Narrator: Avery Sahl (AS)

Company Affiliations: Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Canadian Wheat Board (CWB)

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Summary: Retired Saskatchewan Wheat Pool vice-president and Canadian Wheat Board advisory committee member Avery Sahl discusses his long career in the grain industry. He begins by recalling his childhood on the family farm during the Depression, eventually farming on his own, and becoming a delegate for Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. He describes the differences and similarities between the cultures of the three Prairie Pools and how he tried to push for amalgamation of the three organizations. Sahl then shares how he was elected to the CWB's advisory committee before major organizational changes. He discusses major challenges to the Wheat Pool and CWB during his career, like the Hall Commission on rail rationalization, building inland terminals, marketing non-board grains, the introduction of protein grading, the Crow Rate debate, and the shifting of grain movement from east to west. Sahl shares stories of various international trips for the Wheat Pool and giving presentations to international delegations. He also describes being on the Canadian Grain Commission's standard's committee and his pride in Canada's global reputation for quality assurance. Other topics discussed include dwindling cooperation between grain organizations, the demise of the Pools, the loss of farmer and Canadian ownership in the grain industry, his interactions with terminal elevators, and the various ministers responsible for the CWB during his career.

Keywords: Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Farmer cooperatives; Grain farmers/producers; Farmer delegates; Agricultural policy; Grain trade—Laws and legislation; Alberta Wheat Pool; Manitoba Pool Elevators; Country grain elevators; Inland terminals; Grain transportation—rail; Grain transportation—ships; Grain export destinations; Grain marketing; Government lobbying; Hall Commission; Rail line rationalization; Non-board grains; Canadian Grain Commission; Grain grades; Protein testing; Canadian International Grains Institute (CIGI); Canadian Western grain; Grain varieties; Crows Nest Pass freight rate; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Terminal grain elevators—British Columbia; Boards of directors; Consolidation; Amalgamation; Privatization; Japan; Russia; China; India; Brazil

Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: Nancy Perozzo conducting my second interview in Regina, and it's June 24, 2013. I will have the person I'm interviewing introduce himself and his connection to the grain trade. AS: Well, my name is Avery Sahl, and I've had a lot of different roles in the grain trade from delegate to first vice-president of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to chairman of the farmer-elected advisory committee prior to the elected board, so I guess that's--. NP: Of the Wheat Board, the second one? AS: Of the Wheat Board, yeah. NP: Okay. So I'd like to start right back with the farming part. Were you the first-generation farmer, or did your father and grandfather--? AS: No, my father. He used to tell stories of what was going on at that time in the grain trade. You know, when it come time to sell our grain and to pay the bills, the price was always going down, and I can remember that very clearly. Then if they would haul the grain to an elevator, which they had to haul 20 miles away, "We haven't got any room for that today." It was generally one car of hard red wheat threshed with the thresh machine. The only thing that they had room for was a No. 3, so it was, "Either take it or take it home." That was kind of the standard answer that farmers got. I guess that stuck with me for a good many years, you know? NP: Had your father been active in the setting up of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool? AS: Not really. My father was from the United States and was hard of hearing, really never could hear anything, so we never got involved in politics in Canada or what was going on in the grain trade except having to market the grain out of those conditions. NP: How did he end up in Saskatchewan if he was from the States? Did he ever talk about that? AS: Oh, yeah. He was set up here by a tractor company in Iowa to be a blockman for the Hart Parr Tractor Company. It was really the start of the Dirty Thirties, and so his job really became collecting some of the debts for these machine companies and either try to sell it or whatever. So that was—along with keeping them running—so that was a pretty major job. NP: What year did he move up?

AS: Well, it was in the--. What the heck?

NP: Before the Depression? Like before 1930?

AS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yes, it was. It was probably in 1918 or something like that. 1918 or sometime in that area.

NP: Did he ever talk about how tough that must have been having to go around and--?

AS: Well, yeah, he sure did because I heard it when I was a very small kid.

NP: Knee-high to a grasshopper, as we say.

AS: Yes. It wasn't a pleasant thing, but some of them, it's just a matter of wanting to throw in your keys to your tractor, your separator, or whatever it might be. So it really decimated the farm community at that time. Then that drought was piled on top of that, so it wasn't a pleasant time.

NP: So was your father able to keep his job through that time, then, through the '30s?

AS: Well, yeah. You know, I don't know what the--. I guess as well as it was, it was keeping them old-style tractors running and also the ones that were being foreclosed, trying to get them running in a saleable condition of some kind.

NP: So was he like an implement dealer, like a John Deere dealer these days?

AS: No. It would be somebody like a blockman, a company representative.

NP: And I have not heard the term "blockman."

AS: Well, that's what they used to call them. A company representative that would--. He was obviously a good mechanic and knew those old tractors, so he'd fit into the--. He had the chance to either go to Argentina or go to Canada, and he had a girlfriend back in Iowa. They thought Canada was a lot closer, so that's why we got here.

[0:05:25]

NP: Did he marry that girlfriend, or did he meet a Saskatchewan girl?

AS: Yeah. No, he did. Yeah.

NP: Yeah. So it would be like his territory? His block would be his territory?

AS: Yeah. Well, there was no real territories. It was just wherever. South Saskatchewan was just one big area, you know? Yeah. But I can remember him telling about people coming even late at night to try to get something running again. So it wasn't the most pleasant job.

NP: No. Did he himself live on a farm, or did he live in the town?

AS: No, he lived on a farm. Yeah.

NP: So he bought farmland when he came?

AS: Yeah. Well, actually, the way the farm we lived on was, the guy that owned it just gave up, just said, "Goodbye. I'm going back to England." He had some debt and machinery purchases, and that was kind of in the deal. I don't know all of the details of it.

NP: Did your father continue—after he took the farm—did he continue working with the tractor company as well?

AS: No, not really. We were deep into the Dirty Thirties, and it was a matter of kind of keeping your head above water, and he got into raising chickens and stuff like that, sold the eggs to a hatchery. That's what kind of kept us alive, I guess, at that time.

NP: When were you born, if I may be so bold to ask?

AS: 1926.

NP: 1926. So you came along right--.

AS: Yeah.

NP: On the farm?

AS: Yes.

NP: What are your early memories of growing up on the farm?

AS: Well, they were good, and they were bad. [Laughs]

NP: Let's hear one of each. [Laughs]

AS: Yeah. Well, rain was scarce, and we had lots of dust storms because farmers were farming different than they are now. Oh, it was fun times in a way because you were young and you didn't know any better, but looking back, they were damn tough times, so.

NP: Yeah. How did your career progress then? Did you work along with your dad on the farm?

AS: No, by that time, my father had passed away.

NP: Ah, okay.

AS: And sort of I was--. My oldest brother decided, "Enough of this," so he--. He was born in the United States, so he moved back to the United States, and that sort of left me holding the bag here. My grandfather, who was my mother's father, come up here to stay with us. So I had my hands full.

NP: How old were you, then, when you took over the ownership and responsibility for the farm?

AS: Oh, I don't. It started even probably at 12 years old.

NP: Wow. And by then, the rain had come? It started to get--.

AS: No, not really.

NP: No?

AS: I seen some of them days, the Dirty Thirties days.

NP: So during the war years, you weren't very old.

AS: No.

NP: So you stayed on the farm?

AS: Yeah.

NP: And did things get a little better then?

AS: Well, they started to get a little better, as I remember it, in about 1939, although it was the year that we had a lot of rust in the crops. We didn't have rust-resistant grain, and a lot of the crops were really virtually no good on account of the rust and things. So I had my share of that kind of stuff too.

NP: When did you start to become aware of things that your father had talked about when he said it was difficult to--. Why the Pool came about because not feeling they were getting a fair deal. What were things like in marketing or selling your grain when you started taking responsibility for it?

[0:10:32]

AS: Well, there was the early--. The Pools started kind of a pooling system that really didn't--. They ran into tough times and the bank did some--. The bank had to bail them out. So they started the concept of pooling, and farmers seemed to like it, except it was the wrong time to start it. All the other negatives were going on. It just didn't seem to catch on, although, a lot of them liked it. But there was always some that thought that they could do a lot better by themselves and maybe were a little bit suspicious of what a sales organization like the Pools or the Wheat Board could do, you see? Which is unfortunate. When I became elected a member of the advisory committee, I experienced that too. There was still farmers that felt that, well, they could do better and market their own grain. There was a whole kind of opposition to the pooling concept.

NP: Was there a lot, or just enough?

AS: No, there wasn't a lot, but every election, there was members on the advisory committee that were all for the Wheat Board. It was a strange thing. But there were some that were, a couple years, to come out of Alberta, almost every year for some reason or other. Well, they're a different breed of cats there, you know, and they come up into Canada through a different way from the western states and the cowboy country and that type of thing. It has stayed with the mentality and the philosophy of Alberta people right to this day.

NP: Although that's where the Pools started in Alberta.

AS: That's right. That's the strange thing.

NP: It's really strange, isn't it?

AS: It's a very strange thing. I'm glad you asked because it was a Conservative Prime Minister, R. B. Bennett, when he was a member of Calgary South, believe it or not—the current Prime Minister's area—that had seen this coming and had heard what grain companies were doing to farmers. He was the guy, as I understand it, that phoned down to California to get this Aaron Shapiro that organized the wheat growers in California to come up to Canada. [Laughs] And not only that, but R. B. Bennett—and nobody liked the guy—it's funny because he introduced some very forward legislation. He put in place legislation that would allow the Wheat Board to function, believe it or not, and he also had the CBC—and now that's under attack by the current government—because they had nobody to talk to. He wanted a vehicle that he could talk to everywhere, all these--.

NP: Constituents?

