

Narrator: Jaring “Jack” Timmerman (JT)

Company Affiliations: Standard Elevator Company, Tilt Grain Company, Searle Grain Company, Grain Insurance & Guarantee Company, Affiliate Inspection Bureau

Interview Date: 30 November 2009

Interviewer: Bea Cherniack (BC)

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Summary: Centenarian and retired general manager for Grain Insurance & Guarantee Jack Timmerman discusses his career in the early days of the grain trade. He discusses getting his start at 16 years old as an office boy for Standard Elevator/Tilt Grain Company, then becoming the company’s accountant and manager. He recounts the event of Searle Grain taking over the company and becoming an elevator manager out in the country. He describes the small community of Esme that he worked in, the tough competition with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool elevator, and his move to a different elevator that also handled flour. Timmerman then discusses his move to the Affiliated Inspection Bureau, which performed country elevator inspections, and finally to Grain Insurance & Guarantee as their general manager. He recalls a particularly successful project of replacing flat bearings in country elevator systems which drastically prevented fire damages. Other topics discussed include stories of the farming communities where he worked, changes to unloading systems at country elevators, changes to railcars from boxcars to hopper cars, having to repair wooden boxcars to prevent leaks, and the importance of grain to Canada’s economy.

Keywords: Standard Elevator Company; Tilt Grain Company; Searle Grain Company; Grain Insurance & Guarantee Company; Affiliated Inspection Bureau; Winnipeg Grain Exchange; Grain accounting; Agriculture economics; Country grain elevators; Grain elevators—equipment and supplies; Grain farmers/producers; Grain elevator inspections; Grain elevator agent; Grain elevator disasters; Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Grain transportation—rail; Boxcars; Hopper cars; Grain buying; The Great Depression; World War II; World War II veterans

Time, Speaker, Narrative
JT: A good fellow, and he does a good interview.

BC: Okay. Well, we'll start today's interview. Today is November the 30th, 2009, and I'm interviewing Mr. Jack Timmerman. The interviewer is Bea Cherniack, and we are at Mr. Timmerman's home in Winnipeg. Before I begin the interview, I just to have this on the record because this is a very interesting piece of history. Mr. Timmerman is 100 years old. He will be 101 in February, and I have the privilege of reading a short article about him when I arrived in his apartment. "Mr. Timmerman swims every day, and he had won many, many swimming medals." Perhaps Mr. Timmerman you can tell us a little bit about your swimming because I think we should put that in at the beginning.

JT: Well, I started swimming when I was a youngster, but I guess I started my swimming in the Pritchard Pool because my mother used to send me there once a week usually to get cleaned up. We didn't have running water where we were in West Kildonan at that time. No, East Kildonan where we were later. But I went there, and I started with a dog paddle, I guess. I'm not sure, but I would imagine that's--. All kids do that dog paddle first. Then I developed the side stroke, which was the main stroke at that time when I was a young person. But then the Australians came in with that Australian Crawl in the Olympics, and they took all the medals. Boy, they really cleaned up. Then people started using that same crawl, and that's what I'm using now for the freestyle. At least they call it the freestyle. I do the backstroke as well. Those are my two main strokes that I use in the swimming events that I compete in. Rather interesting.

But I started competitive swimming. I hadn't been competitively swimming up to age 80, and my wife saw an ad in the paper down in Arizona where we were for a couple of months in the wintertime. So she said, "Why don't you do into this thing?" It was a--. They called it Senior Olympics down there. They did until they were compelled by the World Olympic Committee to discontinue the use of the word "Olympics" in their meet. So now it's the Master's, of course. That's what I did. I remember the Master's. But I said, "Oh, I wouldn't stand a chance. Those fellows there are all ex-college champs." So eventually, I relented, and I went into--. And lo and behold, I went in the 200 freestyle. Lo and behold if I didn't win the gold medal! [Laughs] So I said, "If I can do this without training as you might call it, then I might as well try some of the others."

