

Conducted at the home of Eiliv (Sonny) and Joy Anderson, 15 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.

**SA = Sonny Anderson: Interviewee**

**AB = Ann Behrman: Interviewer**

**JP = Joan Parsonage: Camera**

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**AB:** Would you introduce yourself and tell us about your family and your parents?

**SA:** Yes. My name is Eiliv Howard Anderson and everybody calls me Sonny because Eiliv is a very difficult old Viking name. I was born west of Robsart on the northeast quarter of Section 7 Township 5 Range 25 West of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meridian. Dad went to get the doctor in Vidora, Doc Johnstone, but the car broke down so I was born before he got there, no credit to myself, but that's how it was.

My father [Thore Albert Anderson] was born in North Dakota and his father came in 1879 and homesteaded and then in 1910 they re-homesteaded up here at Robsart.

My mother's family came from Norway. She [Randine Hanson] was born in Norway in the town of Lillehammer in the Gudbrandsdal Valley. Their places were not too far apart in Norway. In later years they married (after they got up here); they didn't know each other before that.

I was born [on July 20, 1934], as I said, on the farm and grew up there. I went to school first in a little school called Luce School, right across the road from where I lived. It's in Consul now. It was a teacherage for quite a while but it is still there. They moved it. I took my high school in Robsart High School and graduated from there. When I graduated from school I was accepted for the Royal Military College, but my mother raised such a fuss. It was just after the war and [she thought] if I went into the Royal Military College I'd go to war and be killed. Dad really did need some help on the farm and I was the only boy so I stayed home. I went into the bank [Bank of Montreal] here in Maple Creek and worked there a little over a year. I would have made my career in banking, I

think, but my father got cancer so I came back down to the farm and helped him run it. I slowly bought land and acquired farm land.

I have to be honest with you, too. It was not my mission to be a farmer. I didn't mind it. I envy people who say that all their life they wanted to do something. I really never knew what I wanted to do all my life. I didn't say I wanted to be a doctor, lawyer, or whatever. After I came back and farmed for a number of years I got in the cattle business and pig business, mostly because people owed me debts and they couldn't pay, so they gave me cattle, gave me pigs. I was always quite active in organizations, so I became a Director in the Saskatchewan Stock Growers for a number of years and the Federation of Agriculture.

I married Joy in 1962. She was a neighbour girl. Her maiden name was Brekhus, and they lived six miles north of where we lived.

I courted her for five years until I convinced her to marry me. We were married and we built the house on the farm. It is still there. Tom Eremenko lives in it.

We had a daughter born in 1970 called Jennifer. She had Transposition of the Great Vessels and was operated on in '72 in Toronto and then died from a heart attack in 1979. Our son, Jordan, was born in 1975. He is now married and he's a Vice President for the Federated Co-op Refinery in Regina.

We farmed and I enjoyed farming in a fashion. I did a lot of other things. I was in partnership here in Maple Creek with Don Perrin for 20 years. We built the [Cypress] Motel; we built quite a few buildings and houses; bought the Stewart Ranch and put an electric drive pivot on it. About that time they convinced me I should - I was kind of mouthy I guess - run for politics. I ran in 1975, got elected to the Legislative Assembly and served a term there. When I was there I got to know and argue and visit with Eugene Whelan who was Federal Minister of Agriculture. When I lost the [1978] election he asked me if I would come to work for him, to do a study on the Beef Industry and some stuff, so I went to Ottawa on a six-month contract and remained there 27 years. I worked for Mr. Whelan and I worked for the Prime Minister's Office for a number of years doing speeches and research, and for Ag Economics. I worked for six different prime ministers starting with Trudeau and ending with Martin.

Joy was a teacher before we went down to Ottawa, but there she got her degrees and a number of specialized certificates and taught until we came here [Maple Creek]. When she came here they needed a teacher out at the [Okimaw Ohci] Healing Lodge right away, and you had to have an Alberta teaching certificate which she had. (She had her Saskatchewan, Ontario and Alberta teaching certificates). She went out and she still teaches there.

That's about it. I didn't plan anything, it just happened.