AS: Constituents in Canada, and that's how the CBC come into being, as I remember and recall. It's a strange thing, I'll tell you. I believe it is. And yet, it's not so strange when you progress this a little farther because when I come into the position of first vice-president– You know, there were these three organizations. They met twice a year, these three Pools—Manitoba Pool, Saskatchewan Pool, and Alberta Pool—and they were people of the same culture, exactly the same culture, and yet--. But the strange thing, when I look back, they were a little different than I thought. I thought they were a little bit more on the same wavelength that I was, but when I think about it, Sask Pool was the biggest one of the group. They handled as much grain as the other two Pools together. They were more involved in value-added things, like we started things like crushing plants and moved into barley--. What the heck? Making beer stuff.

[0:16:13]

NP: Malt?

AS: Yeah, malt. And the other two Pools just seemed to back off of that kind of thing. And we were more into farm policy—maybe too much—to the point where I think the members started to think the Pool was the next thing to the government, and they would do everything that the Wheat Pool promoted or had resolutions for at the annual meeting, which was about 10-12 days. Then we would talk to governments. And they were all designed to, I guess, move up the value of farmers' product, you know, to whatever. They worked very good, except when we started into that program, interest rates were about 20 percent.

NP: The program of diversification?

AS: Yeah. You know, the only way a cooperative can get capital is withhold earnings to the member or go onto the market. [Laughs] At that time, you know, grain prices were so depressed that the particular Wheat Pool—maybe the other two as well—they tried to reflect as much of that earning back to the members as possible because there was a real need out there. Some of them were desperate. So then, you practically diminished any working capital that you had. You have to go straight to the market, and they say, "20 percent," and to try to do something by that, it was--.

NP: And you certainly couldn't foresee the day of 1 percent rates.

AS: No, we sure couldn't. It was--. When I think back when we built that plant in Harrowby between Manitoba Pool and Sask Pool, that's where it was, 20 percent, but there was a need for a crushing plant in that area, you see? So I guess we decided to go ahead with it. The difference with the other two Pools, they were smaller. We were the big dog of the pack, and some of our members in our delegate body could not see this. [Laughs] I mean, I think I was one that said, "Look, you guys. We're the big dog in the yard, and we better not act like the big dog. We've got to take some of these things into consideration." I think that's maybe what--. You know, I was a great promoter of amalgamation. I see it had to happen. There was no question. And no question in my mind it had to happen. It was all the same. They all come into being about the same time, the same culture for the same reason, and it didn't make sense for me to see three organizations and three staffs and three this, three that. Everything. Maybe I had promoted it a little too much. I don't know. Maybe there was some resentment from the other two Pools. I'm not sure.

[0:20:10]

NP: I want to go back, but I'd like to stick with this amalgamation since we're talking about it.

AS: Yeah.

NP: You became a delegate, what did we say, 1957? About then?

AS: Yes. Something like that.

NP: And then you finished off in ’87 with your board responsibilities.

AS: Yeah.

NP: Over that time period, how many serious discussions of amalgamation occurred?

AS: Well, you know-.

NP: Every year or--?

AS: No, not really. That’s maybe the problem, I guess. But maybe I was the only one that pushed it, and I pushed it every chance I could get because I felt so strongly about it. When I think back, it might have been a sore spot for the other two Pools. I’m not sure.

NP: Why?

AS: I don’t know. Well, you know, everybody wants to hang onto their own little--. They had a president in Manitoba Pool. They had a president in Alberta Wheat Pool. They all had their delegate structures and their vice-presidents and their managers. It’s pretty hard to talk about something that might put a stop to that and maybe end up with maybe one solid executive, one president of the three Pools, for instance.

NP: Now my understanding is—and I don’t know when this happened, that’s why I was asking about when the serious negotiations and almost getting there happened—because my understanding, there was at least a couple of times where they almost did agree to unite.

AS: Well, that was, I think maybe after I left. I’m not sure because I certainly made a pretty big—maybe too much—a big issue of it. **[Audio pauses]** Maybe another thing, you know.

NP: Let me go back. Okay, continue.

AS: Well, where were we? I was never involved in politics, I mean, other than the Pool politics. Like, I'm talking Liberal, CCF, that kind of stuff. I was out as far as I'm concerned. Because I had to talk to--. I knew damn well all the members of Sask Wheat Pool weren't of one political persuasion. There was all kinds! I made a point to talk to them. "I'm not about politics at all."

NP: But their interests.

AS: Their interests, yeah. That was--. I know there was one or two that didn't feel quite that--. They thought there should have been a bit more of the political--. You know, when you go back to the--. I don't know. In the early days of the forming of Sask Pool, there was a real—what should we say—fight going on amongst the people from the Farmers' Union and the people that were not Farmers' Union people. The Farmers' Union were more militant. They wanted to get a strike. "We've got to stop deliveries." The other side said, "We can't do that. We just can't do that. There's no way." The guy that won on the said-we-can't-do-it was McPhail, who became the first president, eh? The other guy that was advocating a strike and more militant, after McPhail died, I guess he did finally become president but in the interim. That feeling is still prevalent today, believe it or not. It's hard to believe it, but that is.

NP: Yeah. Sort of a strain that continues through.

AS: Yeah. Yeah. Like we've had Roy Atkinson, who was a very outspoken Farmers' Union guy and tried to put that--. They wanted a platform that was paid for, that they could espouse their philosophy, you see. The Pools didn't see it that way.

[0:25:07]

NP: And I think from reading some of the early histories of some of the different Pools that the founders were very deliberate about not being a political organization, like not getting into politics but--. Policy, yes, but politics, no. Was that always the case? Like, did they--?

AS: Well, you know, it seemed to creep in amongst our delegates. Now, for some reason, I guess, I don't know. There were still some that felt pretty strongly about the NDP [New Democratic Party] and happened to be leaning toward that.

NP: Well, while we're talking about this, then, let me ask you about the Wheat Growers. What is their--? Western Canada Wheat Growers group.

AS: Yeah, yeah.

NP: What do you know about how they started up and why they started up?

AS: Well, they were kind of an offshoot. They were ones that thought they could just market their own grain and that type of thing, and they wanted to be able to haul their grain right across the US border. They didn't think it had to stop for any kind of procedures. They'd get a permit and that kind of a thing. They thought they could just do whatever they want. They went broke, you know, because the Alberta government was financing them pretty heavily and so was the grain trade at that time. I was at a dinner in Regina here when Grant Devine was the premier, and some guy come up to me right from this meeting, and they said to me, "Well, we don't need to worry about those guys anymore because they just decided to pack it up because their funding ran out." But all of a sudden--. And I know damn well that after--. You've heard about the Calgary School?

NP: No. Tell me about the Calgary School.

AS: Well, you know, it was that group—Manning and all that group—that wanted, you know, "The West wants [inaudible]," and that type of thing. There was quite a whole--. About five or six of them they called the Calgary School, and their big objective was to swing the big influence from the Ottawa and Toronto area to Calgary. It didn't matter what they were going to do, that was their--. And I've got some pretty authentic documentations to that effect. That's when Manning, he was--.

NP: Preston Manning?

AS: Preston Manning, yeah. Not the old Manning. He got elected, but his influence sort of stopped at the Manitoba border. Ontario said, "No thanks. Thanks, but no thanks." So he kind of backed out. Then they decided they had to have somebody else, you know? That's how come they went to Harper. He was in the National Citizens Coalition. That's about as right of wing outfit as you can get. That's how they ended up there.

NP: So it wasn't just accidental. It was actually a platform.

AS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was. Well, they started out as the Reform Party, and then they morphed into two or three other things and this. They were trying to--. They knew damn well this Reform wasn't going to get any, so they had to get the tent a little bigger, and that's when, I guess, they settled on--. I mean, I'm not an authority on this. They settled on Harper. During the procedure, you know, the progressive people, the Progressive Conservative people in the Maritimes and down there, they really got sucked in because what's-his-name has become Minister of Defense. He was in line for--. He could have probably taken that but--.

[0:30:10]

NP: From the perspective of farm policy, was Stephen Harper ever—before he became Prime Minister or a Member of Parliament—was he ever on the radar from a farm perspective?

AS: No, not that I'm aware of because he had no idea. He thought the Canadian Wheat Board was a grain company! Well, he didn't know it was a sales organization, you know? There were so many things that--. I wrote a lot of letters in my day to the editors, and I know a lot about this kind of stuff.

NP: I think I've read some of them because I read the *Western Producer* on a regular basis. [Laughs]

AS: Have you? Oh, really? You read some of my stuff? Well, I'll tell you, lots of people do, believe it or not. Anyway.

NP: Well. When--. We haven't even really talked about how you became a delegate. I know before we started up the tape, you said that somebody in your community approached you and asked you to become a delegate. How did you feel about it when you first were approached?

AS: Well, I went to the--. The Wheat Pool used to be big in 4H, so I was involved in that. I mean, I was on the local committee at a little elevator, and so I don't know. I guess there was about a whole carload of them come to one meeting. Well, I said, "I'll give it a try." That's where I ended up.

NP: That was your first mistake. [Laughs]

AS: That was my first mistake, yeah.

NP: So when you first got into the board, the Wheat Pool board, what did you learn about the whole operation and grain farming in general that you weren't aware of as an individual farmer working his land in Moss-something?

AS: Well, the first thing, I come to the conclusion that farmers really don't know what goes on. You know, they dump the grain down the chute, and it's gone. I became more aware of that when I got on the advisory committee to the Canadian Wheat Board. To know that we, at that time, sold to about 70-some countries for goodness sakes! And I done some lecturing at the Grain Institute in Winnipeg on farmers, what they do, how they store the grain, and all this kind of thing when the Russian delegation used to come

over there. I know they were there once. They give me a whole big one of those Russian loaves of bread. It was very interesting to me.