[0:04:51]

So that year, they had a qualifying year down there in the Senior Olympics. Every second year was a qualifying year for the national. So that was a qualifying year, so I qualified for the national, and I went down to St. Louis. I won some more medals down there. Then I also went to Denmark for the World Games at that time because I thought, "Well, why not?" So my wife and I went there, and she wanted to come with me. Wherever I went, she wanted to go, so that was fine with me. But there I won two silvers and a gold in the world competition in Denmark. That was interesting because I noticed that the water didn't have that much chlorine in it if any. I asked one of the attendants there. I said, "Don't you use chlorine here?" "Oh, we haven't used chlorine for a long time." He said, "We use salt." So apparently, that's what they use over there or did at that time for the matter of disinfecting

the pool, killing the germs. Anyway, it was interesting. Since then, I went into the US National Game a year later down in Minneapolis, I think it was. I'll show you my medals if you like.

BC: After the interview I would love to see them.

JT: After the interview? Okay.

BC: Yes, I would love to see them.

JT: And some of the plaques that I have. But it's been an interesting experience.

BC: Do you compete in Canada?

JT: Oh, yes. Yes. I usually go into the Nationals. I go into the Provincials, but I wasn't getting much competition in the Provincials, so I try not to. They try to twist my arm occasionally to go into them, so I go into them, but occasionally. But I go into the Canadian National swims, that's for all of Canada, and I think I hold most of the Canadian records now for my age group. The Master's, they go up every five years. You go into a different age group, and that means a different category.

BC: What's your category, your age range?

JT: 100 to 104.

BC: Oh, my goodness.

JT: Yeah.

BC: And how many people would swim in that category?

JT: That's what I'd like to know too. I was in Toronto in May of this year, and there I got four world records. That was-- Well, actually, it wasn't all in Toronto because they had asked me to go into the Provincials here, and I broke three world records in the Provincial, and I didn't swim in the 400 metres freestyle, so I still had that one to get. So I went down to Toronto, and I swam in that, and I got it there. So I had four altogether, that is four world records. But that was in the short course because they had put up a barrier in the centre of a 50-metre pool making it 25 metres, you see, and that's what they call a short course. You can swim the

short course, or you can swim the long course. Now, I got four records in the short course. And I'm going to Nanaimo in 2010, which is next year, and that's in May, the long weekend. That competition is going to be swam in the long course, 50 metres. I like that better because it's not as many turns, you see.

[0:10:05]

BC: Right.

JT: So I'm going to see whether I can--. I'm going into five events, that is the 50 free, the 100 free, and the 50 back, 100 back, and 200 back. So I have five events, and I'm hoping—I'm hoping—to be able to get five world records for the long course, so that'll be four plus five is nine, isn't it?

BC: Yes.

JT: So that'll be nine altogether.

BC: That's pretty exciting!

JT: Well, that is provided I can do that, I can win the 500. But how many 100-aged people will be there? It's difficult to say. I may not have any competition at all. On the other hand, I may have three or four. Who knows? Hard to say.

BC: You have to train!

JT: Yeah. Pardon?

BC: So you have to train. You have to be prepared, yes.

JT: Oh, I'm doing that. I swim three times a week—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The pool I go to is Centennial Pool, and that allows lane swimming between 11:30 in the morning to 1:00. So for an hour and a half you can do your lane swimming, you see? And that's the only thing I'm interested in because all competitions run lane swimming, of course.

BC: Where is the Centennial Pool?

JT: It's about, oh, half a mile or a kilometre away to the west of the residence here. Right across from the old Safeway store.

BC: Oh, okay.

JT: So.

BC: Well, good luck in all of yours--. You've got so many records already, but good luck for the future ones.

JT: Well, one always has a goal, you know. And at first, I thought, "Well, if I can get a record in the provincials, I'll be happy." Then you're not satisfied with that. Then you say, "National. Ah!" So you go for the national. So you get that. So then you say, "The next objective is the world. The world records." So that's what my aims are for the world records now.

BC: Right. Great. Okay. I think I better shift now to your work career. [Laughs] So we ask people to start the interview by giving their name and how you started in the grain trade.

JT: That's interesting. They called me Jack at work. My name is actually Jaring, J-A-R-I-N-G. That's a Dutch name. And it's rather interesting because I have a story that I tell that it's actually a--.

BC: Maybe we should just wait for this to finish.

JT: That's 10:00.

BC: Okay. Perhaps just repeat what you just said so you're not competing with your clock that they called you, did you say, Jack at work.

JT: Yeah. And my name was actually Jaring, J-A-R-I-N-G. I said that that was rather interesting. But anyway, I--.

BC: How did you get started in the whole business?

