

Narrator: Charlie Swanson (CS)

Company Affiliations: Manitoba Pool Elevators (MPE), Agricore Cooperative Ltd.

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Interviewer: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Recorder: Nancy Perozzo (NP)

Transcriber: Sarah Lorenowich

Summary: Retired president of Manitoba Pool Elevators and Agricore Ltd, Charlie Swanson discusses his long career in Canada's grain industry. He begins by describing his youth on a Manitoba farm, changes to farming techniques he observed, and memories of his father, an early organizer for the Pool. He quickly tracks his own career in the Pool from junior delegate to director to vice president to president, sharing his long-held interest in the agricultural policy aspect of the organization. He lists some of the Pool's subsidiary companies that he was on the board for, like Pool insurance, XCAN Grain, and the political lobbying group. Swanson explains the major issues and changes during his time on the Pool's executive, like the Crow Rate debate, shifting export markets, growing farm sizes, country elevator consolidation, increased privatization, and the disappearance of the Canadian Wheat Board. He then discusses the major organizational change of Manitoba Pool Elevators merging with Alberta Wheat Pool to form Agricore, explains the historical context for this merger and earlier attempts to amalgamate all three Prairie Pools, and recounts the first business year of the new Agricore cooperative. Other topics discussed include the effects of the Crow Rate removal, Canada's global reputation for assured quality, visits to Thunder Bay as a farmer and as an executive of the Pool, the difficulties in being a small modern farmer, dwindling political influence of Prairie farmers, multinational conglomerates in Canadian industry, and the adaptability of early farmers and businesspeople in western Canada.

Keywords: Manitoba Pool Elevators (MPE); Agricore Cooperative Ltd.; Farmer cooperatives; Agricultural policy; Grain trade—Laws and legislation; Grain farmers/producers; Farmer meetings; Farmer delegates; Country grain elevators; Grain marketing; XCAN Grain Ltd.; Grain export destinations; Non-board grains; Grain buyers; Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); Alberta Wheat Pool (AWP); Saskatchewan Wheat Pool (SWP); United Grain Growers (UGG); CSP Foods; Amalgamation; Grain transportation—rail; Grain transportation—Ships; Crowsnest Pass freight rate; Government subsidies; Government policy; Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Terminal grain elevators—British Columbia; Farming—Equipment and supplies; Consolidation; Inland grain terminals; Privatization; Corporate restructuring; Agricore United; Viterra; Glencore; Multinational conglomerates; Richardson International; Cargill

Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: This is Nancy Perozzo, and the start of my fantastic adventure going across the Prairie provinces picking up people in the grain industry that I've had on my list for a long time to interview and just have been able to get on the road to do it. So this is June 15 and I am in Neepawa, Manitoba. I will have the person who will be our narrator for today introduce himself and just give a brief review of his connection to the grain trade.

CS: I'm Charlie Swanson, and I've always been involved with agriculture. Started out farming when I was about 20 when I rented our first piece of farmland. Over the years, I became involved with Manitoba Pool Elevators on the subdistrict local board committee. In 1980, I was elected the district director and served in that position for 19 years. In the fall of 1985, I was elected first vice president, and in 1990, I was elected president of Manitoba Pool and served in that position until the formation of Manitoba Pool and Alberta Wheat Pool, which joined forces to become Agricore. I was the first president of that organization and served in that position for one year, and that was agreed to before I was ever elected to that. In fact, I said that I was going to retire when Manitoba Pool joined, and with a fair amount of encouragement, I was asked to let my name stand as president for the first year, and the rest of the directors knew that I wasn't there for a long time. I was there just for the first year to help the new organization come together.

NP: So one of our questions that we'll get to in a little while talks about changes in the grain industry. In retrospect, you were involved in farming when—at least from the perspective of the major organizations involved like the Pool—were relatively stable, and then moved into a time of really rapid change.

CS: That's right.

NP: Yes. Yes. So I'm going to start you right back at the time growing up on the farm. When you were growing up, what was life like on the farm from what you recall?

CS: Well, it was long hours. I fortunately missed the time of the stooks and wagons and threshing machines. My dad and his brothers had one of the first combines in the district, so that eliminated that stooking and pitching sheaves part of the business, which I was always grateful for. Over the years as machinery changed and I had an opportunity to become more involved in the farm, through my early years from about 12 to the age of 20, I was in a 4H Beef Club and enjoyed that very much and probably that had as much to do with my becoming more involved in the agricultural sector later on as any part. I had a couple of Ag reps that had a great deal of influence on my life at that time.

NP: Can you give us their names? I think they should be recognized.

CS: Well, the one that I would highlight would be Welland Stonehouse, who has passed away just recently. Through his coaching and pushing a little bit, I guess, I was part of the provincial 4H beef-judging team in 1956 and won the right to represent Manitoba at the Toronto Royal. Unfortunately, that was the first year of no competition at Toronto, so we missed out on that, but the other fellow that also was representing beef, he was as disappointed as I was that we weren't competing. Not that we were sure we would win, but we sure would have liked to have competed.

NP: Was your farm a mixed farm then?

CS: Yes, it was. It was a very small beef herd, but mainly grain. Over the years, the grain portion of it, well, it was always the basic. We got into canola, peas, sunflowers, and some of those—and flax—to change the production base. We stopped summer fallowing in the early '70s, went to continuous cropping, which I think made a tremendous difference to our farm as it did in a lot of other farms in western Canada over the years.

[0:05:15]

NP: In what way?

CS: Well, in eliminating summer fallow, it cut down on the erosion, wind erosion, which was quite bad in some years, although the land that we were farming was fairly heavy. Wind erosion was never a problem, but the other part of it was we didn't end up with the slews in the spring from the snow melt that we did when we were summer fallowing. The land absorbed the water a little bit easier. The soil was easier to work because of the extra fibre that we were turning back into the soil, and so that made quite a significant difference to the way we farmed.

NP: Did it also increase productivity then, from the standpoint of return?

CS: I'm not sure that it ever produced more per acre than a good summer-fallow field did because we had to add additional fertilizer when it wasn't summer fallowed, but it meant there was more acres in crop because we didn't have anything sitting there black all summer. So our total production did go up, and it did open the door to other potential kinds of crops as well.

NP: Now, where was your family farm?

CS: The community was Brookdale. It was about 18 kilometres southwest of Neepawa.

NP: Oh, okay. So you're still home.

CS: That's right.

NP: In those days--. So we'd talked before we went on tape that you grew up on a farm, but then you also started your own farm about 1961, is that correct?

CS: Yes.

NP: Over that time when you became aware of farming and crop selection and so on, was there a lot of change in what was grown? And in making those changes, was it a difficult change for people to make?

CS: That wasn't that difficult. Those changes really didn't take place until we got well into the '60s when other crops were being introduced. We also were on the edge of the potato area that got started in Carberry. Four neighbours and myself became involved in a small corporation to grow potatoes. However, we didn't stay in the business for that long because we found our land was just too heavy, and we were trucking too much of the soil away. So we got out of it again. We didn't lose any money, but we didn't make any money at it either. It was because of the type of soil that we were dealing with. Sand is the easiest land to grow potatoes in, and now that they have irrigation, then that light land produces extremely well. And also, the way that the potatoes were managed has changed dramatically. When we were in it, we had to put all our chemicals on with ground equipment, and we were just packing the land, and we were fighting with picking the lumps out at harvest time. Nowadays, most of that stuff is done by aerial spray.

NP: You fairly early on became involved in I don't know if you'd call it the politics of grain growing. [Laughs]

CS: Well, it was to a sense, yes.

NP: In connection with Manitoba Pool Elevators. So I want to just step back a minute to talk about your dad. First of all, why was he the first one with a combine in his area do you think?

CS: Well, I think they were progressive farmers. He and his two brothers had worked together over the years, and they bought their first combine together. Part of it was finding labour that would go out and stook in the fall. I can remember one year when they had

to bring—they didn't do it—but somebody else brought large numbers of Aboriginals from the north down to come out and stook, and they would live with farm families for the time that they were working. But that didn't go on for too many years. This other equipment became available, and stooking and teams of horses and wagons hauling in sheaves became eliminated as far as our family's farm was concerned.

NP: You were born in 1935, so you grew up during the war years.

[0:10:07]

CS: Yes.

NP: But do you recall—and maybe I'll ask a broader question—do you recall your dad and his brothers ever talking about what it was like early on in farming as far as not so much the farming practices but organizing, getting a fair deal, making it through the really tough Depression years?

CS: Well, my dad and his brothers were all involved in helping to form Manitoba Pool Elevators locally at Brookdale. They were signers, I believe they were called at the time, to help get it started and didn't deliver too many bushels of grain to any other elevator except Manitoba Pool all the years each of them were farming. I guess that's when I first came to understand the importance of having some influence over how your grain was marketed because you had some influence over the company you were dealing with. You were a part owner and saw what was happening with prices when it came time to deliver.

NP: What do you mean? What happened?

CS: Well, the people that needed cash, they had to deliver their grain right off the threshing machine and get it in as early as possible to generate cash. And that's different from the way it was once the Canadian Wheat Board [CWB] was formed. It didn't matter when you delivered during the 12-month period when the crop year started. Everybody got the same price depending on grade, of course. That was something that I heard my parents talk about—both Kathleen's and my parents talk about—on many occasions, that kind of a change that took place.

NP: Did they ever talk about whether it was difficult or easy to get people signed up?

CS: There were people that never did become Pool supporters. I'm not sure of the reason why. They deal with other privately owned companies, and some of them probably got better treated than others. Dealing with the Pool, everybody got treated the same.

You got paid according to the bushels that you delivered, the quality, whatever it was. You hear all sorts of tinkering around with scales, but you never heard that kind of story coming out of the Pool.

NP: Tinkering around with scales?

CS: The wheat.

NP: When it was delivered?

CS: When it was being delivered and weighed, yes.

NP: Just things that shouldn't be happening?

CS: I can remember one—and this was while I was almost finished school I think at the time—but one year the elevators were plugged pretty much locally, as they were across the country, and my dad had taken a load of wheat into Brookdale to deliver it. The Pool elevator was full. The opposition elevators, as he came down the driveway and saw this line up and said, “Oh, I can take your grain for you,” which he did. Lowered it a grade or two. When the next crop year started on August the 1st, this same grain buyer talked to my dad one day on the street, and he said, “I could give you No. 1 if you’ve got any more of that wheat left,” which is not what he would do when he could take it for whatever he wanted to give it to him for. [Laughs] Those were the kinds of games that were played.

NP: And if the Pool couldn't take it, then--.

CS: Well, nobody wanted to take it home and have to unload it again.

NP: Mmhhh. You were saying you were just finishing school, so there was a real plug up in the system in the early '50s.

CS: Yes, there was. Yeah. There was good crops. And the other thing is the delivery opportunities were very limited because of the quota system that was in place to give everybody equal opportunity to deliver their grain, but there were some years, I think, they only delivered about three bushels per acre. The rest they had to continue to store until either there was a poor crop somewhere else or the markets opened up somewhat more.

[0:15:03]

NP: And in those days, I don't think—and correct me if I'm wrong—there wasn't a lot of on-farm storage, like official buildings. So how was your family storing their excess?

CS: Oh, it was all inside. I think they just build some more portable granaries because I know, at least my recollection, we never stored any grain out on the ground.

NP: Did you know of people who did?

CS: Oh, yes. There was lots of it outside.

NP: Yeah? And a lot of loss as a result?

CS: There would be a fair amount of loss, yes.

NP: The mice were fat.

CS: Mice and deer. And it would get wet on the bottom and moisture would percolate up and spoil.

NP: What interested you, yourself, in becoming active in Manitoba Pool Elevators? I mean, lots of farmers just were sort of loyal customers, but they don't put themselves up for election or--.

CS: Well, I guess it was the fact that when you're on--. It started out on the local committee. Each Pool elevator had a local committee, and you had the opportunity to have some input into how that particular facility was operated, what kind of capital spending would take place to improve the elevator, whether more storage should be built. At that time, a lot of the elevators were getting involved in selling chemical and fertilizer, so that was another opportunity for farmers to buy from their own company. Then--.

NP: That interested you, being a major part of that decision making?

CS: Well, I was selected as I think they called us junior delegates to go to the annual meeting in Winnipeg, and it was a huge meeting. I was impressed with the speakers that were there, the people that had been there for a few years, and the board of directors that were there that were responsible for guiding the organization. Came home quite impressed with how it was run.

NP: Do you recall some of the names of the people who were around in those early days? I know it's going back.

CS: Oh, boy. Hm. Well, Bill Parker was the president at the time that I was there as a delegate, as a junior delegate I guess I'd be called. Two of the--. This area, there were two people that I was both acquainted with that had been district directors over the years, one of them from Brookdale, Wallace Moffet, and he was also the secretary of the local Pool committee. The other one was Jim Devison, who was director for, I think, 24 years, and five of those as president. It was Jim Devison that I followed as a district director. So.