**AB:** Can you tell us some of the memories you have of Robsart and what it was like growing up there?

**SA:** Yes. I was born right in the heart of the '30s. I guess we were as poor as church mice, but the whole country was the same. Being a child it was actually a wonderful life. We all had lots to eat. It must have been an awful worry for the parents, but we had wonderful neighbours and at that time the community all came together for everything. We had everything from first of July picnics to ball games, so you really mixed and met with the community a lot. I never was spectacular in sports, hockey or ball, but I sure enjoyed going and watching. As I say, it was the dirty '30s and no crops or anything, but it never scarred me that I thought we were suffering badly. As a chap, we didn't or I didn't anyway. We always had some cousins' hand-down clothes; we all had lots to eat so things were pretty good.

In later years when I started farming, I think I hit the lucky end of it when I came back home because the rains started coming. We got good crops; the prices were good. I got into the cattle business with the farming. It was a good time to start farming in many ways because you didn't need a lot of money to do it like nowadays. You buy a half section, which I did, and then another and another, and keep adding to it which is difficult now to do. I enjoyed the people. I liked the cattle; I didn't like farming. I didn't like sitting on a tractor going around and around and around.

I guess it wasn't hard to convince me, when they asked me to run in politics, to move. I'd been active in many things and so going out [to Ottawa] wasn't a real challenge.

When we got married, Joy had to finish her teaching certificate so we spent that winter in Saskatoon. She went to the College of Education and got her certificate, and I attended the School of Agriculture.

Through the years, later on, I did a lot of work and study in Economics, worked with a lot of professors of economics and did a lot of papers and writing with them, so I got a good background in it. It wasn't too formal in that sense, but in later years I attended the Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, at the School of Business, and I got what's called the Executive Masters of Business Administration Degree. So I have that. I guess that was it, but a lot of my work was in that. When I ran the Farm Credit Corporation, I was appointed in right when the interest rates went up and there were foreclosures. It was terrible times and difficult times. The Corporation itself was in financial difficulty. They had been very lenient in their lending which at the time was good. I was told to straighten it up and get the books in order, and we did.

We ended up foreclosing on a lot of land, a lot of farmers. In fact, we ended up with over a million and a half acres of farm land, 55 townships in Saskatchewan, all foreclosed on. It's sad because when you foreclose on a business in a town you usually don't take the house and everything he owns, but on a farm you do.

At the time—I want to point that out, too—the Act was changed; we used to borrow our money from the federal government, the Treasury Board. From then on we were told to go on the capital markets—not in Canada but outside of Canada—to sell bonds to raise money we needed for lending, so I had to hire people and set up a money market business, a bond market, and did bond issues. That was quite a unique experience for myself because we went all over the world from Tokyo to Switzerland to wherever and did bond issues. Nowadays, that's not big money, but we'd do a bond issue, it would be 100 million at a time. The first time I signed one of those to borrow that was quite an undertaking, but we did a lot of it and you got used to it.

In that case, too, I did a lot of studying and learning on capital markets, bond markets. Because of my position—we were the largest agricultural lender in Canada and 11th largest financial institution—I used to be asked to attend the World Bank meetings and the International Monetary Fund meetings, and often I

did presentations at them on our agriculture, and how we finance or try to finance it, and difficulties, and exchange views with them.

I guess that's about it. It's not very interesting to tell about.

**AB:** Ok. Can you tell us some of the big changes in agriculture that you've noticed since you were in it to now?

**SA:** Yes. It's become much more—it's kind of a dangerous word to use—more business-like. We used to conduct it more, quite often, as a way of life. You had a little leniency in how you operated. Nowadays it is big business and very small margins, and it takes a lot of money to operate it.

Because of that, the family farm, in the sense that we used to consider a family farm, has virtually disappeared. It's been a long struggle. Way back in the '70s, late '70s, 85 to 90 percent of the farms in Canada, especially in Saskatchewan, survived with off-farm income. Either one of the partners worked off farm or both of them. That's how they stayed in business. Agriculture has always been, if you go back in history right to biblical times, has always been very unique. The primary producer usually does not make very much money. You are very tightly squeezed, very little profit.

The other thing that we have done in North America, here especially, maybe more so than other countries, is we came up with the strange idea that we had to get a farm, we'd build it up then we'd sell it to our sons or daughters. So what we did is we bought our own farm, paid interest payments on the dang things forever and ever and ever. You never got caught up, and we still are doing it. It would make more sense to me if you had a farm and you wanted to pass it on, and you really need the income to live off it, don't buy your own farm. Go buy the neighbor's farm, if you will. It is just senseless the way we, in agriculture, conduct our business so that the great big bulk of the profit in agriculture pours off out of the land in interest payments and income tax.

