

Narrator: Paul Westdal (PW)

Company Affiliations: Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), Canadian International Grains Institute (CIGI), Agritec International, Burcon NutraScience

Interview Date: 26 November 2012

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Summary: In this two-part interview with former director of marketing for the Canadian International Grains Institute Paul Westdal, he discusses his long and varied career in the Canadian and international grain trade. In audio part one, he describes his roles in grain marketing for both the Canadian Wheat Board and CIGI. He explains his CWB role as area specialist for Western Europe market expansion, Canada's close relationship with the UK, and European Union policy changes that lessened Canada's presence in European markets. He discusses becoming the office manager for the CWB's London office, the office's closure, and his move to CIGI as director of marketing. He describes CIGI's adaptability to the industry's changing markets, changing uses for grain, and the consolidation of the industry. In audio part two, Westdal recounts how his canola protein-extraction company grew from small trials to commercial partnerships with Burcon NutraScience and ADM. He explains the uses for plant proteins in food products and the growing opportunities for Canadians in bioscience and biotechnology. After his time at CIGI, he also discusses his work with Agritec International building and supplying grain handling technology to international customers. Other topics discussed include working in a globalized grain industry, the lack of Canadian-based international companies, his work with the World Food Programme in Senegal, and the demise of the CWB and cooperative movement.

Keywords: Canadian Wheat Board (CWB); Canadian International Grains Institute (CIGI); Agritec International; Burcon NutraScience; Grain research; Grain science; Grain marketing; Grain export destinations; International trade; Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); Tariffs; Government subsidies; Common Agricultural Policy; Grain varieties; Grain buyers; Country grain elevators; Inland grain terminals; Globalization; Canola; Soybeans; Peas; Protein extraction; Vegetable protein; Archer Daniels Midland; Multinational corporations; Grain storage; Food aid; Grain handling; Grain transportation—ships; Grain transportation—rail; World Food Programme; United Kingdom; Kazakhstan; Senegal

Audio Part One

Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: Nancy Perozzo conducting an interview in Winnipeg on November 26, 2012. I'll have our narrator for today introduce himself and perhaps just a brief introduction to your career in the grain trade.

PW: My name is Paul Westdal. I've been in the grain trade for over 30 years, spent most of my time with the Canadian Wheat Board [CWB] in various capacities. After that, I moved to the International Grains Institute for a period of time, and then I've been working with Agritec International for the last number of years as well. I would divide my career into those three subsections, and overlaid on that is the development of a technology company, a founder of a technology company as well. So those are the main activities that I've been involved in in the grain trade.

NP: Now, when you say a technology company, what type of technology?

PW: Protein extraction.

NP: Oh, okay.

PW: Canola protein extraction. A number of years ago, I became aware of a technology that was apparently developed and available but in experimental form to extract pure protein from canola meal, and it was a highly valued, highly nutritious substance, food ingredient. And I picked up on that idea, and together with a partner, co-founded a company that has now become a major player in the food ingredient research and development field. It's a publicly listed company now traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

NP: And what is its name?

PW: Its name is Burcon NutraScience.

NP: Burcon?

PW: Burcon NutraScience.

NP: Okay.

PW: My partner and I founded the initial company in 1991. In 1999, we met the people from Burcon, and we entered into an agreement with them to commercialize the technology, and the story goes forward from there. We now have a development agreement with Archer Daniels Midland [ADM] to work on canola proteins, but now we've shifted to soy protein, which turns out to be a more readily commercializable product.

NP: Now, the initial research that was done into isolating the protein, was that done--? What lab was taking responsibility for that, or what researcher?

PW: It was actually a private initiative conducted by my cofounder, my partner, who did this working for a company on his own in no particular lab. So it's really attributable to him. He's the author of the technology, and we are the owners of the technology.

NP: And what is his name?

PW: His name is Don Murray. He used to be in Winnipeg. We worked together for many years, and he lived in Ontario.

NP: Okay. Toronto or--?

PW: In Guelph.

NP: Guelph.

PW: Yeah.

NP: Okay, good. Now, I'm always interested in finding out--. Well, first of all, what year did you start working?

PW: 1970.

NP: Okay. And--.

PW: In Winnipeg at the Canadian Wheat Board.

NP: Right.

PW: That was my first employment.

NP: And what attracted you to the grain industry? Did you grow up on a farm or--?

PW: Didn't grow up on a farm. Grew up in Swan River in a farm community, Swan River, Manitoba. But actually, the initial interest was in wildlife conservation, a naturalist environmental area. But it turned out that that wasn't a field at university that wasn't available for study as such at the time here at the University of Manitoba, so I found my way into the next best thing which was Agriculture and wound up very happy to go through an agricultural program, specializing in agricultural economics. And had the good fortune to be mentored by some excellent people, including Clay Gilson, who was a towering figure in the grain industry and in agricultural policy for many years in western Canada.

NP: Did you specialize within the economics? Did you have a special interest while you were going to school or in your--?

PW: Grain marketing, primarily, but my thesis was on the subject of crop insurance, which was very topical at the time, having been well established and being developed and refined and improved. It was actually founded in the province by Clay Gilson. He was a driving force behind the introduction of crop insurance in western Canada, and so it was an ongoing interest of his, and I was lucky enough to go along for the ride, to be part of that.

[0:05:07]

NP: And that took you pretty understandably into the Canadian Wheat Board. So what position did you apply for there when you first started?

PW: At the time, the Board was looking for university-trained specialists in grain marketing, in particular to try and enhance, develop their marketing efforts overseas. I joined together with a number of other younger people at the time, a group that went forward, and we were called "Area Specialists" at the time. And our jobs were to try and develop markets for sales for Canadian grain in different parts of the world.

NP: Can you recall some of the names of the people who were there and particularly who you worked for?

PW: I do. I can recall David Clark and Bob Broska, and I can recall Brian Oleson, and these are people that I keep in touch with today. But they were part of that original team.

NP: And the supervisor of that group at the time?

PW: That would have been—there were two—Alec Kubichek, whose still around and he's a well-respected member of the grain industry, and Herman Diefenbrook was there as well. These were the two supervisors of that section. And Harold Bjarnasson, who is well known in the grain industry. He, I think, latterly was Dean of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba and held an assistant deputy minister's position in the federal government as well before that.

NP: You mentioned that the people coming into the position at the time were known as Area--.

PW: Area specialists.

NP: Specialists. So what was your area?

PW: Western Europe is where I started off, and that's really essentially where I spent most of my time. That's one of the reasons that I was asked to go to London and take over the position of the office manager of the London office. At the time, the Wheat Board had an office in London, England, and it had an office in Tokyo. So those were the two overseas offices that the Board had at the time. Since then, they've added an office in Beijing. And now, of course, things have changed, and we're not too sure how that's all going to unfold. I believe they still have the two offices—the one in Beijing, and the other one in Tokyo—going forward, but the one in England, in the UK, is not--. And in fact, the last thing that I did there was to close the office in London.

NP: Now, asking you to think back to 1970 and starting out in the grain industry as an area specialist, can you describe that job, what it required you to do? What you learned doing that job?

PW: Well, it required a lot of monitoring of markets, doing assessments of the requirements, understanding the customer's requirements, both obviously quantitative and in terms of the condition of the crops in their own countries and how that might affect the demand for Canadian wheat, and trying to determine what particular advantage Canadian wheat had in the markets and how to enhance the prospects for our sales in those markets in my area. The other area specialists did the same. And then feeding all of this information into the master sales plan for the Board and developing a priority marketing plan. So we were involved in all of that.

It also involved an awful lot of overseas travel. That was a big part of it. We were away for long periods of time. I remember that I was away on one occasion for six weeks from home, and others even longer. The area specialist for Africa, I think he was gone eight or nine weeks on one trip, which is quite unheard of these days. People go away for a week or two, and that's considered a

rather long trip, and they're back home. But transportation was a little bit different then. It was the beginning of mass jet travel around the world, and so that was part of it. In fact, all those developments of communications have affected the grain industry quite substantially.

NP: Did you find that the countries had different personalities? Were there some that were ripe for market development and others that would be a long process to develop the markets and some that you knew just were never going to amount to customers of any substance?

[0:10:09]

PW: I would say all of the above. I was based in the UK, and the reason for that was there was a longstanding relationship in grain—in wheat in particular—between the UK and Canada. They relied on us for a long period of time to provide them with high quality wheat for the baked goods and the wheat-based products that they consumed, that they produced and consumed.

That's an interesting story because I was there at the time that that all changed, and it changed in the sense that their reliance on us became much less, really for two reasons. One is that the technology changed, and they were able to develop a process to extract starch—no, excuse me—protein from their own crop. And the concentrated protein, they were able to put that back into a grist which contained mostly their wheat, a little bit of ours, and then this additional concentration of protein extracted from their crop. That left them in a situation where they simply didn't need all this Canadian wheat to essentially improve the quality of their grist and to achieve the performance in the bakeries and the finished product that they needed. So that was a very big change that took place.

The second thing that happened was—and this has more to do with, I think, the changes in the function of the Canadian Wheat Board office—was that, as I mentioned, we were at the beginning of a time of a considerable improvement in transportation, the beginning, really, of mass jet travel, and also communications. When we began, we were still using telex—the clattering telex machine was in our offices in both Winnipeg, of course, and at London, and so that gives you an idea of the state of communications at the time.

And so, that was all, of course, quickly superseded by much better communications in terms of the communications that we enjoy now. That made it possible for, really, customer relationships to be managed more from a head office and less so the need to have a representative on the ground. Because when you think that you could have somebody in London, in Rotterdam, in Europe in the matter of a day or two from the head office with all the sort of direct management input from the head office, that in a sense, to a large extent, eliminated the need for an overseas presence. At least that was the decision that was taken at the time.

So those were the things that contributed to the change in the arrangements for the UK market. The UK market was our main market at the time. During the time I was there, we had, I think, 1.2 million tonnes. That's a very, very big, if not our biggest customer. But it would not have been, of course, compared to the Russians, who were, in fact, taking many millions of tonnes of grain. Not consistently, but over time they were huge customers. The UK was in there as well as a major customer.

