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GOODERHAM & WORTS  
HERITAGE PLAN REPORT #3

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# ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

Prepared for Roger du Toit Architects  
By Historica Research Limited  
August, 1994

August 29, 1994

Roger du Toit  
Roger du Toit Architects Limited  
50 Park Road  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4W 2N5

Re: Gooderham & Worts Oral History Programme

Dear Mr. du Toit:

The following, Report #3 of the Gooderham & Worts Heritage Plan, is the Oral History Programme undertaken by our firm.

Since the original report was submitted on March 9, 1994, two additional interviews (#3 and #4) were conducted at the request of the Toronto Historical Board. These are included in this revised submission.

These four interviews report provide further site information that will assist in developing interpretation options and in identifying historically significant areas of the Gooderham & Worts property.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Andreae,  
President

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Letter of Transmittal

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## **STUDY PURPOSE AND METHOD**

Four interviews were conducted with former Gooderham & Worts employees as part of the Gooderham & Worts Heritage Plan prepared under the direction of Roger du Toit Architects Limited.

The interviews were undertaken to obtain personal views and feelings about the recent history of working in the plant. Although considerable documentation exists for the technical operation of the site, little material exists on the human, or social, conditions of the G & W plant. These interviews provide some insight into the working lives of employees over the last 10-20 years of the operation of the distillery. The information in these interviews should read as personal observations and not assumed to be absolutely correct in dates or as historical facts.

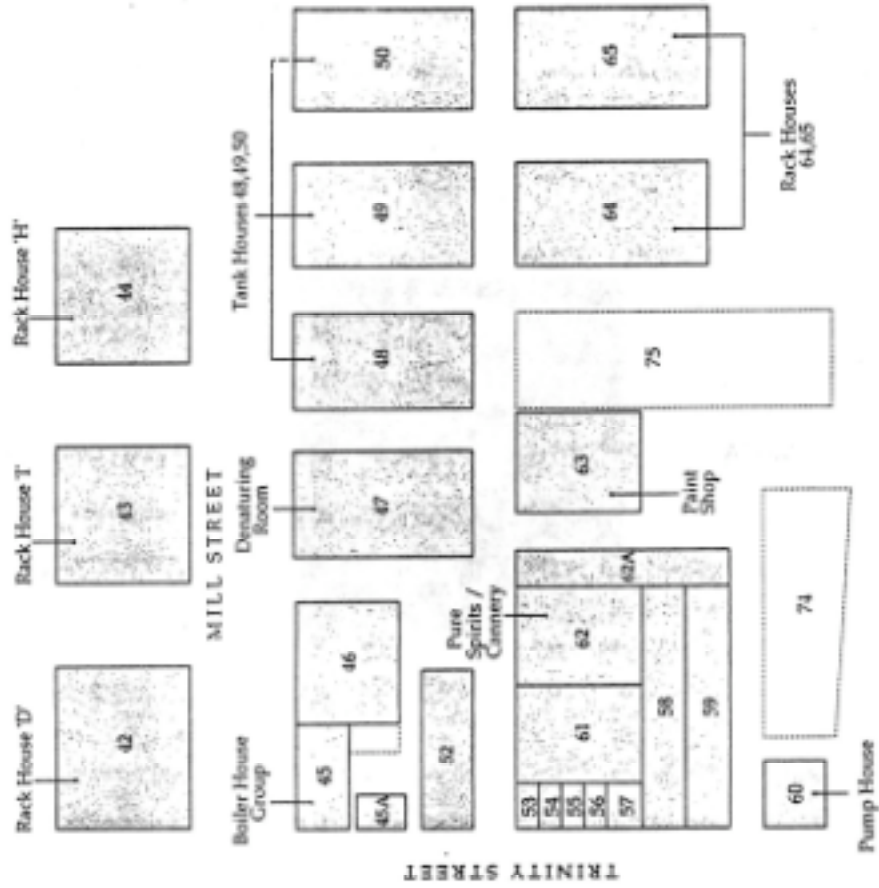
The interviews were also undertaken to suggest ideas or themes regarding the former distillery that may not have been identified in previous research for the site redevelopment.

Finally, the interviews were undertaken to identify other possible employees whose memories may contribute to a better understanding of the recent history of the G & W distillery.

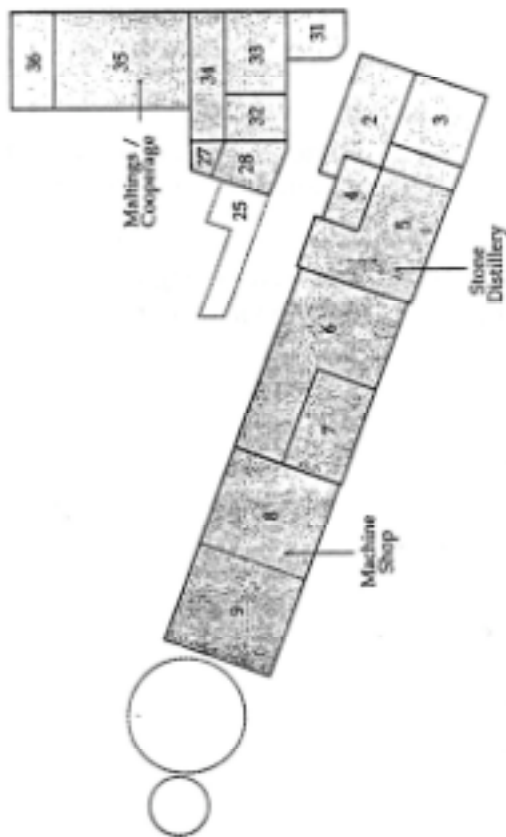
All four people interviewed could provide further information regarding the Gooderham & Worts property. Additional employees to interview may also be identified in further conversations.

The interviews were transcribed with limited editing. As much as possible, the tapes were transcribed verbatim except to edit out pauses and words that do not convey information (ah!, um!, etc.) Square brackets "[ ]" have been used to mark editorial information that aids in the understanding of the transcripts. Problems occurred on the tape while transcribing the first two pages of Paul Allsop's interview and the wording of a few phrases may not agree exactly with the tape.

The interview questions were prepared by Christopher Andreae. He had previously undertaken an industrial heritage assessment of Gooderham and Worts and was thus familiar with the history and layout of the distillery. The questions were, therefore, drafted to try to obtain personal views of work at the G & W distillery and explain events, equipment or operations that were not clear to the interviewer.



**Figure 1:**  
Location of Buildings  
Described in Text



Interview #1: Paul Allsop

## **INTERVIEW NUMBER ONE: Paul Allsop**

**Interview With:** Paul Allsop, former Vice President and Plant Manager, Gooderham & Worts, Toronto

**Conducted By:** Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Limited

**Location:** Hiram Walker Offices, Windsor (Walkerville), Ontario

**Date of Interview:** January 14, 1994

**Notes:** Problems occurred with transcribing the first two pages of the interview. Therefore the wording of a few phrases may not agree exactly with the tape.

Start of Interview

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

### Start of Interview

Chris: Paul, why don't we start with just the technical part of the identification, who you are and when did your association start with Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: My name is Paul Allsop. I have worked in the distilling industry for about 27 years and in 1984, I was transferred to Gooderham and Worts in Toronto from Hiram Walker and Sons in Windsor, Ontario. I was transferred there to take over as Vice President and Plant Manager at the retirement of George Wilton who had 40 some odd years at Hiram Walker. That took place in August, 1984 and I was there until August, 1990.

Chris: OK. After that you came back to....

Paul: Then I was transferred back to Walkerville. My present position is Business Development Manager for a Department of Hiram Walker called Canadian Lakes Distillers.

Chris: I am interested in the former relationship of Hiram Walker to Gooderham and Worts on the Toronto property. I have always wondered how the two companies functioned. Actually, I ask you these questions because they are ones that always intrigued me. I assume that the Hiram Walker operation was a sales division that came to the Gooderham Worts property.

Paul: Yes. When I moved there, the sales division was not there and through my association with them and contact with them, I realized that they were in some very expensive property up in Yonge Street and the Vice President of Sales at the time, Doug Young and I talked about moving the offices of the sales into the plant site if we could renovate the plant site to obtain or to receive the numbers that they had in their offices.

Chris: So actually that is jumping ahead to one of the other questions that I had. It was vacant or you had the extra space in buildings that were empty by that point.

Paul: Yes. I would say that up to 60% of the buildings were empty.

Chris: And so Hiram Walker were, in effect, tenants to Gooderham and Worts. What about other companies like Consolidated Alcohol?

Paul: Consolidated Alcohol produced alcohol and industrial alcohols for the war effort and later produced acetone, when it was called British Acetones. It sort of came out of British Acetones.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So it was the industrial alcohol side of the industry and Gooderham and Worts was the beverage alcohol arm. Another company on the Toronto property was the Barclay Distillery in Buildings 54, 55, 56 and 57 but that was long closed, was it not?

Paul: Yes, but Gooderham and Worts really operated that. It was more in name only a Barclay distillery. Any distiller can operate his stills under different licences as long as they produce a certain volume mandated by law every year, so that one distiller could have up to five licences. As long as they produce under that licence and record that production under that licence, you maintain the licence. If you don't produce under that licence, you lose the licence.

Chris: So, it doesn't matter what it is marketed as? Whether it is Barclay's or anything else? You just say so much is produced for..

Paul: Barclay's or Gooderham and Worts or for McGinnis Distillers. McGinnis Distillers started there. I believe it was Larry McGinnis, but I'm not sure, but he was a salesman for Gooderham and Worts and he bought his first alcohol from Gooderham and Worts. Then he spun off his own distillery.

Chris: It seemed to me when we first went through in 1990, you said that the office was above the pumphouse on the second floor there.

Paul: Yes, it was a McGinnis office at one time. That is where it started.

Chris: And he started off by purchasing alcohol and then set up his own distillery. But that was totally independent.

Paul: It was totally independent. Actually, it does not exist now. It is closed.

Chris: What about Barclay's?

Paul: Barclay's is still bottled under the Barclay name.

Chris: But here in Windsor?