NP: Were you amazed?

AS: Huh?

NP: Were you amazed at just how big the industry was?

AS: I really was. You know, it always bothered me that the average farmer couldn't see that. I was the guy that sort of told the Board to get the hell out in the country more than you've been doing. That was in McNamara's days, when McNamara was chief commissioner. The next guy, they seemed to be afraid to go out and talk to farmers, believe it or not, because there was this other element that was always on their back. They thought they could do it better, you know? They didn't know how, but they thought they could do it better. But I was probably instrumental in getting the Wheat Board and the Grain Commission to go to AgriVision, this big farm show that was in Regina here. They just never used to do that. I said, "What's the matter with you guys?"

NP: Yeah. You're working for the farmers; wouldn't you like to know some? [Laughs]

AS: You know, it changed a hell of a lot since they started to do that, but by that time, there was a lot of that old I-can-do-it-better type of a thing. Another thing, you know, when rapeseed come along--. Like, in the early days, rapeseed was just kind of a--. Some in the Red River Valley in northern Saskatchewan could grow it because it seemed to thrive in their climate better, but it was a crop that they just sold as a cash crop. Just through the thresher, they could sell it right away, you know? That was a big, I guess--. One of the reasons that farmers say, "Well, jeez, that was good that rapeseed," but it was just a small crop. Then, believe it or not, the Board kind of had a quota system that would allow those people to sell their specialty crop—peas were really nonexistent—sell their rapeseed and still, sorry, sell on their wheat acres. It was totally unfair. But anyway, that's--.

[0:36:09]

NP: But there was always an underlying resistance to centralized marketing.

AS: Yes, there was. Yeah.

NP: Now, tell me a little bit about when you got onto the Wheat Board advisory committee. How does that come about? Is it automatically somebody from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool board went to the advisory committee?

AS: No.

NP: So how did you get on the Wheat Board committee?

AS: Well, I had to be elected from my own district. Everybody that was on the advisory committee was from a certain district they represented. Your obligation was to bring to the Board what was going on in that area as far as the crops, the quality of the crops, and that type of thing. Then we in turn would have meetings in those areas to tell the farmers that you represented what was going on as far as sales was concerned and that kind of a thing.

NP: Quotas and--.

AS: Yeah, yeah.

NP: So you were on the advisory panel and the Wheat Pool board at the same time?

AS: Yes, I was.

NP: And was that quite usual that there was a lot of sort of cross-pollination?

AS: Not really, but Turner was on it for a time being two at the same time I was. It was done legitimately. I was elected from the area. It wasn't from the Wheat Pool at all. They elected me, my peers in my own district. So there was nothing illegal about it at all. I guess then there was a big--. What do they call it? A steer--.

NP: Steering committee?

AS: Steer committee. The Board set up a hearin-type of an organization. I think it was a guy by the name of Steer that was heading it up, just where are they going to go on this kind of thing.

NP: On what kind of thing?

AS: On the structure of the board and what they're going to do.

NP: Oh, before they changed the legislation.

AS: Before they changed. Well, I was then a chairman, and so we never discussed it at the advisory committee, but I told the guys that I was asked to go and appear before this group. I said, "We haven't discussed this, but I'll tell you right now what I'm going to propose, that the Wheat Board become a board of directors instead of an appointed group from the government, if you understand." I drew up sort of a plan, an organization plan, this type of thing, and I guess the board got wind of this, and they weren't all that happy about that. The proposal was to change from an advisory committee board to a board of directors that had the authority to manage the Canadian Wheat Board. I even had instead of having any government representation at all, I said we should have one from the government because there's financing involved, and the rest should be all farmers and elected. I even submitted that to Goodale, Ralph Goodale, at the time, but he didn't seem to go for that, and he seemed to put--. There was two or three government people then, which I think was a big mistake that we had. I know that there had to be some because they were getting special interest rates on their borrowing, and they were involved pretty deeply with finances, you know.

[0:40:58]

NP: From your experience, the people who were appointed by the government--. Political appointments sometimes get a bad name.

AS: Yeah.

NP: You know, people appointed that don't have the abilities. From your experience in working with the Wheat Board, were the political appointments able to do the job? As you were saying, they have to keep track of the money and so on because there was some--.

AS: Well, they did, and they didn't. You know, I guess I think one person that was deeply involved in finance would be the thing that should have happened instead of maybe a couple of others.

NP: Who were some of the memorable board members that were there when you were part of the advisory committee? You can talk about the good ones and the bad ones, [laughs] but if you just want to give some recognition to the good ones.

AS: There was one fellow from southern Alberta, and he didn't really have much of a farm, but he was promoted by a group of those people in southern Alberta, and that's where he ended up. But it was pathetic, the lack of knowledge that he had. Of course,

he would feed everything back to this group in southern Alberta, which were pretty redneck guys, you know? A lot of them were not true, by any means, but you never knew what the hell was going on.

NP: Misinterpretation? Who knows.

AS: Yeah.

NP: For the most part were the political appointees acceptable?

AS: Yes, they were. Yes. Yeah. Yes, they were. There was a fellow by the name of--. He was through the RMs. What the heck was his name? Was it Murphy or something? I'm not too sure, but anyway. But they weren't all bad, but the funny part of it was, except one or two, once they got into the board room and their feet under the desk and see what was going on and the legitimacy of it and the scope of it and what was--. They had a change of heart, you know? It was unreal to see it happen. They didn't want to admit it, but they--. But there was a couple that just would never accept it, up from northern Alberta and that. I just forget names. They just wouldn't accept it. You know, as much as it was legitimately audited and all the rest of it, it was just a sort of an underlying belief that there was something screwy going on.

NP: Were those people large farmers, large grain farmers?

AS: Yeah, one or two that I remember. Yeah.

NP: It's sort of hard to keep your responsibilities with the Wheat Pool separate from the Wheat Board because there's so much overlap, but let's go back to your work with the Wheat Pool. For the years that you were there, what were the biggest challenges that the Pool had to face?

[0:44:59]

AS: Well, you know, we started out when I first become a--. We had a small elevator in about every small town, and they were getting kind of dilapidated and rundown. Even farm trucks at that time were maybe getting a little bit bigger. They weren't like they are now, but they were bigger, and they wouldn't even hardly take the scales in most elevators. So we had to do something. We had a--. It was about the same time that this fellow from Saskatoon was appointed. He was a lawyer. I forget his name. I forget a lot of things. To do an evaluation of the rail system and the whole grain handling system, which included the trackage and--.

NP: Was that the Hall Commission?

AS: Hall, that was the guy. The Hall Commission. Yeah. Believe it or not, the Wheat Pool went into that big time, and we said, “Look. We’ve got to do something. We’ve got to do--.” That’s when we come up with a system that--. We still knew damn well that farmers wanted to deliver with their own truck and be next to the guy that buys the grain. They know that they only had a truck—maybe a two-ton truck, three-ton truck at most—but they wanted to be there, and they wanted to talk to the guy. So, I’ll tell you. I think we lost, in the little district that I represented—as far as the Wheat Pool is concerned—there was five elevators that just disappeared. So that’s how massive it was.

Then we arrived at allowing an elevator—called it a high throughput elevator—so that no farmer would have to deliver more than 20 miles to it. At the same time, the railroad said, “Look, if you put in another length on your car spots to I think it was--.” I’m not too sure. “But increase your trackage so that we can send a train down one line and drop, it was about 14-12 cars in every railway, and then we’ll pick them up on the way back.” We got, I think, about $1 a tonne freight advantage, which lasted about one year. But it was something. It was an incentive. It’s not cheap to put the new trackage in along that kind of thing.

NP: I was wondering about Mossbank. That’s what I was checking, where the small community where your farm was. That must have been really--. [Telephone rings] **[Audio pauses]** That must have been a time of turmoil, having to decide which communities kept their--.

AS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was. Oh, yeah. I know all about it because, you know, just like you cut the--. They depended on that elevator and the agent for so many things, you know? To all of a sudden say--. It wasn’t a pleasant time. But I tell you, I took a lot of lumps over it, but it had to be done, you see?

NP: Did any communities become particularly active in lobbying the Wheat Pool?

AS: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, they did. Farmers said, “It’s a farmer’s organization.” What can you do? You don’t want to get tied up in some litigation with your own members, you know? The same happened with non-board grains when rapeseed and some of these started to come in. We started to do a lot of business in these off-board grain, but it was a matter of farmers signing a contract so that we in turn can use that contract in the sale. Well, you know, that’s all right, but if a farmer doesn’t want to honour his contract, what do you do? You take him to court? You couldn’t do that. [Laughs] So we come to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that we just couldn’t tolerate that, going to litigation with some of your own members. Probably you’d hear about it all over the world, eh?

[0:50:34]

NP: Yes.

AS: So that's why we kind of even backed out of doing business in non-boards, rightly or wrongly.

NP: Hm.

AS: I don't know. I remember talking about it. We talked about that, and we all come to the conclusion that we tried desperately to ask farmers if they wanted to sell their rapeseed and that stuff through the Board, but the ones that had the sort of dual advantage, they didn't want no part of that. Of course, that makes sense. So we just dropped that.

NP: Did you see a decline in members as a result of the, let's use the term the *rationalizatio*n of the elevators? Did people just get so upset that they asked for their membership back?

AS: No, not really.

NP: No?

AS: I guess about the same time, these inland terminals—like the Weyburn thing—come on the scene, and they done everything they possibly could to get their business like everybody thinks they should. I think, damn it, even the railroads would give them some special shipping privileges, cars and that. So there was a lot of farmers that maybe they were Pool members too that started to deliver to the Weyburn type of an elevator.