NP: Can you recall what you admired about those people? Not necessarily those people but--.

CS: Well, for them to be able to stand up and speak and discuss various subjects on the policy side of the organization and debate resolutions, which there was some quite heated debate on occasion. A vote would be taken, and they'd move onto the next issue.

NP: What were some of the hot issues of those early days?

CS: Hm.

NP: That people didn't want, did want? Was there any discussion about whether they should go into expanding their basket of services that they offered?

CS: Well, Manitoba Pool did get involved with producing hogs with a barn just out of Brandon, a new line of hogs, and they were in that for a short while. They were also involved in financing feeder cattle, I was involved with that. We fed cattle for a few years. They also built a--. Oh, they bought a beef packing plant in Brandon that I guess was called Brandon Packers at the time. That burnt, and they built a new packing plant, which was a state-of-the-art packing plant, but the problem was buying shelf space to display the finished product. The big companies—Canada Packers, Burns, and--.

[0:20:18]

NP: Maple Leaf?

CS: Maple Leaf. That's what they were called at the time. I forget the third one. They could go into a store, and they would pay a better price to display their product than what Pool Packers could afford to pay with smaller volumes and early in the business.

Manitoba Pool also got involved in building auction yards for selling cattle and were involved in several across Manitoba, the largest one being in Brandon, but they were involved in yards in other locations as well to market producers' cattle, well, on a year-round basis.

NP: None of those had long-term sustainability going into more of the--?

CS: Well, the hogs certainly didn't. The packing plant--. No, it was the new one that burnt down. I guess that's what happened. They just took over the old one and decided to replace it. The new one burnt down and was not replaced, but the auction marts continued to operate until Sask Wheat Pool took all of the beef cattle marketing yards over. And they don't have them anymore either because Heartland or, sorry, the outfit that owned the packing plant at Brooks--.

NP: They keep changing their names so it's hard to keep track of it! [Laughing]

CS: Yes. Oh, I'm sorry. I've forgotten that name.

NP: Doesn't matter. All of that's in the record anyways, so that's not an issue. It's more the whole philosophy and the issues that people were dealing with. So you were a director then until 1985, and then you moved into being first vice-president. What were the responsibilities of the first vice-president?

CS: It was mainly on the policy side of the organization, plus being on some of the affiliated company boards like XCAN, CSP Foods, the Pacific Terminal on the West Coast, Pool insurance, and Canadian Pool Agencies. The Pools owned their own insurance company. We self-insured all of our properties, and so, being on that board of directors, going to the annual CFA meetings. At the same time, I was put on the board of Co-Op College in Saskatoon, and that operated for a short time until they merged with the credit union system, and the head office of that organization was moved to Ottawa, and it was called the Canadian Cooperative Association. While on the board of that organization, three of us from the board were sent on an evaluation trip to parts of Asia to look at CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] programs that were being carried out and financed by the cooperative system, and CIDA were major financial supporters of it as well, which are the Canadian government. They wanted some independent report of how we felt things were going in these various countries.

NP: CIDA being--?

CS: Canadian International Development Agency.

NP: You mentioned a few things that I'm interested in and nobody has really spoken about and that is the whole insurance issue—insurance and financing issue—related to a group like the Manitoba Pool Elevator organization. It's in the background, but it's pretty important, isn't it?

CS: Well, I'll start with the insurance first. The insurance company was owned by the three Pools. All three Pools put all of their insurance on all of their facilities and their terminals through that company. Now, we did sub-insure beyond certain limits so if we had a real major disaster, the Pool insurance company would still survive. So there was sub-insurance which was carried as well to cover mainly for the terminals. The elevators weren't—excuse me—such a big item then. They weren't as expensive as they are nowadays. But it worked very well. I know we were carrying our insurance at a lower price than our competitors were, and in the later years of Pool insurance, we started carrying insurance on other companies as well to expand the business and generate some additional revenue and also keep our staff a little bit busier. We carried out inspection services at all of the facilities on a regular basis to make sure that they were being kept in a relatively clean condition, showing local managers how to avoid potential fires and that sort of thing.

[0:26:23]

NP: Now, the movement, again, out into providing services to others, was that successful?

CS: Yes, it was. And they were still doing it until the merger, until UGG [United Grain Growers] ended up taking over Sask Wheat Pool-- . No, Agricore first, I guess, and then later Sask Wheat Pool when they took them over, took over Viterra.

NP: You mentioned XCAN. What can you tell me about them and how they came about and your involvement with them during the time that you were with MPE, can I call it that?

CS: Certainly. XCAN-- . Let's back up a little bit. The three principal grains at the time—wheat, oats, and barley—were all marketed through the Canadian Wheat Board. Later, oats was taken out, but it left the flax and canola—or rapeseed it was called in the early days—just really being marketed wherever they could get the best deal at the time. So the decision was made to form XCAN. Again, it was the three Pools jointly putting that organization together, and XCAN became responsible for marketing all of these special crops and oilseeds for the three Pools, that is flax, canola, peas, sunflowers. Any other special crop that was grown at the time, XCAN took on the responsibility of marketing those crops. XCAN had their own CEO and management and staff but were directed by a board made up of three directors from each of the three principal organizations—that being the three Pools that owned them. They met on a quarterly basis and had their own executive. I ended up being president of XCAN for a number of years the last few years that I was involved.

NP: What were the challenges of--. Were you there when they started doing the marketing?

CS: I wasn't, no. Well, I certainly knew about it, but I was not on the board when they first started. It started back in the '70s. They had their growing pains and had a staff member that created a bit of a problem, but however, that all got straightened out. The organization grew, and they ended up being the largest marketer of Canadian grains next to the Canadian Wheat Board marketing grain in Canada because XCAN represented the three Pools, and from time to time could also pick up some additional business that would be in store in one of the terminals that they could add to a shipment going mostly to Asia.

NP: Who was XCAN competing with? Who were their--?

CS: Well, the other main companies like Richardson—or Pioneer they call them now—UGG, Cargill. Paterson and Parrish weren't that big in non-board grains as we called them, everything that the Wheat Board didn't deliver, well, partly because they handled a much smaller percentage of the total compared to the other companies that I mentioned. So we were competing with mainly Pioneer and UGG and Cargill were the main competitors in going after the export market.

[0:30:40]

NP: What gives an export company an edge would you say?

CS: I think we could probably use the Canadian Wheat Board as a good example. You delivered what you said you were going to deliver, just like what the Wheat Board used to provide as a certificate final. When a shipment left Vancouver, it had a certificate final attached. What came out of that boat was what the certificate said would be there. I think that was the key part of it was to deliver what you had said you were going to deliver. So you had to earn the customer's respect and confidence.

NP: Was it easy to compete with foreign competition? Difficult--.

CS: The crops that we were dealing in—canola and flax—Canada were probably the largest producers. The US did not have any presence at that time in the canola business. I think there might have been a few acres of flax in the northern-tier states, but it would not be that significant. Europe was growing a little bit of flax, mainly in Germany, but Canada, they had control over the oilseed markets. I shouldn't say oilseed. Canola seed market. Our competitor there would be soybeans out of the US, but when it became canola and it was a human food, we were ahead of what the US could deliver in terms of the human-consumption oil with canola as compared to their soybeans. And the other part of it was that a larger percentage of canola was oil as compared to meal. The US

soybeans were the opposite. They produced a larger percentage of meal, and they had to rely on the livestock market to put it into feed, livestock feed. Canola meal eventually got into that market, but we didn't have near the volume to worry about that they did.

NP: My understanding is that there was a lot of research development work done at the University of Manitoba for--.

CS: Oh, that's where the canola started, yes.

NP: Can you give us some background on that?

CS: Oh. Well, I'm not the right person for that. [Laughs]

NP: From the standpoint of being able to sell it and find a market for it?

CS: Well, it was Baldur Stefansson, Dr. Stefansson, I guess, that really led--. Rapeseed had been grown for quite a number of years, and it was really used for engine lubricating purposes as much as anything. In fact, it was a marine oil, and a very high-quality oil at the start. But he changed the--. Dr. Stefansson really changed the canola industry when he developed and turned it into an edible oil, and that's when it really took off.

NP: And to do that was it just cross breeding and--? As far as you know?

CS: Don't ask me. [Laughing] That's what it was, yes.

NP: What was the long-term path of XCAN?

CS: Well, it was very successful. They only had three CEOs in its history. First name I don't remember, but then Ken, or sorry--. Oh. Retired and moved out to the Okanagan. And then Ken Matchett took over in the early '80s as CEO, and he was CEO right through until the time that UGG took over Agricore, and then it was folded.

[0:35:02]

NP: It was folded. Why was it folded, do you know?

CS: They had their own marketing organization within themselves, and they might have picked up a few of the staff. One of the traders—traders with a “D” [Laughs]—at XCAN was probably one of the best grain traders in Winnipeg, very highly respected individual, and he moved east. I’m not sure who he’s working for now, but he left at the time. I think he was really the backbone of their trading success.

NP: And what was his name, do you recall? You know if anybody ever asked me the names of the people I worked with, I would not have any names. [Laughs] I remember what he looks like, but I can’t remember the name.

CS: Oh, boy.

NP: So he moved east?

CS: That’s right.

NP: We’ll do some thinking about this afterwards, and we can fill it in.

CS: Yeah. It might come back, but at the moment--. Yeah.

NP: We might as well continue with finishing sort of our move through your first vice president into the president of Manitoba Pool Elevators. So that was five years after you started as the vice president.

CS: Maybe just another comment on XCAN.

NP: Oh, sure. Yes, please.

CS: One of the things that they also did, they would send three board members and a couple of senior staff members on trade missions twice a year to the various customers and meet the customers. It was interesting to--. I had the opportunity to go on a couple of them, and three of us that were board members that would be there, our background as farming and still involved with farming, and the customers always appreciated that side of the business of getting to know the people that actually produced these crops that they were buying. The countries that we visited were, well, Japan number one for canola, and then we eventually got into China with malting barley. European customers were just about over a large part of Europe selling flax to Germany, feed peas to France, to Denmark, and some feed wheat for poultry feed and that sort of thing, so.

NP: Interesting markets.

CS: Very much so.

NP: During your total time with being aware of what head office was doing, including XCAN, what changes did you see in the markets, both growing and shrinking? And why do you think they grew and why they shrunk? Shrank? [Laughs]

CS: Well, the canola market expanded as long as we could grow the canola. We were crushing. The three Pools had a very-- Well, two of the Pools—Sask Pool and Manitoba Pool—had a fairly significant interest in the canola crushing industry. We had plants in Saskatchewan, one at Altona in Manitoba, and interest in a packaging plant in Alberta and packing in Montreal. So that was the other side of it as well, where the Pools controlled that side of it as well, and so did a fair amount of marketing on the finished product, although CSP Foods did that on their own.

NP: So why was it so popular do you think?

CS: Well, margarine was replacing butter. Not if you were a dairy farmer, it never would, but for a lot of people, people preferred using margarine. Plus, canola oil, I think, was a cooking oil of choice for an awful lot of people, and that has expanded over large parts of the world.

NP: Because its reaction to heat and--.

CS: And it doesn't go--. It holds its quality very well. It doesn't seem to go rancid like some other oils do. Probably cheaper, certainly, than olive oil. And maybe even-- Well, I shouldn't say it was cheaper than soybeans because they had a huge volume of it, but it was high quality. It was sold based on its quality.

[0:40:10]

NP: Did Manitoba Pool Elevators have product people, or did they rely mostly on organizations like Canadian International Grains Institute [CIGI] and the Grain Research group with the Grain Commission to prove the usefulness of the product?

CS: Are you referring to the processed oil and that sort of thing?

NP: Mhmm.

CS: Or--.

NP: Like you mentioned that the reason that it did well internationally was because it was proven to be a good product for, let's say, deep frying, whatever. Let's say in Japan they were deep frying. So did you have product researchers, or was that left to other people?

CS: No. That was left—as far as the canola oil was concerned—that was left entirely in the hands of CSP Foods, which the two Pools fully owned.

NP: And what did CSP stand for?

CS: Cooperative Seed Processors.

NP: Oh, okay. Do they still exist?

CS: No.

NP: And what happened to them?

CS: They were--. When Alberta Pool and Manitoba Pool merged, and then they continued to operate then because we still had—Manitoba Pool—still owned the interest. But then as UGG stepped in and took over Agricore and Sask Wheat Pool or Viterra, that all was part of the package.

NP: So besides the massive change of one group merging or swallowing another group, there were all these other side operations that were impacted.

CS: That's right. They were all part of it, yes.