Paul: We have a distillers licence here and in British Columbia for the Barclay name. We produce under the Barclay name. Once you maintain a production entity for a particular licence, you can do a variety of other things under that licence. First of all, you can't move the alcohol from one location to another unless you have a distillers licence. So we can't even legally ship it to anybody. You can't receive it unless you have either a manufacturers licence or a distillers licence. That is all mandated by law. So we can bottle under a licence. We can ship bulk under a licence. We can market under a licence. We can do all the things a distillers licence allows you to do once you do that production under that licence.



Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Under your tenure at the plant, it was simply Gooderham and Worts and Consolidated Alcohol? Those were the two?

Paul: Right. What we did to maintain the Consolidated Alcohol's licence only, we would write Excise a letter; tell them that on January 5, we were going to produce rum spirits for Consolidated Alcohols and produce it until we had, I think, 5,000 gallons of rum spirit in our tanks under the Consolidated Alcohol's licence. Then we would stop production and go back into Gooderham and Worts production. Then on paper we would transfer that rum spirit Consolidated to Gooderham and Worts. Thus, maintaining the licence for Consolidated and, in fact, we actually had to hang a sign on the stills that said: "producing Consolidated alcohol".

Chris: Although it then went into beverage use?

Paul: It went into beverage use. It was transferred on the books to beverage use. It sounds surreptitious but that is exactly how we had to do it.

Chris: It is archaic rather than surreptitious, I suppose.

Paul: No comment.

Chris: Going backwards then, in terms of the relationship of Gooderham and Worts to Hiram Walker, again I notice when I went into the office, there is a big brass plaque that says Gooderham and Worts, Hiram Walker. Was that name maintained for licensing reasons because you don't market anything under Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: We market bonded stock under Gooderham and Worts right now and it is the only brand. The last one used to be the "Little Brown Jug" and I believe it's off the marketplace now. "Bonded Stock" is still a Gooderham's bonded stock and it is still sold throughout Canada, mostly in the Maritimes but you can get in the odd store.

Chris: So what is the advantage of Gooderham and Worts name?

Paul: Today?

Chris: Today. Is there a company?

Paul: There isn't a company, per se, but we have maintained the distilling licence for Gooderham and Worts. It is incorporated under the Province of Ontario rather than the Federal incorporation, but still as a distillers licence and the distillery here will produce a certain amount of product under the Gooderham and Worts distillers licence and then transfer it to Hiram Walker. So the name hasn't been lost, it is used as a distilling name for shipment. In fact, we are shipping to Japan under that licence now.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: What were you in Toronto? That was Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: That was Gooderham and Worts and we used our own product in Toronto to maintain our own licence.

Chris: So this was all lost when the distillery closed?

Paul: When the distillery closed, one of our sister distillers had to take over the production of Gooderham and Worts to maintain that licence because had no distiller in Canada or in the organization continued to produce under the name Gooderham and Worts, we would have lost our licence and then it would have disappeared.

Chris: You were in charge of a division called Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: As a separate distillery. It was an entity on its own.

Chris: Now it is simply just a licence?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: So that part of it has been lost, in a sense, when the distillery closed. Is that it? There is no office or divisions down here?

Paul: No.

Chris: But there was up until...

Paul: There was up until September, 1990.

Chris: As a division, how independent was it? Were production decisions, and so on, still made at a more senior level?

Paul: From our point of view, at Gooderham and Worts, Hiram Walker provided logistical support. They paid all the bills and they gave us a schedule of production of rum that was required for the corporate requirements and we would produce. We would then say, all right this is how much you need in a year. We would tell them when we were going to produce it and how we were going to produce and we would make all the arrangements to buy the molasses and produce it and store it and ship it and everything that any other distiller would do. We were very independent after, once they paid the bills. They never questioned us but we didn't abuse that function. We made the production from their production plans and that's the only contact that we had.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Even to the point that you were responsible for whatever the molasses prices were?

Paul: I negotiated the molasses contract and the whole bit. None of it was done from here. Nobody here new how to buy molasses until we moved here.

Chris: What about other Hiram Walker subsidiaries like Corby's? It seems to me that I saw on a plan somewhere, Corby's had a space in Building 5 or something?

Paul: We used to store barrels for Corby. When I first went to Gooderham and Worts, we also had two other operations. For Dow Chemical, we had a glycol operation in which we blended glycol that we received from Dow Chemical in rail cars in a totally different division. Those large tanks at the west side of the, one of those large tanks...

Chris: The one that has "glycol" [written] on it.

Paul: Right. We would receive it in there and we would blend it in a small glycol tank and then put it in tank trucks and then ship it to bottlers of glycol throughout Canada.

Chris: Now, was that there because you actually had that facility left over from the antifreeze days?

Paul: Yes. And all the blending facilities and what have you. Before I got there someone had a contract with Dow Chemical and they would produce glycol.

Chris: And the other company?

Paul: The other company was...it wasn't another company. It was still Gooderham and Worts but we delivered all the case goods to the Ontario liquor stores from Niagara Falls all the way to Peterborough and up to North Bay. We had our own delivery trucks and we had case good storage on site. Then the LCBO [Liquor Control Board of Ontario] built their large warehouse out in Whitby and took that business away from us.

Chris: You mean you were distributing all of the Hiram Walker family...

Paul: All the Hiram Walker family...Corby, Hiram Walker, whatever, Gooderham and Worts, all the Hiram Walker products we had in inventory. We would receive it from the distilling production companies and bottling companies and store it and then put out to the Liquor Boards.

Chris: So that would have made Building 74 quite busy?

Paul: Yes. We had two trucks going every day. They were small vans. In fact, one of them is still there. They were going every day.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: When did that LCBO facility open?

Paul: Somewhere around 1987.

Chris: When it did that led to then another empty building?

Paul: Another loss in income for the site.

Chris: The next general area I was going to ask about was in terms of the recognition within the company. I guess the overall parent company about the historic significance of Gooderham and Worts. My own understanding is that there was a move in the 1970s on the part of the City of Toronto to designate and recognize the site. How did the company, itself, view the property? When you were to go there, did you know that it was this old complex? Was there some sympathy within the overall company recognizing its value? What was your perception of that non-economic, functional side of the facility?

Paul: I guess back in the 70s, again with George Wilton, the maltings required a new roof - extensive roof work - and it was going to cost about \$200,000. They did a study and, at that time, it would be cheaper to tear the building down than to re-roof it. They applied to do that, apparently and the City or the Historical Board, at that time, I think, still had to pass things past the Historical Board to get demolition permits. I not sure about that but they realized that, at that point, the significance of the site and maybe had already realized it but were not pushed to action until this happened and they started designation. In the mean time, someone in Toronto, I don't who it was, whether it was City Hall or Historic Board got a hold of Cliff Hatch because of the Hatch connection with Gooderham and Worts and complained that it was going to be destroyed. This, of course, Mr. Hatch didn't even know about. This is something that happens on a daily basis on a production operations and no corporate President knows everything that is going on. So once he learned of it, the order came down to Gooderham and Worts to repair the roof and withdraw the demolition permit and repair the roof. When the President tells you to repair the roof, withdraw the demolition permit, that's what they did. Shortly after that, it was designated as a Historic Site under the Ontario Heritage Act and from that point on it was treated differently.

Chris: So, on one side the City discovered it when a demolition permit came along and the company discovered it when the City made these observations?

Paul: Yes. There wasn't a concerted effort or callousness on the part of the company other than it was just a good business decision.

Chris: Why did so many buildings survive? If by 1974, several of the buildings were already vacant, weren't they? I guess I am thinking of things like the old mill, must of

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

have been empty, the malt house would have been empty; why didn't these come down in the 60s even?

Paul: I think it was a series of managers there. Bill West and George Wilton who were very conscious that if they spent too much money, they might be closed. They might bring too much attention to the site, so they just backed off spending any kind of money and in fact, by doing so probably preserved the jobs and the buildings and did a great service to the historical community but also to the employees. Whether that was the perceived threat on their part or not, I don't know or whether previous management from Hiram Walker had told them that; don't spend a lot of money on the site or whatever, I don't know. When I got there, Bud Downing was the President at Hiram Walker here, and realized when he started working there actually with Gooderham and Worts and then went to Corby's and then came here and I don't know whether he had a soft spot in his heart, but certainly when I got there, as far as I was concerned, it was going to be a viable operating distillery. I didn't get that impression that the money was not there to do the things. In fact, I was going to replace fermenters and they said fine do it on a 5-6 year plan and put a plan together and then, of course, the takeover took place and sales started dropping in the distilling industry and then we had to retrench that plan.

Chris: So actually, while you were there, there was a shift in perception that when you arrived the plant was to keep going. It was to be a viable distillery maybe even increase production if that was appropriate but it was the Allied Lyons takeover...

Paul: That and combined with a shift in drinking habits. I think you will find they took place in the same time frame. In the 80s, there was a drop in sales and it made companies, not just in the distilling industry, but all companies look at their property and say, all right let's maximize the production of all our properties. Studies were done and found they could do rum here at this distillery. The fact that when the Caribbean got most favoured nation status by the Canadian Government, then Caribbean rum was duty free coming into the country and we were now competing against very large distilleries that produced rum in the Caribbean that didn't have administrative labour in a department of this and everybody else requesting certain regulations from the distillers and all industry. As far as that's concerned, they are very costly items to supply and so we just couldn't compete with the cost. The landed cost of rum in Canada was less than we could produce it for. There were a good number of reasons why.

Chris: Bacardi's was the only Canadian competition?

Paul: Bacardi didn't make rum in Canada.

Chris: So they were already...

Paul: They were importing it. They were also buying it from Gooderham and Worts. Bacardi told me, when I was there, that the reason they bought it from us was that we

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

made the best rum in the world. Now it's gone. As such, the rum that we made for Bacardi was the base rum.

Chris: Which means?

Paul: Which means they blended to our base rum and it was such a neutral rum that it didn't enter in to the marriage of the blenders. It was just the carrier of the marriage of the blenders. Therefore, on its own, was a very good product for any distiller who wanted to blend rum together. Bacardi used it specifically because we were in their backyard and it was cheaper for them to bring it in, for the volumes they needed, then it was to bring it in by shipment. There were some limitations to the volume you could bring in.