Our opportunities on the continent were not as good, and we had less of a loyal customer base in Europe. Although having said that, the trade in durum wheat into Germany and into Rotterdam and into Western Europe continued apace. It was smaller. It was good, solid, regular business, but it was of a much smaller scale than our trade into the UK.

NP: And Italy?

PW: Biggest, of course, for durum at the time was Italy, and Italy continues as a big market. But in addition, we had a shift in emphasis, I think we could say, to North Africa, which became a huge market for us. Algeria in particular comes to mind, Morocco in and out, and other North African countries. But that shifted into the millions of tonnes. Italy, of course, stayed in as well as a major market and is so today.

NP: The plan for developing a market where one was underdeveloped or non-existent, how did you actually go about that? I'm talking in a practical sense, what would a day look like when you headed over to Europe and tried to get information about the country that you were hoping to expand the market into. How would you actually go about that?

[0:15:24]

PW: Well, you know, that's a great question. Essentially, the idea was to penetrate the market using the technical skills that we had and using the first-class quality product that we knew we had and that we were offering to the world. But it was up to us to show customers the advantage of this wonderful product, and it wasn't always clear to them, and they had options. They had alternatives, and they were using wheat from many different sources. So it was incumbent on us to try and find the way to show them how it would be best for them, how they could win markets and how they could win customers and how they could satisfy their customers' requirements and still be competitive and make money using our product. So that was the thrust of it.

We relied on a technical services group that's part of that initiative I mentioned earlier. We became somewhat familiar with that ourselves, although we were not the specialists, and then often we would have travel in the company of specialists from the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] who, of course, were the ultimate technical specialists in the field of Canadian wheat.

NP: So the Canadian Wheat Board had a separate cadre of technical specialists separate from the Grain Research Lab?

PW: Small group of technical specialists who worked closely with the Grain Research Lab, with the Grain Research Lab and the Canadian Grain Commission. And I suppose we could say that they were the bridge. The Wheat Board specialists were the bridge, and we were part of that as well, between the research people in the Grain Commission and the customer who was actually trying to put it into a commercial grist and make a living gristing and selling our other wheats.

NP: So would you make connections, then, with the industry people there, with the government people, with a combination of both?

PW: Both. Both usually. Yes. Industry people, we would visit the private-sector mills. We would visit state sector mills as well. In Europe, there was primarily private sector, but then one can think of in Norway, for example, the state granary was still actively buying grain on behalf of Norwegian mills. And there were also associations. There were associations of millers in different countries. So we ended up cultivating relationships with all of those involved in customer countries in the use of wheat, and certainly in the importation of wheat.

And at the same time, we weren't that far past the war time where there was still concerns of strategic reserves. So in places like Switzerland, there was a strategic reserve, and in other countries in Western Europe, there were reserves, and we therefore were involved in speaking with these people, and very often Canadian wheat would be a part of the reserve.

NP: What would you describe as the biggest challenge that you faced in that part of your career?

PW: I can't think of any one thing in particular. I think it was just the necessity—and it wasn't that difficult to do—of getting out there on the ground and actually visiting with customers and demonstrating the benefits, the use, the economic benefit, and the technical performance of our product. So I think from that point of view, there wasn't any one particular thing.

We were always up against competition, and the Americans had good wheat, and they were strong competitors. Australia was, at the time, also involved from time to time, even though at that point it was very far away as a supplier, but it was a strong competitor there as well. We were not, certainly, daunted by the competition. In fact, it gave us an opportunity to show just how good we thought our product was and how useful in benefits it could be.

[0:20:04]

NP: Now, the years that you were in that position, 1970 to--? In the market development.

PW: I'm just thinking. In the market development area, 1970, let's say, to 1982.

NP: Okay.

PW: And then from '82 to '86, that's when we were in the UK as office manager for the Canadian Wheat Board office there.

NP: Okay. When you think back on that, what was your greatest success?

PW: I think that I'd have to say that the relationships that I developed in the UK, in spite of the shrinking market, allowed us to continue a strong relationship with the major players in the industry, and it developed into a smaller but steady close relationship and a marketing opportunity that continues to this day. For example, the Warburton company was a significant player in the UK market at the time that I was there at the Canadian Wheat Board. Today, they are a major player, and a lot of the growth and development that has taken place in their business, I think, came about in part because of the close relationship that we developed at the beginning with their principles, and that's now transformed itself into a permanent presence for Warburtons.

Warburtons is a baking company, so it's a bit odd that a UK baking company would have a permanent presence here in Canada, and they do through a contract program that's administered by grain companies here in which the Canadian Wheat Board had a major role, and the Grains Institute had a major role in developing. So if there's a bit of a legacy from that time, I suppose, that would be it.

NP: So if we were to go over to Europe—England in particular—and start munching on some baked goods, we could possibly be eating grain that came from the Canadian Prairies?

PW: I think that's true. Less so than it was in the past, but certainly this year in particular there will be many different wheats in the grist because they've had a terrible crop there this year. The quality is not good at all, and they got about half a crop, apparently. So there will be lots of different wheats in the grist. But I think, generally, I think that in the UK, Canadian wheat is still highly regarded, and I think the millers and bakers like to use it. They do so according to the economics of use, and there's-- I think they retain a special affection for Canadian wheat in their grist.

NP: Any changes in the European Common Market tariff issue happening at the time that you were there, and did that have any impact?

PW: Yes, indeed. And in fact, it had pretty much taken hold by the time I arrived. And the reason that the UK in particular developed the technology to extract and concentrate protein in the form of gluten in their products was because there was such a big tariff payable on wheat coming into the community. So Canadian wheat was very expensive, not because we were being unreasonable—we were getting our full value for the wheat—but they faced an import tariff that was quite huge. Sometimes, as I recall, the tariff was greater than the cost of the wheat. So it made it a very expensive proposition. So that created a huge incentive to try and find a way to minimize that costly component of the grist and gave rise to what was called the Chorleywood Process, which was the process I'm referring to by which they were able to isolate the concentrate protein in their own wheat. So very much so that was a very big shift for us.

NP: Now, just because we hope at some point to transcribe some of these interviews, Chorleywood, how is that spelled?

PW: Chorleywood.

NP: How is that spelled?

PW: C-H-O-R-L-[E]-Y-W-O-O-D. And that's the name of a place, but it's also the name of quite a world-famous—in the grain industry a lot of people would recognize that name—as a centre of technical excellence for milling and baking.

[0:25:04]

NP: Okay.

PW: And it's located just outside of London.

NP: The reason behind the tariff, was that to guarantee a self-sufficient market?

PW: Yes, yes. That's it. Well, two reasons, right? One was because there were, in parts of Europe after the war, still concerns about food security because they, in many places, had known real hunger. So they wanted to be sure that never happened again, so they gave every incentive for farmers to produce. So that was it. And the other thing was there was a drive, as you know, to bring up farm incomes, to make farming remunerative, and that farm people in rural areas should not be living in a different economic zone

than the rest of the community. So there were transfers of income by way of crop prices and protection, and export subsidies and import tariffs were part of that whole package.

NP: It seems to me that I'd heard in a previous interview about agents that the Wheat Board used, and was that part--? Was contacting those agents or developing an agent network, was that part of the marketing as well?

PW: Actually, from my side, working in the UK, that really wasn't part of it. That was more part of the supply chain, and so individual buyers in the UK would have arrangements with international grain companies who were the agents, as well as the Canadian Wheat Board. I think at one point we had 32 agents, big and small international grain companies. And it was based on those relationships between agents and our customers in the UK, with the Wheat Board being the originator of the grain, and the people that I was dealing with being the final consumers and buyers of the grain. And the supply chain involved the agents as well.

Then in addition to that, the UK individual buyers in some cases had their own UK agents who then worked with international agents who then were buying grain from the Wheat Board. So it was that kind of a supply chain in place at the time.

NP: Now, again, going back to things in my past, there's marketing a product, and then there's the keeping the customer satisfied so that you don't have to constantly reestablish a market. So was that part of the plan? Was there an actual interaction between you people in the marketing side of it and the people who had to actually sell and deliver?

PW: Well, the sell-and-deliver part really would be the execution piece, and so we're talking about the contract and the pricing, and we're talking about shipping and hitting the targets and getting the grain there on time. Yeah, we worked with and were a part of that, but essentially that was driven by the supply side from Winnipeg with the pricing model that worked out into-- . And we provided input to that and guidance and advice because we had some knowledge that they would not because of our presence in the market that wouldn't be available readily.

But it's interesting to think about that because I was there at a time when that all changed. When communications just became that much more rapid and consistent and reliable, and so suddenly everybody knew everything that was happening all over the world. So you didn't need to wait for your man in Tokyo to ring up and say, "Guess what's happened?" A lot of that was already known, so those were the kinds of changes that took place at the time. But certainly, that was part of it.

But when you say, "to satisfy the customer," we were in a very good position there because we really did have and do have the best quality product imaginable. And the other thing is to remember that our efforts over time have been—were at the time—to select the best attributes that were consistent with the best performance of wheat and flour in the mills and the bakeries in the UK in

particular. So when you think about it, the entire Canadian crop, to a certain extent, was tailor-made for UK requirements to make just the kind of bread that they wanted that would rise so high.

It was interesting, when I think about it, that when I arrived there, one of the observations made as the new man in was—and said in jest, of course—was that, “Westdal, your job here is to help us to make water stand up on end, sell it for the price of bread.” Meaning that our wheat had to have the ability to absorb and hold water long enough for it to be sold, there to be a certain weight, and a certain price applied to it. But of course, that related to the freshness of the product and the other quality characteristics. But I always remember that, that that was a new approach to my work, to say that that was in fact why I was there from their point of view.

[0:31:00]

NP: Did anything ever backfire?

PW: Backfire? Backfire--. Not really. I can't remember any serious backfiring.

NP: So things went pretty smoothly, as they tend to do when you establish a good relationship with people.