JT: I started in the grain business when I was 16 years old as an office boy. Yeah.

BC: For who?

JT: Now they don't have office boys. They have elevated them. They call them junior clerks now, and maybe even beyond that, who knows? I don't know. They may have even a higher name for them now. Who knows?

[0:15:03]

BC: What company was that?

JT: Well, I started with the--. It was a dual company. There was the Standard Elevator Company, and they had 30 grain elevators in western Canada. And Tilt Grain Company, and they did the exporting and the floor trading. I was as green as grass when I went in there. I remember once there was an office boy, another chap, who was being promoted to another job or he was going to another job, and he was trying to teach me the ropes, that was keeping the boss's desk clean. So in the morning, I left home about 6:00 and took the streetcar from East Kildonan where we lived at that time, and I got to the office before 7:00. Now, they used to have in those days the Grain Exchange—where I worked—they had starters in the morning. There was a fellow, and he was a former soldier. He had been injured, and they appointed him as the starter. He was the starter. So he had a little flicker in his hand.

And see, there was an elevator man for each elevator. There were four elevators there at the time at the front door, and they had an operator for each elevator. In those days, they were grilled. They weren't closed in, you know? They were all grilled, and you could see yourself going up and down the various floors. But anyway, I'd get there at 7:00 in the morning or before, and I'd run up those flights of stairs right up to the fifth floor or the seventh floor. I forget now. We were on the seventh floor I think it was, 704. Yeah, we were on the seventh floor. I'd run up those stairs—which I wish I could do now—but I'd run up those stairs and start my work cleaning the desk and cleaning everything up because they didn't have air-conditioning in those days, you see. They opened the windows. They had summer fallowing in the west, and very often the winds would pick up that summer fallow and all that dust, you know, or soil, and they'd blow it into these windows. [Laughs] The desk would just be covered with dust and soil particles, and I'd have to clean that up, which I did.

I did my best on it because I wanted to make a good impression. So then I would have to go to the mail, to the post office for the mail, and I'd do that. Bring it back. Then I would also have to lick stamps. Any mail that went out, the office boy licked the stamps, placed them on the letters. So anyway, the net result is that from there, they moved me up. I must have done a reasonably good job because they did move me up into another position and another position.

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You know, I noticed that if I was going to get anywhere, I'd have to know something. So I heard of a course that La Salle University in Chicago was selling, so I bought this course. It was in higher accountancy, which is useless these days because it's all computers now, but in those days, well, it was a good course to take. So I took this course, and I finally became the accountant for the company. Then they promoted me to become the manager of the company. Then our president died. The estate sold the company to another company, which was called the Searle Grain Company. It was larger than our company, and fortunately for them, the elevators that we had were not in their area, you see. So it expanded their area of operations quite a bit.

BC: Who was the president of your company that--?

JT: Tilt.

BC: Tilt. Oh, Mr. Tilt.

JT: Capel Tilt. Yes.

BC: Can I ask one other question going back? You talked about the starter. The person who was the starter.

JT: Oh, yeah.

BC: What did they start?

JT: Started the elevators.

BC: Oh, they started all the elevators?

JT: Well, I mean, started the signal to go.

BC: Oh, okay. Now I understand.

JT: "You have people in your elevator, now up you go."

BC: Oh, okay. Got it.

JT: So that was the way they did it.

BC: Okay. Just had to clarify.

JT: Yeah.

BC: Okay. So now the company has been taken over by Searle.

JT: Searle took over, yeah. The transfer, you know, was major because we had 30 elevators, and you had to move all of that business over into their operations. So I worked on that for two months. They asked me to do that. Then they said--. Pretty well at the end, I said, "I know this is the end." So they said, "We'd like you to work for us." So I said, "Well, okay." "But one proviso: We can't give you the job you had." Well, I said, "I hardly expected that" because they had sons-in-law who had married daughters of the owner, Old Searle. He was from Minneapolis, I believe. That was at that time they were opening up the west, you know. That expanding the west.

BC: What year did you start in the grain trade?

JT: 1925.

BC: 1925, okay.