NP: Hm. We'll get to that a little later. You had--. Well, maybe I'll ask this question now because one of the things that you said was that when you went on the foreign missions, it was really appreciated that the people that went, I would think mostly all of them at the time—at least when you started—were farmers.

CS: Yes.

NP: And so they'd bring a certain richness to being able to say, "Yes, I grew it, and I know." I've heard some people say that over the years, there have been changes in management of a lot of companies—maybe all grain companies—that once they were run by people like you who were farmers, over the years it changed into you get a lot of people in senior positions who never farmed. Is that an accurate statement?

CS: Well, other than the three Pools and United Grain Growers, it's totally true of all of the rest. Some of their staff, I'm sure, grew up on a farm, but once they were--. It didn't matter which other company it would be, I think, once they become an employee of whatever company it would have been, other than the Pools and UGG, that background sort of faded away.

NP: What were the pros and cons? Let's put it that way. What were the pros and cons of if you didn't grow up on a farm and instead you went through university, let's say, as an economist or an MBA? What are the pros and cons of leadership with those varying experiences? Not so much abilities, but experiences.

CS: Well, I guess looking back, I wish that I had had a lot more education than I did because there were times that felt, well, just not--. I was in over my head. [Laughs] Well, I don't think there were any directors--. There were certainly directors on the three Pools that had university education, and certainly in the senior management of the organizations, but--.

[0:45:18]

NP: Would it be university education mostly in agriculture?

CS: Yes.

NP: Yeah. As opposed to just coming through with an MBA and joining at a senior level in an organization.

CS: Yeah. Some of them may have--. Yeah, it would be basic degrees in agriculture that the majority--. In those that had degrees, that's what it would have been.

NP: So a nice combination of both is a good thing.

CS: Oh, absolutely.

NP: Grow up on a farm and have the sort of official management background.

CS: Yeah. Well, the understanding of financial statements. Just as an example, maybe I would have learned how to write. I'm not a writer.

NP: You're amongst the majority, I think! [Laughing] Yeah. You're amongst the majority. A lot of people are not writers. I taught writing as part of my career, so. [Laughs] Moving from vice-president to president, what changes did that make in your role?

CS: Well, certainly more responsibility. You're at the head of the table every board meeting and more involvement in some of the affiliated companies. The one that I haven't mentioned is Western Co-op Fertilizer, which the three Pools also owned. I was on that board for a number of years as well. And usually if you were a president of one of the Pools that would be a president that would be named as the president of one of the affiliated companies in most cases, but not always. So certainly, the responsibility, more involvement with the rest of the industry. In Winnipeg, I don't know what it's like now, but a lot of things, they worked quite closely together on. Not collusion, but things in a general way that's for the betterment of the industry. There's a fair bit of cooperation in a lot of areas, like dealing with the railways for example. You can never have enough power on the table when you're dealing with them. [Laughs]

NP: Perennial problem, if reading the agricultural newspapers are any indication.

CS: That's right. [Laughing]

NP: More connection with political people? Lobbying, things such as that?

CS: Well, in some cases. For some reason or other, about the second year I was on the board I got dumped into that. There were one of us from each of the three Pools asked to go to Ottawa, and we spent-- I don't know how long we were down there for now. I think we came home on weekends. I think it was more than a week. But anyway, we were down there to lobby over the transportation issues, like the method of payment for example. That started in the early '80s, took them to the end of the '90s when it finally was dealt with.

NP: Explain a little bit about the method of payment.

CS: Oh. [Laughs] The grain transportation in western Canada was substantially subsidized by the federal government. It had been since the time of the building of the first railway. That was one of the pieces that was put in place to entice them to go ahead and make the decision to build. Over the years, the subsidy had grown until it was about, if I remember correctly, about \$700 million a year that the federal government put into grain transportation. There were some companies, some farmers, that thought the company--. And especially livestock feeders that really objected to the farmers getting that subsidy because it added to the price of their feed grains. There was a fairly strong lobby over the years that they wanted this ended, and it started out fairly quiet and gradually kept building and building. Some of us were down there, spent a lot of time, and that was the issue that we talked about was the Crow Rate was I guess it was more familiar--. How it was called most often. [Laughs]

[0:50:38]

NP: Familiar--. Yeah, right. Most commonly called.

CS: Right. And if it was going to be bought out, what kind of dollars were the producers going to get out of it? That went on for, well, from the early '80s until early in the '90s when the federal government finally made the decision. It went through--. We thought it was going to happen while the Conservatives were in power. They hadn't figured out how to do it. And finally when the Liberals came back into power in the early '90s--. And they had inherited a pretty substantial deficit, and at the same time, the negotiations were going on around the world on a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [GATT] and the argument as to who was subsidizing the most in the agricultural sector. The federal government finally said they were going to buy this out, pay the farmers out because there was an obligation to get rid of a subsidy. I don't think that was ever the reason. The reason was to reduce the federal deficit because they got rid of that \$700 millions with about three years equivalent of producer payments directly to the landowners. So they got rid of it, and that reduced that annual obligation on the federal deficit. We didn't need to repay anything out to get rid of subsidies. We were amongst the lowest if not the lowest in the world. Europe, the US, which were two of the biggest, they subsidized then and probably still do now, way more than Canada ever has to their agricultural producers.

NP: But not necessarily railways?

CS: No, it wasn't the railways that were getting it, and the railways, after it was gotten rid of, all of a sudden, their freight rates went up because they weren't regulated fairly well. Less so now.

NP: Whose railways were regulated quite well?

CS: Well, both CN [Canadian National Railway] and CP [Canadian Pacific Railway] both had a cap put on how much money they could get annually out of hauling grain. I just have to think about this for a second.

[Audio pauses]

NP: Can we go back to that?

CS: Sure.

NP: I just wanted to go back a bit and talk about my understanding of what you're saying related to the Crow Rate. The Crow Rate as I understand it from listening to other people, which could be completely wrong, is that when the railways started up, they were given certain benefits in return for a fixed rate on grain shipments. Over the years, they realized or felt they were getting a bad deal and that these rates were inadequate for them to maintain their fleet and service. Am I right so far?

CS: Yes.

NP: And as a result, the government started subsidizing them because the Crow Rate, the powers that be could not agree to get rid of the Crow's Rate, is that right?

CS: Yeah.

NP: Okay. At some point, it just became—and this is the point you were talking about—it became a big deficit for the government. The railways were constantly complaining, and now we have farmers, largely represented by their organizations like the Pools, probably also recognizing that this wasn't working, but the discussion then became how much would the farmers be compensated in order for the railways to get out of their obligation to hold the rates steady. Is that a fair--?

[0:55:22]

CS: I think that's quite fair, yes. One of the things that the railways did or were going to try and prove their argument—rightly or wrongly—they were not putting much investment back into hauling grain because they ended up, the Canadian government and Canadian Wheat Board, invested millions of dollars in buying hopper cars to provide the railways with rolling stock to move grain, whether it was east or west. So that saved the railways a lot of money. And at the same time, they were totally ignoring—well, at least CP, who had got-- I don't know what the net value of that land would be that they received in exchange. They ignored that

completely. CN was owned by the Canadian government at the time anyway, but the CP certainly thought they were being badly done by because they were not getting all of their costs out of it. But in the meantime, they had their rights to these hundreds of thousands of acres of land across western Canada that they didn't seem to recognize the value of at all.

NP: They were selling off that land too, were they not?

CS: Yes, they were. Yeah, I don't think they own much of it now. They may own the oil rights on it yet--. [Laughs] But on some of it at least. So it was a big issue. Manitoba probably fought against the change as much as anybody did because Manitoba is the furthest from port. They have the longest distance to move the grain to export position out of Manitoba. It doesn't matter which way you go.

NP: Now why is that? Because if you were to go through Churchill or Thunder Bay, isn't that a shorter route than heading west?

CS: Well, they still had to pay the freight beyond Thunder Bay, whether it went by rail—and it does a limited amount in the wintertime—but it still had to be loaded on a laker, transferred onto an ocean vessel in Ontario or along the St. Lawrence, and so that freight would be built back in as well. And then the rail freight west, that was by far the longest distance. Churchill handled a little bit of grain, but Port Arthur in a good week could handle as much as Churchill could in a whole season because they've only got a three-month shipping season. The grain that went through Churchill had to be stored either on the farm or in an elevator until the following year before they could move it out because that's when the ice goes out. They don't start shipping until July or thereabouts. And the other argument as far as Churchill was concerned even though it is part of Manitoba, why weren't they putting more emphasis on moving other product out or using it to transfer product in? They've never really picked up to any great extent on that.

NP: Mmhmm. So eventually the Crow Rate disappeared?

CS: It did in the early '90s. Going back to the GATT negotiations that were going on amongst governments around the world regarding subsidies, our federal government decided they were going to pay out the farmer at so much an acre over a three-year period to buyout that subsidy, and the railways would go to changing full rates, whatever they could charge to--. A negotiated rate that the government was supposed to have a hand in.

NP: What was Manitoba Pool's official reaction to the payout rate?

CS: We thought it was too low. Too low. It amounted to about, well, less than three years of what we were getting on the Crow subsidy.

NP: Were the other like UGG and the other Pools of a similar mind?

CS: Sask Wheat Pool was pretty much in line with Manitoba. Alberta Pool because of their livestock feeding industry, they were in a very difficult position. They couldn't come down too hard in arguing against taking that subsidy off because the feeding industry had become very, very important to Alberta. So they were quieter on the issue than what we were further east.

[1:00:21]

NP: The private companies—the private grain companies—like Paterson, Richardson, so on, did they--?

CS: They had no problem with it disappearing.

NP: And do you know why that would be?

CS: I think they thought that we could get into more value-added on the Prairies if it was gone. We were already into a fair amount of value-added even with it, like CSP Foods for example, but Richardson and Cargill are now both into the oilseed crushing business. UGG, they had a lot of interest in livestock feeding, and plus, they were a Prairie-wide organization where we were just representing Manitoba.

NP: And when you look back—because this was happening in the early '90s, and you were there until the end of the '90s—how would you describe, other than the fact that they just got three years' worth of what the subsidy was, how would you describe the success of moving out of the Crow Rate that you could see in that time period?

CS: There were some, certainly, changes in the railway attitude. They were more interested in coming out and helping build sidings, extending the sidings to load more cars. This is one of the--. I'll come back to it later maybe. So that would lead to more efficiency, there's no doubt about that. And the size of farms had been changing for a number of years. The elevators were starting to--. Bigger elevators were being built. If you could load 50 cars—now it's 110 at most of these new elevators—you can't argue with the efficiency of it, except a lot of the costs have been transferred to municipalities and highways on road costs.

NP: So you were also very active during--. I'm sort of getting--. Let me finish off the presidency job. What did you like about being president? I'm hoping there's something. [Laughing]

CS: Yes.

NP: You were there for a good stretch of your life to not like it.

CS: Well, I got to meet with a tremendous number of people from not only Canada, from the States, other parts of the world as well. I was never south of the equator. Maybe the--. I guess Singapore might be, or just on the edge. I had the opportunity to meet with various people and organizations during that time. Meetings across many parts of the United States. The people in the grain industry, while we're competitors, they became good friends and people that I would have never met in my life otherwise. I was away a lot, which is not always good. Among the early years, my wife looked after the farm, and our two kids were in their early years. They were just ready to go to university. Our daughter was in university and our son was just finishing his last year of high school when we moved to Winnipeg. So it was certainly an adjustment for them, and we had, at the time, an excellent hired man. Unfortunately, the first year, I guess, I was in Winnipeg, he ended up with cancer and was no longer available. At that point, we rented out our farm, but up until then, even as a director, I was away for meetings every month--didn't matter what the season was. Kathleen looked after managing the farm and keeping it going, and our son, when he was, well, he was starting to operate machinery as well. So it was quite a--. What would you call it? Well, they picked up and farmed and suffered from it.

[1:05:17]

NP: They were a good team working with you.

CS: That's right. Yeah.

NP: What didn't you like about being at that level of the organization, if anything? What was your least favourite? Let's put it that way.

CS: Well, as a district--. Even while you're on the executive, you still have the responsibilities of a district director. That doesn't end. You have to be a district director be elected to the board, and then even though if you're full time in the office, you still have district director to worry about. They meet, oh, several times a year, maybe about every three months or so, I guess, and there would be--. What did I have? Five, six sub-districts within the district that they would be holding meetings during that time. So I

would be at the office until maybe 5:00 and head out here for a meeting and then drive back at night. So there were some long days, but it went with the job.

NP: What did you sense was Canada's reputation in the international grain market?

CS: Oh, our quality.

NP: Now, do you think they were just buttering you up, or do you feel that they were quite serious about that? What makes you think that it was more than just flattery?