PW: Good relationship, long-standing business with the UK, customers that we knew for a long time. They knew our people. We knew their people. It was a very convenient and good working relationship. But the pressure came from the—as we mentioned earlier—from the Common Agricultural Policy with the huge import tariff, which made our product as good as it was and as desirable as it was, and as much as they were prepared to and wanted to include it, just very expensive. So that resulted in the changes we talked about.

NP: Largest competitors, the American and the Australian?

PW: US Dark Northern Spring was always competition, and good wheat it is. The Australians were there as well with their excellent white wheats, so we had good competition, and we were the better for it because we could demonstrate, as I say, how good our stuff was as well.

NP: So was it 90 percent better product, 10 percent relationships that would give Canada the edge or would you divide that percentage up a little differently?

PW: I think I'd divide it up a little differently, but you're likely not far off because at the end of the day, the product has to perform. Otherwise, the relationship sours. So it has to work, and it did work, and it worked well for a long time, and still does. For example, Warburtons are a major customer through thick and through thin, through good years and bad. They're always there, and they are--. As I say, I think that's a bit of a legacy piece, I think, for Canadians in that market, the ones that were working there earlier on.

NP: The time that you were at the Wheat Board, the 1970 to 1982 in Winnipeg, the Canadian International Grains Institute [CIGI] was coming into being. Have I got my--?

PW: Yes, I think you're right. I can't remember exactly when it came about, but yes, it was there.

NP: Was it there when you started, or did it come into being?

PW: It came into being after I started. So it was after. When I was in London, it was a running a going concern, and one of the things that I did was to help select people from the UK industry to come to Canada and participate in, in particular, the international program. I think they were highly successful in maintaining that relationship and keeping attention focused on Canada as a supplier and in helping us to differentiate our brand, Canadian wheat, from other wheats.

NP: Did you ever recall talking to someone who had come to take part in those international workshops and their reactions to the time they spent here?

PW: Yes, certainly, and I've kept in touch with many of them. There were a couple of interesting aspects to those programs. One is that they were fairly long. They were five, six weeks originally, and then it went back to five and back to four. So a really big commitment of time for people to be away—away from their families, away from their work—and to be with us for that long period of time.

[0:35:04]

And the thrust of it was to be like the grain academy. So the Institute's position was, "We know you're a specialist in something, and you probably won't learn much more about the area that you're specialized in, but all the rest of this complex and integrated grain system, we will teach you about and we will talk about and we will offer instruction in, including logistics and handling and oilseed processing and the whole massive gamut of everything that's involved in the international grain industry." And took an international perspective at the time.

[Audio pauses]

NP: Yeah. I think perhaps if you sit a bit closer to that.

PW: Yeah, I was just saying--.

NP: Okay.

PW: That the international grain industry course demanded a lot of participants. So we found that there were well-established people in the grain industry in customer countries, and upcoming movers and shakers in the grain industry as well who were prepared to and invited to come to Canada and spend up to six weeks of their lives with us here studying the international grain industry. So not just their area of specialization—be it marketing or baking or milling or something—but to cover the whole thing, including transportation, including contracts, including marketing, including competitor countries. And we invited competitor countries to come and make presentations on their systems, and it was really quite an open-forum approach.

I think that based on that approach, we probably solidified and cemented relations with customers that lasted a very long time. But I mentioned that this was, from an industry and education point of view, a very worthwhile exercise, I think, for the participants. But in addition, many of them found being away from home for five or six weeks in a completely different environment gave them pause to reexamine their own lives. And so they were taken out of context, out of their country, out of their family, out of their situation, and it was like a sabbatical, not only in the grain industry, but a sabbatical personally.

So many of them, when you talk to them after, said, “That was a life-changing event for me.” In terms of career, maybe they decided they wanted to move into one area or another of the grain industry that they never thought about, and also personally that it gave them a chance to reflect and see, “Am I really doing what I want to do? Is it going the way I want it to go? Do I need to make a change?” So those were some of the things that I noticed about this big commitment to the grain industry program.

NP: Are we ready to move onto your London posting?

PW: Yes, absolutely. Yes.

NP: So how did that come about, and what was your position there?

PW: I was the office manager of the London office, and it was a very small office. There was just three of us and then just two of us, and it really was a representative outpost. In earlier days, it had a much more active role in the execution of trade. I mentioned that the office was relied upon by Winnipeg head office as a source of information about pricing, about business opportunities, about activities in the markets of both the competitors and customers themselves. So just keeping an ear to the ground and giving a full and complete report on the situation there. That role, that function continued during the time I was there, but I would say its significance diminished. Its importance diminished because of the improvements in the communications that took place.

NP: So the records of the Wheat Board, then—if they haven't been all destroyed—should include reports from the London office, from the Beijing office? That you were required to send reports in on a regular basis?

PW: Oh, yes. Yes. There was a standard reporting procedure, and we were in touch as often as need be with head office to provide the information necessary. But I think at the end of the day, it became a relationship exercise to a great extent, and the market intelligence role as well. Towards the end of my stay there, it became obvious that two things were happening. One is the size of the market had been reduced considerably because of the effect of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the new technology that allowed them to use less Canadian wheat in the grist and still have an acceptable product. So those changes took place.

[0:40:02]

So we tried to extend the office as well, area of responsibility, to include outlying areas. So I found myself going much further afield than I was doing before. That continued for a while, and then it became obvious that, you know, if we're going to spend four hours flying from London to North Africa, we can just as easily send somebody from Winnipeg who maybe will have to spend eight or ten hours to make the same journey, and yes, the timeframe would be different and so on, but it was judged more expedient to do it that way in the end, and that resulted in the decision in part to close the office and concentrate and centralize everything, marketing efforts in Winnipeg.

NP: Did you follow things afterwards to know whether that had any impact? Whether pulling an office out where you really had a chance to meet people almost on a daily basis if necessary, having the personal presence removed, did that make any difference, or not that you could--?

PW: Not that I'm aware of because we continued to trade, certainly, to the UK in smaller but regular and steady volumes. We had already this good relationship with customers. We maintained that in part through regular visits, but also through the work of the Canadian International Grains Institute. So there were a number of contact points there, and they were all useful and helpful. So I

don't have any sense that pulling the office out and pulling everything back to Winnipeg changed our situation there. There was no real loss that I could see.

NP: How long had that office been open? Do you know when it--?

PW: A good, long while. I can't remember when it began, but I'm thinking in the order of 40 or 50 years. It was a good, long time that the Board had an office there.

NP: So even before the Second World War?

PW: Well, I'm not sure about that. But remember that we had special arrangements with the UK to provide wheat to them during the war. However, I'm sorry. I don't know the detail of that. I've lost that.

NP: That's fine. At the time that you were doing the marketing and the time in the London office, were you ever responsible for putting on exhibitions and--?

PW: Yes, we did participate in a small way. There weren't any fora that necessarily provided that opportunity. For example, agricultural shows. There wouldn't be a Canadian Wheat Board booth at an agricultural show. One of the complications there was, in the same way that many countries like to be as self-sufficient as they can be in various areas, the Brits were no different, and they were quite keen to appreciate the fact that they were essentially self-sufficient now in grains, if not them, then Europe. So it wasn't a terribly popular thing to be able to say that they were relying on North Americans to provide them with the kind of products that their customers had come to appreciate and had been consuming all these years. So there wasn't encouragement from the side of the industry for us to have a major public presence in the UK market.

NP: And what was the interaction between you as an industrial emissary and the Department of Trade and Commerce federally?

PW: There was contact and communication, but not a great deal. I mean, we went about our business. They went about theirs. We crossed paths on many occasions when there were Canadian functions taking place in Canada House, in the MacDonald House, in London, and we invited them to our affairs, and they invited us to theirs. So there was that kind of collaboration, but basically we stuck to our knitting, and so we didn't really have to rely on them. We had an established business there, so we didn't have to rely on them to open too many doors for us because the doors were already open.

[0:45:06]

NP: The years that you were in London, when were those?

PW: '82 to '86.

NP: And then I have you--. Where did your career go from there?

PW: Came back to Winnipeg, and then went to the Grains Institute, International Grains Institute. So that would have gone from '86 to 2000. Yeah, that's right.

NP: Okay, and what was your--?

PW: I was the director of marketing at the Canadian International Grains Institute.

NP: And how did that relate or differ from your previous work in the marketing sections of the Wheat Board?

PW: Well, I would say it flowed seamlessly from one piece to the next. As you probably gathered from earlier comments, I was quite taken with the effectiveness of the Grains Institute and thought it was a very worthwhile exercise, indeed, and that it helped us enormously. I could see the benefits, certainly in terms of sales, on our side and in terms of cementing these long-term, very important, well-established relationships. So it just flowed. I just flowed well right into the next part of it and became quite enamoured of the effectiveness of the Institute.

NP: And of course, the customer base was broadened substantially from European because you would be dealing with--.

PW: Yes. Southeast Asia, at the time, was becoming more important. We talked earlier about the shift in grain flow from the East Coast to the west, and so that was all happening. So new market opportunities were developing in faraway places in Southeast Asia. And so, the Grains Institute adapted to that, and the composition of our international course participants changed to reflect that. So there were probably fewer from Europe than there were in the early days and more coming from Southeast Asia.

NP: Was there any requirement for changes in marketing practices because of the shift to different countries?

PW: Not in the marketing practices, but in the course content there was in the sense that we now featured products that were of more interest to—technically of more interest to—customers in Southeast Asia. And that's when the Grains Institute added a whole

noodle making technology section, and so that was it. Then the qualities of wheats required were different because in Southeast Asia the standard British sandwich loaf bread, toast bread product is not in great demand. And so, it doesn't really matter how high the loaf rises if you're going to be making a steamed bun because that's a completely different product requiring different quality characteristics in the wheat and in the flour. So that was the nature of the shift there.

But the marketing side, I would say, didn't change dramatically. We had an office for a long time in Japan, and that office became a bit of a regional office at one point, and then China was added. The Wheat Board added an office in China, and there was always a close working relationship between CIGI, the Grains Institute, the Wheat Board, and the Canadian Grain Commission, and very often we would be travelling together as teams, market development teams.