JT: Yeah. But prior to that, they had expanded west. These--. See, I was only 28 years old at the time, which was comparatively young. These sons-in-law, they were much older than I was. They were 45, some were older. They held the positions of department heads, the various departments in the company. That result is that I said to them, I said, "Really," I said, "I don't want an office job because I've gone through all the ropes here in the Standard Elevator Company that is such as hedging and options and all this kind of stuff, you know." So I said, "I know all that pretty well, and I also have the accountancy end of it, so I know all about balance sheets and proper law statements, but I would like to go to the country and serve and work in one of the grain elevators, or be a manager of a grain elevator because I want to meet the farmers." So they said, "Oh, fine." I said, "Before I go, however, I would like to work on a repair crew because I don't know the machinery in the elevator at all. I've never been in an elevator." So they said, "Fine."

[0:25:16]

So in April, which was a cold month up north Saskatchewan where we started—our work that is—they said, “Okay.” So up to northern Saskatchewan around Melfort, I think it was, we went, and we used to travel in a truck. The crew would sit in the back of this truck with all the equipment. So we finally, in July, they called me. It was towards the end of July. They said, “We’ve got an elevator for you down in southern Saskatchewan.” I said, “Okay.” So my wife was a city girl anyway, and I’ve got to give her a lot of credit for this. She quite willingly went with me. That’s something. So we went there to the little place called—and I don’t think it’s there today because I think they’ve taken up that track—a little siding it was called Esme. E-S-M-E. We had one general store, and that was it.

So we started work there. We had these Wheat Board permits. You had to get farmers to accept them and sign them. So I went around. You know, it wasn’t that productive the first year because my competitor, the Saskatchewan Pool, they had been open all those years when they were distributing relief to the various farmers and also relief feed for the cattle because it was drought years at that time during the ‘30s, you see. So it was difficult. So I didn’t get very much grain delivered that year because there wasn’t any to speak of anyway.

But the next year, it improved and improved. So the last year, it was pretty fair because I had more deliveries to me, more grain delivered to me that year than the Pool had at their elevator. But in those days, they had local committees, Pool committees, and this particular committee had a membership of about 12. They all worked, as you might say, in the area, spoke to their friends, “Have your grain delivered to the Pool.” So I thought it was rather good that—fortunate, I suppose—that I was able to have as much grain delivered to our elevator as I did. That was the third year I was there. Yeah.

But that was interesting because we didn’t have a church, of course, or anything like that, so the United Church minister from Vanguard, which is ten miles away, he wanted to establish a kind of a satellite church. So he came out, and they made me chairman of the church board. So we didn’t have a building. Thought it might be a good idea to put up a building of some kind. A farmer had an old granary, hauled that in, and we plastered the inside because the winds in the wintertime. There were 10-inch boards, and they had shrunk, and the result was that there were cracks between the boards, of course, and the wind just came in on those.

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So one fellow there by the name of Bickner, I remember well. He was a good friend of mine at that time. He’s dead now. But he said, “Let’s have a bee.” So I said, “Well, that’s fine.” So they got a gang together, farmers, and they brought all the newspapers they had, and they made their paste. They pasted the inside with newspaper. All newspapers all over the place. Kept the wind out anyway, but it was still cold in the wintertime, I’m telling you. But we had some good times there. Good times. I remember Major

Bowes, he used to have his programs on, and we put on an amateur hour too. [Laughs] I made an old mic on a broomstick, painted a tomato can black, nailed that down, twisted it over so that it was on an angle. That was our mic. We had a lot of fun.

BC: Can you tell me a bit about Major Bowes?

JT: No, I can't tell you too much about him except that we had battery radios in those days, you know. We'd have to buy this big battery. You would get the news and so on over this radio. There was no television in those days, of course.

BC: So he was a radio personality that you would listen to?

JT: Oh, yes. Major Bowes.

BC: Oh, I don't know who he is, that's why I'm asking. [Laughs]

JT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. He was a radio personality at that time. He had an amateur hour, which he ran. You know, they'd have try-outs, and he'd bring the best in on his program. So this was just a fun program that we threw in. We would get a crowd. We would get crowds, my goodness! All the farmers from the area would come in. They weren't big farmers in those days, you know. They were--. If you had a section, you were a big farmer. Today--. A section, I shouldn't say. If you had a four-quarters, then you were a big farmer. Four quarters. Yeah. But no, it was interesting. Yeah. Interesting. Interesting time. Then they moved me to Wadena because the chap that they had there, he was made a superintendent, and they moved me there. That was interesting too, Wadena. We had a town band. Yeah.