NP: More convenient?

AS: Pardon me?

NP: More convenient for them?

AS: Yeah. Well, you know, then about the same time, trucks were getting bigger, and they were getting semi-trailers on the road. I guess everybody knew there was going to be hell with the roads, but that didn't seem to matter. Then farmers were getting bigger and all the same.

NP: Yeah. A lot of changes over the time of your--.

AS: Yeah, there was.

NP: And even faster after you retired from the--. Now, I noticed in reading that little grain politician article that you were involved in the Canadian Grain Commission's [CGC]--. Now which committee was that? I think it was in the standards.

AS: Well, the Standards Committee.

NP: Yeah. So tell me a bit about that because I don't think we've interviewed anyone who's had that experience.

AS: Well, the Standards Committee, the Grain Commission, every fall they would get a representative sample of grain from a whole area of the province, and this Standards Committee would meet in Winnipeg, and the Grain Commission would show us all these samples and what they weighed and what they graded them. What they--. We were, I guess, instructed to set what we thought was the proper grade on all these. It was an interesting experience, and it's something that the average farmer wouldn't know what was going on. But it's a legitimate and it's a very—what should we say?—good way to tell the international grain companies or companies or--.

NP: Customers?

AS: Customers. We're the only country that buys grain sight unseen by the standards, you know? Dockage and all the rest. I used to go to the durum growers' meeting down in the States, in Minot and Bismarck. They would have kind of a gettogether. All of the politicians would be there. The farmers were giving the--. And the pasta and semolina people were up from New York state and all over. They were there too listening, and they were given them hell for, "Why don't we buy more durum from the farmers in North Dakota?" Finally, I guess they could take it no longer, and one guy got up. He was a semolina miller in New York state, and he said, "Gentlemen, I'll tell you the way it is. To get what we want, we have to go to every elevator in North Dakota to take a sample to know what the hell it is before we can take it back." He says, "That's the way of life." And he said, "If I order a cargo of durum from the Canadian Wheat Board, I know what it says on the specs." He says, "It comes into my mill." He says, "I don't even have to clean it half the time." Those guys sat there, you know. It was quite a shock to them.

[0:55:56]

NP: To have somebody from their own country saying that.

AS: Yes, it is. That's the quality we had in the world. I used to give some talks to, well, the Japanese were there, the Russians were there, of how farmers how they store their grain and how they spray their grain and all this kind of thing. It was very interesting to them. Anyway.

NP: Did you ever, as a farmer, were you growing wheat?

AS: Oh, yeah.

NP: Did you ever have a dispute with the Canadian Grain Commission on--?

AS: On grade?

NP: On grade?

AS: No, I never did.

NP: No? Did you just accept it on faith, or you knew enough about grades too that you knew it was fair?

AS: I knew enough about it. I knew pretty well what I had. It was either the [No.] 1 or [No.] 2 Red or spring wheat or durum. Then when protein grading come in, there's another thing. Even amongst the Wheat Pool delegates in our convention, when they started talking about protein grading, there again there's a big split between the people in southern Saskatchewan and the people in northern Saskatchewan. The people in southern Saskatchewan grow probably 90 percent higher protein grain than the people in the north.

NP: Based on conditions?

AS: Based on conditions, yeah. Weather conditions and all the rest of it. It wasn't a topic that they wanted to talk about because they knew damn well they were getting shafted. Some of their grain was going into the whole system, and it comes from all over, and it was mixed with the high protein from the south, and the drying on top of it. All that grain in the south was generally threshed at, oh, 12, 10, 11 percent. They knew damn well that--. And that's the way the system had to work. It would come from all over. I knew it had to work like that, but I also knew that the returns should be distributed a little bit evener, but that didn't go with certain people either, you see. So you could see how the division in geographical divisions has a big bearing on this type of thing.

But anyway, I guess I was on the Wheat Board advisory committee when they said, “Look, how do you feel if we finance to put protein testers in every elevator or close to every elevator?” Well, I said, “It would suit me just fine because a lot of my wheat goes in there year after year at the protein level that is probably up at 14, 15. It just goes in the mix.” I says, “I know why, too.” But I said, “If you can do that and get away with it, I think that will be the best thing that ever happened.” And I said, “On top of that, I think we should start taking a look at the moisture content as well because I know damn well some of the people in the south that thresh grain and it’s so dry, believe it or not, I’ve seen them. They add moisture as it goes into the elevator, as it gets into the truck.

[1:00:01]

NP: Just to improve the weight?

AS: Just to improve the weight–so damn dry grain in the first place. No, that’s a fact. I used to tell that to the guys in the north. I said, “Well, I can tell you the stories, and I think I’ve seen one of my neighbours do it, believe it or not.” I says, “It’s sure not the way to do it, but that’s what was being done. So the sooner we start to look at even moisture as well as protein, the better it’s going to be for everybody,” because I know the Board had to do that protein testing in Vancouver as it was being shipped out. Japan always bought No. 1 14.5. That was their standard order, year in and year out, with no questions asked because they knew damn well that’s what they were going to get. Yeah. [Laughs] You know, people don’t realize the sophistication and the quality this country’s got. To lose this, you know, the CW, the Canadian Western, that’s we’re known world over.

The Wheat Board had a big deal with Warburton’s, a big miller in the UK, and for a certain kind of wheat. It had to be a certain grade and certain protein, and at the farm, we grew that stuff for Warburton’s, sold through the Board for about four or five years. And they wanted it right now. We had a little bit of a premium for delivering, and a little bit of recognition because it had to get there at a certain time to meet Warburton’s specifications because they were milling this. And they were advertising in the UK, “Milled from Canadian CW wheat.” That’s when the Board was involved in this branding. Now, I don’t know what’s going on, but it’s a damn shame it’s going where it is.

You know, when I was in Japan, I was there with the delegation from the co-op elevators in the United States. They asked if somebody wanted to come from Canada, so I was fingered to go, and we went to Japan. I knew that we had an—XCAN with the Pools—we had a representative in Japan, a guy by the name—Japanese guy—Eddy Yamamoto. So I got word to him that this delegation was coming and to get all the large co-ops in Japan together because we wanted to talk to them. He did. Like, there was--. Oh, what the--? I forget all these Japanese co-ops. But anyway, now, you wouldn’t believe this. The co-op representative from Canada--. What’s his name? He wasn’t very much a cooperator, but he was the guy that was going to head this delegation. He was

from southern Manitoba there. He was a very prominent Conservative at that time. Anyway, all these big guys—president, vice president, all that—from all these Japanese cooperatives, they met in this big--. You know what? He wasn't even there, so I had to carry the ball, of course. I said, "He's obviously got hung up," or made some damn fool excuse, but it was so embarrassing. It really was. But what do you do? What was his name?

NP: Hm. I don't know.

[Audio pauses]

AS: *[inaudible]*

NP: Would you like this on?

AS: Yeah, put it on. So many times that I asked this assistant, the guy that was working for him, I said, "For God's sakes, Charlie Mayer, you know you're supposed to be responsible for the cooperatives and the Canadian Wheat Board? When would you show up? Just show up. You don't have to stay long but show up. Show the flag." He never did. Never. Now that's a fact.

[1:05:03]

NP: Do you feel, in having spoken to him, that it was a question of he didn't believe in cooperatives, or he just--?

AS: I think it was a no-no from the higher up. I'm convinced of it now when I see all this other stuff going on. All the directions come from the top. But you know, there's another thing. We went from there, and we went to China. So when I got into China, we were out in the boonies, and we had all the–. Eat with the *[inaudible*] and all, but I said I wanted to go to a discharge elevator to see them unload grain. And so, this China travel girl, she finally come to me, and she said, "I got something lined up for you." So I went with her, and we drove--. I don't know where we went. Oh, I couldn't even tell you where she went, but we got to the waterfront, and I went and got to an elevator. I could recognize this as a discharge elevator. So I said, "I'd sure like to talk to the manager if you can arrange it." And she did. We went up on the very top of the elevator, and there was this guy. He had a Mao hat on, and I've still got it. I had a Wheat Board hat. And first of all, I said, "I'll trade. I'll give you that, you give me--." And that poor man, he looked around, he looked around. He had a hell of a time, and he finally handed his cap over. Big thing with Chairman Mao right there. And I gave him my Wheat Board hat.

Then he started showing me. He said they were discharging. He said, “That’s Canadian wheat.” He told it to the girl. He reached to the spout with his hand. He said, “Canadian wheat. Good.” And you know, they were just buying [No.] 3 Red because they were buying for price, but it was filling stomachs, you see? That’s all they were buying. But there were two American guys that were with me. They wanted to go along with this. So this Chinese guy from up on the top of that elevator, he went over to another chute, took his hand. I don’t know what other kind of wheat it was, whether it was US wheat or what. He said, “Not so good.” That’s a fact. Isn’t that something? Doesn’t that tell you something?

NP: Doesn’t that warm your heart?

AS: It does, really, you know? I was almost embarrassed because these two American guys who were good guys were with me. But what do you do? I didn’t set a--. **[Audio pauses]** Very historic time when I was there.

NP: Okay. Hold it. Let’s say that again.

AS: I said when I was in China, it was a very historic time. The reason was that the people that were shipped out to the boonies—all the intellectuals and the professors from the university—they were sent way out to pick grain. I don’t know what they were going. But the deal was to equalize them, to cut them down to size, you know? They were just coming back into--. When we got into Shanghai, you know, at the hotel, there was a whole crowd--. I’m having trouble with my speech. They were all these young people there, and there was one guy up on a platform talking something. I don’t know what he was saying. Then all of a sudden, somebody tapped me–I wanted to see what was going on–tapped me on the shoulder, and he said, “Can I talk with you?” He said, “I want to talk English with you.” He had a--. Oh, thank--.