In fact, you would find it unbelievable (in this area here, if you want) the amount of millions of dollars that go out in payment of interest every year which isn't used to spend on the country to build, to acquire, to do anything. It's gone, goes to Toronto or wherever, and the rest goes in taxes, so we are left with very very little, a very small profit level. That's changing a little. What's happening now

with the farm becoming less and less owned by the owner—They are being bought and accelerated now, and they [farmers] either manage it for the people that buy it, and that money is usually coming in from big mutual funds and big pension funds.

For instance, last year farm values in Saskatchewan went up 28%. If I was an investor and I wanted to invest, of course, the place to buy [invest] is in one of these. There is one of these [investment companies] in Regina or Lethbridge - you buy into that fund and you make 28% profit. So buying land is crazy; land goes up and it works. It's not unusual; it's just so accelerated that I think you are going to see such a change in agriculture (which you are seeing now) that you won't believe it. It'll be managed by professional managers, but they won't own the land which isn't unusual. I mean most of the big companies that people are running don't own the company; they own a million shares in it. It's not unusual. I remember way back in the early '70s even, when places in this area, especially ranches, were about to go under, the bank would make a deal with them. They'd take all the profit, pay them [the rancher] so much to run it. If you are lending money, on a ranch especially—it is very interesting—when you foreclose on it in Saskatchewan you can't foreclose on the home quarter. You can't foreclose on the lease land, so what are you going to foreclose on? So they didn't do it. I know, in this area, of ranches since the '70s that have been run that way.

**AB:** Do you think it will go back to the old feudal system like they had in England?

**SA:** Yes. We are just about there now. The only difference is since the turn of the century—not this one, the one before, 1900s—85% of the people in any country were engaged in agriculture. They fed themselves and the other 15%. What we've done, starting about the Second World War, we've converted labour into capital, into money, buying tractors, buying combines, and we use fossil fuel and so there are very few people operating. The last census that I remember there were 268,000 farmers in agriculture as farmers in Canada, and they count anyone with six cows as farmers, but if you break it down into the statistics, 15% of the farmers in North America—in Canada, the US—or the European Union, produce 85 to 90% of the [world's] food. In Canada, 60 to 65,000 farmers across Canada produce 90% of the food. So that's what makes it so

difficult when you take the smaller farmer to do policies on subsidies or to help them when they are in trouble. Because if you take the smaller farmer, you'd say you've got to have \$100 an acre or \$200 an acre to exist in tough times. That's well and good. If you take the other farmer who is farming 10 to 20,000 acres, which a lot of them are, are you going to give them tax dollars of over two million? I don't think the taxpayers will go for that in the city. It should be actually split in two in what we call agriculture. [Very small farms] should be split off as hobby farms, to be blunt, is what they are; you can't make a living on them really. And the big farms do fairly well, thank you. We're feudal now, really, if you get right down to it.

It's a change; it's a big change. I don't know if it's good luck or if just because for 20 years that was my job, doing statistics and trying to draw up programs. You got to look at it from afar and see what was happening. Where when you're sitting close to it you don't really realize it happens, but you don't see the march of it and at the rate that won't ever reverse itself. The whole area, like here even, since 1960 and '70, of this area, the Reno Municipality, we've lost what, 90% of the population? And so what's left [inaudible] will be farmed, the grain will come off it, and the food value come off, but there'll be no people there. That's sad. I don't know how you reverse it.

What would reverse it is if you ran out of fuel. If you ran out of oil and diesel fuel we'd starve. We couldn't get our crop in the ground; we couldn't use fertilizer; we couldn't get this thing harvested, and it would just grind to a halt. We'd have to go back to 85% of the population on the farm with horses doing it. It was a change caused by that.

**AB:** Do you think it will go back to that?

**SA:** Not once we ran out of fossil fuels, and even if they do there'll be other substitutes they'll use. They always tell us we are running out of fuel but by any of the stats I've seen, we've got quite a supply on hand, no matter how we waste it. But it sure would be a shock to our whole system if they said there is no more fuel this spring. Can you imagine all those big tractors with the air seeders behind them? Not moving? What would we do? And so yes, it's been a very big change and in some ways I consider myself fortunate that I was able to be part of overseeing it in a sense. You know, history is such a change. I did a

lot of work, for better or worse, on subsidies and change in farm policy and programs, and I know some are detested, but they had to be changed. They couldn't be left the way they were or they disappear. There has been a general push for 20 years in government to get government out of agriculture, to let it go on its own, for better or for worse, and it has succeeded. A lot of our programs of support are gone - our freight subsidies are gone, and that was a push they wanted to get rid of for years. It has succeeded in general. The only things left, and I don't give them a long shelf life, are the marketing boards for eggs, milk and chickens. Because when we go to the World Trade Meetings, which I've been at, we can't ask for free trade but say you can't trade chickens or that into our [country]; ours is protected. So it's like our lawyers term, "You can't suck and blow at the same time." We don't get very good results on our organizations because we are a split personality on them. There will be big changes when that happens again. Some of the bigger dairies now are adjusting to it already.

