't care less.

EE: You're not very sentimental.

MP: No. Those days are gone.



EE: Did you know Frank Mazur well?

MP: No, no. I didn't know him. We used to go--. We had these meetings up in that hall. What do you call it? Labour Hall on Fort William Road.

EE: Right, yeah. The Labour Centre.

MP: And he was there all the time.

EE: Because Frank didn't have a funeral either.

MP: Pardon?

EE: Frank didn't have a funeral. Didn't want a funeral service.

MP: He didn't?

EE: No.

MP: Good for him. Good for him.

EE: That's why I mention Frank. I think the lodge did have a kind of memorial for him at the Labour Centre. Because I think the guys deserved to have a chance to think about Frank. Maybe your crews do too, but anyway. That's not the business we're here for. We're looking back, not ahead! [Laughs] Obviously, your work contributed to Canada's success as an international grain trader.

MP: I hope so. [Laughing]

EE: You had to provide the boards so they could get the grain here and send it on.

MP: No, I mean, because if it wasn't for them, it would be impossible. It's the crew that I had.

EE: Yes. Yeah. You were proud of the guys, did a good job. What major changes did you see in your job and trade over the years? You've mentioned the different sizes of doors, going from wood to the carboard and so on.

**[0:45:11]**

MP: Major changes?

EE: And then, of course, the hopper cars coming in, that's an obvious change. Are there--? You might want to say more about those, or are there other changes that you saw? Did the railway change over the years from your experience? The railway company.

MP: Well, I don't know. I don't think there was much of a change according to our department. We did the same thing day-in and day-out. The only change—and it was a big change—was hopper cars come in.

EE: Yeah.

MP: That's the only big change.

EE: But for the rest, the seasons came, and the seasons went.

MP: Yeah.

EE: You bicycled, you walked, you got a truck to get around. The range of your responsibility could vary, but it was basically the same thing whether it was just Intercity or whether it was the whole coast to coast.

MP: Well, it started in one place and then evolved. When the gang got smaller, they give you a vehicle, and out you went.

EE: Yes. And at the end, they pushed you out.

MP: Well, I pushed myself out.

EE: Yeah, well, you made the decision. [Laughing] But they helped you. What other challenges would you say that you faced on the job over the years?

MP: Well, there's a lot of challenges. I don't know if you would call it challenges is that my boss, who was Frank Yurkoski, and guys like that who's pushing the men for no reason at all.

EE: Yes.

MP: I didn't like that at all.

EE: Was it really harassing the guys for the sake of harassing them?

MP: That's it. I got so mad that I went for a grievance in the department. When I got that job, I don't know what the hell our boss did, that I brought him to the superintendent, at that time was Trimble. I don't know if you remember a Trimble?

EE: No.

MP: And had this Ernie Johnson, he was local chairman. I'm supposed to keep my mouth shut, and he's supposed to do the talking, but he didn't know what the hell it was all about, so I did the talking. He kept his mouth shut. And we went to the superintendent, and he asked what the problem is. And I said to the superintendent, I says, "Listen." I says, "If he went," this is Frank Yurkoski, "going according to this rule book," I said, "be no problem." "Oh." Frank was in the hallway. They called him and shouted, told me to go out, and boy did he get hell!

EE: From the superintendent?

MP: Superintendent gave this Frank Yurkoski hell.

EE: Yeah.

MP: "You go according to the bloody book. No fooling around."

EE: The rule book, had it been negotiated, or was it the company's?

MP: No, it was the company and union.

EE: Had negotiated the rulebook, yes.

MP: Yeah.

EE: And you were serving as sort of steward for the union?

MP: I was, yeah.

EE: And you were saying that--. I didn't quite catch the title, or did you say steward, that you were the steward?

MP: Well, yeah.

EE: Or did they have another title? So what did you say you ran for?

MP: Well, company steward, yeah.

EE: It was the steward, or the union steward.

MP: Yeah. And the other guy was the local chairman.

EE: Yes, right. And did your local ever go on strike through those years?

MP: Oh, yes. We were on strike a few times.

EE: Because there were, I know, the grain handlers lodge 650 was on strike.

MP: Well, we were on strike too. Yes. Oh, yeah.

EE: Separate from lodge 650 or part of the same strike?