[Audio pauses]

NP: So you were saying that somebody came and tapped you on the shoulder.

AS: Yeah. And he said, “Can I talk with you?” He had a little book, you know, that they all carry. So he was talking and trying to talk English and Chinese. So I said, “What’s all that demonstration?” So he told me what was going on, and these people, they call them the Lost Generation. They didn’t know what to do. They were come back way out from inner China, and they didn’t know whether to go back to school or what in the heck to do. They were kind of almost demonstrating. It wasn’t a violent type of thing, but they were just demonstrating.

[1:10:49]

NP: So one of the people I interviewed—now, it might have been Doug Livingstone—and he talked about Mr. Yamamoto and the million-dollar golf club membership.

AS: Yeah. Yes. [Laughing] Oh, yeah.

NP: That must have raised a few eyebrows amongst the farmers.

AS: Yes. Yeah. Well, it did, but that's what you had to do. That's where you had to do your business. [Laughs]

NP: So what other countries did you travel to as a--?

AS: Well, I was in India. The thing was kind of winding down. Although we didn't have many connections in India--. Oh, yeah. Well, we did in the cooperative section. The cooperatives in Canada, they were financing a creamery up in the north, and now it's not Indian. It's more Pakistan, right up in there. I forget the name of it. Omnibad, or something. So all these peasants had a buffalo, and they would milk the buffalo in a little brass container and take it in, and they would weigh it, and they would either get baby food—special baby food for the babies—or they could get cash. At night when we were there, there was a whole line of those poor people bringing this little brass container of buffalo milk. Yeah.

NP: You mentioned that you visited the terminal elevator in China. We have a special interest in terminal elevators, being a group based mostly in Thunder Bay. Was that elevator pretty much like an elevator you'd see here, like a terminal elevator that you'd see here?

AS: Yeah. It had a leg up, and it wasn't really high, but it went up there. It was taken right off of the boat, and they were filling bags. The guys would put bags on their backs, and they would dump it on another little boat that went up the Yangtze River to way up there. That's where the guy from the Wheat Board got killed, on that very same run. Was it Smith?

NP: I have not heard this story.

AS: Yeah. Yeah. He was appointed to the Board as a commissioner at that time. They were still called commissioners. That's another thing. I said, "Get rid of that damn--. Nobody knows what the hell it is. Call him a board member, an executive board member. Whatever." But they would put these bags and dump it on these smaller boats and take it way up the river to somewhere.

NP: And what happened to this board member? How did he get killed?

AS: Well, the Chinese, they were--. The China Oil Food and Cereal were very, very supportive of the Wheat Board, and they would take maybe one guy--. Or one Board would give one guy the total jurisdiction of that particular country, and it was Smith that was taking in there. They thought so much of this Smith guy that they took him up there in a kind of a special trip, and the boat hits a dock, apparently, and he fell over and hit his head. You know, they travelled right back with his casket, and a man from China Oil Food and Cereal to his funeral in Winnipeg. I was at his funeral, but that's what they did. That's the rapport that we had with China at that time.

[1:15:35]

NP: Did you have any involvement with the Russian sales?

AS: No.

NP: Was that before your time?

AS: Oh, no. I was there, yeah. Oh, yeah. [Laughs] Well, it was still the advisory committee. I would do my little presentation of farmers—what they do and how they treat their grain and how they store it—and they were very interested in it. I was a spray pilot. I had an airplane that I sprayed crop with, and I made damn sure that I dealt with the insecticide and pesticide thing very thoroughly so that they understood and that they weren't getting any kind of a pesticide or herbicide resistances. So I made sure that I had pictures of some of my spraying and how it was done and why it was done and what it was for. So that went over pretty good.

NP: So you said pesticide resistance. Did you mean pesticide residue?

AS: Yeah. They were very, very interested in whether we were selling them some grain that was contaminated, let's put it that way.

NP: So the Russians were concerned with that?

AS: Oh, yeah. Well, I guess they all are. Well, the durum people from Italy and the Mediterranean area used to come through here, and I took them out to my farm, and we cooked them some steaks. They wanted to see some durum fields and that kind of thing. So that was a good exercise.

NP: I understand that they were pretty particular, the Italian group.

AS: Yeah. Yes, they were. Well, it's a legislation in Italy that they could not use anything but durum wheat in their semolina. They couldn't put some red wheat in like some of them do here. It was durum. Durum. So they made damn sure that that's what they got to them. And the same as this other guy in the Mediterranean, Luigi. Luigi, he was in that--. Where was he from, Algiers, I think? Something like that. I had a couple of them guys would come through, and I'd take them out and show them durum. They even had their--. Oh, yeah. It was--.

NP: Their national dress on?

AS: Oh, yeah. You know, after, the Board wanted to take them around and show them around southern Manitoba, and they chartered a couple of buses and some farmers that they were supposed to see. There was this--. When I was doing my presentation at the International Grains Institute, I particularly watched this young guy. For some reason, I don't know, but he was always using an interpreter. You know, whatever question he asked me was through the interpreter. So when we got on the bus, I spotted this guy sitting at the other end, so I sit down right beside him. So I start pointing things out here where we were going down the road south of Winnipeg, someplace there. You know what? He answered me in English, best thing I ever heard. You know, I was kind of alerted to this before, that not all of them there from the Russian delegation, they weren't all pure Russians, or they could speak in other languages, and I sure found that out. You know, I never said a word. I just kept on talking.

[1:20:01]

NP: [Laughs] Do you think it was deliberate to let people think they couldn't speak English and then listen in to the conversations?

AS: That's what I mean. Oh, that was going on there. I knew. I was alerted to that from some of the commissioners, and they knew full well. But I didn't think anything of it until it faced me right square on there. [Laughs] Anyway, that was another--. That was quite a--. But you know, they were a customer, and they were fussy, so that's what they wanted.

NP: That's, in my mind—in talking to people and reading about the Canadian product—those are the customers we seek out or have that we want to--.

AS: Absolutely. It's really starting to bother me what's going on, but I heard now that this Ritz you know, the Japanese, they wouldn't even ask. They would just tell the Board what they want, and they'd make an agreement for so much a year, and they would tender, I think, every week or something like that. It was just they knew the Board knew what they wanted, and they kind of

made damn sure that they had it for them and this type of thing. You know, they can't store up grain there. They've got to almost take it off the boat and put it in because they tie up money and they tie up everything else. That's the respect that--. And not only that, at that time when the Board was in charge of the shipping, if they didn't have enough of [No.] 1 Red, for instance, at 13.5 or whatever, they could go to this elevator and take some of what they wanted. They could go to another one in Vancouver and go to another one.

They can't do that now or couldn't. I don't know what kind of arrangements they're going to make now, but they're in damn trouble, I know that, because the Japanese phoned over, I guess, and Ritz got—that's not public—but excited to take somebody. He took some guy from eastern Canada, someone that didn't know a damn thing about CW, and he took him over to Japan, said, "Oh, yeah. You're going to get the same kind that you got from the Board and all the rest." From what I heard now, whether they changed now, they're having a hell of a time if they got from the Richardson Elevator or they got it from Viterra or whatever to give it up. They didn't have this--. Which if we've lost that, that's a hell of a--. That's a serious thing.

NP: Some of the people that we interviewed as part of the project were with what used to be the Lake Shippers Clearance Association and then became the Ports Clearance, Canada Ports Clearance Association [CPCA], and that was one of the things I wondered because in Thunder Bay, in interviewing a lot of the managers—not this generation of managers, but the previous generation of managers—almost without exception, they talked about the cooperation between one elevator and another. If you had difficulty filling the order, well, they'd just call up so-and-so and they'd--. But my understanding, in line with what you're saying, is also that that cooperation just isn't there any longer, that competition is the order of the day.

AS: Yeah. It is you say still?

NP: Yeah. Competition, not cooperation.

AS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I know that for a fact. I get a little pipeline here and there once and a while, some of these things. Yeah, it's, well, I don't know, you know? There's so many things that we've lost.

NP: Well, I'd like to come back and--. Well, maybe we'll talk about it now, and we'll end on a more upbeat note. The Canadian Wheat Board, let's deal with it first. Could anything have been done differently to have had it continue as it was going, or was it just a question of time?

AS: Well, it could have been a vote, like it was in legislation. If there would have been a producer vote--. And the chairman that was on there, way after I left, and he made that statement pretty clear, "I will abide by whatever the farmers say in a vote that's in

legislation." But this Ritz almost laughed at him, you know? Embarrassed him. That's what we could have done. It could have been done.

[1:25:48]

NP: Do you get a sense that so much has changed in the way farming is done now—you know, you referred to bigger equipment, bigger elevators, bigger farms—because of those changes, how do you feel the current crop of farmers will adjust or come out of this change from Wheat Board marketing to independent marketing?

AS: I don't know, but it's probably one of the most lucrative periods in grain prices that's ever happened.

NP: Now?

AS: Huh? Now. If it hadn't happened with this time, if the timing would have been different, I think it would have been a different ballgame. You know, from what I hear now in the country, some of the bigger farmers, they're really kind of putting pressure on it. The old quota system, farmers, they knew that they had a chance at a certain share of the market, whatever that be. But that's gone. I think from what I hear now, there's some fighting amongst the grain companies in offering the bigger farmer a bigger chunk of the available market. Then because prices are so lucrative now, they can get away with it.

NP: What impact does that have on smaller farmers?