BC: Did you play in it?

JT: I did. I started out playing a trombone, but then they made me the bandmaster. That was interesting. We had a band. Oh, I don't know how many we had. About ten or twelve, I guess, at least. Yeah. Somewhere around 12. We played marches and so on.

[0:35:39]

I'll tell you one funny thing that happened. That was the Searle Grain that handled flour there for distribution to the various merchants in the area—Foam Lake and all over the place. So a car of flour had just come in because I was out of flour—that is, it was getting low. So I placed an order, and this car of flour came in. Well, we were handling Red Rose, Quaker, all of these. So I was unloading this, and it was around 5:00 at night. So the bandmaster at that time, which was Joe Tabashnik, he was the

bandmaster. He came over to me. It was during the war, you see, 1941, I think it was. 1940. He came over, and he said, “You know,” he said, “we’ve agreed to supply them with some soft dinner music. So we’d like you to come over when you get through unloading this flour. Come over.” They were having this dinner, which the Daughters of the Empire had put on.

So the Daughters of the Empire had this dinner going, and it was in the large room over the Chinese restaurant. So I said, “All right. I’ll be there.” I went over there. So when I got in, it was a low ceiling. I heard this banging going on. There was a bass drum in the corner, and there was a tuba blowing and bumping and booming and booming away. I joined in. But it amused me when he said, “Soft dinner music.” This was really soft, I’m telling you. [Laughs] It was noisy! But we had a good time. Yeah. We had a good time. Yeah. And we put on a program in the Legion Hall. I brought in a clarinet soloist from Winnipeg, and it went over well. The whole thing went over. So that’s pretty well it.

Then they called me back to Winnipeg. They said, “We’ve got a job here. We’d like you to look at it.” See, Searle Grain Company was the grain company that formed the Grain Insurance & Guarantee Company in 1921. But they had applied for a charter, and they had a Dominion charter in 1919, but they didn’t use it until 1921. I think it was 1921 or 1920. The reason that they started this was because they thought they were being charged too much by the insurance companies, premiums, so they said, “We’ll start our own.” It was a very successful company, Grain Insurance, turned out that way.

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Now, what they did, they established a small company, which is a subsidiary of the Grain Insurance & Guarantee Company, called the Affiliated Inspection Bureau. They formed that because they wanted inspectors going around checking for fire hazards, and also, we were a bonding company as well, that is Grain Insurance. They bonded all the company elevator managers. They did that to avoid the loss that they would have if they had shortages through theft. So they formed this company. The chap that was in charge was a fellow by the name of Collosum, and Collosum had been hired by the Grain Insurance & Guarantee general manager because he was a superintendent in the Saskatchewan police force at the time. So he came in, and he headed this particular company for the Inspection Bureau, and he brought a lot of policemen with him. Yeah. And I succeeded him because it was during-

I went to the war. I navigated on Lancasters. Finished a tour of ops, which is 30 trips. Actually, we did 31, and I came back, and they said, “Well, how would you like to be an accountant for the company?” So I took that for a year. Then they said to me, “Mr. Collosum is retiring now because he’s in his seventies.” During the war, it was difficult to get anybody employed who was younger. So I said, “Okay, I’ll take it.” So I took that job. To make a long story short, the Grain Insurance & Guarantee Company general manager—Ed Craig was his name—he came to retirement age, and he retired. The assistant manager, Fred Bamford, he went

up to become the general manager of the Grain Insurance & Guarantee Company. Then they were looking for an assistant manager, so they asked me to take that.

At the same time, I was still manager of the Affiliated Inspection Bureau, so I had the dual jobs, as you might say. Later on, 1963, I think, Fred Bamford was on a business trip down east, and an Air Canada plane went down, and he was killed. So then they asked me to take on the general manager's job. But we were having a lot of losses in those days. So I thought, "Well, let's see. Let's look into this thing and find out where the losses occurred." Fire losses, that is. So we found that a lot of our losses were made through having flat bearings in the boot. Now, you don't know anything about an elevator, so I won't tell you too much about that.

[0:45:11]

BC: Well, generally, so people will understand.