NP: Now, how would you describe the difference between the marketing--. What's the marketing--? What's the word I'm looking for? The market niche of the Canadian International Grains Institute and the marketing department of the Wheat Board?

PW: Okay. I think it's the Wheat Board's responsibility is the execution part of it, is the sales of it, establishing the quantity, the grades, the shipping period, and the price. And so that's really Wheat Board world right there. The Grains Institute was more involved in the lead-up work in creating the opportunity for the Board to sign the contract. So I think that's how I would describe it.

NP: So the Wheat Board wasn't out directly marketing their product as you were doing when you were--?

[0:50:02]

PW: I think as the Grains Institute became more active and involved, I think the Board relied on the Institute to provide that kind of soft-sell service ahead of there being contracts to, as it were, create the opportunity for the sales to be made.

NP: You mentioned that it was important in order to encourage sales to make sure that what you were selling to them would actually work in the finished product. So if Canadian farmers were growing wheat in large part to satisfy the production needs of European millers, bakers, et cetera, how did you try to help in a transition? Because as the market started to grow for noodles and other products, it would also make a difference in varieties, so how did that all fit together?

PW: Yeah. Very good point. So there was a shift, and the shift was two things. One is that it turned out our wheat was a pretty good all-rounder. So it was good at most things—not everything, but most things. So we didn't have too big of a struggle to get it into many different products. The top grades, the highest protein, the top grades worked best in the European, UK applications I think

it's fair to say. The lower grades and different classes of wheat worked better in other applications. For example, white winter wheat became more important for some products—noodles for example—in Southeast Asia.

In addition, at the time—this is going back to the period, I'm sorry, before the--. Earlier on before the move to the UK, we were working in the market development department, and the shift there was to see if we could find and develop products, classes of wheat, new varieties that more precisely met the requirements of Southeast Asia. So that's where the different new classes at the time of CPS White wheats came from. Then, of course, at the time, the Board also had a big barley program, and malting barley was a very important part of that—selling both feed and malting barley in the export markets.

One of the projects that I was involved in was to bring into Canada—because we didn't have anything in our own development programs—a white hyaluron six-row barley that was, at the time, very popular in the United States. This represented an effort by us to grow something and produce something here that we knew there was a market for, but that we didn't have in our arsenal of varieties and barley varieties. That was Beacon barley. And we did the same with Klages two-row barley that was much favoured by American buyers, and the Americans were big buyers and big potential buyers and big buyers of our malting barley. So that represented an attempt by us to respond to changing customer requirements, like growing what they wanted to buy.

NP: Anything else about your time with Canadian Grains Institute? That was a 14-year period, so.

PW: Yes. Yes, it was.

NP: What changes and challenges, other than what you've already talked about, occurred over that time?

PW: Well, the biggest changes that took place during that time—and maybe it wasn't just that time—obviously was the change in the country-elevator handling system. It went from being several thousand—3,000 probably when I started—country elevators spread all across western Canada.

[Audio pauses]

NP: [Coughs] Pardon me.

PW: It went from a rather large number of wooden crib country elevators of very small size, spaced all along the branch lines all across western Canada—they were 3,000 and some when I started—to something in the order of 300 today, large inland terminals. So that's a massive transformation across the landscape, and the huge change overall for the grain industry.

[0:55:30]

So at the Grains Institute, naturally, our programs reflected those changes. Changes in technology, in handling, in throughput, and all the factors associated with that, in logistics and collection. The whole process has just accelerated because now we have this enormous concentration of--. In the handling system, we now have a handful of large grain companies, and I guess with the exception of Richardson's, which is a great and wonderful company, the others are a couple of smaller ones. We've got Paterson and Parrish & Heimbecker, and I may be forgetting somebody, who are holding their own in the new environment. But now we have the, what is it, the ABCD. The huge multinationals have taken a major stake in the Canadian--.

End of Audio One.

Audio Part Two

Time, Speaker, Narrative

NP: Starting a second track. We made a move to a quieter location, and if I recall, Paul was discussing the major changes that were occurring at the time that he was with the Canadian International Grains Institute. One of those major ones was the consolidation and dismantling, actually, of the country elevator system, and I think your last comment had to do with the internationalization of the Canadian grain trade. So do you want to start with that one?

PW: Yes, exactly. Not just the Canadian grain trade, but as I think back on it, for example, we saw the same kind of thing happening in the flour milling industry. There was quite a change that took place in the flour milling industry with major players from the US--. Is that working all right here?

NP: Yeah.

PW: With major players in the US taking a very big position in the Canadian flour-milling industry. As that happened, also we saw concentrations in malting, in the malting industry in Canada as well, with more international participation, and as well in the brewing industry. So all of these things took place as globalization was the big force driving all of this. Big players found opportunities to move into other markets, including the Canadian markets, and add on components to their worldwide positions,

their worldwide holdings. And that continued apace throughout this period. So it wasn't just the concentration in the grain handling system, but also in those other aspects of the grain industry.

NP: Right. Again, if history serves me, I think it was the mid '80s where the globalization--.

PW: And the free trade arrangements--.

NP: The Free Trade Agreement.

PW: Agreement as well. So we were open for business. We were open to participate globally, and others were open to come and take greater participation in the Canadian industry.

NP: Did Canada in turn--. Did Canadian industry take greater participation in international companies?

PW: You know, not to the same extent, and I think that really there hasn't evolved yet a big, strong Canadian international company, with Richardson the exception, of course, and they're doing very well. But they're still essentially a Canadian-based operation, not an international--. They don't span the globe in quite the same way that Cargill or ADM or Bunge or Dreyfus or any of the really big players do, or Glencore at this point.

So that's something that's highly observable is that we didn't end up with a great, huge Canadian international multinational based here in Canada. And I suppose the question of where the national base or loyalty is for companies is an open one because international companies work worldwide. They are domiciled in sometimes the strangest places that don't seem to make a lot of sense but probably do from a structural, accounting, and other point of view. They're international players, and they're not necessarily rooted in one place or another.

But for those of us who grew up during the Canadian Wheat Board era and who worked during the Canadian Wheat Board era and watched all of this change, there's certainly questions about, "Well, why couldn't there be a Canadian worldwide champion as well in the grain industry?" But so far, it hasn't come to pass.

NP: Now, these changes, and they've only accelerated after the time that you left the Canadian Wheat Board—so the 2000s from 2000 to 2010—what kind of impact during your time with Canadian International Grains Institute--. The increased presence of international companies in Canada, did that have any impact on the work that was done within the Canadian International Grains Institute and the Wheat Board, because they're so closely associated?

PW: No, not hugely. You mention an important part, and that is that our founding tenant, our core tenant in the whole Canadian Grains Institute institution was the Canadian Wheat Board. So as long as the Canadian Wheat Board was there, there was sort of a strong, steady, solid base of funding support, for example, which was critical and important, but also of direction. There wasn't a big change there.

[0:05:10]

The international companies have their own ideas about market development. I think they're quite comfortable and happy doing their own work, and they would not necessarily discourage Canadian participation in overseas markets, but for example, they might say that, "Well, there's really no need for Canada to do a whole lot of development work over in Korea because we already have people over there. Our company people are representing us there, and they're looking after everybody's interests. So don't worry, be happy, and we'll all carry on." So there wasn't any particular push or drive that there should be particularly a Canadian presence because it might suit the company to source grain, for example, in other places. So there wouldn't have been the same incentive and the same kind of drive that would have been there before.

That being said, I think the Canadian International Grains Institute was quick to recognize that the landscape had changed, made the adjustments required, worked with all the players—the new international players—and the new form and the new landscape rather well. They adapted. Having, again, still the anchor tenant in the house who was the Canadian Wheat Board at the time.

NP: Now, when you say the anchor tenant, was most of the education that was done with wheat and barley, which were their major products? Or did the International Grains Institute programs cover other products such as canola, oats?

PW: Actually, it was broader than just wheat and barley. They were two very important parts, components, absolutely, but it did include pulses and other crops. We did have canola programs as well. So it had a much broader appeal and broader coverage than just the Wheat Board grains, the wheat and the barley.

NP: When you think back on the time, the 14 years that you spent there, other than the changes that you've already talked about and challenges, are there any that come to mind, specific issues that arose that needed to be dealt with beyond the really big changes?

PW: Yeah, not in particular. I think we all were flexible, adaptable, and accommodated the changes as we went forward because we were essentially providing a service to the grain industry. And so, there were no really insurmountable difficulties that I can think of that we were not able to accommodate.

But one of the things that happened to me, and I did mention to you earlier that I'd been involved in the founding of a biotechnology company, and one of the drivers for that was I felt that wouldn't it be nice if we could have a biotechnology company in Canada—in Winnipeg in particular, my home city—that could add value to Canadian crops? That would be a Canadian company in Winnipeg that would have the opportunity to create really good jobs, science and technology jobs, that could be the foundation of or a participant in a biotechnology sector here in Manitoba, which was just beginning, which has had some success. And I wanted to be part of that.

This was, partly in my mind, an effort to--. Was partly in response to all the changes that I could see taking place around me because I was concerned about the old head office argument that what were we going to do? We would simply be left here as the traditional hewers of wood and drawers of water, and that all the good jobs would be in the head offices located somewhere else, that the science and technology would all be done somewhere else, that the patent work would all be done somewhere else, and that we would lose all of these things, or at least we wouldn't gain them.

So the changes that took place at a personal level affected me to that extent that I went out and, with another, and founded a biotechnology company, which had gone on to be a successful protein company and is now, as I say, a publicly-traded company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

[0:10:08]

NP: Now, I can't recall if we have the name of that company on--.

PW: The name is Burcon.

NP: Right.

PW: B-U-R-C-O-N. Burcon NutraScience.

NP: B-E-R--.

PW: B-U-R-C-O-N. Now, that's not the name of our original company, but we eventually made arrangements with them to commercialize the product.

NP: Right. So what was the name of your original company?

PW: It was BMW Canola.

NP: How did you pick that particular product to work with?