AS: Well, that's a good question. I think a lot of them just say, "Go. Take it. We're done." [Laughs] And land prices are good too, so you know, they can get out, I guess. So I don't know. But I guess, you know, the reputation that this country--. And you know, what I hear now, they're starting to just say this CW grain, Canadian Western, that's known all over the world. They all know it, Canadian Western. They think now there's a move going on to just abolish that so that wheat is wheat, so that a ship or somebody that's shipping, they can just throw Canadian grain into a cargo of US grain or whatever the hell, and it's just grain. Well, you know, if we lose that, we're losing a big thing that we've spent years developing.

NP: That point that you make is something that has been topical in the press, the *Western Producer* and the *Manitoba Cooperator*. Am I correct in assuming that the argument on the other side is that any premium that we might have gotten for high protein, good quality, can be made up for by extra production? Like, better production per acre.

AS: Yeah. Well, in some of the other wheats—like the winter wheats and that—well--. But you know, now there's a, from what I read, the corn in the United States, a lot of it went into the ethanol, but now, I think, there's a big change going on again. We thought here that the ethanol was going to be the thing for wheat and all the rest, but I don't know whether it is or not.

[1:30:31]

NP: Whether ethanol is going to be the market that it was?

AS: Yeah, yeah.

NP: Let's talk about the demise of the Wheat Pools.

AS: Yeah.

NP: And why you think it happened, and what impact there will be. And tied into that—although I might ask it again if we get into one area—the increased concentration of grain companies. So farmers don't have as many choices as they used to have, and what impact you see that having. So let's go back to the Wheat Pool and how it played out that they were a major player across the Prairies and, all of a sudden, were gone.

AS: That's a good question. Well, you know, it started with we had a CEO, a guy by the name of Milt Fair. A very, very capable--. Really, he was admired by every grain company, Pool or non-Pool, in western Canada because of his knowledge and competency, his whatever. Unfortunately, he got sick and passed away. Then they started hiring. They hired another guy that--. Well, Milt Fair and I were very good, very close friends. He brought this fellow from--. He was a marketing man from the flour mills in Saskatoon. He was a good marketing man, so Milt's objective was to bring one or two of these guys in from Winnipeg and Saskatoon and get them to take a look at the parent company and see what's going on there, you know? So in case somewhere down the road it had to be--.

But this guy that they brought in from Saskatoon, number one, he was a marketing man. Milt told me this after the thing kind of blew up. He said, "I should have never done it. I should have--." He was strictly in marketing. He was a good marketing man, but that's as far as it went. As far as a member of a cooperative, he didn't have an idea. He didn't have a co-op bone in his body. And then he started hiring some of these--. And so, that was that, but then they got into--. I don't know what the hell they thought they were doing. They were on kind of a buying binge and this over in Poland and down in Mexico. I don't know what they were thinking about, but that was after I left. So I don't know what the hell--. Then--.

NP: But you were a farmer at the time still.

AS: Yeah.

NP: And so what were they telling you they were doing because would you have not kept sort of in tune with what your delegate was up to?

AS: Well, yeah, but when I was with the Board there, the board set the policy, the general direction that the chief executive officer took and the financial man, and said, "That's the direction we want to go." If there was any dispute or anything, if he thought otherwise, he would come back to the board, and the same with the financial guy. But then, all of a sudden, they were going to sell shares like UGG [United Grain Growers]. Well, they started these big building programs. It was too ambitious, number one. I mean, they could have started it a little bit more, and they bought all of these elevators and poured a lot of cement, expensive cement. [Laughs] It's like a new or different world. Well, it was just a small grain company is all they were. They had no business in an elevator in Mexico or Poland or whatever the hell it was.

[1:35:25]

NP: Maybe both places from what I hear.

AS: Maybe both places, yes.

NP: Was all of this occurring around the same time as everybody got pretty big for their britches, before there was the whole collapse, what, 2008? Can't remember when the--.

AS: Well, I think maybe someone thought that the Pool was way behind because of the Weyburn terminal, and some of the other companies were building large elevators on main lines that knew damn well that track wasn't going to be pulled off from out of them and this kind of a thing. Maybe the wheat was a little slow in moving that direction, although they started in a very modest way before, little smaller ones in--. So I don't know.

NP: I interviewed Stewart Wells, a member of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the National Farmers Union, and then I interviewed other people who were on the Board at or around the time Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was starting to expand. It struck me as being a really tough time to manage a company, because you have the pull from the people who still had a feeling for cooperatives, that it

was more than just getting good prices for the farmers. You were members of the community. Then the other side, which was, “We have to get bigger in order to compete on the international market and with the other grain companies that were doing the same thing.” So it must have been very hard to pick that centre line.

AS: Yeah. It probably was. It probably was. But you know, sometimes you have to make a stand. I know when we went through that first major, that Hall Commission--. Oh, boy. I’m telling you. They were on my back, little elevators here, and all you can do is stand up and hold your ground. Say, “Look, boys. You know damn well your trucks are getting bigger and you can’t even drive into that elevator. You’ll fall through it!” And that stuff. So you’ve got to stand up, I guess.

NP: Yeah. And take a stand, and sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn’t.

AS: Yeah. And this Crow Rate thing was another thing, you know. But you know the Farmers Union was just, “Keep the Crow. Keep the Crow.” Well, you know, in the Wheat Pool, we seen all that, and the markets were shipping from out that way to the Pacific. There were big tie ups in there. Well, thank God the government financed some of the building through the mountains and that kind of thing. But boy, they were under a lot of pressure to service. There was Chinese vessels sitting there. they’re was Japanese vessels. And Charlie Gibbings was on the Wheat Board at the time, and he made a special trip over there to try to keep them a little bit down, try to explain to them what they were faced with. About that time, the Wheat Pool said, “Look--.” to everybody, “Look, we were prepared to pay a little bit more for shipping grain if we get the certain service.” Of course, the Farmers Union guys, they just thought that was a big sin. We really broke down. And God, they called a big meeting up at Riverhurst, and of course, that was in my district. I knew some of the guys that were scared to go.

[1:40:06]

I went because--. So I went there, and they had a guy spokesman there that made the big--. “The Pool, they sold it out, and they’re going to pay more. Our Crow Rate is more.” So I sat there until it was my turn. I said, “Look, gentlemen.” I told them what we did. We said--. Well, first of all, I said, “There’s boats sitting over there in Vancouver. There’s Japanese boats. Gibbings went there to try to--. And we couldn’t service the damn market.” It was the quotas were– They couldn’t haul them to the elevators because they couldn’t ship it out. I said, “Look, this is what we did. If we repair a little bit more, there’s no numbers on it, but in turn, we got some better service. I tell you, you guys would be on my tail right now and will be from now on if you can’t even haul grain to your elevator because they can’t ship it out and the Board can’t service markets.” And you know, I settled them down right there. I said, “That’s--. Then you’d be on my back, and you’d be on the Wheat Pool’s back to do something. What can you do?” Well, I said, “Gentlemen, the Wheat Pool is a pretty influential organization, but it’s not government.” It’s as simple as that.

NP: Did the farmers get the better service?

AS: Yeah. Oh, I'll never forget that. I think they were going to crucify me right in that hall, but I just let them have their say and said, "That's the way it is."

NP: You're a brave man.

AS: Huh?

NP: You're a brave man.

AS: Oh, no. I'm management. You've got to stand up and tell it like it is, eh?

NP: Is there anything that you wish, in retrospect, that you had done differently, decided differently? Because with the advantage of hindsight, I mean--.

AS: Well, you know, my relationship with the other two Pools and their vice-presidents and that was very good. Although when we would talk, they wouldn't say too much because we were the big dogs, of course, and I didn't promote that. I tried to play the--.

NP: The nice dog. [Laughs]

AS: Yeah, the nice dog.

NP: Deputy dog. Deputy dog.

AS: But on top of that, one of the Alberta presidents after the one that died--. Well, there was two. One of the guys was from--. What the hell was his name? From northern Alberta. He told me, he says, "You know, I know how you feel about amalgamation." But he says, "I'll tell you something. The Alberta government had told the Alberta Wheat Pool pretty clearly if there was any talk of amalgamation, if the office isn't in Calgary, Alberta, forget it. You're going to get no sympathy or support from the Alberta government, period." Did you know that?

NP: And yet I've heard the story that the decision at the end, which was beyond your time—after your time—after Alberta and Manitoba had amalgamated– and the office was in Winnipeg, not in Alberta–that that deal, the Saskatchewan and--. Manitoba and

Alberta joined, and Saskatchewan decided not to, that the issue there was Saskatchewan wanting the head office in Regina and not willing to compromise.

AS: Well, I didn't--. I heard that Alberta and Manitoba made that decision in isolation between them.

NP: I think after they didn't get the successful three-way, yeah.

AS: Yeah, well, you know.

[1:45:02]

NP: But regardless, I'm getting very interesting stories as I go over the Prairie provinces. Do you know Murray Fulton?

AS: Yeah.

NP: Yeah. He's actually said he's written on what's happened, so I'll have to get a hold of some of what he's written.

AS: Yeah.

NP: But we were talking about—Murray and I—were talking about one possibility, and I'd like your comment on it. As farms got bigger, the business of farming became far more complicated, and if you look at the early cooperatives, and you think of yourself, how much time you put into being a delegate—running the meetings, representing your community, doing the work on the Board—all of the time that that system required from farmers, and did it get to the stage where the modern day farmers, who didn't have the tie back to the Depression, which you had through your father, did they decide that they no longer wanted to spend the time that was necessary to keep that kind of operation?