Chris: Customs?

Paul: No. There are only two ships that travel the world carrying rum and Bacardi owns them. They are very busy all of the time so it was their schedule that, my understanding, limited the amount of rum that they could bring into the country, so that is why they had to produce from us. Some of those ships were destined for other distillers.

Chris: In terms of the process of rum distilling, did Gooderham and Worts have an advantage with the kind of equipment it had? I am just not familiar with what would make rum distilling better or worse.

Paul: It was the stills, specifically, but we also had a specific yeast that was designed by Gooderham and Worts for the production of rum. The yields were very high but the distillation process, per se, the stills themselves, they were Barbay [spelling uncertain] stills. They produced a very superior product. The designer of the stills came from our Peoria operation years ago and he was brilliant when it came to designing stills. It is the stills that make the difference. Those were excellent.

Chris: It was, when, in the 50s or something that you went into rum or when did molasses....

Paul: That is my understanding. The early 50s.

Chris: So that is when these stills were designed and put in.

Paul: Yes. That was the latest molasses production in history but before that we were producing alcohol from molasses during the war, I believe too.

Chris: But in terms of the equipment that is there now, that ugly green control panel and all that. That is the 50s rum [still]?

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: Yes, that is the 50s panel and before that I don't what it looked like. I haven't seen any pictures of it at all.

Chris: The columns and all that were installed at that time as a rum distillery?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: Is there anything of the earlier distillery there? There is an anhydrous plant on the other side of the wall there?

Paul: Yes, that is an anhydrous operation that used benzene and that was before the 50s during the war, actually. Since benzene is now a designated substance, you could use it to make anhydrous but that still operated for a very short time. I don't believe as successfully as they had hoped. It was just shut down and left there.

Chris: This has nothing to do with the interview but I am curious. Is there a rum still down here in Windsor? Or did they convert [another still to rum production]?

Paul: No, we use the same stills we use to produce whiskey but they are very sophisticated stills and you can change their function very easily.

Chris: The other Barclay stills that are in [Buildings] 54 and 57, there again, there is nothing particularly old on that site in terms of the stills than presumably those Barclay stills were put in in the 40s, the rum stills were put in in the 50s, the anhydrous stills are probably the oldest then from the 30s. Is that it?

Paul: Yes, I would think so. You can actually see that they are older than the rum stills. They are very old. That is probably the technology that was, sort of, growing at that time and that is one of the reasons why they were unsuccessful, the anhydrous stills.

Chris: In terms of raw materials, was it always molasses when you were there? It was grain prior to that, was it not?

Paul: Yes, there is evidence with the roller mills that in fact, they did do grain. All the chutes and what have you. In fact, there is still dust in them if you move the sluice gates, don't stand under them because you will see dust. I don't think you will ever get rid of grain dust.

Chris: But there must have been employees who worked in the mill?

Paul: Yes, there were. That site had almost 200 employees at one time.

Chris: How many were there when you were?

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: When I was there, I believe 38.

Chris: And was that steady during your tenure? Was it 38 right up to closure? [See Interview #2]

Paul: Four people retired and just before I got there, the last person hired was Jimmy White who is now there as maintenance staff. [See Interview #2] He was hired - that was an interesting story - by Dick Martin and Bob Morrison. Dick Martin was the Superintendent and Bob Morrison was the Assistant Superintendent at that time. [See Interview #3] They went to a trade school in Toronto and asked for someone who would like to be a pipe fitter or a machinist and so the instructor at the trade school said, "Jimmy is a very bright, young lad, take him.". We brought him in as an apprentice. We gave him time off to do his exams and he went through his apprenticeship with flying colours. The feedback we got from the school was will you take anymore because as such, Jim had such a wide variety of jobs to do that he not only learned his own skills but many, many others. You had to be a jack-of-all-trades there when you are maintenance. He came through with flying colours.

Chris: It is interesting that he is still there. What about the molasses? How did that come in? Where did you get it from?

Paul: We bought our molasses and contracted with a company in Hamilton called Canada West Indies Molasses Company. They are owned by Tate and Lyle in the U.K. which supplies, I was told at one time, about 80% of the world's sugar. They own a good portion of supply process and certainly, a great deal of molasses. It would come in ... Canada West Indies Molasses has storage tanks somewhere around New York at the end of the Oswego Erie Canal and they had a barge that they would load up and come up the Oswego Canal, across Lake Erie to Toronto, tie up at our Gooderham and Worts dock, which I understand is now property of the RCYC [Royal Canadian Yacht Club]. Then we had a pipeline that went underground to the large tank on the west of the site that says "molasses."

Chris: The outside tank?

Paul: The outside tank [in Building 9].

Chris: What about the other two tanks? In Building 8 there is a little tank..

Paul: Inside, that's also a molasses tank but that tank was heated during the winter months. There is steam coils inside the large tank outside, but molasses in the winter gets pretty stiff and so we had an inside tank that we would constantly be drawing into to maintain a warmer molasses that we could actually pump. When we needed more to fill the inside tank, we would turn the steam lines on in the large tank and draw from the warm molasses around the steam lines, but the inside tank was specifically to keep it



Interview #1: Paul Allsop

warm enough to pump the volume that would, hopefully, last for any very, very long cold snaps.

Chris: In Building 8 was the little tank inside the building, in Building 9 was the tank that came through the roof which is yet again another molasses tank?

Paul: No, the large outside one, that you see from the outside, is in fact, probably the bottom 30 feet is inside the building. So that was the other reason the tank was designed like that, but they still required steam lines on the inside because of the molasses above the roof line in the tank was cold. The molasses below was warm but not warm enough.

Chris: So all the other tanks outside to the west of that were all glycol?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: Products and byproducts? Do you remember anything about the antifreeze?

Paul: Just a small amount, actually. It only lasted about two years after I arrived there. Then it was taken away to a much larger operation because the supplier of the glycol wanted us to get into aircraft de-icing fluid and we just didn't have the tanks to do it. They wanted all their operations in one site so, I think, they took it to Linwall [spelling uncertain], a company by the name of Linwall [spelling uncertain], Toronto and they took it over at that time. That would be about 1986.

Chris: But the canning line in [Buildings] 58/59 was still there in operation when you first started?

Paul: No.

Chris: This was bulk antifreeze?

Paul: Yes, I'm sorry, tank trucks. They would receive it in rail cars, unload the rail cars into the large tanks, reduce the strength of it and colour it and put in mould inhibitors and rust inhibitors, etc. We would blend those together in another tank and then ship it out in tank truck.

Chris: In terms of the building, though, 58 and 59 have been vacant for years?

Paul: Oh yes. It was a bottling room before it was a cannery.

Chris: What about fusel oil? That always intrigues me. Is that a byproduct?

Paul: It is a byproduct of all distillation processes.

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Like a commercial byproduct?

Paul: Yes. Actually, I was there again, about three years and we used to sell it to a company in New York who would come down. We would drum it off from the fusel oil still.

### End of Side One

Paul: We used to drum the fusel oil off after it was taken out of the regular molasses alcohol and drum it off and then at the bottom of the fusel oil still there was a small tank where it was collected. We would then drum it from that tank and when we got 20-30 drums of it, we would call this company from New York. They would come in with a tank truck and pump the drums into the tank truck. They used it for perfumes, fusel oil, for producing perfumes and other cosmetics. But, I found another use for it just after the ... this is where Gooderham and Worts comes into the nuclear age, Chernobyl incident. I got a call from a chap in Germany who wanted to know if we had any fusel oils. I said, "Yes, we had 50 drums of it." He said, "I'll take it." sight unseen, "I'll take it." I said, "What do you want it for?". He said that there was a company in Germany that makes zanthate than is used in gold production. It makes the ore, after it is ground up, froth. In the frothing it pulls the gold to the top and they skim off the froth and that is how they extract the gold, in certain processes. I don't if all process are like that, but they need fusel oil to produce Zanthate. I said, "Why all of a sudden do you need our fusel oil?". He said, "Well, we usually get our fusel oil from the large distillers in the Ukraine and the last load that came in was radioactive and we had to send it back. Now we are scrambling all over the world to find fusel oil and if we don't find some the price of gold is going to go crazy.". Now I don't know how much gold he produced or how much of it was true but we sold the fusel oil.

Chris: Somebody described fusel oil as pretty disgusting stuff, though. Is it sort of smelly, sticky?

Paul: Have you ever had kirsh, the drink kirsh? That's what it smelled like, but a lot stronger.

Chris: Were there any other byproducts? There was the mash slop and things like that, which are not a byproduct...

Paul: Well, the byproduct from the molasses was just the stillage that was produced from the molasses that was the result after. We just used to put it in the sewer system and treat it in the sewer system and put it in the Toronto sewer system. Now, we had a licence to do that, of course. It wasn't that offensive or volume. It was just that grain would be more of a solid byproduct where the molasses byproduct was liquid.

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Chris: OK. So were there any other commercial products like, I guess carbon dioxide is given off but wasn't gathered, is that it?

Paul: At one time, I guess when we were producing from grain, there was a fair amount of carbon dioxide and there was a building called the gas house that was between the office building, the lower building between the office building and the malt building and that is now offices. In fact, the conference room was part of the gas house and they would pipe the carbon dioxide from the top of the fermenters to there and then out to, where the parking lot is now, a company called Liquid Carbonic. When Liquid Carbonic moved, probably after we stopped producing by grain, we didn't produce enough CO<sub>2</sub> for them anymore. They had to move and somehow, they are producing it some other way now.

Chris: Was there any relationship with Windsor in terms of bringing in something to finish in Toronto or conversely taking any of the products from Toronto and finishing them in Windsor? It seems to me that you were saying that in terms of the rum, that was sold out of the company.

Paul: Yes, we sold rum, of course to Bacardi. We made it for our own production as well and we would age it first in barrels and then we would drain the barrels and ship trucks of it to Corbyville where Corby would do all of our rum bottling. Now Corby is closed down and the rum is produced here and bottled here.