PW: Well, two things. One is that I've got a family connection with it. My uncle, Baldur Stefansson, is the so-called—together with Keith Downey—the father of canola. So I was always very much aware of canola, and so anything to do with canola, I was alive to and alert to. And the second thing is that I attended a Canada Grains Council meeting in April of 1991, and I heard a presentation by Don Murray about value-added opportunities for Canadian crops, and he talked in that presentation about the fact that we had a technology that would isolate a pure canola protein from canola meal, and the canola protein was a very good functional and nutritional protein.

He identified that as one of a number of opportunities. So at the end of his presentation, I approached him and said, "I'd like to hear more." One thing led to another, and I said, "I'd like to try and commercialize this." He is a protein chemist by training and probably one of Canada's best in his field without a doubt, and so he agreed to work with me, and he would support me technically, and that I would do the rest, pushing all this stuff uphill for a long time to see if we couldn't commercialize this product.

So that's what happened. We ended up taking it forward from the test tubes to the pots and pans to the bathtubs and to the various quantities as you move along the whole development scaling-up process. And then we finally reached a point where it was just too much for us. We didn't have the resources to go to the mini-pilot scale, and that's when we looked around for partners, and that's when the Burcon people came and said, "We like this idea. We'll join forces with you." We ended up making arrangements with them to commercialize the product, which is now underway. We are happy with the result.

NP: Where was Burcon from?

PW: Burcon is a company based in Vancouver. It is registered in Whitehorse. What's that--. In the Yukon. The reason it's registered there is that that allows--. They allow international people, not necessarily residents of Canada, to be on boards, on their board of directors, to hold positions with the company. I'm not sure I'm quite right about holding positions, but yes, probably I am.

In any event, behind all of this was a Hong Kong company that was very interested in becoming involved in this sector in North America. So that's where that all came from.

NP: And what are the uses of the canola protein?

PW: Well, it has many uses in food products, and in small quantities of any prepared and processed food products in the stores, in the supermarkets, contains small amounts of protein, most of it now soy—and we've now shifted to soy because soy has become a more current opportunity for us than the canola. But it goes into all manner of food products: whipping in baked goods, into processed goods, into meat products, into a great number. Shakes and drinks and--.

NP: Is it possible to explain to a layperson such as me what the chemical composition of that protein what it does, both the soy and the canola? What's its main contributor, what function it contributes to those products you just mentioned?

[0:15:01]

PW: Well, from a functional point of view, the proteins provide you with the ability to whip, to gel, to foam, to emulsify products. So I think the easiest example would be like food glue. If you want something to hold together, like a mass that's not--. It's like a reinforcement. It's like egg white. Egg white is the gold standard and a very highly functional protein. And so, I think that gives you an idea. If you think of meringue pies, and you think of eggs put into--. Well, this protein--. Eggs, of course, are not vegetable based. They're animal based. The proteins that we've been extracting from canola and soy and now from peas—we've added peas as well—perform these kinds of functions. So food scientists use these kinds of things in food systems to make better products, and it goes across a whole range of different consumer products.

NP: Now, would price be the major decision maker in whether you use any of those? Well, even if you choose pea over canola over soy or over egg, what determines which ones the manufacturers would choose?

PW: I think that performance would come first, and so, they will look for something that's going to do the job because a great many--. The big food companies that provide most of the food that we see in one form or another on the shelves, they have a product and a reputation and a brand to protect and defend. So they're not going to take any chances with oddball kinds of configurations, so they need tried, true, tested ingredients to go into their products.

They will be looking, also, at the economics. Egg white, for example, is wonderful stuff. Two problems, I guess, with egg white from their perspective. One is it's hugely very expensive. Two is it's animal based rather than vegetable based, and as you know,

health, wellness, and nutrition is shifting from animal-based products to vegetable-based products. And so, our soy, pea, and canola products fit very well into that shifting trend.

NP: Do they in turn—those three—do they have different--. When you put them into products, do they react slightly differently, or are they interchangeable?

PW: Somewhat interchangeable but have different properties, some better at some things than other things. And also, from a nutritional point of view, they're going to have different profiles. The nutritional profile will be different, is different. I mean, for example, canola has high--. We've got two products there. One is high in cysteine, which is one of the amino acids. They're chains of amino acids, these proteins. I'm not the protein expert here, but I do know that canola has a couple of very strong features. One is this high cysteine content, the other is methionine is high as well. So taken altogether, it's a very good quality protein for human consumption.

Soy has a different composition, and it's also very good, and peas as well. So they each have their own strengths and weaknesses. Strengths, I suppose, we should say. It is the case that if you combine them from a nutritional point of view, the sum is greater than just the sum of the parts. The value is greater than just the sum of the parts because whatever shortfall there might be in one in terms of an amino acid can be made up from another. So there's a balancing and a compensation effect when you bring them together. So that's part of the story.

The other is their rates of digestibility are different. So that means you can have sort of a long--. You can have one of them may have a big burst of digestibility at the beginning of a time period, and the other doesn't kick in until later. And that's true in terms of the mixes of proteins. So from a nutritional point of view, it's exciting, it's interesting, and very timely because people want to live better, eat better, live longer, be healthy. So these products address many of those desires and their requirements.

NP: So when you started, you were working with the canola protein extraction?

PW: Mmhmm. Yeah.

NP: And then you expanded to the other two. Did you expand--. Why did you expand to the other two? Was it just for what you were saying that they could combine to make a better product? Or were there other reasons behind--?

[0:20:00]

PW: All of the above, and also, we wanted to diversify. We didn't want to be just a one-trick-pony kind of company, so we had to look. "We know how to make it." Going down that track, we added the soy, and we added the peas, and their technology--. I mentioned that the nutritional profile is different, so is their chemical composition. So that required a major modification of the process, et cetera, and so there our process is particular to those using some of the similar techniques, obviously.

So we wanted to diversify, that was one thing. The other thing is that canola protein is not yet established as a category. There's a lot of interest in it. One day it will be, I'm sure. It has a lot of great features, and we will probably be the ones—we expect to be the ones—who will finally do that. But soy has been around for 66 years. Peas have been around for a very long time. So once we had those products ready to go, that was a far easier thing for us to do in terms of commercializing in the markets because we weren't creating a whole new category. We were just adding a new product to an existing line up of products within the soy category and within the pea category.

NP: So the process--. You had talked about one of the reasons that you wanted to look for something such as this that you could work on is because you were looking for a home-grown product that could be developed in Canada, patented in Canada, and so on. So do those three processes—or the one process that is used for the three different products—those are patented in--? Those processes--?

PW: Yes. They are three different processes, really, and there would be some common elements but not too many because their properties are different. This gets into an area that I'm not really all that familiar with because I'm the layperson, and Don is the technical expert. And now, of course, we have a whole team devoted to that. Now, the question again you were asking about--?

NP: Is whether it's a Canadian process, whether it accomplished what you hoped it would accomplish.

PW: Oh, the Canadian piece, yeah. That's an interesting story because the journey has taken a different direction at this point, and that is that I looked for--. Initially, stepping back to when we reached the point where Don and I could no longer fund this with our milk money, we were writing cheques out of family incomes. First it was hundreds, and then it was 500, and then it was thousands. All of this was coming out of normal family income, so you can't really do a heck of a lot of R & D on normal family income, but we did what we could. And we carried this for a long time by ourselves, but we reached the point where we couldn't do the mini pilot program without major, serious resources, and we needed a few million dollars, and we just didn't have it.

So we went around to the sources that we thought might be available here in Canada and knocked on the doors and went to see the ENSIS and went to see the Crocus and went to see all these various players and talk to local people. And in the end, there really wasn't any interest from these Canadian sources, initially, in the Canadian sources in getting involved in a project at this very early

stage of development. They would be interested and have the opportunity now to participate because they can buy the shares in the stock market, but at that point, it was an idea, it looked quite promising, and here we had these two guys who were putting it forward, and it all looked very good, but it was very early stage. So there really wasn't any early-stage interest.

Finally, the interest came from this group in Hong Kong who said, "We are looking for an opportunity in this field, in the so-called biotechnology field." But that's changed too because biotechnology now means genetic modification, but we're not genetic modification. We're food technology. Anyway, they decided that they were prepared to put up the money required to take the next steps, and that's how we did this, how we made these arrangements and did this deal.

But in terms of the Canadian part of this, we have here in Winnipeg a technical centre for Burcon NutraScience, and it has 12 or 14 people working in it and have been working in it since 19—not since 1999. Yes. Since 1999. Even before that, we had a small group because Don and I got the original centre up. Then with the efforts of our friends—and the resources of our friends—in Hong Kong and Vancouver, we were able to expand it into what it is today, which is a high-tech research centre for protein technology. And it's based right here in Winnipeg. And we've just won a big award at the Las Vegas International Food Technology Show through our partner. We have a partner now, ADM, the big giant food and grain and agriculture company, is our commercialization and development partner, and they have just won an award, and we have just won the award for—. I forget what the designation is, but it's an award-winning product. So that comes right out of here. So I'm pretty pleased about that.

[0:25:42]

NP: I could see why.

PW: But the thing about it is, originally, I thought that we might have the factory here, and I could sort of visualize all of that happening. We'd have all these circles around it, and it would just be a beehive of buzzing activity. Didn't quite work out like that. We do have some Canadian presence and results. This technical centre is still going full blast and doing very good work and continues to support the projects. We have the small administrative office in Vancouver, so that's the Canadian piece. We have Canadian shareholders and so on.

But the reality is that when you do come to commercialize products like this, where do you go? Who has the ability to take products like this worldwide? Well, you wind up, eventually, going to the very big players because they're the ones who have the worldwide established networks. So all they have to do is take our product and put it on the truck. And so, instead of them shipping 14 different ingredients to that plant down the road, now it's 15. They put more bulk on the truck, and that's it. So that means that

all those sort of do-it-yourself build model that I originally visualized really doesn't work in today's environment. It's just not part of the game. Globalization. Everything is big.