MP: Part of the same strike.

EE: Part of the same strike.

MP: Yeah.

EE: Yeah. Did you have a combined negotiating team then? Were you part of the same negotiation, or were you just sort of dragged along by lodge 650?

MP: No. I was on the picket line.

EE: [Laughs] But the--.

MP: I'm going to tell you a story about—this is true—this fellow here that--. Antonyshyn told us this. When there was a strike, they had a train in the station. It was all kind of stuff. There was liquor in there and there was all kinds of food stuff. Anything you wanted. Sugar.

EE: A mixed train.

MP: So the superintendent come out, he says--. Half of staff didn't go on strike, you know,--the big bosses. So he says, "Boys, break the seals, go into the car, and take whatever you want because they're on strike. We're going to blame it on the strikers, and it will be covered by the--."

**[0:50:17]**

EE: Insurance?

MP: The insurance companies, yeah. Imagine!

EE: Yeah, there's not much that's unfair in a strike, I guess, when the companies--. So they were particularly interested in the liquor, I suppose.

MP: Yeah, guys were taking everything.

EE: Yeah. I guess some of the stuff could have spoiled during the strike.

MP: I said, "Andy, what did you take?" "Nothing."

EE: Yeah. This is Mr. Antonyshyn?

MP: Yeah.

EE: An honest man.

MP: He was good.

EE: Yeah. Any other--. Did you have any kind of understanding, impression of challenges that the grain trade was facing during those years? There were ups and downs, I suppose, to some extent. So did you--. Some years they needed more men than other years?

MP: Well, yeah. Well, now that you mention it, there was, because when we got busy, they asked for men, and he wouldn't give you any. Instead he come to me--this Frank I was talking about--and he would send one guy to Current River. I says, "I'm short. I need men." "Send one guy to Current River." I said, "No, I'm not sending nobody to Current River." I said, "You tell that guy that's handling that job, instead of sweeping grain," which he was, "to do the same work as I do, and he won't need a man." "How do you know he's sweeping?" I said, "I know he's sweeping grain." And I didn't send him a man. I didn't send him any.

EE: Yeah. And this was--.

MP: "And if you want to take me to the office, to the superintendent," I said, "go ahead." And he was afraid. He was afraid.

EE: Because you had specified the problem. [Laughs]

MP: Yeah.

EE: Now, was this a matter of more work to be done?

MP: Well, it was more work, so we needed an extra man, you know?

EE: Yes. But they didn't want to hire an extra.

MP: They didn't want to hire, and he practically sent one guy to Current River. No way. No way.

EE: Yeah. Did you enjoy being a foreman?

MP: Yes, I did.

EE: Did that take you out of the union?

MP: No.

EE: Okay. So you were sometime a—I guess they talk about—"lead hands" as another term for the work.

MP: No, no.

EE: For the foreman who remains in the union. I don't suppose you would have left the union.

MP: No. No. I was there to the last.

EE: Yes. How important was the union to you over the years? There's a--.

MP: Well, when I started, first I told you that before, it was really hard. The old timers were pushing the guys, we had to buy our own tools, you know? So everything fell in it's place, most responsible for some of it. Not all of it. And after a while, things got not bad, you know?

EE: Working conditions improved?

MP: Oh, did they ever. Yeah.

EE: Was that as a result of negotiations?

MP: No. If I was yes man, they wouldn't. But I stood my ground especially with that foreman of mine, you know. I wouldn't give an inch to him.

EE: Sure. And of course, you were both in the union so that it was kind of--.

MP: Well, he wasn't in the union.

EE: Oh, he wasn't.

MP: No, not him.

EE: He was supervisory.

MP: I was in the union, yeah.

EE: And were there circumstances in which the union protected your employment? Were you ever in danger of being fired?

MP: Well, I think I should have been fired a long time ago, but these officials were too afraid to do anything to me. One time, safety guy come with a white helmet. There was another guy with him. They told us, "If you see a stranger, don't talk to him because there's a contractor that wants to take over." "Okay, no problem." So I know this guy's got a white hat. He's safety. This other guy, I don't know what he is. So that time I was buying 50/50 tickets from this switchman, Johnny Barback, and this guy comes to me, he says, "You're going to be at another job. You won't have the chance to buy tickets." I said, "I have a lot more chance to buy tickets." And he went. I don't know who the heck he was. Phoned me, it was Andy. "Maurice," he goes, "you've got to apologize." "To who?" He says, "To the superintendent." "Well, who's he?" And he was an assistant superintendent. I didn't know. Usually when somebody comes down there, they introduce themselves. Sorry, I got no teeth there.