CS: Well, I think that no other country in the world, when a boat is loaded, they're handed a piece of paper—I guess the captain or whoever has it—by the grain inspectors saying, "This is what's in this boat." They would deliver it, they'd turn over that piece of paper, and there was hardly ever a dispute over what was being unloaded out of a ship. So I think it was our quality that we delivered, and we had competitive prices, although there were many times we were getting some premium price because of what we could deliver to the customer. Like now, the emphasis seems to be going away from protein wheat, but at that time, the US couldn't deliver a shipload of consistent quality wheat. They just don't have the system to do it. They still don't. Never will. But Canada could, but now that's being taken away. The responsibilities of the Grain Commission are being watered down, and the inspections are being reduced. There's money being saved, but we may end up paying for it down the road. We'll have to wait and see.

NP: When you talk about the reputation that Canada had and the contribution of the inspection system to it, was there a philosophy within Manitoba Pool Elevators that it was important?

CS: Oh, we totally supported not only the Canadian Wheat Board, but the Canadian Grain Commission as well. We had the opportunity to meet with both organizations on a regular basis, and our management team also met with them from the various departments. There was a very good working relationship. The other companies? I'm not-- Well, we know that some of the other companies didn't show the same support for the Wheat Board that Manitoba Pool did and Sask Wheat Pool at the time. Alberta Pool, again, because of the livestock industry, they were a little bit softer on it. But, well, we don't have either of those anymore. Well, the Grain Commission, drastically watered down, but the Wheat Board is gone.

NP: What other connections were there with the Canadian Grain Commission? What connection, for example, with the Grain Research Lab? Any connection with seed or sample verification, things like that? Were there other connections?

[1:10:17]

CS: Well, samples would be sent over on a regular basis through the year, and especially if a farmer was not happy with his final grade. Well, there would be samples kept not only at the elevator, but at unload time in Thunder Bay or the West Coast, and the Grain Commissioners would get a chance to take a look at them to see who was right or wrong. It was an ongoing basis with the country elevator division keeping posted as to if something was showing up in grain samples in a particular year. The Grain Commission would get in touch, and then our staff could get out and talk to the managers and, you know, “This is something you’ve got to be watching for because it can cost us big time if this gets through.” So there was a very good working relationship.

NP: And did Manitoba Pool provide instructors for Canadian International Grains Institute courses and--?

CS: Yes, from time to time they did, yes. In fact, I think quite regularly they did, especially when it was the farm representatives that came in from across the Prairies. But even when the international buyers would be in town, they would meet up and maybe go on a tour of one of our elevators and that sort of thing. And we did have some involvement in the seed lots helping to develop new varieties. Not that we ever did the breeding part of it, but once it was out ready to be released by the university, and they would be looking for plots to grow on various parts of the province. That would take place as well.

[Audio pauses]

NP: It’s amazing how the time goes so quickly. We just took a little bit of a water and stretch break, and before I move onto some different line of questions, whether there’s anything we have talked about the connection between the Manitoba Pool Elevators and shipping. Rail shipping we’ve done, but not lake or ocean shipping. In the positions that you held, what connections did you have with those, or did you see Manitoba Pool having with the shipping industry, water shipping?

CS: Well, they were certainly vital—excuse me—certainly vital to getting the grain to their final destination, but other than our staff at terminal position, whether it was West Coast or east in Thunder Bay, the rest of us, you know, we would maybe tour a ship if we were in Vancouver or if we were down in Thunder Bay. Our board was usually down to Thunder Bay a couple times a year, and well, our time was down there to visit our terminals, and we usually had a visit with the Patersons. They were excellent people to go down and visit with and talk about issues, and they’d take us on a tour of a boat or whatever. But beyond--.

NP: Did you have your own brokers?

CS: No. Well, we were shipping--.

NP: So if you were shipping--. I mean, board grains would have been dealt with by the--.

CS: Yeah, that would be handled by the Wheat Board. And non-boards would have been dealt with through XCAN. Yeah, that didn't come back to head office at Manitoba Pool at all.

NP: Well, you lead me into asking the question about your recollections of operations in Thunder Bay. When did you first go to Thunder Bay? Did you ever go as a farmer or--?

CS: Yes, I did. It would be in the late '70s, I guess. Manitoba Pool used to take a busload of farmers down every summer and spend a couple of days in Thunder Bay and touring the terminals and meeting the terminal staff and have dinner with them. There'd usually be a ship or a boat in the harbour, and we'd get a chance to tour them. The boat crews were very cooperative that way in letting people go onboard end to end and see the operation of their--. I don't know what you'd call Thunder Bay--. Are they ships or boats in Thunder Bay? [Laughs]

[1:15:22]

NP: Well, I think they'd be ships. I think some distinction is when a boat becomes a ship, but they're large enough I think we can call them ships. [Laughs]

CS: Right, right.

NP: Some people get annoyed if you call their ship a boat.

CS: Okay. But they were very cooperative and very good at explaining what the different people onboard did. It was an eyeopener for most of us that went down there from the Prairies to see these. Even the Great Lakes ship was big when you'd never seen an ocean-going vessel. [Laugh] So it was a good experience. So that was in the late '70s, and then after becoming a director, again, we would take--. The directors would be part of going down with the busload of people that would go down. Did that--. I don't think we missed for 19 years, and then for the last number of years, Kathleen and I went down for the Christmas party at the end of December, and then later early January after the Christmas rush was over and go down there with the staff Christmas part. So we made a lot of trips down there over the years.

NP: So do you recall your first impressions of the terminal elevator?

CS: How big they were, that a ship could pull in there. I guess if they had enough of the one kind of grain, they could load that ship. And the speed at which it could be cleaned. It was just at the time between the transfer from the old boxcars to the hopper cars, and watching them unload a boxcar, tipping it up and over to get rid of the grain out of it, and how simple it was to push an auger out of a belt and unload a hopper car, and the way they were moved in and out, and the speed at which it happened. It was very interesting. And the size of the cleaners. And then the other part was the height of them when you go up top to look out over the harbour and over the city. There's one manager that used to insist that, in fact, he used to tell Kathleen, "Oh, you can climb to the top." Fred Bodey, I don't know if you've heard of him or not. He used to insist that she could climb to the top by stairs. [Laughs]

NP: Right from the ground?

CS: Oh, yes. Yeah.

NP: And she didn't kill him after? [Laughs]

CS: I don't know if she felt like it or not, but she went along with it. [Laughs]

NP: Could be scary!

CS: Yeah, it's a lot of stairs, but you get a great view. You'd have to walk around where the grain comes in and dumps into the cleaners and out into the next bin. The speed that it's transferred from one part of the elevator to the next, it's unreal. That was interesting.

NP: And who were some of the other personalities that you recall from the--?

CS: Oh, the Mallons. Well, first of all--.

NP: The dynasty.

CS: Yes. [Laughs] Jack and Bill and Brian. I'll never forget them. And then more recently--.

NP: I'm just trying to think myself who was there. Well, in Agricore's time, it would have been Bill Green. No, he would have been afterwards.

CS: No, he was at UGG, I think.

NP: Oh, okay.

CS: I think. No, I think Bill Mallon--.

NP: I think, yeah.

CS: Became manager of Manitoba Pool terminals, but--. Yeah. UGG didn't take over until after they took over Agricore.

NP: Oh, okay.

CS: But there was--. Oh. Names.

NP: Because the--. Oh. Well, let me see. Hm! Because Brian Mallon would have been up to pretty much the end of Manitoba Pool.

[1:20:13]

CS: That's right, yeah.

NP: As the head guy there.

CS: Just before him--. Oh, I can see him. I can't put a name on him.

NP: Yeah.

CS: Kathleen? **[Audio pauses]** Terrible.

NP: Because we're talking about terminal elevators and we're talking about Thunder Bay, was most of Manitoba Pool's product delivered out of Thunder Bay?

CS: Most of it would have gone east. In fact, they would have pulled even into a part of Saskatchewan. But we would ship maybe in the wintertime a small amount west. But basically, it went through Thunder Bay.

NP: And which markets were served out of Thunder Bay?

CS: The Central America, some into South America. There'd be the occasional load--. You know, they could only load 25,000 tonnes out and go direct. Those cargos, I think, usually went south out of Thunder Bay. The larger cargos would go into larger ships on the river, and they'd go into--. Well, wheat into the UK, flax into Germany, feed grains into various places—France, the Netherlands.

NP: Italy?

CS: Sorry?

NP: Italy? Durum. But that would have been the Wheat Board, I guess.

CS: But that would be Wheat Board shipments, yeah.

NP: I asked the question earlier, but I think we moved off into a different direction, and that was the changing in markets over the time that you were with the company.

CS: Right.

NP: So what did you see?

CS: Well, that probably had the greatest influence on the declining volume going through Thunder Bay when the Pacific Rim started to buy more grain out of Canada, and that naturally went out of Vancouver and Prince Rupert. And the other influence was the building of Prince Rupert, which gave them a lot more capacity, and then they could handle the 75,000-tonne ships, which would give them a better freight rate as well. So it was that change that had a great influence, I believe, on the volumes going east. And then later after the change in the freight after the loss of the Crow benefit, one of the arguments I used was the Thunder Bay Harbour Commission because there were people within that organizations that thought it was fine for it to go because they thought

they were going to get more grain, and my argument was, “You won’t. Once the Crow is gone, we can load cars in Manitoba, ship them right straight south.” Which that’s what happened.

We were shipping wheat to Omaha, malting barley. Oats were a board grain, but a lot of oats went out of Manitoba. The change in the loss of the Crow benefit, I would say reduced the volume that was going east. I was disgusted with them when they didn’t follow my argument, but that was their problem. [Laughs] I think the Patersons understood it, but I can’t remember the man that was the head of the Thunder Bay Harbour Commission. We used to meet with them every time I went down.

NP: Was it Mr. Johnson at the time? Dennis Johnson?

CS: You know, the name has gone out of my head.

NP: Maybe not.

CS: The--.

NP: The difficulty of making decisions when you don’t know what the future’s going to be, right?

CS: Yeah, that’s right. But it really had an impact on the number of lakers. I mean, the Patersons had practically a new ship sat there idle that we toured through a couple times—just never was used. And then they finally got rid of all of their ships, I guess. At least I think they have.

NP: So the decline, for the reasons that you’re saying, a double whammy of increased Far Eastern shipments and the axing of the Crow Rate resulting in less being shipped out of Thunder Bay. That must have also had an impact on the terminal elevators that you were running there.

[1:25:20]

CS: We were able to--. Well, because so many others were shut down. Sask Wheat Pool closed down I’m not sure how many, but we were still able to get pretty good volumes through the two terminals that Manitoba Pool operated. The terminals always provided a very significant part of Manitoba Pool’s bottom line, as it did for all operators I believe, but I know they certainly did for Manitoba Pool. It probably went down a little bit because the grain was pulled out of Manitoba, and we were the largest shipper

of grain out of Manitoba. We used to handle through our country elevator system I think we were up as high as 60 percent some years in all the grain in Manitoba. So we had the volume, and terminal unloads were based on originations back on the Prairies.

NP: What does that mean, terminal unloads?

CS: Well, you would get car allocations based on the percentage of grain that you handled. Although, they had a different formula for Thunder Bay, but it still meant that we were getting a good percentage of it down there as well. But it certainly impacted the volume of grain and the number of cars we would get. Well, they're tied together. If you don't get cars, you don't get the grain, but if you're bringing the grain in, they automatically--. It's part of the formula where you would get the cars to move it out generally speaking. It didn't always work perfectly, but--.

NP: Okay. I don't know if at the level that you were operating in the organization whether you can answer the question about--. You had talked about here in Manitoba and especially in Winnipeg when issues came up that had an impact on the whole industry, there was a fair degree of cooperation—not always total agreement, but cooperation. Was that also happening at the terminal level? Or is that something that the managers there would have been--?

CS: It was the managers themselves that if there were any issues, they worked that out themselves, and I think they got along quite well. I know the P&H staff and the people at Pool 1, they worked together very well. P&H, I think—don't tell Bill Parrish I said this—but they used to depend on some of our repair crew helping them out quite often because they couldn't justify having a lot of people around. Our guys, I understand, went over and helped them out whenever they could and needed to, so. But there was always rough edges, not necessarily with Parrish, but with some of the others. There were disputes over who got what and where the ship was loaded first.

NP: Oh. So did you have any interaction with the Ports Clearance Association?

CS: No, no.

NP: That was really at the local level.

CS: Strictly Thunder Bay. That's right. The other thing that we did most years when we went down, we met with the council, the Thunder Bay city council and talked about issues and changes. And one of the things that we raised with them on a regular basis was the property taxes. We knew what the taxes were in Thunder Bay. We knew what the taxes were in Prince Rupert because we

were a part owner. We knew what the taxes were in the port of Vancouver, and then we knew the non-existent taxes that were across the border in Seattle. Thunder Bay was at a real disadvantage there. Their taxes were considerably higher.