But it has been a good life. I feel sorry for the changes in the small towns and communities because we don't have them anymore. It is a struggle and everybody fights to keep things going. There is just nobody left.

**AB:** Can you tell us some of the things and some of the people you had for friends when you were growing up and some of the things you did?

**SA:** Oh yes. We had a lot of good friends. Sadly, most of them are in the graveyard. I grew up and going to school one of my closest friends was Willis Pedersen, and he was just a mechanic and welder from the word go. Our biggest sport in the wintertime was to build snowmobiles and stuff and sometimes we just about killed ourselves. We built ice fishing shacks which we moved and burned because the stove fell over. [There were] a lot of good people, a lot of interesting people. We used to enjoy going to the ball games, see different people play ball. [There were] the big First of July things up at the lake [Cypress Lake]. There were sure a lot of, and they still are, Canadian-minded people who do a lot of work. I know when I took my 4-H in the Beef Club, there were—oh gosh, now my memory's going—the leaders of that, Lorne McLuhan and John McLuhan, and all those ladies who spent hours and hours of work. Joy was part of that Light Horse Club with Wilf Cornelsen and all that work. It is just volunteer, volunteer. They had the children's stuff going. A lot of the people

really were talented. I don't know what it is about the Cypress Hills and south of the Hills there that draws people. If they ever live there for a little while, they'll never [permanently] leave it, they'll always come back. When you think of—like Mrs. Nadeborn—played in the symphony in Berlin, Carnegie Hall and whatnot, came down [to Consul] and that was it, that was her home.

Ben Broderick, he was there, travelled all over, but he's got to be back. I don't know why it is, but I know it's there. I know myself, the Hills called me back. The Hills will always be home, and the south and the people. I think it's as much your memories and the people who are living there now and lived there before that draws a person back.

We're one of the most, as far as I can tell in my travels, one of the most—lenient is not the right word. We are very accepting of things and people. We don't discriminate. For instance, here in town way back, we had Gordie Lyman. Any other place he couldn't live the way he did; we just put up with him. He lived a good life.

It's the same down south. We don't get all riled up because a person of a different color comes in; we just accept him and that's it. I think that's part of it. I guess basically maybe because they've all toughed it out together; they are kind people down in the southwest. They really are. I won't say they won't get mad at you, take a whack at you, but I mean basically they are a very, very kind people. They'll try to help others, think of others, and I think that is more so than many other places where I've been where it just doesn't happen. First they [people in other places] don't like strangers; if they don't like them, they don't put up with them and they tell them so.

There were a lot of real mentors, too, that I had. I remember one fellow who took me under his wing was old Rube Gilchrist. We used to go up with him. He taught me a lot. I don't know why we hit it off, but we always did. That was when I was farming and I kept grain. I used to haul grain and stuff for him and got to know him. We did a presentation on the beef marketing board, him and I. First one we did I was only 17 or 18 when we did that one. And I remember we did the road up and when we got to town to the Armoury, where they had the hearings, he said, "Go and make the presentation."

I said, "No, Rube, you're making it. I'm not."

He said, "No, I can't make that presentation. I'm afraid people will think I'm biased."

So I went up and made it. Jack McDougald was in the audience and to this day he laughs. He said that I was so nervous my knees were shaking and my pants fluttered.

There were a lot of really good people who I knew would help you, mentor you, and if you got in too-deep stupidity, they'd try in a nice way to get you out of it and straighten you around.

But it's sad, I find, to open the Consul phone book and I don't know hardly any of the names even that are on the farms anymore. I guess the daughters married sons-in-law and sons-in-law run it and use the name, so you realize you are kind of anachronistic, outgrown my time. I guess that is what happened. It's different. I'll be 80 in July. It's been a long pull in some ways. It's no wonder half the people I know are dead.