AS: That could be, you know. But when the Pool decided to go on the market, stock market, and the--. Well, we had big earnings and had big handlings, and the financial statement was always very good. So the delegation went to Toronto, and I understand maybe even to New York, telling this story. Of course, everybody jumped on the bandwagon, you know, big time. They drove it up to some $20. The only ones that didn't go on the bandwagon were the poor guys who were farmers. Now, a lot of them come to me and say, "Now, what the hell? It's my organization. I didn't bail out at $20. I still have mine at $12." So what do you do? It was the speculators that pulled the pin, you know? When the shares got up there, like anybody should, they bailed out. They made all kinds of money if they bought at $12.

NP: What's your take on the amount of money that farmers lost as a result of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool going public?

AS: Bloody. That's right. Well, you know, I know quite a few of them that come to me and said there's no--. They said, "Look, we hung in there. We owned it." And when you own something, you've got to have money. You can't own anything and not have any money in the damn thing, whether it's a house or car or whatever the hell it is. And boy, I had my share of people that had--. Anyway.

NP: Similar to the Wheat Board situation, then, too, is the lawsuit still going forward saying that farmers are owed a certain amount of money tied up in the Wheat Board?

AS: Well, I think so. I talked to Stewart, and I think he said that it's still there, but I don't know. Didn't the Supreme Court sort of didn't want to hear it or something?

NP: I think that was a different one.

AS: A different one.

NP: That might have been--. I think that one was the one about whether or not the government broke the law in not having a farmer plebiscite.

AS: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Yeah. But you know, it goes right back to--. Well, if you read the National Citizens Coalition and their aims and objectives--. You know, I didn't know what all that was, so one day I read it up on my computer, and the whole thing was there. Low tax. Their program is low taxes, less government, and at the very end was a picture of a yellow combine, "Get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board." So that's where it all started.

[1:50:17]

NP: Mmhmm.

AS: And the guy didn't even know. He didn't even know it was a sales--. He thought it was a company for Christ's sake.

NP: Well, there's all kinds of decisions you can make if you don't have to take facts into account.

AS: Yeah, that's right.

NP: So I'm going to shift gears completely and talk about terminal elevators.

AS: Yeah.

NP: What was your first experience with a terminal elevator?

AS: Well, we used to go to Thunder Bay on their--. They had a recognition for 25-35 years, and we'd go there, and we'd go through an elevator and look at it and be part of the--. We put on a supper there for them. That's about what it was.

NP: Did you have misconceptions about terminal elevators before you became aware of what they do?

AS: Well, not really. Not really. I mean, I knew pretty well what they did. In what way though?

NP: Well, for example, this morning I was talking to Ted Turner. He said that before he had visited a terminal elevator, he thought that they were awfully pricey.

AS: Pricey?

NP: Yeah. It was costing them a lot of money and what in the world were they doing there that it was costing this much money? [Laughs] So when he went and--.

AS: Oh, I never. I mean, I know what's involved there, and you can't run an outfit like that on peanuts. All those cleaners and all, it's--. I don't know. I didn't know what the cost structure is on them, but I don't think it's cheap.

NP: I think from what I've heard from other people, they were usually money makers.

AS: Yes, they were. Yeah. Yes, they were, even for the Pool. The terminal elevator division was the money maker. I don't know how much. I forget how much it was, but--.

NP: Were there any ever issues with labour issues or things like that relative to--?

AS: I guess there was. Not seriously. They seemed to be run very smoothly. There was a big consolidation that went on there too, wasn't there?

NP: Yes. Do you remember anything about that?

AS: Not really, no.

NP: That was when Federal was taken over, and then dust control had to come in and decisions had to be made.

AS: Yeah, yeah. That's right. Yeah, maybe they went into dust control there. I don't know. But what elevator were you going about or--?

NP: That we were trying to get designated?

AS: Yeah.

NP: It was called McCabe's. Well, actually, it was the Government of Canada Elevator. You know how they had five elevators?

AS: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

NP: This was the first one built. It was built in Thunder Bay under the leadership of C. D. Howe. He was hired by the government. He hadn't started his own engineering firm yet. McCabe's, which was a private company out of the States, but eventually bought out by the Kroft family in Winnipeg, they took it over, and then United Grain Growers was the last owner before it was decommissioned. But it's now supposed to be demolished, so we were looking for a new elevator, and the new elevator that we glommed onto was called Fort William Elevator, and it was Saskatchewan Pool 10, I think.

AS: Oh, yeah.

NP: On the river.

AS: Oh, yes. Yes.

NP: Yes. Just as I left—did I tell you this?—just as I left town, a couple of days later I get a note from someone saying it's been struck by lightning, and we might be out of an elevator again. [Laughs] We're doomed!

AS: See, how is the former CEO of the Wheat Board doing down there?

NP: Adrian?

AS: Adrian, yeah.

NP: Adrian Measner?

AS: Yeah.

[Audio pauses]

NP: But--.

AS: Anyway, it's--. Yeah.

NP: Anyway.

AS: Well, I guess my big concern is that Canada built up a reputation of quality and this CW grade and sell to countries sight-unseen type of thing, and have we lost that? I don't know.

[1:55:21]

NP: Well, have we lost it is one question, and that is still to be told. Does it matter is another issue. Can we compete? Coming into that is another question I have, though, wondering if you have any comments to make. There's a few winners out of—obvious winners—out of all of these changes, and one of those being the private companies. Now, relative to size, the Canadian companies are pretty small.

AS: Well, yeah.

NP: And the two major players at this point—at least the ones that have distribution systems that aren't Canadian family companies—are Glencore and Cargill. Now, what's your sense of the loss of Canadian ownership of companies and its impact on Canadian farmers? Have you given that any thought?

AS: Well, I don't know. Maybe I'm not a good one to ask because I've got a whole list of Canadian companies that were here and are gone, like Hudson Bay, you--. Well, I've got a whole list. There was a lot of them. You know, if you were to invest in companies, there are damn few Canadian companies left. So this here guy that's supposed to be buying Viterra now, his track record is not that good either. His honest track record isn't all that good.

NP: What makes you say that?

AS: Well, I've read a lot about where he's been and about some of his dealings. Yeah. He's a big player in the US election and stuff like this.

NP: The fact that profits that used to come back to the Canadian farmer through the Pools, the fact that those profits will no longer stay here on the Prairies, do you think that makes a difference?

AS: Well, I know I've seen a lot of the--. Even though we were competitive in what we charged, when the smoke cleared, we had a pretty good financial statement. I guess maybe the big problem, we should have kept it in some form or another instead of paying--. Although, the farmers that were members and customers, they were so damn broke and prices were so low, so they really--. We had no alternative but pass a lot of their earnings back to them. So I guess maybe a lot of them never realized it because it wasn't big money, but it was money.

NP: It was steady.

AS: Yeah.

NP: And in amalgamating every farmer that got it and having that spent in the community--.

AS: Yeah, that's right.

NP: It may have not made too much difference to a farmer, but the bigger picture--. We've done a really good job answering most of these questions, but I'll just ask them in a little different way in case there's something else you wanted to add. Have you had a

chance to talk about the major challenges that you faced in your work as a farmer and as a farmer delegate on both the Wheat Pool and Canadian Wheat Board?

[2:00:14]

AS: Well, you know, one of them was when we went through this major consolidation. I took a lot of lumps in having to close small elevators, and that's understandable, but it was part of the job. It had to be done. I guess that was one. You know, I knew damn well that when we were trying to value add, like, canola crushing and flour mills, we knew damn well that by doing that, we were forfeiting a lot of capital that we had to replace on the market or something like that at high prices. That was a real--. When you had to face that, and you actually knew that you had to try to do some of that stuff.

NP: Did you get a chance to talk about the significant events, things that stand out in your mind as highlights over the years? Not necessarily the challenging--. I know you talked about your visits to other countries. That sounded to me like highlights, but anything else that--?

AS: Yeah. Well, I thought that by doing that, some of the experience I had being on the executive, and that my peers and my neighbours and all the people that elected me that didn't have that opportunity, and how could I--? And it was hard times trying to--. I took pictures to try to have programs related to it, but when you're sitting out there in the boonies, you know, and some of them smaller farmers or any farmers, you're trying to explain what happens after you dump the damn load of wheat in the elevator and all the things that--. And where it ends up and how it gets there and the reputation. I don't think they had a clue. Too bad, but that's the way it was.

NP: When you think back on your illustrious career, what are you most proud of?

AS: I'm sorry?

NP: What are you most proud of in your career?

AS: [Laughs] Well, I don't know. I guess to percolate from farmer to an executive level of a very, very influential farmer-owned company has to got to be pretty, I think--. I guess my big disappointment is it didn't go farther than I thought it was going to go, but that's the way it goes, I guess.

NP: Farther or longer?

AS: No, I mean the three Pools didn't somehow--. But after thinking about it, you know, even within that Pool, they had the delegate structure, and every delegate had a little bit of a bailiwick that he was very proud of, of course, and every board member also had a little bigger chunk. And they started thinking, you know, "You're trying to tell me to give that up?" I don't know. There was a lot of prestige in being a delegate, in being a board member, and to throw it all in one pot, maybe they didn't see the advantages that I thought I saw because it just seemed to me that three organizations, the same philosophy at the same time, the same problems--.

[2:05:07]

NP: A natural for--.

AS: It's a natural. I don't know.

NP: I asked someone—when I first heard some of the background information—I asked whether they had brought in an outside mediator to deal with it because--. And I don't think they had at that time. Do you think that might have helped?

AS: Well, you know, when I got talking with some of the cooperatives in the United States, and they gave me a book on the amalgamation of cooperatives. I brought that home, and I gave it to Milt Fair. I thought it would be a good place to start, but Milt was unfortunately not feeling all that good and, I guess, he didn't feel up to--. And maybe he wasn't the one to promote it because everybody knew damn well that he would be the ideal guy because some of the other ones, they just seemed to bomb out. The only one maybe is Murray from Man Pool, but the guys--.