JT: Every elevator has what they called an endless chain of buckets, and they would take the grain from the trucks. It would be dumped into a pit, and that pit fed to the leg. They called that the leg with this endless belt with buckets attached. You'd open the slide, and the grain would go in and carry all of that grain up to the top, to the head, and there you would have a distribution spout to go to the various bins, you see, because sometimes you took in oats, and sometimes you took in barley. Sometimes you took in wheat. So you'd have to--. And these were all numbers. There's a wheel there that would tell you which--. So you'd turn that wheel, and that would swing that spout around to the proper saucer and the proper feet, the proper bin, you see? There would be pipes going down to the bins. Yeah.

BC: So the fire was happening at which point in that?

JT: Pardon?

BC: The fire was happening in what point in that?

JT: Down below.

BC: Down below. Okay.

JT: In the boot.

BC: Oh, okay.

JT: Yeah. Because most elevator agents at that time were not happy to go down into the boot because usually there was grain dust piled to about that over these cups. There were flat bearings, you see. Now, flat bearings, that means that they were not roller bearings or not ball bearings. So it was a flat bearing, and the only way you could lubricate those was to fill the cups with grease and then screw them down. You'd have to go down every night to screw them down so that they'd be ready for the morning. Well, a lot of elevators just weren't too happy about having to go down, dig through this dust, and find this cup, grease cup. So I thought, "Ah. I'll go for ball bearings. But it would be costly, so we'll see whether we can get the grain companies to fall in line with us."

So I figured it all out, and I found that in five years' time by giving them a discount of so much per \$100 value in premiums, they could pay for them in five years' time. So I wrote them, and all the companies agreed. You know something? We cut down our losses. We were having about seven or eight losses a year, elevators going up in smoke. We cut those down to, one year we had one loss in 17 months. We went 17 months without a loss. Boy, oh boy, I tell you. The directors of the board, they were delighted. Anyway, it went well. The company went well. It grew and grew. The dividends were excellent.

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We had a very astute Scotchman by the name of W. McGee Rait as chairman of the board. You see, all insurance companies, they have to have a certain reserve. This is according to the superintendent of insurance in Ottawa. The net result was that he would make some very astute decisions, and the board would pass them because he was a good investor. He made some pretty wise choices in his investments, and we did pretty well on our investment income as a result. You know, our main source of profit was cutting down those losses, you know? Yeah, we really cut them down. That, fortunately, went on from year to year, not as well as that 17-month period, but we only had two or three or four losses a year. That's about all. So they were cutting way down, yeah, which we helped considerably. Yeah. Helped the company, that is.

BC: When you were in these positions, you would have people who worked for you who would actually go out to the elevators and make sure that they were--?

JT: Yeah, we had a staff of inspectors. We had about 12 or 14 inspectors throughout western Canada, and they had their own areas, you see, their own district, and they had their own list of elevators that they were supposed to inspect. They would inspect these. We kept a map, and we had different coloured pins to show for months. Different months had a different coloured pin. If the territory had many red pins, they were the dangerous ones. We would contact the inspector and say, "Well, look. Why have you failed to inspect here?" So we kept them on their toes in that way. They did very well. Yeah, we had a good staff. Good staff of

inspectors. Everything went quite well. The success of that company was really our inspection department, that is the Affiliated Inspection Bureau, and also getting the odd, good idea. Yeah.

BC: Now, did it change over the years? The wooden elevators started getting replaced by the concrete inland terminals.

JT: Yeah, yeah. That's right. But that didn't start until after. It was just beginning to change when I retired, and most of the change has taken place from then on. Don't forget, I retired in 1974. That's 35 years. Yeah. That's 35 years. That's a long time to be retired, isn't it?

BC: Well, in your time in the grain industry from 1920--.

JT: '25.

BC: '25 to 1972, you retired?

JT: '74.

BC: '74. What were the biggest changes you saw in the whole industry?

JT: Well, the biggest change is I guess the size of farms after the boys came back from overseas. They all wanted big farms, so they would buy some little farm and run them until they had maybe 3,000 acres. At that time, they were in acres. 3,000 acres, 4,000 acres, some even much more than that. But that's a big change that came. Then they got the big machinery, of course.