Chris: What about the antifreeze? That wasn't produced by any of the Hiram Walker family?

Paul: No. No, not at all. The antifreeze was produced by Dow Chemical.

Chris: Again, from a production process point of view, the Toronto operation was self contained; it didn't rely on any other of the production facilities within the Hiram Walker family for raw materials or semi-finished products and it didn't ship semi-finished products to be finished elsewhere within the Hiram Walker family?

Paul: Well, yes it did because Corby was within the Hiram Walker group. Semi-finished rum would be blended and bottled at the Corby building.

Chris: What about in terms of transportation? How important were the rail lines while you were there? You mentioned tank cars loads of...

Paul: We also shipped rum out to our British Columbia distiller by rail and they bottled rum for the western part of Canada and the western United States. We received alcohol, sometimes from commercial alcohols in Montreal, which was industrial alcohol on a separate line to the industrial or pure spirits building. We then, also received glycol by rail, exclusively.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So that siding was used right up until the end?

Paul: I think the last time we used it, it was probably January, 1990.

Chris: It is always good to hear that rail is still being used but on the other hand, I suspect that the tanker trucks were the more important mode or the more continuous mode of travel.

Paul: Yes, they were.

Chris: In terms of the physical plant, how do you feel about its condition? After you realized in the mid 80's that things were going to close, was there less incentive to keep it up or was it maintained in peak condition up until the end?

Paul: I think we did. Of course I was the only one who knew it was going to close for about 2 years. For the safety of the employees and the quality of the product, it had to be maintained right to the end.

Chris: So it was always maintained as a fully operational plant?

Paul: Absolutely. I don't think you can do anything half way in industry when you have a feeling that you want to do the best and you just do until the last drop is produced.

Chris: I guess there is also food and health standards?

Paul: There are government regulations that you still have to uphold until the last employee walks out the gate.

Chris: What was the capacity during your tenure there of production capacity?

Paul: I think we could produce somewhere around 8-10 million litres of alcohol of rum spirit.

Chris: What did you produce?

Paul: We were producing about five in the last year.

Chris: When you first came there, you were producing at capacity?

Paul: No, I think the capacity was probably 8 but we were producing somewhere in the 5-6 level all the time.

Chris: What about the industrial side; ... of the flow of industrial alcohols through the plant?

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: That was pretty constant. The industrial customers are varied and many and we drummed it off; we sold it in 500 ml bottles, to tank truck loads, in 210 litre drums, and 25 litre cans, and 5 litre cans.

Chris: Would employees move back and forth between the two lines depending on the season? I understand there was some seasonal variation?

Paul: We used to bring some overload employees when we had to do some barrel drains and we needed five or six more employees. We would bring them in from an overload company. Most of the employees were trained in all areas of the distillery. Our worst time was when we were running around the clock in the distillery and had to use our still operators and our fermenter house operators and that took our regular employees to do it and we had to bring in overload people to do some of the other things. But, any one employee could do any job in the place.

Chris: Was that a policy or just because they were there, they learned.

Paul: I think it was necessity. We would do drains in the morning and industrial alcohol in the afternoon. We had two truck drivers or three truck drivers and three trucks doing case goods and one doing industrial alcohol. It was just a matter of going from one job to another and another, all day long.

Chris: Actually, it sounds like it would have been much more interesting.

Paul: I think it was. I think that is one of the reasons we had such long term people there. I think the youngest person in seniority was Jimmy White with 6-7 years. But after that seniority, I think the next one was something like 18 years and then it went up to 25 years and then Bob Morrison had 41 years. So long service people were there and they enjoyed working there. In fact, when we closed, one of the guys, Pete Nicholson said he didn't know if his car could go any other place.

Chris: What about the decision to close the plant? You mentioned that it was a secret for two years from employees?

Paul: I don't know that it was a secret from the employees for two years. When we lost the glycol operation and we lost the case goods operation and effectively, we only had the industrial alcohol operation and the rum production, there were meetings and you could read the writing on the wall. I think the final decision was made, probably, six months before the actually closing. But, prior to that, no matter what we tried to do, it just didn't seem viable anymore to keep that plant running. Plus, we got involved in the development of the site and any number of people were telling us we couldn't operate a distillery in the middle of retail and commercial and residential properties and that sort of

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

driving we existed to the site. So once it was decided to go with the development, then the distillery was somewhat domed.

Chris: Why did the Hiram Walker sales staff move out then? It completely closed down. Could they have stayed?

Paul: That was the rationalization that so many companies were doing in this age. They were all let go. They did not move, they were all let go. Our sister distillery, Corby's sales force took over all Corby and our market products. We took over all of Corby production so it was sort of a tit for tat operation. We'll take over your sales and marketing, you take over our production.

Chris: Now Corby's is just a vacant lot, isn't it?

Paul: Yes, and this distillery [at Walkerville] is operating 80+% of its capacity. Which in modern days, is the way to operate. It's just economics.

[Note: The Corby plant was closed about 1990-92 but some buildings were still standing in 1994; the still house had been demolished in the early 1980s]

Chris: It's the state of the economy.

Paul: The way of the world.

Chris: You mentioned, in terms of the equipment, that it was well suited for rum production so presumably, the plant had a useful niche in that way. Is there a down side as well that Gooderham and Worts faced, that made the equipment, the plant or whatever seem more difficult to use? Did that ever factor into any of the decisions about operating the place? What were the opportunities of the site and the constraints of the site from a production point of view?

Paul: I think from a production point of view, the site could create more income as a development property than it could as an industrial property. Specifically, it was designed as a distillery and most of the buildings were purpose built for that purpose and to change them to any other purpose would have been very costly and just not financially viable, especially when you have other plants that are running at 50% of production and are much more efficient than you are.

But, as it operated, as Gooderham and Worts operated on its own entity, it was a very efficient operation and a very flexible one because we could do a variety of things. There were pipelines all over that place. We could go from one tank to any other one tank. A modern distillery tends to have circuitry where gin is in one circuit, rum is in another circuit, something else is in another circuit and never the twain shall meet. We were flexible enough that we could use tanks for multiple purpose products in the beverage

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

business or multiple purpose products in the industrial alcohol business. Those two systems were separated totally, but that was the only separation that existed. But, as a flexible plant and an accurate plant for operation and numbers and things like that, it was extremely well looked after and well managed.

One example: when we ship a product from one distiller to another, simply because of the pumping and the movement of the product because it is a volatile product, you lose about 1% of the product. Excise understands that so they allow you 1% loss on pumping and shipment. If you have a loss of more than that you pay the duty for it unless you can explain to them where it went. If there was a leak and an obvious loss of the product and it wasn't siphoned off for portability somewhere else and you could prove that to them, then you didn't have to pay the duty. What the distillers did was they went back Excise and said, "All right, when we have a 3% loss, we shouldn't have to pay for 3% loss because you are already allowing us 1% so we should only have to pay for the 2% loss.". Excise were discussing this question. The chief Excise duty in Toronto was in this meeting and stood up for Gooderham and Worts and these 10 loads that we sent to British Columbia were all within 1-2 tenths of a litre of each other in volume. One Excise officer from another region questioned that accuracy because he had never seen it before. The retort from the Chief of Excise from Toronto was, "Have you ever seen Gooderham and Worts?". He said, "No". He said, "You would know if you had that they can do it and they are probably the only ones in Canada that can do it." The reason, of course was, we used to weigh the alcohol and send it by weight. It was always the same strength, 96.5% of our stills and we maintained that strength religiously. When we put it in the tank scales, the scales that now exist in the pure spirits building up on the second floor, we would put it in those scales and load from those scales to a tank truck.

We would set the scales and they are very accurate scales, so that when we have withdrawn the amount we want from the scale, it starts to tip, the operator can reach over it, arms length and close the valve. In a modern distillery, the operator reads a digital read out, supplied to him from maybe 100-200 feet away. He pushes a button on a valve that is probably another 100-200 feet from the tank and the pump. You never get the accuracy that you get on a closure of a valve arms length to that tank truck. The scale tank was never moved. We pumped the product in and the weights on the scale were kept the same for all ten loads. So we knew that all ten loads were the same. But in the modern day distillery, you can't do that.

Chris: Which makes it a bit of a joke in a way, because they probably have metering that is probably accurate to 1/10th or 1/100th of a litre.

Paul: You would think so, but none that are approved by Excise. There are many industries that use meters in line meters but none that are approved by Excise. It is difficult, apparently, to calibrate them.

Chris: So it works for internal use but not for Excise duty?

## Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Paul: Yes, but not for Excise duty purposes. At that time, that was my understanding. I understand now there are in-line meters that Excise has approved but at that time there were none. Of course, this distillery and this whole process was put in place before electronics were even known.

Chris: What you are saying that is kind of interesting then, is that the Gooderham and Worts plant could be rebuilt, updated, modernized and was from the 1860s right up until 1957, but in today's market it couldn't and wouldn't have gone through another modernization no matter how good the alcohol industry was today? It couldn't have justified a brand new rum still or whatever?

Paul: I don't know if you can say no matter how good. What is the art of the possible? Certainly, if the volumes were there, then it would pay more to keep it there. It would be able to realize more profits if the volumes were there. It possibly could, but certainly with the industry the way it is now, it certainly is not going to happen.

Chris: Why did the scale tanks in Building 60 survive in such pristine condition when all the other ones seemed to get painted over with aluminum paint? But the "Fairbanks" [lettering] is on it, the wood work is there. Those three tanks almost stand out on that property.

Paul: Scale tanks, as such, are special animals no matter where they are. They, first of all, cost a lot more than a standard tank. They have to be calibrated by Weights and Measures yearly, at one time, and now, I believe, it is every two years. The scalemen were usually the blenders. They were highly qualified people and had pride in their jobs. I am not saying that the other employees didn't have pride in their jobs, but these were instruments of accuracy and so they had to be kept clean of any dust or anything that was on the mechanism that would have resulted in different weights. They had to be kept lubricated and what-have-you. They were, in fact, in a very confined room where there was no other operation going on. The larger tanks in the distillery and in pure spirits had a variety of other operations going on beside barrelling and trucking and things like that. They didn't, I don't think, survived as well as the scale tanks because of the areas they were in.