**AB:** I've lived there my whole life and there's ones I don't know.

**SA:** I know. I drive through and I think back to my good friend, George Ziegler; we were always together. Gordon Teigen and your dad [*speaking to Ann and referring to her father, Art Rotnem*] were good friends of mine. We drive through and they are just not there anymore. It's lonely sometimes.

**SA:** That's one thing I always regret; I never have had a hobby. My only hobby is reading, and I read and read and read and read. In fact, it's been that way all my life; I was reading before I went to Grade 1—I'd read books—and I've read ever since. But I don't do wood work, and it's sad you know. I look at Ben [Broderick] and his train collection and Joy's dad [Sigurd Brekhus] before he lost his eyesight he did woodwork, beautiful stuff like that.

I never really had a hobby except reading. That did well with the research because a lot of the work I did, most people thought I was nuts because I liked doing it. But they would have hearings across Canada over something, and they'd collect all the presentations on tape and in writing, and then they would give me a call and they'd have a row of them, the size of that table sitting there, of presentations and it was my job to have read them and go through them and

bring them down to a 40- or 50-page booklet, with a page- or page-and-a-half executive thing on the front.

I've always had—I'm losing it now—but I've always had almost a photographic memory and so I could read them and do that. That was really one of the rare things I was in Ottawa all those years to do because they would get stumped with this stuff. They'd go to hire people, and they'd say, "No, we can't do that." It takes time, but that was one gift that really kept me in Ottawa a lot. I had a really, really good memory, still have, sort of, and I would travel a lot with the minister or the prime minister, sit at these meetings, and if they needed information you gave it to them, hopefully. I could usually come up with it. Tony Merchant [former Member of Parliament] said that I was the only person he knew whose mind was filled with trivia and most of it useless. It was helpful. With the minister I remember one time we were in Saskatoon with Mr. Whelan, and they were giving him the gears over Indian Land Settlements. [They were asking him] what's he going to do about it? And he was kind of stuttering a little and I said, "If you give me a moment. The minister recalls, too, but," I said, "in 1933 they [the Provincial Government] made an agreement with the Canadian Government and the provinces. The provinces got to own the land and the minerals, but in exchange for that they would settle Indian Land Claims, the land for it. The only thing that the Federal Government really does is oversee the negotiations, see that, hopefully, the Indians don't get too tramped down". That was the end of the argument.

Whelan said, "Is that true?" and I said, "Yes, it's true."

**AB:** Are you still a member of Mensa?

**SA:** Yes.

**AB:** And what does that entail?

**SA:** Really, it is just they do an IQ test, a series of them, and you have to test in the top 2% of IQs. And how that came about—and I don't know why—when I was up at the university I was up there with Blair Backman; we were good friends. Anyway they did IQ tests on all of us and I did my test and they said, "Something is wrong. Retake it; take another test." So I took another test and they said—gee, I hate to put this on tape—you've got the highest IQ ever tested

at the university at that time. And so then they said, "Why don't you write the Mensa exam?" I did. You need 98%. I was a lot smarter than I thought I was, I guess. I really was. It's strange. I think that allowed me a lot of times.... They'd ask me if I'd do something and I would say, "Yes, I'll go and do it," and I didn't have a clue what I was to be doing, and I think without that confidence I'd never have done that.

**JP:** What does Mensa stand for?

**SA:** It's just Latin for table and what it really stands for is discussion around the table, and its purpose really when it was drawn up is you are supposed to try to get together to support and try to promote knowledge in the community. So they set up a lot of programs, or tried to, for gifted children in school because gifted children in schools get left out. For the ones that have a little trouble learning there are lots of programs, but for the gifted the only thing they do is give you more work, the same crap you're doing. And that's why I would never admit I was gifted in anything at school because that's all they did. The first time I ever did that they just gave me extra work, same stuff, but extra work.

I always had good marks; I went all through school and through university with over 90% average mark, but I don't talk too much around home here about it.

**JP:** Did you pass that on to your son?

**SA:** Yes, I think so. He does very well. I think he did. But I don't talk about it. It is meaningless in many ways. I found it a pain to judge IQ because to really judge IQ you have to be able to judge the ability to do innovative thinking. Otherwise you are judging the ability to acquire and assimilate and expel knowledge which is like a tape recorder. My big argument when we get in groups is I don't think you can test IQ, but they say you can and they say I have it, so that's it.