NP: And their argument was--?

CS: They were the golden cow [Laughs] as far as we were concerned. They spent maybe a load or two of gravel down there some years, but that was it. We didn't see much contribution that the city made for what they were getting out of the terminals. I don't imagine that's changed, but there's a lot of lesson there.

NP: Did that have any impact on grain shipments out of Thunder Bay, or it was you're annoyed, but at some point--.

CS: Mostly annoyed. Well, the taxes there came out of our bottom line at Manitoba Pool, and we knew what the taxes per tonne were to Prince Rupert and in Vancouver, and we knew where we could make more money. But we really couldn't say, "Okay, we won't ship to you anymore. It's going to go west." We didn't have that freedom.

[1:30:38]

NP: That brings up another point, and that's grain handling costs. Were they also varied from Prince Rupert to Vancouver to Thunder Bay to Churchill?

CS: As I recall, there wasn't a whole lot of difference, but I can't remember that.

NP: It was probably nationally negotiated.

CS: I would think. There might have been a little bit, but I don't think it was significant. But there'd be other people that could maybe answer that better than I.

NP: During your time in the executive, would it be called, were there any strikes?

CS: Yes. I think there was at least one in Thunder Bay, and we had a strike at Manitoba Pool. The one that I remember the most is the year that we joined with Agricore. We had a pretty nasty strike, and it hurt the organization. It lasted for longer than it should have, and we lost business as a result.

NP: That was just in Thunder Bay?

CS: No, sorry. I'm talking about the country elevators when I mention that part of it.

NP: Okay.

CS: But if the elevators are on strike, they're not shipping grain.

NP: No.

CS: So. But I think there was one strike that I can recall at Thunder Bay, but it might have even been ordered back to work. I don't have a very good recollection of that, but I sure remember the one out here in Manitoba.

NP: So it wasn't an annual problem?

CS: No, no.

NP: In the overall scheme of things. Hm. Something else came to my mind there, but it's slipped out again. Okay.

CS: Truin.

NP: Oh, okay, was the fellow's name?

CS: That's one of them, yes. [Laughs] First name that's maybe--.

NP: Do you think he's still alive?

CS: I'm not sure. I expect he is.

NP: I should try to track him down. Sometimes finding these previous managers is very difficult to do.

CS: Well, if you got a hold of Brian Mallon, he could tell you.

NP: Yeah, okay. Changes over the time that you were involved. We talked about some of the changes in farming, but now changes in Manitoba Pool Elevators.

CS: Well, they're sort of tied.

NP: Oh, okay.

CS: But which way do you want to go first?

NP: Wherever you'd like to start.

CS: Well, I think some of the changes-- Well, the agriculture, it's always been changing, but in the '70s and into the '80s, I think, was when it really started to take off. Four-wheel-drive tractors came out, the combines started to get bigger, air-conditioned cabs on tractors and combines. So the acreages were getting larger, and at the same time as they got larger, grain trucks went from a one-tonne to a three-tonne to tandems and now later the B-trains. That all had an effect on the country-elevator system. Some people might say that the elevators were abandoned first, but I take the opposite side that I think the changes on the farm led to the consolidation of the country elevator system because as the trucks got bigger and the farms got bigger, they could haul further and it did not really cost them any more. They'd bypass an elevator or two.

[1:35:16]

We ran into the same problem with farmers buying farm supplies, especially chemical. Sometimes our toughest competitor was our own country elevator down the road, the next one, because we had so many of them across the province. We were--sometimes you'd see nothing but Manitoba Pool elevators if you drive for several elevators. Well, quite a few. They might have been-- Well, it started off six or seven miles apart, but even as they got a little bit further apart, it was usually another Manitoba Pool that you would see. Farmers would bypass because they could buy from down at the next country elevator because the country-elevator staff were getting paid for handling ag supplies--fertilizer and chemical--on a dollar basis or a volume basis. And so, they knew if they could increase their sales, they could make more money, and how we got into that con-- [Laughs]

NP: Competing with yourself.

CS: Exactly. That's what was happening. But eventually, as the elevators started to consolidate, Manitoba Pool--it might sound like I'm bragging--but they had the best well-kept country elevator system in Manitoba of anywhere on the Prairies.

NP: Now what do you mean by--?

CS: They were in the best shape. They were maintained the best, and they were very well maintained by and large over the whole system. It was difficult to go out and close those elevators because they were in pretty good condition. They had some useful life in them. Our farmer members and our delegate system usually would agree to closing elevators, but that one, not mine. That was difficult. We were a little bit longer getting into building the larger more modern elevators than some of the other companies were. Well, two reasons. We had so many of these smaller elevators that we were going to have difficulty closing in some areas, plus the capital that we were going to have to borrow in order to do it.

So there were two reasons why we didn't get into the larger elevator just as quick as some did, and we were at a disadvantage when these big trucks came along, the semis. We had lots of elevators that couldn't dump a big truck, at least with any degree of ease. Even a tandem truck, that's a double axel under the box. We couldn't lift the box high enough because the elevator was too low. So we were starting to get hurt in that way. So these changes--. And the other companies knew that, so they could pick their spots and move in. It made for tougher competition.

NP: Were the other elevator companies in pretty much the same situation? So you didn't lose people, your farmers, because you closed down because other people were closing down too?

CS: Well, we had the largest percentage that had to be closed down, and because farms were starting to grow fairly quickly, some of those same farmers had the options of where they did their business. And the other thing that came along in the early '90s when the Crow Rate was done away with, the elevators were paying incentives for a 50-car spot, for example. If you had a big elevator, you could accommodate that amount of grain. You just had to pay the farmer that extra few cents a bushel to deliver a little bit further, and they could buy the business and load the 50 cars. Didn't cost them anything because they were getting a rebate back from the railways.

NP: So did people have a membership in Manitoba Pool Elevators?

CS: Yes, they did.

NP: Did you see a decrease in membership, then, over that time? Well, you must have because there were fewer farmers.

[1:40:05]

CS: Well, it wasn't-- Well, yes, overall, we did because the numbers were going down, but once a member was a member, he was a member for life unless he asked to be bought out or paid out or whatever. That happened some, but the overall number certainly did drop. I would think-- It's hard to put a number on just how it actually worked out, but I think the larger farmers were quicker to go to the opposition than they were to go to Manitoba Pool because it was a cooperative. Not everybody believes in a cooperative, and that hasn't changed, whether it's-- Well, there are no cooperative elevators anymore. But Co-op stores that we've got all across the country, there are still lots of people that will not darken their doors. Even if they're a part owner, they share in their returns through their dividends, and some of them are saying, well, they get their dividend up front. Maybe they do.

NP: Well-- [Audio pauses] My opinion. The opposition to cooperatives, you said, has always been there.

CS: Yes.

NP: And yet, for a cooperative to exist—in the case of the Pools if we go back in history—they had to have a certain percentage of people before it was even worthwhile to be, to become.

CS: That's right. Yes.

NP: Although the opposition was always there, let's say that, what, 20 percent weren't in favour and 80 percent were in order to get going. What would be the-- Is that fair assumption? And what would it be now? Is the opposition growing? Does that percentage still hold? Or has it changed substantially? Is that question making any sense? Is there any increase in the opposition, or is it holding steady at what it was?

CS: Now we're talking about the Co-op retail system now? Because the grain system is gone.

NP: Just the whole idea of cooperatives.

CS: Well, I think as far as the agra side, just about every gas station or gas company is into fertilizer and chemical. There are independents that we never used to see that are now in that business, and they're growing. In fact, they are by far the largest dealers probably across the Prairies, the independents, now.

NP: The independents being--?

CS: Privately owned. They will start up with a fertilizer shed and supply fertilizer, but they'll provide good farm service. They'll scout the fields. Well, the cooperative system does that as well, but--. And then the seed companies certainly have a hand in this, and chemical companies have a hand in this as well, like Monsanto, for example. While they'll supply the co-op system, I think they're more inclined to deal with the independently-owned dealerships than they would be with the co-op system.

NP: Sort of philosophical bent, right? Why would you speculate that the spirit of cooperation, cooperativism, is not as strong as it used to be?

CS: Independence. I think I see it as farms get bigger. They feel that they're in a position—they're dealing with larger volumes—they can go out and make their own deals. They don't need to worry about--. They don't care about the Canadian Wheat Board. They think they can do as well without it. They can go and buy their chemical and fertilizer and cut their own price depending on their volume, I guess, or how quick they pay their bills. I don't know how they do it. Farmers, as they got bigger, they were feeling more independent and didn't really think they needed somebody else looking over their shoulder anymore.

[1:45:02]

NP: And do you think that's correct?

CS: Well, I think it will come back to bite someday.

NP: In what way?

CS: Well, losing the Canadian Wheat Board from the government's perspective or even a farmer's perspective couldn't have happened in a better year than it did last year because prices just went up on every commodity, and it's moving because the demand was there. There were short crops in parts of the rest of the world. Well, the US short crop was the biggest player. If people think that things are always going to be that great where they can pick and choose where to deliver to get their prices down the road, well, I hope they're not disappointed, but I think there's a good possibility they might be.

NP: You mentioned early on—I thought it was an interesting point, and nobody else had made it before—about the increased size of trucks, farms was a factor in the demise of the elevators rather than the other way around. So are you saying—and I'm sort of interpreting this, so it may not be correct—are you saying that the increased size of farms is also responsible for the decrease in cooperation because there isn't the need to cooperate that there was previously?

CS: Oh, I think--.

NP: And it's really a question of size.

CS: Oh, I think your comment is right on. They're independent, and they're getting their advice from the chemical company or a seed company. It has nothing to do with--. And in some cases, Cargill, for example, I think do a tremendous job from what I've gathered in helping a farmer with marketing decisions and with their input decisions. They're probably doing better than—across the spectrum—than any of the other grain companies are. Now, they don't have as large an area to cover because they're not the big players, but from what I read and gather, I think they're doing a super job of providing a full service of market intelligence and making the right decisions as to what chemical to use, what fertilizer. Others are doing it, but I think they're doing it probably better.

NP: And one of the things that had crossed my mind about the demise of the Wheat Board as it was known and the reduction in services provided by the government--. What are the impacts of that? Not so much on what's obviously the impacts, but on independence of information that's available to farmers? As everything is privatized, is there any impact on that, or is that--?

CS: I'm not sure whether there is or not. A private company providing that service, they've probably got more to lose by not giving good information than somebody else is, that are more generalist than--. Farming is a very big business today. The input costs for seed and fertilizer and chemical, huge amounts of money go into the ground every year. What's is more than a number of years ago—excuse me—would be the gross coming off that acre. So they've got to be specialists. Like we used to have Ag reps running all over the country in every little, well, not every little town. There used to be one in Minnedosa, one in Neepawa, one in Minnedosa. Now you get one spread out three times as far away, and those people, there are some things they could do, but they could not be specialists the way the agronomist at a chemical company or even some grain companies up to the same level in what information they can provide and understand what they're doing. So the government has backed away, but it's probably just as well because they could not have kept up with it. Which came first? Well, I don't know. [Laughs]

[1:50:29]

NP: Well, the resources that would have to be ploughed in to maintain that.

CS: Yeah.

NP: Constant upgrading of information.

CS: So there's others that have picked up on that source of information, and especially marketing of the grain has now been added to it. But certainly, the information on producing the crop, that's a very specialized service, and grain companies, fertilizer companies, and the chemical companies have really jumped into that.

NP: Now, there was a mention made earlier on in the interview about the rationalization of the railway branch lines. So again, it's chicken and egg related to the closing down of the community elevators. Which came first? Did they come in at--?

CS: Well, the rationalization of the elevators.

NP: Came first?

CS: Oh, yes. Just as an example, between here and Trans-Canada Highway, there used to be six rail lines in that area between the Trans-Canada Highway and Riding Mountains that are just off to the northwest here. There are three still in that same area here, but the further west you go, the further apart they become. Like we haven't been impacted nearly as dramatically in this province as they have been as you go further west. There are isolated areas in this province where the hauling distances really stretched out, but nothing like what it is further west.

NP: What has been the impact on the farmer of--. Have they grown and become more productive in parallel with the pulling back of services and having to travel further that it really is not much of an impact on their bottom line?

CS: Well, I think generally speaking, I would say the farmers have become more productive. With these modern air seeders that are available now, they're run by computer. I was just noticing a field of corn a couple of days ago. I was out driving around. Every plant every six inches down the road. That's done with the improved technology in the seeding. That was just on corn, but they can seed canola almost the same way. They can reduce the pounds of seed per acre by between two and three pounds per acre because it's pinpointed where it is, not just sort of dribbling out, and here it's thick, and there it isn't. Their productivity and their costs are certainly improved. The air seeders have reduced the amount of tillage that's going on, on the large farms. Like there's farms right beside Neepawa here, one of them is somewhere between 15 and 20,000 acres right now, and they're not the largest farm in the province by any means. Further go west, they'll get even bigger.