Chris: The use and the area? What about the weigh master?..

Paul: The blender, actually.

Chris: Were these long term employees?

Paul: Usually. Blending, even here, has the long service employees. It is an area that requires a little bit of knowledge of other areas besides your own, although you have to build that knowledge from working in those other areas but it is also an area where you don't really get too dirty and you have a great deal of responsibility. You are putting a



Interview #1: Paul Allsop

blend together that is very, very costly in the assets. You have to be very precise. I think the older employee and the more skilled employee and one that is more caring usually winds up in blending.

Chris: Are any of the blenders still alive or retired?

Paul: Yes, they are all retired now.

Chris: I guess because of the significance now that those weigh tanks have, it might be interesting to talk to one of them. Does that sound like a good idea?

Paul: Sure, Pete Nicholson was the Supervisor in that area. He is in Toronto, and retired, owns horses and having a good time, I'm told. [See Interview #4]

Chris: In terms of the closure, again, how was the closure announced to the employees?

Paul: George Chandler, the Vice-President of Production for Canadian Operations, my boss at the time, called all of the employees into the office, the new office where there used to be the stable and one morning in April or May of 1990 and told them that the plant was going to close on August 31. After that, we didn't do any work that day, as you can imagine. Some of the people were shocked, some of the people were not. Some of the people who had been around since 1957 when grained stopped being produced and they thought they were going to close then and they started doing rum and things still didn't seem to be all that viable. They thought that at any time the axe was going to fall. So, from 1957 to 1990 they lived under that threat. For some of them, it actually came as pretty tough.

Chris: It wasn't a function of how long they were there, it was just the surprise of it actually closing?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: The architect has talked about "Farewell Court." What is the significance of that?

Paul: Well we had our last party there, the day of closing.

Chris: In August, outdoors, in that area?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: Because Roger [du Toit; architect for the redevelopment] was saying the employees asked that that area be called "Farewell Court?"

Paul: Yes.

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So there was some sense of tradition or significance given to it.

Paul: Well, it was the last time they were all together.

Chris: I just noticed this note here about the Excise people and it has always struck me as being one of the more tedious jobs, I could imagine. Was it?

Paul: Well, at one time, I was told there was almost 50 excise officers at that site. At one time, we could not move whiskey unless they unlocked the tank, unlocked the valves. Every valve had a lock on it. Every pump had a lock on it. Buildings had locks on them. They just didn't really trust us at all, I'll tell you. Every time we moved product from one tank to another, there was an Excise officer in the crew or two; one at the receiving point, one at the shipping point and then five or six more recording all the data.

Chris: This was even when you started there?

Paul: No, Excise had gone to a post audit system and the Excise officers were provided with an office. They were there, probably, two hours per day and they were auditing books that we prepared on the same profile as was done before. In fact, that is how we do it now; all distillers in Canada.

Chris: When did that change?

Paul: Early 80's. 1981 or 1982.

Chris: So just before you came to Gooderham and Worts?

Paul: Yes.

Chris: I still think it must have been one of the most indescribably dull jobs. You wouldn't be producing anything, you wouldn't be...

Paul: It is like any other. There was a cross-section of the general public in the Excise division as well. Some officers were very sticklers on, "you are going to do it my way and that is all there is to it". Some of them, it was a power trip for them. Others were very cooperative and very helpful. Within their ranks, they had problems because some people would feel that this was necessary and others felt that they were watching the King's or Queen's alcohol. I think some of that thinking still exists. No matter what the distilling industry does to be good corporate citizens, stay within the law and do all the things we are supposed to do, we are still looked at as though we are bad actors. How many times have you seen a newspaper article calling it a Sin Tax?

Chris: Why was so much stuff painted with aluminum paint? It seems to me, you must have got a good price on it.



Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: So, it was a natural extension after closure? The movie business just picked up.

Paul: Yes.

Chris: What about the privacy of the property? The closure of Trinity Street? It has always been a private place, hasn't it?

Paul: As I understood it, Trinity Street closed during the first World War when it became a war plant producing acetone. They put the fence around it. Actually, it was patrolled from inside by armed guards and what have you. The story goes, and I heard this from O.D. Johnston and some things I have read about, that during the first World War, the British were losing the battle and so they did a survey of the front line officers and asked, "What's the problem?". They said, "Well, we can't spit at them, we need ammunition.". At the time, production of cordite required acetone. Acetone was being produced by all the British distillers as much as they could produce but it was not enough. So, the Gooderhams, being expatriate Brits, were approached by the British government because G & W, at that time, was the largest distillery in the world, and the Gooderhams turned over the production plant to acetone entirely and didn't charge them. They changed the name to British Acetones and very shortly after that, tank car after tank car - there are some pictures of rail lines of tank cars outside the property - were going to Britain. I am not sure where I got this information, maybe Stephen [Otto, historian] or Mike Filey told me, but there was a change in the fighting during that period of time. There was sort of a lull in the fighting and apparently the British Secret Service let out information on purpose to say something like there was going to be a big push months from now. So, the Germans stopped the offensive to prepare for this big push and it was really created so they could get more acetone in Britain, to delay, to get the ammunition back up again. Maybe it was a turn, who knows.

Chris: Gooderham and Worts played its little role.

Paul: Maybe its a major role and that's maybe why there are so many "Sirs" in Britain instead of "Vons".

Chris: Or that there is a Queen and not a Kaiser. Paul, that really was the list of questions I had. I could have asked you about stories about the plant but I'm not sure if the employees themselves wouldn't be a better...

Paul: Pete Nicholson is the guy you want to get a hold of.

Chris: Is there anybody else you think I should talk to.

Paul: Maybe Bob Morrison. I can give you his number and he can maybe give you Pete's number. Bob has kept in closer touch with him than I have. Obviously because he is in town. [See Interviews #3 and #4]

Interview #1: Paul Allsop

Chris: Thank you very much.  
End of Tape

## **INTERVIEW NUMBER TWO: Jim White**

**Interview With:** Jim White, formerly millwright on maintenance staff for Gooderham & Worts; now on maintenance staff for Allied Lyons to look after property.

**Conducted By:** Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Limited

**Location:** Former offices of the Hiram Walker Sales Group in the Gooderham and Worts plant, Toronto.

**Date of Interview:** February 3, 1994; interview ended at 1:55 p.m.

### Start of Interview

Chris: Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to do this oral history tape with us. Could we begin by just having you say your name? When you started with Gooderham and Worts? What your job title was and so on?

Jim: OK. My name is Jim White. I started July 24, 1984. I had my first interview June 5, 1984.

Chris: Interview?

Jim: Yes, my job interview. It was through my plumbing and welding school teacher. He was friends with Dick Martlin, who was the Superintendent at the time, and although the two never met, they talked quite a bit on the telephone. Our steam fitter is also from the same school and was represented by our same teacher, Mr. Franklin Delonair Degenova from Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute in Scarborough. What he would always do, not necessarily the highest standing student he had in his class, but the one with the right work ethic, would be to call around industry and see if he could place someone that graduated. He got lucky with Mike Fenton and five years later he got lucky with me. He would call up and say he had a really good guy, I just happened to be at the top of the class and was the top student for that year, and do you have a place for a guy down there. He could weld, he does work with sheet metal, he's a plumber, he's a welder, he does lathe work and everything like that. It just so happened that one or two of gentlemen, the older tradesmen here, had retired and they had been limping by with just Mike doing a lot of the day to day routines. With all the shipping and industrial work going around and the

Interview #2: Jim White

still running and the boiler room to operate, it was just too busy for the small crew that they had.

Chris: So you went straight out of school and into this job?

Jim: Yes.

Chris: Lucky you.

Jim: Yes. I had my interview June 5 over the phone and there was a couple of first questions asked like, "What colour was I? Where was my ethnic background from?" As soon as I said from the UK, it was like, "OK, come down for an interview.". They liked everything British. They liked to keep everything British.

Chris: Gee, you can't ask those kind of questions today.

Jim: He was a funny man, but he liked the fact. He said, "Do you want a pair of safety boots?". "Yes". "Okay, then you can come down for an interview." So, I came down and I tried to be as calm as I could because I got lost getting here first of all and I got here and I sat in this little office. It was small office with two desks facing each other so you are looking straight on to him. It was very intimidating and I really didn't notice at the time, I was trying to be very good and very polite, eye contact, the whole bit, but I was making him very uncomfortable and I didn't realize why until I went and spoke with Bob Morrison and he told me that he had a glass eye and it didn't click in. I made him very uncomfortable but he said, "Well, I am going to interview others.". I heard through the grapevine that he didn't. Too impressed with me. He made bring my entire four year transcript from High School.

Chris: What building? Where was this interview?

Jim: Within this office [in Buildings 33-34].

Chris: You mean this complex?

Jim: Before it was renovated, his office was where the centre doorway is. Right across from the boiler room. That was his office.

Chris: Jim, I want to spend a lot of time talking about your work here but just a few general other types of questions you might have more information on it. The one thing I have always been curious about, and I asked Paul Allsop about this as well [See Interview #1], was the fact that there was the Hiram Walker sales office here surrounded by a production plant. Did your work involve the maintenance of this as well or did they run separately?

Interview #2: Jim White

Jim: Everything. Everything above and beyond the call of duty. Unplugging toilets, redoing sewer system lines, moving furniture, you name it. Hanging pictures for executives.

Chris: So, this Hiram Walker operation was a tenant then of Gooderham and Worts?

Jim: That's right. That's the simplest way to put it. It is the same thing, we have film companies here as different tenants now. You do the exact same things again. If they need furniture moved, you move furniture; pictures hung, constantly changing light bulbs. You supply the washrooms with toilet paper and paper towels. They had cleaners that clean. You don't have to do that.

Chris: Why did the Gooderham and Worts office take the smaller stable building and Hiram Walker get the big, huge office building?