**AB:** Well, I think we have covered everything, Sonny.

**SA:** Thank you.

**AB:** Thank you very much.

**SA:** Thank you, ladies, very much.

**SA:** [*Conversation continues off camera. When the camera is turned back on, Sonny is speaking on marketing*] ... I agree with them [marketing boards] in the fact that if you are going to negotiate you should negotiate as a group. Whelan thought marketing controlled production. My argument with him all along was a marketing thing to control sales. Because if you go in as an individual you have no bargaining power at all, and if you go as a group and you bargain on your cattle or your grain in one lot—and that is what we are losing with the wheat board is the bargaining power. We are going individually and if you stand alone you get picked off alone.

It's like with the union—an individual is picked on; if you unionize you can stand up for your rights. I used to have some big arguments about marketing boards at meetings and one guy out of Guelph was just dead against them; they should not be allowed, they are just a dearth on humanity. I said, "Well, it is strange because as far as I know you are a tenured professor of Economics".

[He said], "Yes."

I said, "You can't lose your job unless you abuse little children or do something, you know, stupid."

[He said], "No. I'm tenured."

I said, "As far as I know your group sets the exam for how many can come in and be [inaudible] and so control your own wages".

[He said], "Yes, that is true".

I said, "It sounds an awfully like a marketing board. They said who can graze, how much they can go through, and what they are going to charge for the services."

He got so mad he threw his books and left and he never attended a meeting with me again. But it's the same thing. I think with a marketing board, as much as controlled markets, is just to be able to bargain in bulk for you. If you went in and said I've got a hundred or 20 000 yearlings coming off grass and this is what I want for the 20 000, instead of taking them in bits and driblets, you have a better marketing power.

**JP:** But it seems to me, though, that you don't have an incentive, as a producer, to do better. You have a lot of producers in there who bounce along and...

**SA:** Yes, but I tell you one of the weaknesses of a marketing board—and this is just a proven economic fact—is they put them in so to try to keep the small producer. A small producer will disappear in Canada under a marketing board. The reason is, to set your cost of production, you take the cost of production across the board, and halfway in-between is the cost of production you use to set your price of milk, if you will, in a milk marketing board...

[*pause in taping*]

**SA:** That's okay. The argument I used to have Whelan, he's going to keep the small farm. You lose them, you have to, it's the economics. Like, dollars never lie. If you want to see why something happens, follow where the dollars go and that's why it happens.

Anyway, you set the price of milk production is there [*indicating the left side of an imaginary price line*] for your sloppier producer you're talking about, and here are your real good producers [*indicating the right side of an imaginary price line*], and here [*indicating the middle of an imaginary price line*] for producers that are halfway. So I want to go expand and buy more quota, which is very expensive now, so I waltz into the bank and say, "I'd like to buy more quota".

"What's your cost of production?" [asks the banker to a sloppier producer].

"Well, it's below the average".

"I'm not interested really. If you are below the average, you are not making a profit".

But then you waltz in and you are at the top end and you say, "I want to buy more quota."

[The banker asks], "How are you doing?"

"Here is my cost of production; here is what I made."

"No problem."

When the quota comes up you [the small producer] can't get it because you can't get the loan and you [a big producer] can, so you buy it [the quota] out. In time you just sell your quota and get out of it. And that is the thing with marketing boards—it doesn't reward the ones that are slack-ass; it wipes them out. That's a weakness, but it's a weakness that doesn't do what Whelan and them thought it would do.

I've farmed and ranched for many years and we are very independent souls, but many times we would do better if we would negotiate together as a group than if we go up individually. There's really not an association left that doesn't do that, from teachers to lawyers to economists.

**JP:** The only time farmers and ranchers get together is when there is an issue to fight.

**SA:** That's true. Or a party! [*Laughter*] It makes it more difficult to negotiate especially when right now there are only so few slaughter houses, so few buyers for fat beef, it's right down. They do talk together, which they shouldn't be doing, but you can't stop it. I remember years and years ago I did a study on the beef industry and how the price was set. At that time all the beef went down in the big coolers in Montreal (before you guys were born), bulk and primal cuts went out, and the packing houses were told what they were going to be paid when the stuff in the cooler cars got down. They had no say. They were told here's what you get paid and that's what they had to take.

We were supposed to report on that and I had a nice fellow call on me, tell me, "You'd better be careful how you write that." He says, "We know where you live, where your family is". A fellow I worked with, a reporter, they blew, dynamited, the step off of his house. So I watered down the report quite a bit. I didn't put all the particular facts in. It's there, nothing we can do about it.