The other thing that's important—and I think our people in Vancouver recognize this as they went through the exercise—is big wants to deal with big. The big customer for ADM, whatever that might be—and these are the people whose names are on the products on the shelves—they want to buy from other big, well-established ingredients suppliers like ADM.

[Audio pauses]

NP: So you were talking about big likes to deal with big, which I think is a very--.

PW: Big likes to deal with big, and so we discovered at the end of the day, we were going to do a deal with one of the big companies, and those big companies are virtually, without exception, either based in the US or internationally in Europe, or perhaps now in the future in Southeast Asia. So there wasn't really an opportunity to go to a great, big, strong international company in Canada and say, "Let's go and market this worldwide" because they don't exist.

NP: So the closest would be Richardson's?

PW: Richardson's, exactly. You know, they're a wonderful company and great company, but they're not operating at the same sort of worldwide mega level that the others are operating. They don't have plants located in six different continents around the world and 80,000 employees and those kinds of things. They don't have that. They're a great, big, strong Canadian-based company. Maybe they will in the future. You never know. You never know, but they're not there now.

NP: Yeah. I share your both--. Well, I share your desire to have Canada become more of a player internationally in the marketplace rather than being shopped out by others. [Laughs]

PW: Well, the Australians call us the branch-plant economy because I think they're thinking more about the mining industry whereby our big mining giants went the same way as many of our big national grain entities. So that seems to be the Canadian way, and I guess we can wring our hands about it. I'm not happy about it. I mean, one of the things that drove me to consider doing what I did was to see if I couldn't do something. And I did something, but it wasn't quite what I had in mind. It didn't quite work out, but maybe we're talking here about the immutable forces of globalization that these things are just so enormous that the big players just dominate the field. And as we discovered—our little company discovered—trying to do anything other than go the way we went and cooperate--.

[0:29:55]

And we've got great partners in ADM, wouldn't say anything but good things about that company. They're wonderful partners for us. They also have a big presence in Canada. It's not like they're not doing anything here. They're doing lots here. Are they based in Canada as a world entity? No. They're somewhere else. Our product, the canola products and the soy and the pea products, are they likely to be made here in Canada ultimately? Probably not. They're probably going to fit better into the worldwide program for another company in the US or Europe or somewhere else, and they'll be sourced from there. So I really don't know how to do this, how to create the Canadian giant company here, but maybe Richardson's are on their way to doing that. I mean that could well be. They could be adding pieces as we speak all over the world. Maybe they're involved in the Black Sea region. Maybe they're putting up houses in Southeast Asia. Maybe they're doing all of these things.

NP: Because, as you mentioned early on, one of the reasons you were looking at that was you like to have, in your home community, you like to have well-paid people, world-renowned in their field working in your city.

PW: That's what we wanted to do. We wanted to build that right here. That was going to be the hub. But so far, it didn't quite work out that way. However, looking on the other side of it, we've had this technical centre running now for 12 years, 13 years, and that's been--. I would say that our group is on the leading edge. We have 400 patents worldwide, and we are highly respected and well-regarded in that field. We pretty well know what we're doing in that area. How that's going to play out in the future, I don't know. Where products will be produced and who will ultimately benefit from all of this, we don't know. It's not clear. But we've already benefitted to some extent, and we will continue to be players, but not quite the way I originally visualized.

NP: Mmhmm. Now, I have you connected with Agritec International.

PW: Yes, yes.

NP: And when did you slip that into your busy life? [Laughs]

PW: That happened after I left the Canadian International Grains Institute.

NP: So that would have been in 2000 or 2001?

PW: Yeah, 2000. So 2001, let's say. You see, I was always of the—you can see—I was always of the opinion that we could do more. This was during my time with the Wheat Board in particular, I kept saying to myself, “Well, you know, this is wonderful that we're selling wheat and barley and doing all these things around the world, but could we not use this platform to do other things? Could we not use the Canadian Wheat Board to be the engine of growth and development in western Canada? Could it not make investments around the world and own facilities in China, own facilities in various places? And could it not make investments in the Chinese brewing industry?” They were begging us to make investments in the Chinese brewing industry. The opportunity we had to be investors in one of the main companies in China was just begging, went begging. That company alone is now bigger than the entire Canadian market. So I mean, there are just enormous opportunities, in my view, that we did not take advantage of.

And it's nobody's fault. It wasn't part of the mandate of the organization, although that's not even clear because they were--. The mandate included the opportunity to do anything that we thought was in the interest of producers. So if western producers, for example, could have owned a major brewery in China today, would they be happy campers or not? I don't know. I suspect they would. So those were the things that were running in my mind.

And the other thing is that the people we were selling the wheat and the barley to, they needed all the technology for handling, receiving, and storage of grain. So my thought was, “Why don't we sell them some silos? Why don't we sell them some grain cleaners? Why don't we use the Wheat Board platform to do that?” It was never really part of the equation. It just didn't compute. It wasn't part of the thinking at the time. So when I left that whole outfit I said to myself two things. One is I said, “You know you've been talking about this for years. Why don't you do something about it?” And the doing something about it was creating BMW Canola that led to Burcon that led to the whole story we just talked about.

The other part of it was to say--. Agritec is a group of companies based here in Winnipeg that had been responsible for building most of the new facilities in western Canada. That group of companies was the latest, greatest, highest technology, most experienced in the world in building modern grain facilities. Why wouldn't we take them international? Why wouldn't we just go and offer those services turn-key basis to others around the world who, if they don't buy from us, will buy from somebody else? So why would we waste this opportunity? So I said, “You know what? We're not going to do that.”

[0:35:32]

I approached the Agritec people. There was a skeleton organization. They tried some--. They made some efforts in the past, and it hadn't really been highly successful. And so, they were impressed with my presentation and what I had done, and I think in particular that I had founded this technology company. It gave them confidence that I could do what I said I thought I could do, and they said, “Sure. Okay. We'll go with you. We'll work with you.” So I took over the Agritec group of companies. We went

international, and we made some attempts in China, which initially which didn't work out. There were some complications there, and lots of people have found difficult getting traction in China. Anyway, timing just didn't work for us.

We shifted gears and went to Russia and went to Kazakhstan, two areas where they have similar grain economies, not grain economies, but grain environments as do we. So we thought there might be some opportunities there. So I got on an airplane. Russia was interesting, but it was a time when the Russians had great difficulty making decisions about projects, and so we ran into a number of dead ends there and decided we weren't getting anywhere, so, "Let's try somewhere else." So the somewhere else was Kazakhstan. So I went to Kazakhstan, and we have now built more grain storage in Kazakhstan than any other company, period. So we have now built five, six, seven installations. We've got probably 350-400,000 tonnes of storage, which is roughly—not quite—half of Vancouver to put it in perspective, as inland terminals across Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan is virtually identical to Canada—where we were working, northern Kazakhstan—to the western Prairies. They have the same crops, the same frost-free days, the same wheats, the same everything, and it's just an enormous, endless plain like it is here. So everything fit. It was absolutely a perfect fit. So we built that and happily worked on projects there until the financial crisis of 2008 when everything fell down. Not our structures. They're still standing and in good use, but the financing fell down, and they ran into huge problems and haven't really recovered. They've had a couple of really bad crops. So that's where the Agritec piece fits in, and I'm still working with them, and we're looking for opportunities that we will do more.

NP: So besides the grain storage, you said there are how many companies involved with the sort of Agritec--?

PW: Six companies here in Winnipeg, and they're the ones who have built most of the new inland grain terminals in western Canada, the ones that replaced the wooden country elevators. So they--.

NP: Besides the silos, then what other--?

PW: Cleaning and handling and receiving and drying equipment. All the pieces you need for an integrated turnkey facility. So we have the construction design built company, engineering company. We have conveyors, a company that makes conveyor systems. We have a company that makes the bins, the big steel bins. We have companies that make the dryers and the other components that we need for these projects.

NP: So the scales and all of those as well?

PW: Scales. Although, strangely, we have a scale company, but it never works because they always have their own scales in the country. In the case of Kazakhstan, they want to use their own scales, and I think it's because they maybe trust their scales or they're familiar with their scales or they've got a certain idea in mind. Anyway, so we don't do scales, but everything else we've done.

NP: Unfortunate that 2008 came about for many reasons, which I will discuss with you once we're finished the tape, for our project. So looking to the future with that company, what are you hoping?

PW: Southeast Asia. The economy is on fire. Less so today than maybe it was a year ago, but it seems like that's where we need to go, and I'm looking at opportunities in that area. We'll be heading over here soon to see if we can't find an opportunity for Agritec to do some more international work there.

[0:40:13]

NP: Now, you're marketing. You're back to marketing. Well, you were never really out of marketing.

PW: I never really left marketing. [Laughing]

NP: So the connections that you built way back, starting back in 1970, has there been an opportunity to sort of, as time went by, to just build on and attach to the connections that you made earlier on in your career?

PW: Yes, yes. I've brought in some of the same people who used to be our customers now work for us, for Agritec, as consultants to help us with this, this, and this. So the network is alive and well, and is working. So all the investment that we made, that I made, in the past--.

[Audio pauses]

NP: For you. [Laughs] Okay.

PW: So all the investment we made in those relationships in the past have been extremely useful. And that's how it works. You maybe don't see people for a long time, but you keep some kind of relationship up, and then you say, "Well, can you help us with this over here?" And very often the answer is yes, and they're happy to renew acquaintances and get involved in new projects. This has been and continues to be just a really exciting journey for me.

I also think that opportunities for young people now in our field are enormous. We're 9 billion people coming up, probably. Canada is in a great position to be a major player in satisfying food needs for all of those people both here and abroad. We have the technology. We have the know-how. We have the ambition. We have the people. It's all opportunity there waiting for us to take it and to pick it up and move forward. And when you think about—on a bigger, broader world scale—when you think about also opportunities at the micro level, I mean, I've gone both ways. I've gone worldwide on the Agritec front, and so that's big and expansive, but we've also gone molecular in terms of the work that we've done on the protein. So I think there's as much excitement and opportunity in going into the molecules, getting close to the molecule, as my partner Don used to say, and you can think of the opportunities that there will be in the future to grow wonderful, new, useful products and things in the field.