Jim: There was more of them. They were higher up the pay scale, higher up the executive ladder.

Chris: In terms of the production at Gooderham and Worts, you didn't need a bigger space?

Jim: No. I think there was 11 people in the office. They weren't busy every single day of the week. It is the same as everywhere else within the plant. You had your really busy times and you had your slow times.

Chris: What was that based on: the fast and slow times?

Jim: Product demand. The product demand for shipping and receiving. When the still was running, it always seemed like half of the plant wasn't though, but half the plant was in the distillery on shift. It left a skeleton crew to do the rest of the shipping, drumming within the plant for all the industrial sales. There were still tank trucks rolling in and out of here.

Chris: So, you would move around? The staff would increase in the distillery when that was busy and then it would increase over in the...?

Jim: When the distillery was down, the plant was at its full strength. There was constantly, in the denaturing department, filling 45 gallon drums or four litre cans or 25 litre cans of alcohol. You had pure spirits, they were also filling five litre or 25 litre cans and 40 gallon drums - 210 litre drums - of alcohol both industrial - hydrous 100%, anhydrous 95%. They had so many customers like Coca-Cola, Pepsi, 7Up, Park Davies for cough medicine, the list goes on and on: Heinz for vinegar/ketchup - ship them different alcohol strengths they give you. Different processes through different industries required different amounts of alcohol or specific mixes. For anything like shampoo - it



## Interview #2: Jim White

would be Alberto VO5 and they would take 1B which is 95% anhydrous with a solution of a powder mix called Bitrix. [Bitrix] is a very, very bitter substance; it is #8 on the world's most bitter substance list.

Chris: Then, does that mean that you could fill in for any job description on the property?

Jim: Maintenance didn't have to fill in anywhere else in the plant. But the whole ideal working situation here was, from Dick Martlin, that the philosophy was that if he could do any job in the plant, his maintenance force had to be able to do any job in the plant.

They had to know every area of the plant; every square inch for all piping, all the sprinkler systems, all the different processes that went on because we had to repair them. So, in order to repair it, you have to know the day to day routines of how everything goes.

Chris: So, in fact, I don't know if you did any drumming or working in the denaturing plant, but you had to know what was going in there?

Jim: That's right. You had to know what was going on everywhere. The whole plant was set up on a family basis. You knew everybody by their first name. There is a little funny story there. I grew up with this guy, Glen Haliday, and his dad was Bill Haliday and he worked in the boiler room. So, when I first started here, he was still working here but everybody else around the plant I would still call by their first names except for him it was Mr. Haliday. I didn't go, "Hey, how's it going?". I would say, "Mr. Haliday". I would still give him that respect. Everybody was a tight knit family. Everybody knew everybody's wife or children; it was pretty close.

Chris: Was it social? Were there picnics or parties or more just social on the plant itself?

Jim: Social on the plant. For a lot of them, it was the highlight of their day to come down to play euchre at break time and at lunch time had their tea. It was pretty good. Some of them would hang around together socially but it was most of the time you were at the plant, your 8 hours, that's your social time. Home was your time for your family.

Chris: What about things like Christmas parties? Were there many activities like that?

Jim: There was a long service club and you had to be here over 10 years, I think, and then you could be a member of that club. It met once a year for a party.

Chris: That the company would put on?

Jim: The company would put on and they would bring back a lot of the retirees. Christmas parties? Well, the guys in the plant would get together. You would have a

Interview #2: Jim White

couple drinks in one department. We would bring in a little bottle of something and everybody would have a drink and raise a toast and then you would be on your way.

[Interruption]

Chris: I would like to ask about the Excise crew. Were there still a group of Excise people on the property when you started?

Jim: We had one. The gentleman's name was George Koshen. He was a very funny man. He was bald like Kojak [a movie actor] but he would never really come right out and say things. He was always beating around the bush. He was the Excise officer here and I think he retired and they didn't replace him right away. They let the company go on its own merits and then what they did was send one officer down once a week to go over the books.

Chris: But, when he was here...?

Jim: He appointed two deputies in the office to look after things.

Chris: Two company people?

Jim: Right. Excise had their own special keys. They were in charge of the keys. They would keep track of all the weights and everything. It is pretty fool proof. They take the weight right off the scale and there is a stencil there. It stencils the weight, so you can't cheat that way.

Chris: But, all of the Excise rules were still in place when you started here, like the double locking, and so on or had that already disappeared?

Jim: Most of the doors are still double locked. It has always been that way so we never changed it. I don't think it was as strict in the end. If the company wasn't honest, I think they could have probably gotten away with a lot.

Chris: But, it was a relatively small plant towards the end.

Jim: That's right. I think we were still producing, the last time our still ran was June 5, 1990, on the average about 1 1/2 million litres of molasses spirits.

Chris: Per run?

Jim: Per run, yes.

Chris: How long did a run last for?

## Interview #2: Jim White

Jim: A run could last for three months - four months - five months - six months. It depended on the demand. You would get your orders ahead of time. One of the largest ones was Bacardi's and they would order a certain amount and that is what you produced.

[Interruption]

Chris: You were talking about how long a still run would be and Bacardi being the major customer.

Jim: One of the major customers, yes. I would probably say about 70% of product we distilled would be sent to them. The other 30% would go into storage and then to aging. What we would usually do is run through the winter time so we would have the summer time to do all of our repairs. The lab man, the distillery foreman, would go through and make a list of about 30 or 40 points that would need repair within the building so he could do another run successfully. We would run in the winter time because all our condensers were cooled with lake water. Lake water is really cool in the winter time but once it warms up in the summer time, you have to supplement it with City water and which is too costly. All in all, it worked out pretty good.

There was always lots of repairs in there. The distillery was pretty well falling apart and that was one of the key interests that caught me when Dick took me around the plant. He said that you had to be able to adapt in every building if you had to fabricate a part, you had to know how to do it. He said, "If you could come up with something better, something that would work better than what was actually in place, feel free, express yourself, go ahead."

Chris: So, that was the challenge for you that you liked?

Jim: Yes. There was lots and lots to do around the plant like that.

Chris: You had a chance to tinker and experiment and come up with a better way of doing something?

Jim: Lots of different ways. My foreman, a little later on, Dave Seller and I experimented with making pumps. We made a pump for pumping caustic soda into the solution, into the sewer. The distillery discharge was acidic so you had to use caustic to balance it out. The City got upset with that. They were cracking down on all the pollution that was entering the City sewer system. Which was kind of funny in itself, because we were on the acidic side and just down the street, Leaver Brothers was on the bland side, so they had to dump sulphuric acid to balance their's out and we had to dump caustic. We should have just got together but you know ....

## Interview #2: Jim White

Different things, we made pressure regulators for the boiler room chemical system, for feeding the chemicals into the heater. Lots of things. You would just go around the plant and if you had an idea and you wanted to do it somewhere, go ahead.

Chris: But with something like this caustic pump, you probably could have bought one but there was just no money for new equipment, is that it?

Jim: Well you would call around and get some pricing and get some pamphlets and information but not everything meets the requirements. You had to be able to adjust it for a certain amount that had to go down there like a gallon a minute or a gallon a hour. A lot of pumps just run constant. They do have pumps that we were looking at that was all rubber tubing and it was for dialyses machines - pumping your blood out and back in - that's the size of pump that we needed but with caustic you can't do that. When it is exposed to air, it solidifies - the water evaporates out of it and all you are left with is caustic powder. It plugs up all the pipings. It was fun. It was trial and error but eventually we got something that would work.

Chris: In terms of looking around the plant and just what I have seen over the years, I get the feeling that there hasn't been anything new done or new equipment go in since probably the 1950s. The rum still was probably the last major new equipment. Is that true?

Jim: Let me see. I'll go building by building. Building 50, they put stainless steel tanks in. They took the copper tanks out and put the stainless steel tanks in. That was there key tank house for Tank House #10, for doing all the shipping of product. What they would do is dump barrels in the dump trough there and put it in a tank until it was ready to be sent off to be bottled. They would send it to Corby's or Hiram Walker to bottle.

Chris: Why did they go to stainless steel from copper? They needed new tanks?

Jim: Well, if you were to interview Pete Nicholson or somebody like that or Bob Morrison probably knows too, who deal with alcohol, once you get below 80% proof or 80% alcohol, it will pick up the copper taste. So what you have to do is put your lower proof spirits into a stainless steel tank where it can't pick anything up.

Chris: Why was there still so much copper around the plant?

Jim: High proof. When it is in a barrel, it is cut down from 95 or whatever to 64 [proof].

Chris: But all the tanks in [Buildings] 60 and 61 were copper, weren't they?

Jim: That's right. Most of them held industrial alcohol. They were all 95 or 100%. Molasses spirits they stored in there also. That was at 96%.

Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: But those are old tanks. They must have been in from the 19th century probably?

Jim: They still put lower proof spirit in there but that's what I was told that it picks up the copper if it is in there over a greater period of time. You could put something in there for a short period of time. Use that tank as a blending tank and then barrel the whole tank. There is lots of ways to get around that. I have seen it before. It kind of discolours the alcohol. What they would do to show me, they would put some stuff in a pail and just let it sit there for a day and you could see it picks up ....., it picks up a colour.

Chris: What that is really saying then though is that there wasn't much new stuff going in. So the decision must have been made ....?

Jim: Our boiler room, we had three package boilers put in in 1972 because we had two other boilers in there, 1956 Babcox and Wilcox.

Chris: That's that big square one in Building 4?

Jim: In Building 4. We have one remaining but those were a lot of maintenance. They required an engineering staff, three shifts. They plugged up a lot. They were running on oil. There was a lot of problems with them so they decided to spend the money. They bought an experimental system. Bob Morrison and Dave Sellers were sent to Chicago to study the boilers and they got a trial system here. I think they paid \$75,000 for all three boilers. At the time, it was very good. Right now they are about \$75,000 each, between \$75,000-\$100,000 each but, those boilers are over 20 years old now.

Chris: You mean they would fetch \$75,000 now or that is what it would cost to replace them each?