NP: Murray Cormack?

AS: Yeah. I liked him. The guy from Alberta was, you know, well, I think he was under the thumb of the Alberta government big time. Yeah. So. There was--.

NP: Things going on that weren't necessarily at the board.

AS: Yeah, yeah.

NP: Yeah. Now, we are hoping, in spite of our bad luck with terminal elevators, to persuade the federal government to sponsor a Parks Canada interpretive centre telling the story of the Thunder Bay port and the grain industry. So dealing--. So that we don't step on western toes, we're not telling the farming story other than growing grains in order to satisfy international markets. So we're doing the handling, the rail transportation system, and the shipping transportation system, and terminal elevators all across Canada. So when you think about those elements related to Saskatchewan, what do you think should be featured in a centre?

AS: In an interpretive centre?

NP: Yeah. In an interpretive centre to recognize what those elements, including the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool presence—which was pretty big in Thunder Bay—on national development because it's a national story. That's why we want Parks Canada to do it.

AS: Yeah. Well, I mean, there's no question they were a must of some kind. We've just got to have them. One of the big things, when the market started to shift out of Thunder Bay to the Pacific, that was a big—in my mind—a big paradigm shift, you know? I don't think too many people realized it. I mean, I did because I talked to Chinese delegates and the Japanese, and I knew the volumes out there. Well, when the Pool built out there in Vancouver—there's another [laughs]—and we were criticized. A former Grain Commission guy by the name of--. Called it a white elephant and all that kind of stuff.

NP: This is Prince Rupert?

AS: No, no. At--.

NP: Vancouver?

AS: At Vancouver. Well, I think it was going to cost $12 million or--. I forget. Then we couldn't get so many things. We couldn't get piping from a US company because it would go, some of that line was going to go over to China, believe it or not. That's a fact. They had contract with some company in the United States to do all the spouting. After word got out that grain was going to go to communist China, they had set up a special company in Vancouver to build that spouting for that elevator, believe it or not. [Laughs]

[2:10:49]

NP: That's one I haven't heard before.

AS: Huh?

NP: That's one I haven't heard before.

AS: That's what happened. Boy, there were things at a standstill for a long time until they got somebody sorted out to build the damn thing. Yeah. And then building it on the north shore even was a struggle, you know.

NP: Why's that?

AS: Oh, people up in there were " dust and"--. Oh, everything they could think of, you know?

NP: Ruin their view, I'm sure.

AS: Yeah. But--.

NP: It's interesting that you say what you said about the story of shifting markets because it certainly tells the story of Thunder Bay.

AS: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

NP: But it also shows all of the things that have to be done in order to handle that shift. It wasn't just a question of, "Oh, well. We'll get a few more boats coming in the West Coast." There's all the infrastructure there that needed to--.

AS: That's right.

NP: Yeah. Big story.

AS: You know, right when the first flush of that Wheat Board struggle, the Board got a hold of some of their best customers, and there was a guy from Malaysia. He was a big customer of the Board's from Jakarta, I think it was, to come over and talk to the advisory committee, and I was on it at that time. We met him in a hotel in Edmonton, and he said he made a special trip over there because he heard rumours that the Board was going to go down. He said, "I'll just tell you gentlemen," he said, "when I order grain from the Canadian Wheat Board, I know when it's supposed to get it at my dock." And he said, "It's always there, and it's ready to put in my mills." He says, "I buy grain from Australia. I buy some from Argentina. I buy some from the United States. But I tell

you," he says, "I've got to have Canadian grain to put in that mix because," he says, "my mill doesn't stop night and day." I forget the guy, but it was *[inaudible]* or something.

NP: Who did he come to speak to?

AS: The Board invited him over to talk to the advisory committee about the service. We asked him a whole bunch of questions, and then he said, "Look, if the Wheat Board goes, I'm going to have to go look for another store, some place to get my grain." And he says, "I don't know whether, with the way things are and the service I'm getting now, I don't know whether I'll be able to pick that up," or something to that effect anyway. So it's--.

NP: Well, is there any comfort—is it fair to say—is there any comfort in the knowledge that no other country is doing it any better to sort of drop right in to take over where Canada ended off if the quality does change?

AS: Well, I sure haven't seen it in my--.

NP: So that's almost a good thing.

AS: Argentina, I know what they have to go through. Everything's got to come in. It's got to go right through the system, and price doesn't matter. It's got to go. And that's where the Board used to back off. Back off. You don't sell it on a market that everybody else is flogging it, and that's one of things that farmers don't understand. They say, "Well, you sell, sell, sell." Well, I think that's a good strategy. When the Argentine crop comes off, it has to go through. They haul it in by truck, and it goes through those elevators, and they sell it at whatever price they can get. We pulled up all the rail tracks, some of these rail tracks, in southern Canada. You know where they went? They went to Argentina out in the boondocks because they used to haul grain in those big trucks, but the three wheels back along things. And I was over some of those roads, and I wondered how they ever did it, but now I understood they had taken those steel, that stuff they bought from here, to build rails out there.

[2:15:55]

NP: Hm.

AS: Anyway. You hear a lot and see a lot when you get around.

NP: Yes. You've had a very interesting time of it.

AS: Well, yeah.

NP: Anything I haven't asked you that you wish I had asked you?

AS: Well, no. I don't--. There was one thing, you know. When there was a change of government and they kicked out--. And the Liberals got back in, and they were looking for a guy to be responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, and nobody knew who the hell they were going to get. Everybody knew a guy name Hazen Argue, you know? He was a, I don't know, he was a real renegade, and he farmed here down south at Cavell, Saskatchewan. But everybody knew damn well that he belonged to the cooperative there. He was a good Wheat Pool member. He was a good man and had a good understanding of the Board. So we all--. It was Sask Pool that really instigated that to have him appointed Minister for the cooperatives. To tell you, it was the best thing they ever done because he would come in in the boonies, so he dressed like a straw--. Anyway. [Laughs] But he was no fool. He was no dummy, believe me. He'd done his job. He used to sit in on the Board advisory committee meetings. He didn't bother with the Board themselves. They were doing the selling.

But he asked me--. That's how I got to Argentina. He wanted to go on this trip to South America. So I said, "Yeah, I'll go with you." So we went to Brazil. Brazil, up in there. Very well received. We had a fellow that was with the Pool–I forget his name—but he was fluent in Spanish, or Portuguese and Spanish, which is pretty close there, but he was along. What we were trying to do, is there any way we can cooperate in these marketing things instead of like what was going on in Argentina? Well, I don't know why we did it, but to get a little bit more cooperation between the exporting countries, you know? [Laughs] They put on a big dinner for us in Buenos Aires, and so everybody knew that they put on a big dinner. They generally do it up pretty good, you see. So they asked Hazen Argue, he was there, to give a little talk. Well, I'll tell, you when he got up and put his good suit on, when he got up, everybody from Canada couldn't believe it. I never heard a better presentation on his knowledge about the country, the grain industry. I was flabbergasted. So was everybody else. He was no dummy, although you would think so.

NP: [Laughs]

AS: Anyway, that was a highlight, I guess, to me.

NP: So which government ministers responsible for the Wheat Board did you work yourself through in your years with the Wheat Board? Like who--.

[2:20:09]

AS: Well, this Charlie Mayer. That was the [inaudible] He wasn't even--. That was a dead issue because--.

NP: Well, he's a farmer.

AS: Eh?

NP: He's a farmer.

AS: Yeah, I know, but he was getting his instructions from the big boy from the National Citizens Coalition, and he was coming right from the top even at that time. But Hazen Argue, you know, he had a really good understanding. It sometimes even amazed me. Well, he was an MP too, you know. The knowledge the guy had because--.

NP: Knowledge and interest?

AS: Eh?

NP: Knowledge and interest?

AS: Yes, he did.

NP: Who else would have been--? When did you start with the Wheat Board? You were after Otto Lang, or you were there when Otto Lang was in charge?

AS: I was here when Otto Lang was there too, yeah. Well, you know, Otto Lang would have been the Prime Minister if he would have kept his--. He got off on a tangent first on these large inland terminals, and farmers weren't prepared to buy that. Then he got off on a tangent, a religious tangent, somewhere he had no business in. But I was at a lot of meetings where he was too, and he used to draw a crowd in southern Saskatchewan like you wouldn't believe. He was a very intelligent man. My neighbour, he was heading out. He was a lawyer. When he was teaching, he says one of the smartest he probably ever had. But anyway.

NP: It was Goodale a--?

AS: Huh?

NP: Was Goodale a Minister Responsible for the Wheat Board?

AS: Yes, he was. He was Minister of Agriculture. Yeah. Well, there's another guy. But he wasn't involved with the Wheat Board, but he was just a hell of a good Minister of Agriculture because he really still is still doing a good job.

NP: Where does he live?

AS: Who?

NP: Where does he live?

AS: Right here in Regina.

NP: Oh, in Regina.

AS: Yeah. His constituency is right over on the east side here.

NP: Yeah. I thought I might try to pick up an interview with him in Ottawa, because I find myself in Ottawa occasionally.

AS: Yeah.

NP: But I've taken a lot of your time. It's actually almost 25 to 6:00, so I'm going to--.

AS: Well.

NP: Thank you so much for taking part in our project.

AS: Well, I don't know whether I contributed anything.

NP: Oh, yes. Oh, you know, what you excelled at? Telling the stories, and we love stories because they're much more--. They speak to the general population, and with our centre, we want the general population to know more about grain industry history and

how Thunder Bay worked together with the Prairies to, for a long time, get those products to market. So thanks again. I'm going to shut us off here.

End of interview.