NP: Is there any room for the small farmer anymore?

CS: Not really.

NP: Unless you live right next door?

CS: Not really. They're being weeded out pretty quickly. Not as a straight grain farmer. I would say they're a thing of the past. You can't buy a new, small combine anymore. That's one change. Tractors, you can still buy small tractors and seeding equipment, but a combine, you'd have to hire somebody to custom do it if you want them to--. And some people do that. But you can't buy anything but a \$500,000 combine anymore if you want a new one. There'll be older, small ones still being traded, but that's not going to last forever, and they won't be able to get parts for them forever either.

[1:55:00]

NP: Well, obviously we talked about the rail lines, the changes in the elevators that were around, the services that were provided. Now, the big change, which is the change in the—what's the word I'm—landscape related to the Pool elevators—like rapid change almost from the time this project was started. You've made it very difficult for us! [Laughing] I'm sure it has been no picnic for you either. But that really started, well, it started when you were in your final years. So what transpired? How did these things get moving, and then moving at a really rapid speed?

CS: Part of it is a competition to get land. You know, as the old saying goes, there isn't any more of it. There is a real competition for farmland, and somebody might buy a big tractor one year and think, "Oh, I haven't put many hours in that. I have to get some more acres to cover the ground with." It sort of feeds on itself. A lot of grain movement is done by custom haulers. Some farms have one or two semis of their own, but an awful lot of it is done by custom haulers, and once it's on the truck, the farmer doesn't care where it's going. He figures he makes a phone call and gets a price, and probably the elevator company said, "This is your price. Deliver it here in the pit." So they don't really care how far it moves. So that restriction has been removed as far as, "Well, I can only deliver it for those few miles that my little truck will take me." But competition for land, the change in equipment, government policy has had an impact to some extent.

NP: In what way?

CS: Well, for example, from a provincial government perspective, they're removing the people from these Ag offices that we used to have scattered all over the province. I don't know how many we used to have, but every town of 12 or 1,500 people would have an Ag rep. Now that isn't the case. It's the chemical, seed, and grain companies that are providing the technical and--. Oh, what's the right word for their production? providing the information, agronomic information. That has changed, become very specialized.

So that's certainly having an impact. I expect that some of these companies that are providing this service are saying it's based on a certain-sized farm. If you're this big, it's this. If it's this big, it's probably less per acre. That contributes to it. Federal government policy like eliminating the Canadian Wheat Board. They did that. They didn't even follow the legislation to do that. That in itself is maybe not so--. Losing the Canadian Wheat Board in itself is maybe not the most terrible thing. It was the way it was done because it was supposed to be made by farmer decision, which didn't happen. Lots of farmers were happy about that, but certainly an awful lot more weren't.

But that has an impact as well on the speed-up of this change now. There's a sum shift happening in the kind of crops that are being grown. Last year, from here or even north of here to the US boundary, there were thousands of acres of corn—like you wouldn't know the difference between driving across Nebraska and driving across up here last year almost, with the corn fields. It turned out tremendously well. Same with soybeans. They're moving north and into this country because of improved varieties. That's certainly going to change the kind of grain that's going to be moved and how it's moved. Most of that stuff will be moved by truck into the feeding industry as far as corn is concerned. Some of it to distilleries, into the distillery in Gimli or to the ethanol plant in Minnedosa, but that will all be moved by truck. So there's just a whole lot of things at play that's causing a lot of change.

[2:00:46]

NP: And the changes in the, or shall we say, the lead towards mergers and eventually demise of Wheat Pools? Pool companies. I can't call them Wheat Pools.

CS: Well--.

NP: What were the early issues that led companies to even think about merging?

CS: Since my time on the board of Manitoba Pool, and it happened the odd time even before, I don't recall the number of meetings with our colleagues—excuse me—in the other two Pools regarding getting together and forming one Pool. Everybody thought it was a great idea. Sask Wheat Pool—I don't want to lay all the blame on them. The other two of us can take a bit of the responsibility as well but—they wanted, I think, a bigger decision in how the final outcome would look like because they were the biggest. We have to admit to that. But I know as Manitoba Pool, and I think Alberta Pool felt a little bit the same way, that we had a lot of things to bring to the table as well that we weren't being recognized for.

But then when Sask Wheat Pool became a publicly-traded company, that pretty well ended any possibility of merger with Sask Wheat Pool. Once you become public, that's pretty hard to wind that—publicly traded—very difficult to wind that back. At that point, Alberta--.

NP: When did they go public?

CS: Oh, it would be about 1990--. I'm not sure the exact year, but probably--.

NP: So Agricore came into being in '98?

CS: '98. It would have been probably at least three or four years before that that Sask Wheat Pool would have become publicly traded. I would say maybe '93-'94. Somewhere in there. I'm not sure the exact year.

NP: So let's step back, but don't let me lose this train either. What caused, from what you know, what caused Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to go public?

CS: Well, they had a change in CEO to Don Loewen, who certainly pushed that almost right from when he first became CEO. Some of his board supported--. Well, I guess in the final outcome all his board supported him, or a majority. They wanted to become a world-sized organization. They got involved in a number of other ventures—quite involved in the hog business. They got involved in not Tim Horton's, the other donut shop.

NP: Robin's?

CS: Robin's Donuts. They got involved with that. They were building a grain terminal in Manzanilla, Mexico, another one in Gdańsk, Poland, I believe it was, and yet, the other two organizations were saying, "We don't think it's a good idea."

NP: Now, did they have to go public in order to do that? Is there something about being a--?

CS: Well, it's one way of raising a lot of capital.

NP: Oh, okay.

CS: And which they did initially, I guess. So then Manitoba Pool and Alberta Pool, we decided we were going to be on the outside looking in at this. It wasn't going to be a three-way organization coming together. And the feelings between Alberta Pool and Sask Wheat Pool were never the same as they were between Sask Wheat Pool and Manitoba Pool for some reason. I'm not sure what it was, and we got along pretty well with Alberta Pool. But there was never a strong feeling of working together between Sask Pool and Manitoba Pool. We got into the oilseed crushing business, Manitoba Pool and Sask Wheat Pool. Alberta Pool was never part of that.

[2:05:31]

NP: Where was UGG in this?

CS: Well, I was coming to that.

NP: Oh, okay. Sorry. [Laughing]

CS: About the year before, at least maybe 18 months before the merger of Alberta Pool and Alberta Pool--.

NP: Alberta and Manitoba.

CS: Sorry, right.

NP: Do you want to say that again, just so we have a--?

CS: Alberta Pool and Manitoba Pool decided to merge. About roughly 18 months or thereabouts—probably slightly less—Alberta Pool and Manitoba Pool, we decided we were going to make an attempt to takeover United Grain Growers, who were a publicly traded company as well. We had bought up all the shares that we could buy. We did this individually. When we got to the point where I believe we were at 19 percent, I think, was the trigger point, we had to state our intentions. We probably didn't—well, I know we didn't—manage it as well. Whether it would have changed the final outcome, we'll never know. It was a hostile takeover. No other word for it. Had we gone and talked to UGG and said, “Look, we think we should do this. Can we work together on it, make it work?” That never happened. I like to think that maybe it would have. However, we'll never know. And so, they put a poison pill in place that, in effect, the shares that we owned would have basically become worthless if we proceeded.

NP: How does that transpire? Like what can they do--?

CS: It was in their legal right to do it, and I've heard of other companies doing it since. I'd never heard of it before that either. But they can, in effect, determine that the shares that Alberta Pool and Manitoba Pool owned—and it amounted to quite a significant number—they can, within their own organization, declare that we could never sell those shares so that they'd be worth anything. So they put it in place. So immediately when we found out that that was the way it was going to come down, we both decided that this wasn't going to work. We decided we were going to sell our shares, and we made a lot of money on them. It was one of the best years that Manitoba Pool ever had was selling those shares plus selling our share in Can-Oat in Portage la Prairie to Sask Wheat Pool. They came out and said that when they became a publicly traded company, they wanted Manitoba Pool out of it. The major shareholder at the time said, "Yes, you can buy me out, but Manitoba Pool has got to be treated quite well in this," because we had provided a lot of assistance to the original owner of Can-Oat over the years in his trading activities and supplying them with oats. So we came out of that deal quite well as well.

So after that had all taken place, Alberta Pool and ourselves decided, "Why don't we merge?" And so, we went out and held country meetings, met with our delegates, and said what we were thinking about. We each held individual delegate meetings on the same day, and when it went over, we had a one negative vote in Manitoba Pool delegate body, and Alberta's was, I'm not sure whether they had any or not, but it was overwhelming majority that we should merge our two organizations and restructure our delegate bodies, reduce the number of delegates, restructure our board. But that would happen after we'd been in business for a year and get a chance to get our feet under us and go through that exercise of restructuring. At the same time, we had made the decision jointly to build a couple of elevators in Saskatchewan because they had gone into Manitoba to build elevators as well as into Alberta. This was before they had gone public, which didn't help the situation any either. So we made the decision to build three elevators in Saskatchewan in various key points. I was there when the concrete was being poured, and the response from area farmers was tremendous.

[2:10:48]

But we had to borrow a lot of money to do it, as well as expanding and building new facilities in Alberta and Manitoba. We ended up with--. In the first year, I think the crops were fairly decent, and I retired after the first year. Following that, there was some bad crops across the Prairies. The volume of grain was down, and over the next three or four years—I forget how long it was after I left—they, I guess, made the decision to sell out to UGG.

NP: Now, refresh my memory. What was the impetus for combining all three Pools, recognizing it didn't work? What was the impetus for that?

CS: Well, I guess we could see, well, some office efficiencies. We didn't need as many head office personnel as the three organizations had. There would have been efficiencies in moving the grain because the car allocations were based on a company's presence within a province. We were each operating in individual provinces. Maybe there were times when certain varieties of grain were needed. We could pull them cheaper to the West Coast out of Alberta or out of western Saskatchewan, just as an example, to meet certain marketing opportunities, probably opportunities to find other value-added opportunities as well to more than just handle grain, but to add value to that grain, whether it was oilseed crushing. There was often talk of a flour mill, which might have been a possibility, where we process the wheat where it was grown in the area where the top-quality wheat was. Pasta plant was often talked about—lots of good durum in southern Saskatchewan. So on paper at least, and in many ways I think on paper it was right that we could have reduced our operating costs, certainly by a fairly significant amount.

NP: But in order to do that, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool would have had to be on side?

CS: Oh, they would have been on side, but one of the things they said, "Head office has to be in Regina." Regina is a nice little city, but no other connection to the grain industry. Winnipeg is the grain capital of Canada. Were we unfair in Alberta and ourselves in digging our heels in on where the senior management should come from other than putting them all up front and selecting the best? The head office issue-- . But then they were, before they became public, those issues were still on the table.

NP: Was there an arbitrator involved in the negotiations? Was there an outside person brought in to--?

CS: We did have, on a couple of occasions, to help lead the discussion, but it certainly worked, I think, when we had—when Alberta Pool and ourselves made the decision to merge—we had outside assistance. We had a man from Toronto, whose name I've forgotten, came out of Deloitte. And certainly, I think he provided a very valuable service in putting it together and also provided us with a means in which we would determine who the first CEO would be because we decided it would come from the existing organization, but there would only be one, and there were two. We wanted to do that with Sask Wheat Pool. They would not consider that. With three CEOs, they would not consider that option at all. So there was things like that that turned us off.

[2:15:32]

NP: Before we move on to what happens after that, was all of this necessary? Could success have-- . Could the three Pools, including Saskatchewan not going public, could they have succeeded if things hadn't changed?

CS: One of the areas that really would have made a difference would have been our ability to generate capital because the change in the elevator system was already started. Individually, we would have had difficulty generating the necessary capital to build

those \$25 million elevators that you see sitting around the country now in order to be competitive, to load the 110 or 115 railcars at a time. Individually, we might have been able to build one or two. Well, Manitoba Pool built a couple of them, and beyond that we would have had to have waited until they started getting a payback, and we'd reduced our debt in order to build any more of them. The other two were, I don't think, any different that way. Generating capital, I think, would have made a big difference at a lower interest rate, I'm sure, because we would have had more assets behind us, more ability to generate the kind of bottom line that we would need. A short crop in one area of one province was not going to have the same impact across the Prairies as it would have in an individual province. That was one of the big issues. Plus, we would have had the opportunity to have some more influence on where our railcars were spotted, which province, because we would have been one organization rather than three. That would have had an impact as well. So there were--.

NP: Would it have had any impact on terminals?

CS: I don't think that it would have. If it was the right thing to do to ship grain to Thunder Bay as one organization, I think that same thinking should have existed.

NP: And Alberta didn't have, by that time, they didn't have a--.