Jim: To replace them, brand new, I forget. I had a gentleman come down and quote me some prices on it and I think he said \$75,000 each. He would buy them right now and take them off our hands for \$49,000.

Chris: For all three?

Jim: Each. He would recondition them and turn around and sell them. They are worth money still because they are still used. They are a very good boiler. They are very low maintenance. We had very few problems with them other than the usual bearings. You replace a packing and the typical wear and tear parts go but other than that, because we use soft water, we don't have problems with the boilers plugging up or anything like that.

Chris: The other thing that amazes me about the boilers is when I see that big Babcox boiler that is there, when you had two of them, the size they were, now you have three tiny ones. It is just amazing the change in efficiency.

## Interview #2: Jim White

Jim: That's right. When the still was running, we had to run all three boilers because our steam load was around 24,000 pounds per hour which is a lot - a lot of water, gas. They wouldn't be running wide open but they would be pretty close to it. Now with no production going on, we have minimal heating in the building, the steam load has dropped from 24,000 pounds per hour to about 6,100 pounds per hour.

Chris: What were you doing on those really cold days this winter?

Jim: You crank them up.

Chris: Were they getting close to the...

Jim: A couple buildings got very cool and, this being an exceptionally cold winter, I've actually had to turn on a lot more heat in more of the buildings than I've had to.

Chris: Were you getting close to 24,000 pounds of steam?

Jim: No, no. Instead of 6,100 pounds it would be 6,500 - 6,700 pounds but having to turn on more steam rads in the buildings than they have had in previous years. It has taken a beating this year. This year is our record year for leaks; for pipe leaks, for steam leaks, return line leaks, for freeze ups. This has been a year for us to remember. Busy, busy. We fix, like yesterday, five steam return line leaks but we found two new ones.

Chris: Why does a leak suddenly happen? Why would this cold weather bring on a leak like that?

Jim: Well, the piping is old and everything runs in cycles. You pretty well get to know which pipes are going to wear out quicker because you have to keep replacing them. So, long stretches of pipes are starting to go now. Running water, obviously, wears metal. It wears the pipes over a certain amount of time. When you thread a pipe, the threads dig into the pipe and that's the thinnest area and that's where 90% of the leaks will be. Trying to be the recycler I was when I first came here, I've learned that lesson since, quite a few times over. What I would do is cut the end off the pipe, rethread it and put it back in. In a day or two, it leaks because the pipe is paper thin. It is not just the thread that goes, it is the whole length because it runs a groove. The pipe may not be full of water the whole time, it may only be half so it wears a groove into the pipe. Steam condenses in the rad and with the steam traps, it allows the water to escape so there is water hammer and that causes a large vibration on some of the pipes. If the steam traps wear out, which they do, live steam can run through and it puts live steam constantly flowing through the return lines and that adds to wear and tear also.

What we've done, when I first came here, my foreman at the time, Bob Cane, he knew how to use our lathe just for turning down drill bits. He would take a 1/2" drill bit and take the end down to 3/8" so he could use a 3/8" drill instead of the big 1/2" one.

Interview #2: Jim White

Other than that, there hadn't been anybody to use the lathe in about 20-30 years. No one knew how to use it. I sat down with him for about 10 minutes, one time, cleaned it up a little bit and I spent 3-4 hours when we were in slow time. I took it all apart, figured out how it went because it is a lot different than today's modern day lathe. I figured out exactly where everything went and then I brought over my foreman, Dave Sellers and started showing him. It took me a few hours to learn how to use it and then I taught him how to use it. It was an ongoing process to teach him because I was learning how to use more and more on it. That way, the both of us could use it. I showed him how to put threads on so we could thread 2 1/2" pipe or something because our pipe threaders could only thread up to 2". There is all kinds of things; for making bolt threads.

Chris: Is this the lathe in Building 8?

Jim: [Yes,] the machine shop.

Chris: That's the belt driven? That must have been fun to...

Jim: Oh, yes. It is very accurate. It is very old but very accurate. It is 2,000th of an inch out over 48 inches. It is very, very accurate.

Chris: Does that mean that whole machine shop was hardly used then?

Jim: Most of the equipment there is probably in very good shape.

Chris: Because it wasn't used for 20-30 years?

Jim: That's right. Nobody knew how to use it. The drill press constantly got used. I think the drill press is the oldest equipment in there and I think it's the one that has been used and abused. It is very good. Where I would hesitate to drill an 1 1/2" hole with a hand drill bit, that one works fine. It is slow but slow and steady. If the drill bit jams, the drill bit doesn't break because the belt slips. The equipment is hard to break. It is the same with the lathe. If your tool bit jams, it just jams up and the belt slips. You can't get hurt and you can't get killed with it. The only way you get killed is if you have long hair and winds in and it winds in very slow and you panic; or a tie or a loose shirt or something. Just the obvious safety rules.

Chris: That's really interesting about that machine shop. I will have to...

Jim: I was taught on all the newer equipment in the machine shop: milling machines, lathes, shapers, the whole bit. But, it is like, what do we have here? It is so ancient, but that is part of the draw to it because it is so old and so simple.

## Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: Another challenge for the site? In terms of the steam fittings and things like that, the plant is suffering from deferred maintenance? Normally, there would have been a program for replacing the steam pipes, steam traps and so on?

Jim: Well, that's why we are here. It is an ongoing job. It is not a deferred job. It is ongoing.

Chris: But, if what you are saying is that there are sections of pipe going and what if this plant was still operating? You would just said, "Well, this year we are going to reinstall 500 metres of new steam line."?

Jim: Well, that's not the way we work. If it isn't broke, you don't fix it. Where you find a leak, that's where you fix the leak. You don't replace the whole thing because there is miles and miles and miles of piping. So, what you do is you have a little 4" nipple or 6" nipple that is leaking, you have long runs but you break it up between unions and couplings so you just have to replace one length rather than replace the whole because there are different bends; 90 degree bends cause a lot of wear. The more times you change the direction in a single run, the more turbulence there is in the water and you are more prone to leak.

Chris: Coming back to the furnaces, why are those new gas furnaces so much smaller than the Babcox? There seems to be capacity...?

Jim: They are high efficiency. They are the same steam pressure. Where the three package boilers are now, I am not sure whether if there was one boiler in there or two boilers. I am not sure. They were just oil and inefficient. There are a lot of coil tubes in there and there was a lot of plugging up problems with them. They didn't run soft water so it was all the minerals and the water would bake on the insides so they had a lot of down time. They have this little auger and it went through with the water hose attached to it and the water would spin the drill bit - almost like a drill bit - gear teeth and it would chip away at the stuff on the sides.

Chris: And chip away at the pipe too?

Jim: Probably. They would plugged up so bad they would just hammer a wooden block in - cut the pipe and hammer a wooden block in. Different things like that, cap it off or weld it so that coil wasn't used any longer.

Chris: Let me ask you about scales, weigh scales around here. Again it was interesting in talking with David Nasby [historian working on this G&W study] how important he seemed to think weighing was for the whole alcohol industry. The most obvious question to me is why are those three scale tanks in the loft of Building 61 in such good condition when so much of the rest of the plant has been painted over with that aluminum paint and



Interview #2: Jim White

generally, doesn't seem to be in as good a condition? Is that a fair observation? It sure looks different than say going to Building 5 or into the still area.

Jim: There are a few reasons for that. One, it is a small, confined space so it gives you the illusion that it is a lot cleaner because there is less space to put junk in. Of course, it takes time to fill a tank. It is an hour to pump up for a tank truck. What the scale man would do is to pump up from the storage tanks below, pump it up, weigh it and then pump it into a tank truck. He may do four tank trucks a day and that's his day. So, you read, you do your crossword puzzles - idle hands - so some of them would polish valves or do something along those lines.

There was always something to do. You could be doing other things not just pumping one tank car. There are three tanks up there, so he could be getting the next day's. If you were having four or five tractor truck loads today, he could be having all three tanks filled. Filling one, get it empty and then denaturing would need a shipment of alcohol for one of their mixes so he would have to bring up another batch of alcohol and then feed it over to denaturing. Because it is high up, you can get away with gravity.

Chris: So it provided gravity feed to....?

Jim: To loading tank trucks, to denaturing. You had your choice of pump or gravity. If your pump was busy, you had gravity.

[Interruption]

Chris: Does it sum it up that the fellow would have had the time to look after the space? How many people were responsible for that scale office? Was there just one person?

Jim: One. Patrick LaChapelle, that was his domain. He was our scaleman. He was a real nice guy. Still is a nice guy. Very healthy, very happy. He is one of the happiest guys I know who is happy he is retired. He got out a couple of years early. He is single, he has lots of money. He has lots of fun with a lot of the retirement groups around. They go on skiing trips. It was the best thing for him, he said.

Chris: That must of, in some ways, been kind of a lonely job?

Jim: Yes.

Chris: All by himself?

Jim: All by himself. It was always fun because no intercom phones so the foreman was on the floor below and you would be walking on the ground floor and you would be walking in there and you would hear him, .... [the phrase at this point was not clear on the tape] .... He would rhyme off some order. "Yeh, Yeh, OK". It was pretty fun. You

## Interview #2: Jim White

would go walking in there and you would hear Pat yelling down at you and you would be like "where are you at" because he would yell so loud it would sound like he was beside you. The scale tanks are in very good - the ones that we were still using - condition.

Chris: Throughout the plant?

Jim: They are very accurate. I know, that was one of my jobs. Having to test them, we would get a Weights and Measures Officer and he would bring in - we used Aurora Scale as our company - 5,000 pounds of 50 pound weights and that was the job.

Chris: To carry them up into the loft, up there?

Jim: That's the young kid. Get the young kid to do it. What we would do is, you notice when you look in that the tank platforms are square and the tanks are round. On a lot of the tank platforms, you will find little hangers with boards, that's for storing the 50 pound weights. So, what we would do is put 1,000 pounds of weight on, check the accuracy of the scale, if it was OK, you would put 5,000 pounds of water or alcohol into the tank and then check it to see if it was OK. Take the 1,000 pounds back off, see if you had your 5,000 pounds original. If that checked out OK then you would move on. You would put 2,000 pounds of weight on. You would put the original 1,000 pounds back on and then an extra 1,000 pounds and it went on like that until you reached the scale's maximum capacity of 60,000 pounds.