NP: Now, I just have a personal interest—very tangential—in Africa. When I started working on this project, I went on eBay because I wanted to gather together old postcards of the grain industry in Thunder Bay. And I recall coming across a postcard that was from the same era, so it would be around 1910, and juxtapositioning [sic] that postcard to a postcard from Thunder Bay which showed one of the new terminal elevators built in the 1910s and the storage of grain in Africa, which was the other postcard, which was essentially a pile of grain on the shore of the country. And I thought, “Now, why did that happen? Why in Canada we built this wonderful infrastructure, built up the expertise in building these elevators in maintaining the crop so it didn't get eaten by rodents or destroyed by weather or whatever? And then in Africa nothing happened. They were piling grain on the shore.” And I don't know if I--. I certainly didn't keep up with what happened in Africa. So I'm interested in Africa as a customer, and what you learned about that over your time from the 1970s to now where--.

PW: Well, you'll remember, I worked for two years in Senegal, West Africa.

NP: No, you didn't mention that on tape, but you did mention it when we were speaking before the interview.

PW: Okay. Yeah. So I should mention that. So we were there. I was there with my family, and we were there for two years, just a little over two years, working for the World Food Programme, United Nations World Food Programme. It was the time of the great drought, yet another great drought in this case West Africa. So my job was to receive and help distribute food aid from the World Food Programme. So that meant that countries like Canada would contribute food, and Norway would contribute food, and the US would do food, and Sweden, and then we would receive these shipments and then work with the Senegalese officials to distribute it to the [inaudible] populations, the populations that were in jeopardy, at risk.

[0:45:21]

And we did so either as emergency food aid and also as food for work. So it was part of the payment that was made for work on infrastructure. We didn't have any projects building grain storage, but we did have irrigation projects and other projects directed to enhancing productivity and food self-sufficiency. But the question as to why the Africans don't have silos and proper storage and everything is a difficult one, and I don't know the answer to it, and I'm not sure anybody else does. But from what I saw, they seemed to be just caught in some kind of a trap there that didn't allow them to move very far from where they were.

I sensed in part it was because of a social structural situation whereby the people who were at the top of this social structure, things were working reasonably well for them. They were driving cars, and they were doing well, and they had the things they needed, and it really didn't suit them too much to have new varieties of sorghum introduced that would triple, quadruple, and increase dramatically the production of sorghum, which would distort the whole balance between the production of sorghum and the production of the cash-crop peanuts. And the peanuts were then exported and could be used to gain foreign currency, and foreign currency could be used to buy the things that certain people found more desirable than others. You could buy anything, of course. But it seemed to me they were almost in a state of paralysis, that they couldn't move because of this structure.

Now, that's very simplistic and just my view from a short time there. However, a lot of people working very hard tried to do the right thing. International circles very impressed with Canadian efforts and international efforts to be useful and helpful in that part of the world.

NP: When were you involved in that?

PW: That was way back in '76, '75-'76, so that's a long time ago.

NP: And how did you come to take part in it?

PW: Well, I attended a lecture, another lecture—I've got to be careful not to attend any lecture—but I attended a lecture by George Hutton, who was a former well-regarded Minister of Agriculture for the province of Manitoba who at the time had taken a position with the World Food Programme, and who came back from the World Food Programme to Manitoba, gave a presentation, and I was impressed with it and went to see him afterwards and ask questions, as I did in the earlier story with Don Murray. One thing led to another, and he said, "We're looking for fellows like you. Can you speak French?" I said, "Well, barely." He said, "That doesn't matter. We can teach you French, but if you're interested, there's a job for you in West Africa." That appealed to me, and I said, "Okay. I'll take a look at it."

I made arrangements for a leave of absence from the Wheat Board for a couple of years. They were agreeable, and I went off and spent the two years in West Africa, and it was a wonderful experience. And also, a feeling of really doing something useful. Now, there are lots of useful things to do in the world, and people do them everyday, but that felt very good to be helping directly with--. That's a very feel-good kind of a situation.

[Audio pauses]

NP: Like. [Laughs]

PW: Yes, yes. That's right.

NP: You took a leave of absence from the Wheat Board to do this. Did you see connections with what the Wheat Board was doing and the World Food Programme?

PW: Well, the mandates were quite different. One was commercial, and the other was international relief. So the connection was wheat and food, and so that was clear. The other thing that comes up, of course, is that at one level when you think about it, if you are giving food away to populations that might otherwise be pushed to buy it, it could affect the markets and supply and demand and the commercial reality. But the truth is that there never was enough involved in the food aid compared to the entire size of crops, world crops, and trade to be anything other than marginal. The populations involved would never had had the resources themselves to be participants in the commercial world of grain.

[0:50:16]

That's a discussion that we had, actually, at the Wheat Board with the commissioners at the time about relationship and impact. In the end, they seemed to be quite different worlds. We didn't cross there. It's not like the food aid was displacing any commercial business because the commercial business either didn't take place at all or seemed to take place off to the side, was not affected much at all by the food aid events.

NP: So we have the Agritec experience, the CIGI experience, the Canadian Wheat Board experience, the Burcon and its predecessor BMW experience. Anything in your career that I've missed?

PW: I think for the active life in the grain industry, that's it. No, I think we pretty well got it covered.

NP: So I have some general questions then.

PW: Yes, yes.

NP: When you look back on a pretty illustrious career, I would say—and I don't say that to everybody [laughs]—what are you most proud of?

PW: I think I have a couple of things. One is that I actually did something. In other words, I didn't just moan about the fact that we seemed to be losing some ground in terms of Canadian content, in terms of the jobs that were available, in terms of the technology. And so, I'm quite proud of the fact that we actually put a stake in the ground and said, "Nope, we're going to try to do something about this." We wanted to create wealth. We had three objectives for our company. One was to create wealth in the sense that you make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. Two was we wanted to add value to Canadian crops. I mean, people have been talking about this, *duh-duh-duh-duh-duh*, for the longest time, and some did. And three was we wanted to make good jobs right here in Canada, in these fields.

The fact that we were able to do that and achieve this platform and this company and this technology centre, and we're now working with one of the biggest companies in the world to commercialize our products, and we've got a company in a publicly traded market, I think that's something. I feel like I made a little bit of a contribution there.

And the other part would be this--. We talked about the World Food Programme. I really felt very, very good about that. I thought that was a tremendously worthwhile exercise, probably as much for me as for them. But we did our best, and we established some records and milestones there, being quick to respond to food aid and food emergencies when people said it wasn't possible. I don't do impossible well, so I thought, "No, we're going to do this." So we found a way to do it. Anyway, that's part of it.

NP: And what was your position there?

PW: I was the World Food Programme field officer. So I parachuted in there with a severe language disadvantage having high school French from Manitoba, and I cast no aspersions on that. It was a fine program, and I did my best, and we came out of it in pretty good shape, but it doesn't really equip you for just getting off an airplane and going straight to meeting with the Minister of Agriculture and trying to figure out what we're going to do with the next shipment of this, that, and the other thing that you really weren't too familiar with. So it was interesting.

I spent probably six weeks in what I would describe as a deaf and dumb situation and eventually came out of that and wound up being able to speak French tolerably well with what I would call a horrible accent, but there you go. That's what happened.

NP: Great. Any recollections about Thunder Bay? Did Thunder Bay ever factor in your career?

PW: Well, it was certainly an important part of the supply chain going east into the Atlantic and into the markets I was responsible for. There were two avenues from Thunder Bay forward in terms of grain supply. One was that salties would sometimes go up, but with less frequent, to Thunder Bay and take grain directly—not fully loaded, but partly loaded—and then be topped up in the river. So certainly, that was part of our whole supply chain going into the UK. And then, of course, it operated essentially as a transfer house taking grain from rail into the lakers and onto either the Maritimes or to the St. Lawrence River.

[0:55:27]

So it was part of our program, but I could see—I think we could all see—that everything was shifting, that the flow out of Thunder Bay and the advantage that we thought we had with the lakes there seemed to diminish over time, and that all the focus shifted to the West Coast, to Southeast Asia, to Vancouver, and then to Prince Rupert.

NP: Did that create any impact on your work?

PW: No, not really. It didn't. I can't think of anything.

NP: I think you've probably covered this as we went through the various stages of your career. The question is what were the major changes you saw in your job, in the industry over the years?

PW: I think we've covered those, actually.

NP: Mmhmm. Canada as a competitor, any changes over the years? Up, down, has it pretty much, in your experience, maintained its place in the competitive market, the grain competitive market?

PW: Yes, from what I can see, I think we have maintained our competitive position, but I think we're at the threshold, probably, of a change there in terms of the Canadian wheat brand. And what I mean by that is that up to now there's always been a strong focus on exemplifying the good quality characteristics of Canadian wheat, and the brand had some value, and the Board attempted to use its single desk selling monopoly power to obtain premiums for farmers and were successful in doing so for a long period of time.

But that's all changed now, so we now have, I think, a bit of a different situation, and I wonder whether the Canadian brand will continue to be as exonerated as it is. I think that those now selling Canadian wheat will probably, and quite understandably so, take the view that the Canadian is just one of—if you're an international company—just one of many options to supply a customer with. And the very best situation, I think, for an international supplier would be to say, “Well, we'll sell you some wheat, and we would like it to be optional origin, and these are the grades we're offering in Canada. These are the grades of American wheat we can offer, and this is the one, and we'll ship the ones that work out best for us and for you.” So I think there might be a change there in how Canadian wheat finds its way to market, how it's presented, how it's marketed. Maybe more of it is going to be part of an optional origin package by international sellers.

NP: This, I guess, is tied in with changes that have occurred in the industry per se, and I don't know whether you want to make comments on the changes since 2000, which were pretty big ones in the industry.