**[0:55:20]**

EE: Introduces themselves?

MP: Yeah. Who they are. He didn't say a word. How the hell am I supposed to--? First, they say, "Don't talk to strangers." And then I got to apologize. Man, oh, man. What's going on here?

EE: No, no. That's stupid.

MP: I went through a lot, but I handled it.



EE: Yes. White hats are always the bosses, eh? What--.

MP: Yeah. One time, they send me to the elevator—this was Frank—he said, “Wear your white helmet.” I says, “No, I’m going to wear a yellow one.” “Why?” I says, “Well, big shots won’t know who the hell I am.” “No, no. You wear the white one.” “Okay.” That time it was the first load of these cars with paper doors. So they dumped us at Pool 1. They dumped this car, everybody went—the car’s still on the dumper—everybody went in the car including our superintendent. He says to me, “Pull that nail out of that corner there.” I was trying to pull it with a hammer, couldn’t handle the damn thing. I said, “No, can’t.” “Oh, you don’t know how. Get.” “I don’t know how? Twenty-five years with a hammer, and I don’t know how? Here, show me how.” He takes the hammer, same thing with him. We need a special tool. To this day, we haven’t got that special tool. To this day. Yeah. Yeah, that’s the guys we had as working officials. What you had to put through.

EE: Put up with, eh?

MP: Yeah.

EE: The hardhat that you wore on the job was yellow?

MP: White.

EE: Oh, it was white.

MP: I didn’t want one. I didn’t want a white one. I wanted a yellow one just like all the rest of the guys.

EE: Yeah, the crew.

MP: The officials come, well, the first thing they come up to the guy with the white hat, you know?

EE: Yes. They want to know who’s in charge.

MP: So sometime Andy would phone me from the station, and he says, “Maurice, there’s officials going to come to see you down there.” I said, “Oh, thank you.” So I went into the yard, sat on the rail. Put my mitts on the rail, sat on the thing. I’m smoking. And

they, “Where are the foremen?” “Oh, he went in the yard. He’s checking cars.” And they’ll look, and they can’t see me, but I could see them. And I was smoking and looking at them. Soon as they go, I come out. I didn’t want to talk to them.

EE: Oh, I see. [Laughs]

MP: I didn’t want to talk to them. No.

EE: And You got away with it, eh?

MP: Yeah. They ask you stupid questions.

EE: You were able to smoke on the job?

MP: Oh, yes.

EE: Was there a lot of drinking on the job?

MP: No, no. There’s one thing that one time one guy come with a bottle of beer in his lunch pail. And I says, “I don’t mind you drinking, but it’s against the rules, you know? We cannot drink on the job.” He says, “Okay.”

EE: He didn’t know better?

MP: Yeah.

EE: So he took this--.

MP: Well, he didn’t know.

EE: So he took the bottle or the can, went home.

MP: He didn’t know. He come from Italy.

EE: Oh, yes. Yeah, where alcohol--.

MP: Maybe they do that in Italy, I don't know.

EE: Yeah, right. [Laughs] Well, what are your most vivid memories of the job? You've given us--.

MP: Vivid?

EE: Yes, some good memories up to this point, eh? Any vivid ones?

MP: Oh, I had a good relationship with the men. That's what my memories are of. I had a good gang.

EE: Yeah.

MP: Treated them good. It works both ways.

EE: Right. Well, they respected you, I imagine.

MP: Oh, yeah.

EE: Yeah. My chief engineer here has gradually become—made me aware—that he's got good questions to ask sometimes too. So I'm going to turn to Owen and say, what--?

MP: Well, he's been listening.

EE: He has indeed.

MP: I don't know if he's got any questions. Have you?

OM: I have got a question, but I think you were kind of like some of those armies where the officers always wore no ranks because they don't want to get shot first, so they don't know that you're a major. They think that you might just be a--.

MP: No, no, no, no.