CS: Not then they didn't, no.

NP: No. So when and if they had to ship east, did they always ship through Manitoba Pool, or did they--?

CS: Yes. They shipped quite a lot of their grain through us. And just as Manitoba Pool, while we had an interest in one terminal in Vancouver, we had an interest in Prince Rupert. Alberta Pool had a big terminal in Vancouver, which they had become partners with Cargill in, and Sask Wheat Pool owned a big terminal, and then the three of us owned a terminal jointly. But it would have improved the efficiency and throughput in that sense as well, I expect. But as far as Thunder Bay, if it was right to ship it east one to one, I think that would have still been there.

NP: Now--. Sorry?

CS: It might have--. I should back up. It might have speeded up Sask Wheat Pool's consolidation maybe by one more terminal in Thunder Bay. Maybe. I'm just guessing at that, so.

NP: Mhmm. So in rapid succession, if I've got this right, there was negotiations between the three Pools in which you agreed to disagree. Shortly after that, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool went public.

CS: Well, we were still--. It was an ongoing discussion every year.

NP: Even when they were public?

CS: Well, we had a couple meetings even when they became public. I don't think there's any harm in that being known now because they're gone now anyways.

[2:20:05]

NP: That's right.

CS: But they were very, very worried that if that ever became public, it would have an impact on their share price. I can understand that, but it never got out that we had met a couple times.

NP: So then there was an agreement to disagree between one party, and the two parties formed into Agricore.

CS: Yes.

NP: So how did that work out in the year that you were there? As you had hoped?

CS: Well, there was a lot of growing pains. There was a lot of employees transferred from Alberta. They closed their office. Well, they had pretty much shut the office down except for a handful of people. They continued to manage the agri-sales, like the chemical and fertilizer continued to be managed out of Alberta, but their grain people in large part were transferred to Winnipeg. Their public relations, policy people, some of them--. There was a lot of Alberta Pool people transferred to Winnipeg.

NP: And were there--. How do they describe it? Always annoys me when they describe it this way. [Laughs] the "Your position is no longer--."

CS: There was some of that, yes.

NP: So--.

CS: In both organizations.

NP: Yeah. Was it people had to apply? You know, there were two of a position, they had to apply, or were offers made?

CS: I would say both.

NP: Yeah. Did it go fairly smoothly?

CS: I think that it did. I'm sure you could talk to people that would tell you different. [Laughs] But I thought it went reasonably well. I know I spent an awful lot of time on the road that first year out in Alberta for elevator openings. I saw some parts of Alberta that I'd never been to before. But the other--. Yeah, there was a lot of travel involved for some people. The other part of it was that XCAN and Western Co-Op Fertilizer and the insurance was still owned by the three organizations and continued to operate that way, which it had no negative impact on it because it had their individual management.

NP: Who was hired as the CEO of the new--?

CS: Of Agricore?

NP: Mmhmm.

CS: It was Gord Cummings, the CEO that had been at Alberta Pool. And the individual that I would say lost out was the CEO of Manitoba Pool, Greg Arason. They had agreed that when we got into the discussion, they were both prepared to put themselves forward to the joint boards as candidates, and substantive interviews took place with both as well as our consultant that we had interviewed them, talked to them both, and reported back to us, and a decision was made as to--. And Greg ended up being CEO at the Canadian Wheat Board. President, I guess his job title was.

NP: What impact, if any—negative or positive—did this have on relationships with customers, with farmers, with railways, the Wheat Board?

CS: I don't think there was a lot of negative feelings about it. We had spent a lot of time out in the country, and I know Alberta Pool did the same, talking about it before the delegates ever voted, and so they understood what we were doing, and to the best of

our ability, where we thought the advantages were. And I think by and large that people bought into it. One of the--. The negative feelings certainly showed up in Manitoba Pool when the selection was made as to who was going to be CEO. One organization had been closely connected to one, and in this one, they had to get used to somebody else. One of Greg Arason's strengths was he was a good people person, and there was people that were quite upset about it. But however, they got past it and went on. So that didn't make it any easier in the Winnipeg office for a little while.

[2:25:18]

NP: Were there unanticipated costs? I'm just thinking of painting the elevators! [Laughs]

CS: There were costs, but we had gone through the exercise of--. Well, we didn't put much paint on, but we did put new signs on them all, and there was a cost involved there. There was some head office savings. The head office in Winnipeg was expanded somewhat, so there was some costs there, but we had gone through the whole range of what we knew we were getting into and had a price on it. I don't think any of us ever judged them to be excessive. There was some additional costs. I don't remember the number now, but some additional costs, certainly, but nothing was a big surprise to it.

The one area that did hurt us, I think I mentioned it earlier, Alberta Pool was not unionized, and it was decided by all of the employees that—and they outnumbered us in employee numbers—that they really didn't want a union, to be involved in the union. That caused a strike here in Manitoba, and it went on for too long, and it cost us some business because they just simply shut the elevators down. We had individuals that would continue to be at an elevator to take in grain, but it was a very rough time, and it hurt. That was a bad way to start out a new company.

NP: Was that unanticipated?

CS: I don't think that we anticipated that--. Well, we knew there'd be some hard feelings. We didn't think that they could carry it out as long as they did. I forget the length of time, but it was a rough time.

NP: Yeah. So at the end of your year, then, were things going on fairly smoothly?

CS: Yes. We were into restructuring the board. That decision had been made as to downsizing the board from—what were we at?—16 at least directors, and we were going to downsize that number. Although, we were taking in parts of Saskatchewan from both sides and getting delegates from Saskatchewan, and our delegate body was going to be downsized somewhat as well, but the

groundwork for that had been done through the year, meetings out in the country. There were some directors who were defeated, and some new people came onboard. That was after I had left.

NP: Would you have done anything differently?

CS: Oh.

NP: Other than people not digging in their heels on Saskatchewan's demands?

CS: Well, I guess we should look back and say where could we, as the other two Pools, been showing a little more flexibility in trying to advance this further down the road and maybe ended up as one organization, because the rest of the industry, especially UGG who were anti-Wheat Board and lobbied strong against the Wheat Board, they were very concerned because we had a fair amount of political power as Prairie Pools anyway. We had an office in Ottawa, and it might have made a difference as to what might have eventually happened as far as the Wheat Board is concerned. We like to think it might have. There was more political strength in the organization, because after we separated and went our separate ways, Prairie Pools really did not have much of a function after that because we had one organization going one way and the other two—or Agricore—somewhat different. So the political strength on whether it was Wheat Board or other issues, that certainly was weakened.

[2:30:17]

NP: Interesting you bring up that topic because I've read a little bit of history about the development of the grain industry in the west, and of course, one of the big changes is the number of farmers that there were, say, at the turn of the 1900s compared to now.

CS: Right.

NP: And every time you turned around, there was a commission that the farmers had fought for. There were things that were brought in that farmers fought for, whether they were happy they won, I don't know. But the farmers' voice seemed to me to be pretty strong then because, as the percentage of voters on the Prairies, they were by far the largest group. Is it accurate to say that the Pools represented the farmers' political interests as opposed to just their own political interests? Were their interests and the farmers' interests pretty much the same when you hit the 1990s and the 2000s? And this is a very long-winded question, but that goes on to say, then, if they did, who represents the farmers now? And if there is no representatives of the farmers as a group, does it make a difference?

CS: Well, certainly, I would say yes to the last part of your question. [Laughing]

NP: That's probably the only thing you can remember because I went on for so long! [Laughs]

CS: No, I think as the three Pools, we had a fair amount of— and not just in the recent years. Going back for many years that the Pool representation, and they could—what's the word?—not energize but get farmers to come together, and they made various trips to Ottawa by rail, I read about, dealing with different issues. And so, the three Pools, I think, did have a fair amount of political power. At least we thought we did. I think we had some influence on some issues on farm policy that the federal government would be working on. Drought payments, for example. What's reasonable and fair? Is it needed? Transportation issues not just on freight rates, but on service issues, which some periods they got pretty terrible; changes in freight rates that the government had some influence over; charges that the Grain Commission could levy for their services because the government, in the past, had picked up a fairly significant portion of that. That's getting drastically reduced. The farmers are basically picking up the major share of it now. But the three organizations, I think, did have a fair amount of influence on those issues.

Provincially, we never strayed across borders to talk about issues. They basically weren't a whole lot different anyway, so they could each represent their own, and they were dealing with their own politicians. Although, our political representation, we spent more time dealing with federal politicians than we ever did with provincial. We would meet with our provincial government once a year and the odd time with the Ag Minister occasionally. He would come as a guest speaker to our annual meeting. That was pretty much it because most of the issues were federal responsibility anyways, so. So there was I think a big--. And who represents farm interests now?

NP: Mhmm.

CS: The provincial farm organizations that have--. We have KAP [Keystone Agricultural Producers] in Manitoba, Wild Rose in Alberta, and I'm not sure what they call the organization in Saskatchewan. They are by and large, I think, doing a pretty good job, but I'm not sure whether they get together to the same extent that the Pools did, for example, back 20 years ago to represent farm interests. I think you made a comment: Were they representing company interests or farm interests? When the elected side were involved—and basically that's who it was—we didn't stray far from representing farm interests, or we would have heard about it.

[2:35:36]

NP: So when they would go public, then a farmer's interest is less direct.

CS: It's a shareholder interest.

NP: It's shareholder interest.

CS: Right.

NP: Okay. So, changes.

CS: And that's where, I guess, Sask Pool—I'm not going to be surprised by it—but what happened to the equity of farmers in Saskatchewan when they went public and then Sask Wheat Pool basically-- Well, they got into very, very deep financial trouble because of all the other interests they were getting into. They basically lost most of the farmers' equity. Their shares became worth very, very little. That was one of the unfortunates of their going public, in my opinion, as far as the farmers were concerned. And a lot of them, that's why they were happy to see another company coming in like a Pool, and we've stated, both organizations, that we have no intentions of becoming a publicly traded company, that we would remain a cooperative, that their dividends would accumulate as they did business with the organization.

Alberta Pool had developed a plan for paying out those dividends over a period of years, which we bought into and agreed to. There was interest paid on that account, which we had never paid before, which was kind of a sore point with some of our members. That money was sitting there in their dividend account, we would pay a little bit out each year, but as it was allocated, they had to pay taxes on it. If it become working capital in Manitoba Pool, the company paid the taxes, and the farmer didn't. But if it got allocated to their account, it became taxable, and they didn't appreciate that too much. Alberta Pool's plan, paying some interest, helped to take away some of that sting.

NP: Did you follow what happened afterwards?

CS: Well, I never really knew exactly what happened to Agricore. I never found out. I just knew—or I could guess, at least—that by the number of elevators that were built over a five- or six-year period that they must have generated a fair amount of debt, and there were, over probably a three-year period, some fairly significant downsize in the crops in Alberta and Manitoba. Volume is dollars in that business, and I think—as far as I know—that's why they went to UGG and made a deal with them to take them over. Although, their equity was preserved. There was no loss of value to the individual farmer. They got shares in trade. It was their decision when they sold them. Some of them could have done extremely well. Some, like myself, sold too soon and didn't do as well. [Laughing] But that was the individual farmer's decision. They didn't lose their equity like they did in Sask Wheat Pool.

NP: And then Viterra.

CS: Well, that was the new name of Sask Wheat Pool.

NP: Taking over Agricore United.

CS: Right. Yeah, yeah. That's right. That's when it became Viterra, and then--.

NP: Did you follow how that came about? Because UGG and Agricore come together, perhaps, because of--.

CS: That must have been, oh, six or seven years, I guess, after. I never did hear the details of it or talk to anybody that knew them either. So I really can't. I won't touch that.

[2:40:05]

NP: Yeah. And then comes Glencore.

CS: Right.

NP: Again, this is just your own personal opinion. So that brings an international player into the situation. So from what you know about international grain trade from your travels abroad and involvement in XCAN, does the fact that that's an international company have advantages or disadvantages for--?

CS: I see no advantage to it from a Canadian farmer's perspective. They are a giant company. Their president got a bigger bonus last year than 100 CEOs in this country would get in a lifetime, I think. They're just huge. It's a huge company. The control over the Canadian grain industry, even though most of it--. Well, in fact, it is all private now, pretty much. The only publicly traded presence is ADM [Archer-Daniels Midland]. The others are privately owned, but at least some of it was Canadian. But now, it's totally out of the hands of Canada or Canadian farmers. They're just another mark on the wall as far as that big company is concerned. Although, Pioneer came out of it extremely well. They got a tremendous number of facilities. I'm not sure of the exact price, but I think they got a pretty good deal. The other part of it is that Agrium now owns or controls a huge part of the fertilizer industry in the country and control over the outlets or the retail outlets for that fertilizer, and that's not good for Canadian farmers either. So it's unfortunate that UGG, at least as a Canadian-owned company that had farmer shareholders, that they disappeared as well.