[0:55:42]

As far as change goes, there were changes in the unloading of the grain. When I was there, most of the grain was brought in by horse and wagon so that if they had 80 bushels on their grain wagon, that would be a pretty big load. They'd have a team of horses. At first, when I was--. There was no air lift. There were no air lifts. They had to crank them up. Anyway, then we had these air lifts, and we had an air tank, which would be pumped up to a certain maximum, you know. Couldn't go over it, otherwise it would explode. But you'd get this, and that would give you the air to lift the load. The front of it would be lifted up to the height of this, maybe six, eight feet, and then that would give you a slope, and the grain in the truck or the wagon would run out because at the back, they would have this slide which they opened up. Down it would go into the pit.

Eventually they got bigger electric lifts, I think. They had that after I left, I believe. But then they had these great big trucks coming in carrying 1,000 bushels. That's interesting when I talk about 1,000 bushels. When I first started, they had these boxcars that carried about 1,000 bushels. They were made of wood, and they would have all kinds of cracks and everything else because they had shipped machinery and everything else. They used them for anything except grain at that time. Then they would shunt them into yours, and you'd have to buy a bunch of lathes at the lumber yard and nail these holes in these cracks, otherwise, you'd have a big shortage in the car by the time it reached the terminals.

BC: At what point did they start just dedicating them as grain cars?

JT: Pardon?

BC: Was there a point where they started dedicating them just to carry grain?

JT: Well, then they got these tank cars, you know, yes. Now you see these tank cars going, and some of them has Cargill on them and Saskatchewan Pool and Pools and all this. They have those now, you see, but not at that time. Yeah. Yeah. It was quite interesting. But you carry on.

[1:00:07]

BC: All right. Well, you're answering all my questions naturally. So let's see. Well, we talked a bit about your typical day on the job because you did so many different kinds of jobs. You seemed to really have always been promoted to an administrator. You worked your way down, and then you'd go all the way back up again. Doesn't sound like you've had to apply to any jobs in your life. It sounds like you were offered jobs all along.

JT: No, I didn't have to apply. That's true. That's true.

BC: One of the questions was the connection with other segments of the grain industry—the producers, the carriers, the handlers, Canadian Wheat Board, Canadian Grain Commission, purchasers.

JT: Well, the Canadian Wheat Board, after I retired, they asked me to look at the Canada Grain Act for security, so I did, and how it could be improved. I wrote a report on that. Oh, I don't think they ever used it, but that's not the first time because previous to them asking me to do this, they had some other company drawing up their thoughts on the matter. You see, the whole thing, it's very political. This company, they put that up on their shelf, just carrying dust. That's about it. I guess mine was too. Yeah.

BC: Did you ever go to Thunder Bay and see the elevators there? Did you have any connection to Thunder Bay?

JT: Well, I was down there to check on a few things, but not often, no. Not too often. Occasionally. Yeah. Do you mind if I just make a call?

BC: Not at all. Let's just figure out--. We'll put this on pause. I will find--.

JT: Yeah. Put it on hold.

BC: Okay. Let's see. Is that pause? **[Audio pauses]** Let's try this. We're back on.

JT: Do you rent this?

BC: No, the Paterson grant allowed--. So all the interviewers share this. We pass it around to each other.

JT: Oh, yes. I see.

BC: And we send the tapes down to Lakehead University to be put into the archives. So I have it today, and another interviewer will have it another day.

JT: Yeah. I understand, yeah.

BC: So just to finish up our interview, are there any questions that I should have asked you about your work that you think is important that people know about? Something that's of interest?

JT: I've tried to cover all the points. [Laughs] Yeah. As far as the connections is concerned with the terminals, between the grain trade and the terminals, in those days, if there were leaks, the railway companies, they had a special department which they had set up to look after claims, what they called claims. So we used to have claims, but you had to prove your claim. You had to prove. Sometimes that was a little difficult. But anyway. Often, we were--. We always collected some money from them.

[1:05:37]

And in those days too, with the tank cars they have now, they have hoppers underneath, and they no longer have the air dumps, at least at the terminals, where they used to bring the boxcar up. They'd open the doors and then swing it that way and swing it sideways to make sure that they got all the grain out, and then they'd handle it. But they handle it differently now because they've got these hopper cars, you see, and they have three or four hoppers underneath, and it just goes right down into that big pit that they have. Yeah. So. That's one of the differences that has come about in the last 25, 30 years. Yeah.

BC: Is there a part of the history of the industry that you think is really important to preserve that Canadians should know about? Because the grain industry played such an important part in the history of this country.