OM: That was a good play on your part. But who were some of the guys you worked with that you would have a chance to maybe mention their names now and people can remember them through this interview? The good guys you worked with. You mentioned your group that you worked with, your gang.

MP: Well, I could mention right off the picture here.

OM: Okay.

MP: That's easy. Okay, this little one here is Milanese, Spedowski, Cenkovic, Antosiak, Colitrus, Galaski, Jahawey, Bolus, Lewicki, Kolisnek [Spelling on these was all done phonetically, so likely some are incorrect.] and then I can't see the other guy. He's Italian. I know he's Italian. What else?

**[1:00:18]**

OM: What guys stood out in your mind as guys you liked to work with and enjoyed working with that you may not have mentioned?

MP: Hm. Now that's a good question because I had good relationships with everybody.

OM: What was a good relationship? You kept on saying you had a good relationship with your workers. Like you could trust one another or--?

MP: We could trust one another and whatever. If I give an order, it was obeyed, not like some of these young guys that use that four letter words. I says, "What?" I says, "Listen. Say that once more." I says, "Don't ever say that again because, I says, "I could send you to the station and he's gone, you know?" I says, "I'm not going to do that." I says, "I'm giving you an order. You're not going to kill yourself. If you need help, come to me, and I'll give you help."

EE: But avoid the profanity.

MP: Right.

EE: No drinking.

MP: No, no, no.

EE: No swearing. Respect.

MP: No, you could swear all you wanted as long as there's no women around.

EE: But there was certain language uses you didn't want to hear?

MP: The officials did more swearing than I did.

EE: Yeah, I suppose--.

MP: I had these, in the lunch shack up on Current River, a lot of these pin-ups.

EE: Oh, yes.

MP: The superintendent come in, he looked at it. "Take those effing pictures down!" "What kind of pictures?" You know, and then he said it again. I didn't take them. They're still--. Shack got burned down with the pictures in them.

EE: The good-looking girls went up in the smoke too, eh, or up in the flames?

MP: Yeah, yeah. I'm sorry for the girls.

EE: But they survived the superintendent. Anything else, Owen?

OM: That's all. I just wanted to get the names of some of the guys because probably their kids still live in town here, their families, that sort of thing.

MP: Oh, yeah. This one guy, Joe Hardick. I don't know if you're from Westfort. Are you from Westfort?

OM: Yeah.

MP: Do you know him?

OM: No, I don't know him.

MP: On Brock Street.

OM: Oh, I live just down from Brock Street.

MP: He's, oh, he should be around 88, 89. Something like that. His wife died a few years back.

EE: You took one of the pictures and you were reading from left to right on the picture, and I'm saying this because the recording doesn't have the picture. But if we do a copy of it, we'll have it so then we can--. We should probably mark on the photocopy which picture you were remembering the names on.

MP: Well, this one on top here.

EE: Yeah. Well, that's the thing that--.

MP: A Rumanez, sounds just like--. When I first talked to him when he started there, "Rumanez, Cuban?" "Uke!"

EE: But names got changed sometimes.

MP: Well.

EE: Yeah.

MP: I never heard of a Rumanez Uke.

EE: No. I was going to ask you as a follow up question to that, the name suggest a pretty fair variety of backgrounds, or were the crews mostly Ukrainian and Italian?

MP: No, there were Greeks, there were Polish, Ukrainians, Italians, you name it.

EE: So this is where the Canadian stew pot--. Americans say melting pot. I think Canada's stew pot is a better term for it. The Canadian stew pot was well represented there.

MP: We got along together good.

EE: You got along together. And you were--. When you began in 1948, the foreman and the older fellows in the crew had worked in this crew through the war, I guess, maybe even back in the Depression? Or did you have a sense of the earlier years? Because you were coming in as a young man, and there were other men coming in after the war. Did you have some veterans in the--?

MP: Uh, yeah. One. We had one, he was a night shift, Mike Bealey.

EE: And he'd fought in the war?

MP: He fought in the war and had back problems on the job because he was a wheely worker. I don't know how many times he landed in that hospital, and then he come back, and he was pushing the guys. I says, "Mike," I says, "how many times are you going to the hospital to have an operation on your back?" He told me. I forget how many it was. "How many times did you have CPR officials over here coming to visit you?" "None." "And you're pushing the guys for them?" That changed the man, changed man.