NP: So you said it has a negative impact on farmers. Can you give an example how? Because Cargill has been operating in Canada for quite some time as a major--.

CS: Yes. Cargill have been, as you say, have been in this country for quite a long time. Their focus is on value added more than some of the other companies. And the other part of it is they really have not expanded their percentage of the Canadian grain handle, maybe a percent or two at most, since they came to this country, came into Canada. So they play a role. They're good competition. I think there's a lot of integrity in the Cargill company from my brief experience with them and sitting on a couple of boards with the former president of Cargill. You know, their biggest play in this country is their beef-packing plant in High River, which is the I don't know if it's the second largest or largest in Canada.

NP: So--.

CS: So they are a foreign-owned company, but I don't see them as being--. They haven't changed their approach to handling grain. They've built some good elevators, but--.

NP: All those changes, quite amazing. As I said at the beginning, you start out with things going along pretty well, probably at the time seeming like changes, but nothing compared to the last ten years.

CS: Well, even the last five.

NP: Or the last five, yes.

CS: Because there was farmer control, and now there isn't. Pioneer have jumped from what? They used to be about number four maybe in terms of grain handled, and now they're number one. They got a hold of it because they got some elevators when Sask Pool took over Agricore. Because of the Competition Bureau, they had to divest of some elevators, and they got a hold of a whole bunch more. They're very strategically placed across the Prairies now with some first-class facilities, the newest, plus they're in oilseed crushing. They've expanded that and expanded their terminal position. They're in a great position for a privately owned company.

[2:45:47]

NP: Would it be correct to say that now farming, particularly in the west and maybe in the east—I don't know—farming is really very much similar to any other business?

CS: Oh, it's big business. When you start dealing with even a couple thousand acres of crop land, and some of them many times that, there's no room for a bad decision. It is big business.

NP: But even on a more— Across the Prairies-- . No special deals for the farming industry. It's now just another industry.

CS: Yes, pretty much. Although, I expect, though, that some of those large farms are getting them. I can't prove that, but I suspect they are.

NP: Getting--?

CS: Deals on fuel for volume. Fuel, fertilizer, and chemical, seed.

NP: Yeah. I'm thinking even more from a political perspective. You know, we used to have the Grains Group in the federal government and special subsidy programs and so on. Is that unlikely to be an issue anymore? They're just another industry?

CS: Well, I don't think the political-- . Well, the political strength is not out there to pull it together now, I don't think, because so many farmers are so busy operating their own business, they haven't got time for that, trips to Ottawa or whatever.

NP: Volunteer work, as it would be called.

CS: Yes, that's what it was. [Laughing]

NP: Yes, volunteer work. Okay. Anything else you want to say about the changes that you went through that we haven't had--? I can't imagine we haven't had a chance to talk about. [Laughs]

CS: Well, some of them had to happen. Like the elevator system, it had to change to keep up to the farmers. Maybe the farmers got too far ahead of them—now they got too big—but time will tell if that will ever change back.

NP: That pretty much deals with what you were dealing with in your career for the changes and challenges?

CS: Yeah.

NP: Now, were there any other challenges? [Laughs] Any other challenges that you had to face that aren't connected to the changes that we talked about?

CS: Hm. I can't think of what it would be at the moment. [Laughing]

NP: Yeah, that's right. Or if it was, it was quite minor. Did you regret giving up farming?

CS: Oh, farming was good to us. I liked farming, but I wasn't that crazy about spending a lot of hours on a tractor seat, which I spent lots of them doing. It seemed like that was the right thing to do at the time to go in a different direction. We still own land. It's rented to neighbours. Well, it--. I was walking away from things that I had always been doing and leaving it to Kathleen and the family and a hired man to pick up the responsibility, and they probably did it better than I did. [Laughs] So the other part of it was we lived in Winnipeg for 16 years or 15 years, I guess, and so although we were back to the farm—we didn't miss many weekends—but it wasn't the same kind of contact within the community and not involved with community organizations. But since then, I've got involved with some of those, well, especially since we moved into Neepawa eight years ago.

[2:50:25]

NP: When you think back on your career, including being a farmer, what are you most proud of?

CS: I'll have to think about for a little bit. I guess one of the things that I think we were quite proud of is that we kept pace with what was going on in the agricultural business pretty much. We were changing what we were producing. We ran a small feedlot for a number of years when it was the right business to be in when grain wasn't moving, and that worked out very well for us. I think we could change with the times, that whatever was the right thing to be growing, getting into some special crops. Our equipment we kept up with. We were able to, as a family, do a fair bit of travelling and holiday time. Our kids grew up in a very good community and went onto university and got a good education.

NP: One of the things that struck me in learning more about the growth of the grain trade or the grain business in western Canada was how, almost against odds, Canada—and correct me if you think I'm wrong—Canada became one of the major international grain traders in spite of the fact that most of the grain that was exported was grown in the middle of the country in a horrifically cold climate and with relatively few people. What do you think caused that to happen? How do you think that happened?

CS: Well, I would think that the pioneers must have wondered what they had got themselves into when they first came out here. You know, come out and build a little shack out of sod, or further north here out of poplar trees and sod over the roof, and walk miles and miles to get their groceries or take a wagonload of flour down to I think it was Portage or someplace the nearest flour mill was. A several-day trip to go and do that to get a few bags of flour. Cope with the cold, the drought, the grasshoppers, Prairie fires. I think it's amazing there's still anybody here. [Laughing] They had to be tough people and very adaptive too because that's really how a lot of the changes came about. Individual farmers building a better plough or cultivator or seed drill, hooking two tractors together where there used to be one. Combines I don't think were first built in Canada. I think they came from the States, but I'm sure it wouldn't have been long before somebody up here would have moved one of those threshing machines onto wheels and been pulling it around a field.

So starting out and coming here with--. What is it they bet that CPR that so many dollars they could stay there for X-number of years and own their land? And an awful lot of them did. Many didn't, but they were an awfully tough group of people, and I guess some of that has trickled down.

[2:55:18]

NP: So what would we have, then, is those people, and they would be producing grain, but they couldn't eat it all.

CS: That's right.

NP: So what else? Or not producing enough to export. So what else came into play that we became an international grain trader rather than just subsistence?

CS: Well, the climate over the years probably was a factor in that. It, I think, is a major reason why we can produce the quality that we do, and we had some plant scientists that have done a super job of developing, whether it's rust resistant or other disease resistance into the grains. The changes that came about in canola, shortening up the maturity time so that we wouldn't be faced with a lot of frost-damaged crops. We were very fortunate in all the years—well, my dad as well—the years that we combined, there was never a total crop failure. We never experienced that. The year that Kathleen and I bought our first half-section was probably the driest year for years for a long time, and we still produced a half a crop. So part of it depends on the area that you have the privilege of growing up in, but not everybody in Saskatchewan had that because they fought dust, fought grasshoppers, and rust, and we were never faced with that same kind of problem here.

NP: And we did get railways no matter how annoyed farmers might be with them on an annual basis.

CS: Well, yeah. If we were going to turn the Prairies into a wheat country, there had to be some way to get it to a market. The people that went out and found those markets, well, I guess went east first probably back to the UK and some other European countries to start with. But there were some very, very intelligent, wise people that were here and helped make a lot of these things possible. I don't see the same individual abilities coming out of people that you read about that were here in the past. They're not out there. They do a lot of good things, but they can go out and spend the money to buy machinery or whatever and do it, but not do something from their very own initiative. I just don't see that happening.

NP: When you certainly read the stories of those early people in the grain industry, just like the farmers—although the farmers certainly had the worst of the climatic conditions and probably the worst of the risk because it was individual risk—but some of the early business pioneers too were pretty impressive people.

CS: That's right. They were, and they took their chances providing farmers with fuel until harvest time and generally got paid. [Laughs] Yeah.

NP: Individuals cooperating, would you say?

CS: Well, it was. Yeah. And so, cooperatives were formed. We still have some of them in some form, but not in others.

NP: You received the letter, I think, from Ernie Epp that explained a little bit about our project?

CS: It was pretty short. Actually, there wasn't a whole lot in it.

NP: Just saying that--.

CS: It was happening and that he hoped that I would be willing to be interviewed, and that was basically it.

NP: Just to tell you a little about our ambition because then it leads into probably the last question that I'll ask, and a good thing too because we're on three hours. [Laughs]

[3:00:19]

CS: Oh, God. [Laughs]

NP: I know! I estimated three hours. Anyway, our group called Friends of Grain Elevators—which joined forces with Lakehead Social History Institute to come up with the Voices of the Grain Trade—Friends of Grain Elevators came together because we wanted to have a terminal elevator recognized as a National Historic Site.

CS: Oh, yeah. Right.

NP: And representative of Canada's international grain trade. So because of all these changes in the industry, we've had a tough time finding an elevator because one year it would belong to one person, and the next year it would--.

CS: Oh, right. [Laughing] Flipped, yes.

NP: We couldn't have picked a better time to try to get that happening, but anyway. But we wanted more than just a plaque. What we wanted was an interpretive centre that featured the story of getting the product from the Prairies to international markets and all that this entailed. So we found an elevator that we've put forward as a candidate, and now we're going to move forward and try to get an interpretive site set up. We already have an artifact from Manitoba Pool Elevators because the fellow who had purchased Pool 3 kept the great big fibreglass Manitoba Pool Elevator sign that was going to be tossed in the garbage.

CS: Yeah, right. Good.

NP: So from the perspective of Manitoba Pool Elevators—and given that this centre would be in Thunder Bay—what part of the Manitoba Pool Elevators story do you think should be featured in that, in a centre if it were ever to come about?

CS: I would think the role that the country elevator played because without them, Thunder Bay wouldn't have been needed, I guess, is putting it bluntly. [Laughs] So I would think that the role that the country elevator played as far as getting the grain down there and being part of the changes over the years.

NP: They're really tied together.

CS: Yes, they are.

NP: One would not exist without the other.

CS: No.

NP: And if the country elevators had no place to store it back in those days, that would have rotted on the Prairies. Just like if the railways weren't there, nothing would have happened either. So I mean, one piece very much melding with the other. Okay. Good. Did you ever keep any memorabilia of Manitoba Pool Elevators?

CS: Oh, I might have a keychain or something. I don't know. [Laughing] Not really, no.

NP: No? What happened to Manitoba Pool Elevator archives?

CS: As far as I know, it's still at Brandon University.

NP: Oh, okay.

CS: Because I know a while back, 25 years ago, if an elevator was closed, we would ask them to send their minutes to Brandon University. I have no idea what kind of--. I think I recall them saying they were hoping to get them onto--.

NP: Digitized?

CS: Digitized. Whether it ever happened or not, I don't know, but I know there was an awful lot of stuff went to Brandon University.

NP: Was there a Manitoba Pool Elevator newsletter? Or to--.

CS: Yes, there was. Yeah. It took different forms. And the *Manitoba Co-operator* was an arm of Manitoba Pool for years. Is John Morriss on your list?

NP: I've interviewed him, yes.

CS: Oh, you have? Oh, okay.

NP: Yeah. I talked to him early on in the project.

CS: Oh, okay. Yeah.

NP: He's one of my favourites.

CS: Right. So I know that he--. Yeah. Well, he certainly knows the role that the print media played in it. But what--?

[3:05:04]

NP: Photographs and things such as that?

CS: Brandon University maybe.

NP: Yeah.

CS: Well, a lot of *Manitoba Co-operators* will have a tremendous number of pictures, but--. I know we had various people that would be doing photography, and we had a calendar that we put out. In fact, I think I've got just about all of them that we put out annually.

NP: Oh.

CS: They would always feature an elevator, or maybe more than one. We did that for a number of years.

NP: So likely it is that Brandon University would have that as well, the list of--.

CS: I don't know if they would have calendars or not, but John Morriss might even have a collection of them. But I know I have them for--. I'm not even sure. [Laughs] I guess they're stored here.

NP: Well, who knows. One time we might ask to borrow them and have an exposition of Manitoba Pool Elevator calendars!

CS: Yeah, yeah.

NP: An art exhibit. Yeah. Okay. So I've noted that you have those so even if at some point we could--.

CS: Sure.

NP: If Brandon University doesn't have it, we could digitize them then.

CS: Yeah, right.

NP: Because we have started a website, and it needs some tweaking, but it's at least up and running, and we're hoping within the next year to try to move forward and pry some money from Parks Canada to do a--.

CS: Oh, yeah.

NP: So I'd like to thank you very much for the time that you've spent. A lot of good information.

CS: Sorry I wasn't as precise in some places. [Laughs]

NP: Oh, names, you know, names aren't that important. They can always be found.

CS: Yeah.

NP: So I'm just going to sign off now.

CS: Well, thank you.

End of interview.