PW: You know, I guess we have to acknowledge there's been a very big change in terms of how wheat is marketed and that the Canadian Wheat Board is no longer the single-desk marketer of Canadian Wheat. Now there are other players directly involved in buying wheat directly from farmers and selling it, and I guess it remains to be seen what the significance of that is going to be. I guess over time we've seen the disappearance of the Pools. So Manitoba Pool, Sask Pool, Alberta Pool gone, UGG [United Grain Growers] gone, and then their successor Viterra now taken over by a much larger international company. Part of the whole globalization exercise.

[1:00:06]

And more at the farmer level, I'm wondering if there isn't the shift in thinking too as well. Whereas the Pools represented farmers working together, cooperating as it were, in the marketing of their grain and then also in buying inputs and supplies and so on, that seemed to be a model that worked well for them over the years. But that's all shifted now, and people now, I think, are a little more independently minded, and they prefer to do their own marketing and to run their own operations and perhaps less inclined to that cooperative model. So I think that's been a shift over time.

NP: This is a slightly different question than challenges and changes. This is most significant events that happened during your time on the job. So these are like the stories that pop out and say, “Yes, I'll always remember that, or I'll always remember that” that occurred.

PW: Well, one must certainly be the changes at the Canadian Wheat Board. Who would ever have thought that the Canadian Wheat Board that at one time virtually controlled the Canadian grain industry--. Wheat was the biggest crop. It was only marketed by the Wheat Board. The Board allocated cars for Board and non-board and essentially ran everything, together with its agents, of course, but I mean they were the drivers in all of this. That they would essentially—they haven't disappeared—but that their role would be substantially changed to the point where they are now probably, we could say, one of the smaller players in the industry. Who knows how that's going to unfold. That chapter remains to be written. So that has to be one of the major changes that took place.

The other thing is to think about the handling system, the changes that have taken place there. From several thousand country elevators, small wooden country elevators, in the space of my lifetime being replaced by 100, is it now—I'm not sure of the number—of--.

NP: More like 200 and some across the Prairies.

PW: 200 and some inland terminals. So I mean, it's quite a fantastic change. One has to think--. And it's connected to all sorts of other changes, including communications, and including increases in productivity, equipment, fertilizer, genetics—all of this stuff moving forward at a tremendous pace.

NP: Very hard to have predicted. Was there--. You were in the industry. Were these all predictable things? It's just that they seemed to take forever to come, and then all of a sudden, they *whoosh!*

PW: All of a sudden, the flood gates come and open up, don't they? So what were some of the floodgates opening up? One, I guess, maybe was the Free Trade Agreement, which shortly after that we had this change in ownership structure and in participation in the Canadian grain industry, in milling, in malting, and more participation from outside from other countries, other companies based in other countries. So that has to be a floodgate kind of an opening change.

What else happened? I mean, I can think of my UK experience, obviously. The Common Agricultural Policy and the very high import tariffs just dramatically changed the situation for us in Europe. So we were kind of forced to look elsewhere, and happily, at the time, Southeast Asia opened up and other opportunities appeared. So that was a big shift.

NP: Transportation? End of the Crows Nest? Thinking about Canadian companies who have become more multinational, the CN [Canadian National Railway] and the CP [Canadian Pacific Railway].

PW: Yeah, yeah. That's a good point, yes. That's part of the change, isn't it? And who knows what came first and what came second here? What's the cause and effect? But I suppose the changes in the railway situation, yes, created the opportunity for better freight rates, for bigger facilities that could load 54 cars, and they had eight hours in which to do that, and then even bigger facilities now. That predicated and resulted in the dramatic change in the country elevator system. That came out of the change of the Crowsnest Pass rates, of course. Yes, that's true. That's true. That's all part of it.

[1:05:40]

NP: And the future will be interesting, both in the industries you're still involved in and--.

PW: Yes. And you asked if there were any signs that this was coming. I suppose there were signs, but did any of us see them? I'm not sure we did. I'm not sure we did. And so, when we stand here and look forward, what do we see now? I see huge opportunities for young people. I mean, I think this is a great time to be in agriculture in my opinion. If I were doing it again—and I am still doing it, but from a slightly different position—I wouldn't hesitate to jump into our business. I think it's exciting, dynamic, and full of opportunity.

NP: And probably a lot more people following your route in being involved around the world. So they may get their education, they may grow up in Winnipeg and get their education in Winnipeg, but they, given the global nature of the industry, are unlikely—unless they choose to—stay.

PW: It's true. One can see at the moment opportunities in Southeast Asia, and so a young person, perhaps, would be well advised to go to Southeast Asia, have a look around, see what's there, and get plugged into economies that are growing, that are moving ahead.

NP: And many of them are because they couldn't get jobs here, so they go there and they teach.

PW: Yes. Yes, they do.

NP: And they learn the language, and that opens doors for them.

PW: And that's a huge benefit, absolutely.

NP: Yeah. Now, I have a self-serving question, which I will also continue after the interview, but I mentioned to you when we were speaking off tape that our super goal is to set up a National Historic Site in Thunder Bay related to the grain elevators, recognizing their part in the growth of Canada as an international grain trader against geographic odds in the initial stages. [Laughs] If we are successful in doing that, what parts of, that you see from your career, would you like to see displayed there, covered there? What would you like visitors from Canada and from the world who pass through to know about the Wheat Board, the Canadian International Grains Institute, the companies that supply silos and whatever?

PW: Well, I'm interested in the story. I think it is fascinating, and it will be, I'm sure, rich ground for research in the future, and is probably now. To think about the changes that have taken place during my lifetime, it would be interesting to have, it seems to me, and useful and worthwhile to have that recorded somewhere— not my lifetime, not my story, but the big story. That would be-- I'd like to see that. But in terms of one particular thing, do I have a whiz banger that should be in there or not? No, I really don't. But you know, you can think of the focus, the orientation was all towards Europe and the UK and all of that, including the varieties, including Thunder Bay, including that whole eastern export program. And then that all shifted, and it shifted for the reasons we talked about, and then it all shifted to the West Coast and the Southeast Asian markets.

[1:10:02]

NP: Now, we'll talk more about that because not only-- Well, we'll talk more about that off-tape. Other people that we should interview?

PW: Well, you've probably spoken to Bob Roehle. I would hope so.

NP: Mmhmm.

PW: Yeah, because he's a wellspring of--.

NP: I think he probably gave me your name.

PW: He may well have done that. Bob and I are old friends, and we worked together, and we're still in contact. Yes, good that you should say--. And certainly, Brain Oleson, you would have spoken to him?

NP: No, I haven't, but he was--. I was trying to contact him this week, and we were ships passing in the night. So I'll have to pick him up at another time. What about the brewing side of things?

PW: Now who would be a good person to speak to on that? You know, there's a guy, Norm Kendall, but he's been out of the business for a while, but he would also--. I wonder if he wouldn't be--. He's a reflective kind of philosophical guy, but only he's not in Winnipeg. He's in Neepawa, so that's too far away.

NP: Oh, is he? Okay. No, that's not too far away. I have friends, farmers, in Neepawa that I can just mooch off of. [Laughs]

PW: Okay. Well, he's right at the corner of Highway 5 and 357.

NP: Well, that's great because his name was given to me, and nobody knew where he was.

PW: I know where he is because I've bumped into him. What happens is if you go up Highway No. 5 towards, I guess, Dauphin, it would be at that point. Neepawa No. 5. You go about 12 or 15 miles north, and then 357 is called the Mountain Road, and it goes west at that point. If you drive one mile, maybe one and a half—no more—and you start to rise, on the right hand side, the north side, you will see a sculpture. It's supposed to be a sculpture. It's an old, broken down pump thing from a long time ago. That's his stuff. That's his sign. I don't know why he chose that for his sign, but that's him. But then he's tucked in there on an acreage. He lives right there. They've got a wonderful garden, deer running all over the place. Deer season ended yesterday, so he'll be happy to see you.

I think he would be a great guy to talk to because he went through--. He came here. He's a Brit who came here a long time ago, and he worked in the brewing industry. He was head of the National Association--. No, no. I'm thinking of the National Association of the British and Irish Millers, with whom I worked for many years in the UK. But he was head of an organization that was an umbrella organization for the brewing industry. He's got two barley varieties named after him—one Norm and the other Kendall, I think. So he would be a really good guy to talk to.

NP: Good. And the noodle side?

PW: The noodle side? I was going to say Paul Chen, and that's because Paul Chen was the first guy to head up the noodle section, the noodle department at the Grains Institute. I can give you his number if you want to call him in Vancouver.

NP: Paul--?

PW: Paul Chen. C-H-E-N. So he knows all about--. But he is probably the guy who knows too much about noodles. He's, I think, Chinese or perhaps a Taiwanese national who came and worked for us. One other person, probably Denny Stephens. Have you spoken to Denny Stephens?

NP: Yes. Yeah.

PW: Because Denny is not short of observations on the grain industry, and most of them very good. All of them very good.

NP: Okay. I'm looking for somebody who is sort of technical, so would Paul be the guy?

PW: Tony Tweed.

NP: I'm trying to get a hold of him. He doesn't have a telephone answering.

PW: No, he doesn't. Have you got his email?

NP: No.

PW: Here it is.

NP: [Laughs] He thought he could escape me!

PW: No, you'd want to talk to Tony. He's--.

NP: I talked to him when he was at CIGI because--. But we usually wait until people retire, and I noticed he just retired.

PW: He's the right guy. Yeah, but you know what? He'll have time.

NP: Good.

PW: Okay. So here, I'm just going to get this for you. Options. Compose email to Tony. T-O-N-Y. Tony Tweed, there he is. Here's his address. Why is he--? He's T Tweed.

NP: Why don't we--. Let me just end off the interview.

PW: Yes, yes. Sorry. Okay.

NP: So that we don't have his email address--.

PW: In the middle of it all, yes.

NP: In the middle of it all. [Laughs] So anything that I haven't asked that I should have asked you that you were hoping, "Gee, I hope she asks me about this"?

PW: No, I think I'm quite comfortable with what we've covered, and there's really nothing more that I can think of to add right now.

NP: Okay, thanks. Well, you have my email address, so if you think, "I want another session," just let me know. So I'm just going to sign off now with my thanks for quite a wonderful couple of hours covering your career.

End of interview.