JT: Well, grain was one of the main exports that Canada had years ago. Now, of course, we manufacture--. We sell our raw material, that is our ore and so on, to various countries. We do some of the manufacturing here, such as steel and so on, but as I say, one of the main exports, *the* main export, was grain in those days when I was in the business. Yeah. Made a big difference. Yeah.

BC: Now, I should ask you, is there anyone else that you think we should interview? Anybody that you worked with, or you think would be interesting, or could add to the story of the grain industry?

JT: Well, I'll tell you something, Bea. I've outlived all my colleagues.

BC: Yes.

JT: So, I can't interview them when they're under the sod. [Laughs]

BC: No, that's true.

JT: Or I can't ask you to interview them. Yeah.

BC: Well, it's been a real pleasure having talked to you and hearing your part in the grain industry.

JT: Well, I hope and trust it will be of some value to you.

BC: I think it will. I think it will. I do thank you.

JT: But it's been an interesting experience. I can't say that I've disliked it because when I came back from overseas, the general manager of the Grain Insurance & Guarantee said, "We'd like you to come back here and work with us again." I said, "I don't think I want to come back and work with you or work for you." I said, "My main interest is in the grain end of it. Grain business. That's my end of it." So he says, "Well, the Grain insurance & Guarantee Company could use you. That's pretty closely associated with the grain business too." Anyway, finally, he persuaded me to go back. He said, "I'm going to retire pretty soon." So I thought, "Well, maybe the assistant manager's job isn't such a bad job." And things fell in a different--. With Fred Bamford dying, being killed through that air crash, it changed things again for me. So that's the way it goes, eh? That's life.

[1:10:29]

BC: Yeah.

JT: Yeah. But I've got to admit that, as I say, my reigns have fallen into pleasant places. R-E-I-G-N. Reigns. Reigns. [Laughs] They were talking about the days when you drove horses. Yeah. Anyway. Yes, it's been an interesting experience. I used to get a great kick out of going to visit the farmers when I was buying grain out west. Yeah. I found that farmers in general were very kind people. There was this fellow Bickner, he was the biggest farmer in the area. He was 2,500 acres, which was a lot in those days. He worked hard. He worked hard. On Sundays, he would ask my wife and I and my little son—because we had a little boy at that time called Bruce—out for Sunday dinner, and boy, did they put on a spread even in those days because they all had gardens, you know. They had a dugout and so on that they watered the gardens. And they had chickens, and the chickens had a great time eating grasshoppers. [Laughs] Yes.

They used to bottle this chicken. On Sundays, they would bring out the very best. They would have the chicken and the vegetables and the mashed potatoes, but then one major dish they brought out was the dessert. They'd make their own ice cream. They had to turn it in those days, you know, and put ice on it and so on. Salt around it to cool it. Well, they would bring out this ice cream. They never used dishes. They had these small ice cream dishes. They brought out soup plates, and they would scoop this stuff. They'd just load it with ice cream, and then apple pie would go with it, of course. They weren't content with that. They would bring on apple pie afterwards, or it might have been in reverse. I'm not sure. But anyway. It was a very generous group that we dealt with there.

There was one instance where they had a big surplus of wheat, and prices were rather low. The Bickners, they used to invite a fellow by the name of Nate Burton. Now, Nate, he was a widower, and he was a farmer out there. So Nate said to him, "You know, Bickner? I know how we can get rid of this surplus." Bickner said, "How can you do that, Nate?" So Nate said to him, "Eat more eggs." "Well," he said, "how is that going to help up?" "Well," he said, "if you're eating one egg a day now, eat three eggs a day.

The more eggs you eat, the more chickens you will have because you'll have more chickens as--. You see that your supply of food is increasing by the number of eggs you eat, well, you'll automatically get yourself some additional chickens." So Nate said, "Well, I don't want to eat more than the number of eggs I eat now. I don't know what in the world I would do with three or four eggs." So Nate says, "But you've got to eat more eggs." Well, he says, "Nate, I'm not going to eat more eggs." And they got into a real argument. They got into a real argument. I thought there was going to be a battle. Anyway. That's it.

BC: Thank you so, so much. I will turn this off now.

JT: Yeah. Well, these are all memories, you know. Nate Burton and some of the others, boy, oh boy. Anyway.

End of interview.