**[1:05:10]**

EE: [Laughs] Of course, he'd been in the forces, so he'd been pushed by the officers, I guess, and he figured you needed to listen to him, eh?

MP: I'd listen to him, but I'd say, "Don't push them like that." I says, "They're doing the work." And he says, "Yeah, you're right."

EE: So this is one of the places where the stew pot worked well and the guys--.

MP: Worked for me!

EE: Yeah. The guys were in good relations. They'd drink together at the Legion Hall, eh?

MP: And that's how the work got done. That's how the work got done.

EE: Yeah. That's a very interesting little bit of Canada here. Are there any important events that we might put on the recording? Is there anything else that--. Are there questions that I might have asked that I haven't asked that you'd like to answer?

MP: Well, I don't know. There was a lot of joking around, but I don't want to say the jokes because there's no point to that. Some of them won't come out very good on your end.

EE: A certain amount of racy joking.

MP: Maybe got to plug his ears, I don't know.

EE: [Laughs] yeah, we might have to restrict this recording if you told all those stories, eh!

MP: But to your question, no, I can't recall.

EE: No. You're satisfied with the work you did over those years?

MP: Oh, yes.

EE: You served the interests of the country and the trade.

MP: Not the company.

EE: And you're happy with the guys you worked with.

MP: Yeah. And they screwed me out of maybe \$300, chop, chop pension.

EE: Yeah. Yeah, the companies can be nasty.

MP: And I wasn't the only one.

EE: No, I daresay.



MP: According to this guy Rob, he says, “You’re not the only one.”

EE: No. The neighbours on the next farm, Irish background, I guess, in Manitoba, my father’s impression was that the old man—there were four sons who also farmed with him—and the old man had worked for one of the grain companies, and they fired him a little short of pension so they wouldn’t have to pension him off.

MP: Holy smokes, eh?

EE: So he managed to buy a farm, and they were farming the better part of 3,000 acres. Or was it 2,000? Certainly, much more land than was typical of farmers in the area. So they did well in those terms, but that was one of my first experiences—second-hand, third-hand—what big companies can do. Well, it’s been a pleasure interviewing this morning, this afternoon, rather. Appreciate what you-- You filled in a real blank that we didn’t even know existed until we were told to talk to you.

MP: Well, all this stuff that I told you, especially with my bosses, I don’t know. If I’ve got to listen to them—or to him, I should say—to him, the work wouldn’t have gotten done the way it got done.

EE: No, no. And the company probably came to realize that you were doing a good job, that you were keeping this part of the big railway operation going effectively.

MP: Well, they did. And for him they took-- He had keys, they took the keys away from him, the company, because he got out of the hospital, he come back, so they sent the CPR police to take the keys off him because he was pilfering—plywood, nails, paint—you know?

EE: Yeah.

MP: Even gas.

EE: Oh, boy. Yeah.

MP: Oh, I forgot to mention that I was on a forklift too. I was loading cars in the [shuck shed], taking paper doors in bundles and throwing them in different cars. I was on the forklift.

EE: The paper doors couldn’t be reused, I don’t suppose.

MP: Well, at first, they told us to clear both doors, and then they says, “If it’s good on one side, leave it. Just take the other side that’s down.”

EE: Yeah. The side you opened, I guess.

MP: Yeah. Better for us!

EE: Less work.

MP: Less work, yeah.

EE: Sure. And for the company too if it isn’t needed.

MP: Yes. Then they use less paper.

EE: Yeah. But the paper then, it was waste?

MP: Yeah.

EE: I suppose it ended up being burned with the waste.

MP: Well, we burned it, and the steel straps they’d send to Lakehead Scrap with a magnet and pull it out and put it on a truck, and away they go.

EE: Right, to the scrap yard.

MP: Yeah.

EE: Right. Well, it’s been a pleasure. And if that concludes the story, well, you’ve done a good job of filling in--.

MP: Well, I got more stories I could tell but--.

EE: [Laughs] Not on a recording, eh? Well, we'll ask the engineer to shut it down, and then you can tell us another story or two while we sign the documents.

MP: You going to do something with those pictures?

**End of interview.**