**SA:** [I can argue a debate] for marketing boards or against marketing boards and I'll win either one, and that used to drive Whelan mad.

I said, "If you can't defeat the argument, you can't win it. You've got to know it well enough, both sides of it".

He used to say, "Who wrote that?"

I'd say, "I did".

"Well, that isn't what you wrote for me."

I said, "Well, it's what you wanted."

**AB:** So do you miss the politics end of it?

**SA:** Yes, I miss the politics and the people. That's really what I enjoyed about politics. I like people, and I enjoyed the interaction with people, and I really miss that, I do. I miss being on the Hill [Parliament Hill] in Ottawa and in on the debates. Even if you're not [a part of it] you have a feeling that you're where things are happening and you are part of making it happen, but you're really a very small part of it. I miss that. I really do. Like I worked most of those years right on Parliament Hill and various [other locations]—East Block, Centre Block, and Fed Building and whatnot—and I did a lot of different things.

I spent a while setting new senators up in their offices, explaining to them what they could and couldn't do, and I got to the last when they wouldn't listen and I resigned. I said I'm not going to be able to do it. I'm glad I did because I see what they are doing now. You couldn't get it through their heads what they were doing with their expense accounts; you are not gods, you are senators and there are rules you have to follow.

I enjoyed it for a while, but I just resigned; it wasn't worth the trouble. Because if you don't do it you're.... It's like if you are a Deputy Minister or a Crown Corporation Chairman you're supposed to keep your minister from doing things he shouldn't do, like signing for Red Tuna or stuff like that. And the fact is if you tell them not to do it, and explaining won't do it, you're supposed to go to the prime minister and say, "Your minister won't do this," which would be an embarrassment and it's wrong. And then he'll step in and straighten the minister out and fire you. You are to defend your minister and you didn't, did you? You went and squealed on him. If you don't do it, they will fire you.

**AB:** You're damned if you do or damned if you don't.

**SA:** You'd better be fired for doing it than not doing it. Yes, it's a strange life here. [inaudible] pleasure, they call it. I call it like being a mistress. You can be let go just like that, no reason, no nothing; you're just down the road, just like

that. You are the scapegoat if anything goes wrong even if it is not your fault. They won't do the minister in, they'll do yourself in. So it is a strange life that way.

**JP:** When you were a member of the Stock Growers didn't you write an article in the paper?

**SA:** Yes. Cypress Cy. I still have the list. I was going to do it again but I am so outdated now. Yes, I used to enjoy that. Cypress Cy Sez. I enjoyed that.

**AB:** You have had a very interesting life.

**SA:** Oh, just different. Yours is just as interesting. All the things happen, just different things.

**JP:** Did you get a lot of static over your columns?

**SA:** Once in a while. I remember Roy Atkinson [activist farmer in Saskatchewan]. He made a speech where he said that people that run the feedlots put so much stilbestrol and growth hormones and this, and that they don't eat their own beef. I did an article: You can always tell a farmer because he comes with his own steak to have fried for him, and he comes with his own potatoes to have cooked. You know, just made a real farce out of it.

Oh, he was mad. He was going to sue me and I don't know what all he was going to do.

I said, "Well, I'm just saying what you said".

It just went to nothing, but yes. I just tried to be funny more than anything.

Yes, those were good days. I enjoyed that. Did a lot of work. 15 or 20 years in Stock Growers [Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association], set up two stores, one here in Maple Creek and one down by Estevan in Alameda [*Editor's Note: Sonny says Lacadena as the town name in the video, but corrected it to us as Alameda later*]. The newspaper is still going. We started our own paper. We went from 137 members to over 2000. I was the Ways and Means Director. I did a lot of work on that, travelled a lot. They were a good bunch. I was going to go up to the meeting last year in Moose Jaw; it was the 100th Anniversary. And I got thinking who would I know?

**JP:** McDougald.

**SA:** Yes, Jack. Boyd Anderson [former executive member of Saskatchewan Stock Growers from Glentworth, Saskatchewan], if he is still alive he would have been there. He's blind like Sigurd was. All the Jankes and all the Grants and all the Smiths and all the ones I knew are no longer with us. And the young ones would not have a clue who we were.

It's 35 years since I was elected, so you meet someone on the street that's 40 years old, they don't know who you are. I don't even bother telling them I was your MLA once. So time passes you by. It really does.