Chris: How long did that take?

Jim: A day per tank. So by the end of the day you felt like your arms were 10 feet long and your knuckles were dragging on the ground because you are lifting 50 pounds weights constantly, up and down, up and down. For the pure spirits [Building 61], for the scale loft there, it was pulley.

End Tape One, Side One

Jim: For particularly for the loft, what we would do is jerry rig a support beam out of the top roof, off the roof line inside of the building. We put a pulley on and one guy stays down, one guy stays up in the doorway and it is pull, pull, pull and that takes about 2 1/2 hours to pull 5,000 pounds of weight up. So you start walking around like a wrestler. You walk all the way up the stairs, get up to the top of the scale loft and you say, "let's get going" and then you have a tough time picking one of them up. Your arms are just so totally tired. I think, if I remember right, it is about two weeks to do every scale in the plant because even the little portable 210 litre drum scales - they are like 1,000 pounds capacity - have to be checked. What you do is put the weights on the corners and the scale has to be able to read accurately wherever the weight is on the platform. It doesn't have to sit in the middle. It can sit on a corner and it has to read.

Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: What happened if, in fact, they weren't accurate? Then you would have to....?

Jim: That's why we have a scale company here also. Scaleman doesn't help you lift the weights. That is your job. The scaleman is there to adjust the scale to make it accurate. The Weights and Measure Officer is there to make sure there isn't hanky panky going on - no fixing the scales.

Chris: So, there is a Weights and Measure guy and then when he is satisfied he put a...?

Jim: He puts a seal of approval on and it has to be verified every two years.

Chris: So, this was a process every two years not annually?

Jim: Every two years they had to come in and check.

Chris: And you tended to do all your checking at once?

Jim: That's right. You bring the guy in for two weeks and then you do it and then you don't see him again for another two years. You make your appointment ahead of time.

Chris: What always gets me about those stickers is putting them over some of the wonderful paint jobs.

Jim: Some of them really didn't take the care. It was like it had to be displayed in a very visible fashion so it catches your attention if an Excise Officer was to come in and see that this scale is due, it is four years due.

Chris: So, they would be responsible for reporting?

Jim: Yes, because it has to be done. It is the company's responsibility to have it done. I am sure the Government would be sending out reminders.

Chris: I meant to ask you, where was the Excise officer's office? The last guy you were talking about?

Jim: George Koshen? When I came here, he was just down the hall from Dick Martlin's office. He had a small, very small office. It was six feet by eight feet with a little desk in there. That's was all he needed.

Chris: Would his day be walking around or would his day be in the office?

Jim: It would be in the office. If they were bringing alcohol up to tank, if they dumped barrels, or they were doing mixes or something, something that was in the scale tank, had to be recorded and he would go over and verify and initial their weigh tickets. So, scales

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are accurate. You know the scales are accurate because they have tested by Weights and Measures. They know exactly how much alcohol spirit is in there because you have specific gravity and you have temperature. When you have specific gravity and temperature and you have a weight, you can tell exactly how much your gallonage is. They know exactly. What would happen is, it would tested, weighed and checked in the distillery and then it gets pumped over to the scale loft where it gets double checked or verified to make sure there is no leaks or sideways lines tapped off somewhere else within the plant. They can double check the figures between the two and they know exactly. Then the figures are recorded.

Chris: So, that was the actual flow then within the distillery? It went straight from Building 5 into the scale loft and then from the loft either into the tanks or..?

Jim: Either into [Buildings] 61 or 62 storage tanks or it would get rerouted to Tank House #10 or 4 or 9. Four or nine were generally industrial alcohol storage or not very good product. It would be called "heads and tails". It would be like island rums that are coming up but there are a lot of impurities in it, a lot of sticks or twigs or stuff floating in it and it would have to be run through the still to purify it to clean it up.

Chris: Did the scale loft [in Building 61] handle industrial alcohol as well as beverage alcohol?

Jim: All alcohol.

Chris: How did you keep the tanks clean enough for beverage use?

Jim: Industrial alcohol is drinkable. It is just pure alcohol.

Chris: Not denatured?

Jim: No denatured alcohol goes in the scale loft. It is only pure products, unmatured. Industrial alcohol is unmatured alcohol. It is not aged in any way, so it could come from grain or corn. It could come from anything. It is unmatured alcohol. It is high strength.

Denaturing has its own scale tank that has the capacity of having impurities and everything like that, being pumped from one of their isopropyl tanks or something. They would pump it up to their scale loft, weigh it and then it could be dumped from their into a truck.

Chris: So, that little scale loft in the mezzanine of Building 47 is a miniature version of this one?

Jim: That's right.

Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: I see. So then, once it went from Building 61 scale loft, it would go over to Building 47 [and] straight into the tanks or into the scale loft?

Jim: Either way. They had that capacity up there. They had a manifold system up there. You have your choice of dumping straight into the scale tank because what they would do is: you have "tank 13" or "tank 4" or whatever. It doesn't matter; any number. It is a certain mix and if they needed 95% isopropyl or something and they only had 60% on hand, you had to increase the alcohol content so they would dump unmaturred alcohol in there to raise the content. But there is different mixes like 1B or 2A. There is quite a few, 1G. There is lots and lots of a variety of mixes that deal with wood alcohols or methanol or anything like that. All that stuff is poisonous and harmful for human consumption so that is why they have their own scale loft because the transfer from tank to tank and some mixes are a combination of part of this tank, part of that tank so they have an empty tank which is their blending tank.

Chris: What prevented an accidental pumping backwards of a denatured alcohol back into say, Building 60 or 61?

Jim: Denaturing doesn't have a pump. Denaturing scale tank is lower than the loft scale tank so it is fed by pump or gravity from pure spirits to denaturing and then from denaturing it fills its tanks within the building through gravity. There is one pump in denaturing and it is an air pump but it is mainly used for transferring from tank to tank. They had a portable electric pump that they used for transferring from tank to tank or from tank to tank truck. So, there was no way that it could get back up into a scale tank upstairs because even in pure spirits there is a manifold system and the hoses have to be hooked back up. So, there is a panel a cam-lock hoses and the scaleman has the choice of where to send it. Whether he wants it to go to this group of tanks or Tank House #4, 9 or 10 or Denaturing [Building 47] or the scale loft [Building 61] goes to pipeline along the front of the Cannery [Buildings 58/59] out to fill railway cars on the railway tracks down in the front of Building 60, right at the foot of the brick road. We could fill molasses spirits or we had whiskey from tank house 10. It could be pumped all the way up through the lines through a bypass in the scale loft and then down to fill a railway track. Whiskey had its own line, molasses had its own line because whiskey contains charcoal and you can't contaminate unmaturred or molasses spirits with charcoal. They want a clean, pure spirit.

Chris: Coming back to the denatured spirits then, how could they leave Building 47? Could they also be pumped out to the railway line?

Jim: [Building] 47 can't go to the railway lines.

Chris: Could it go into a tank truck?

Jim: It could go into a tank truck.

Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: How would it go into a tank truck?

Jim: They would pump their own portable electric pump from a tank up to their scale loft [in Building 47] and then through gravity from their scale tank into a tank truck.

Chris: So, it wasn't using the tank filler in the bridge between Pure Spirits [Building 57] and the Distillery [Building 2,4,5]?

Jim: No, between the main office and the cannery bridge there is a filler tube and you could fill whiskey trucks there also, or all trucks there from the scale loft. That is another system also. We were mainly using that for demineralized water. What they would do is pump demineralized water from our storage tanks there up to the scale loft where one tank would weigh out a certain amount and then dump it into a tank truck and then you could use that to blend alcohol. Cut the strength of alcohol or they were using that for antifreeze. Diluting the concentrate for antifreeze, giving it a 60/40 mix. We had a lot of customers like General Motors, or Ford or Mac Truck and they wanted their antifreeze premixed. So, it would just go into a vat or tank and right into the rads of the cars. They didn't have to worry about doing all their little mixing.

Chris: Why would you be moving demineralized water into a tank truck, though?

Jim: We had different buyers for it.

Chris: So, one of the things you actually sold was demineralized water?

Jim: It wasn't worth very much. It would be like inter-company. We had like Brights Wines or something. Their demineralizer broke down. They couldn't buy demineralized water so we were already running their wine spirits through the stills for them. They would send us impure wine like the all the bottom dredgings and everything like that, send it to us and we would run it through our still and give them back 95, 96 or 97% wine spirit. It is a clear, neutral spirit; no smell, no taste, no colour but almost clear alcohol but it is derived through wine. They would, in turn, use that to blend that into an 8% wine like [not clear on tape]. They could increase the alcohol content to 11% just by blending. It keeps a common thing like you could get 8% or 11% or 13% or you can go up and down. I don't think that wine is very accurate. That's how I was told that they would use it to blend up alcohol strengths.

Chris: So, they would keep it in reserve for their own use and you were then doing it as a custom job when you had some capacity?

Jim: They use wine spirits sometimes for making liqueurs rather than normal alcohol because it is a fruit product, alcohol from fruits and most liqueurs are fruit based.

Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: Also, it seems to me that sherry is fortified but then, I think you have to use brandy or something?

Jim: Brandy is sherry, yes. G&W "Electric Schnapps," they had a whole line there of six different flavours made with wine spirits that we ran off our still. It wasn't a very big seller. It was very strong. It tasted very strong.

Chris: It met a certain market?

Jim: Oh yes. Some of it tasted like cough medicine, that's how bad it was. One of their cherry flavour's tasted like cough medicine. It was very strong.

Chris: I am not sure I would like to meet the sort of person that would like that sort of stuff. Jim, the other thing is, what about the different legal names that were on some of the tanks and stills? I guess, in particular, is it Consolidated Alcohols and G & W and I think there were some other names around as well?

Jim: Like Barclay still?

Chris: Well no, I guess I am thinking more about right now, right at the end. Did you have to be careful as to whether this alcohol was literally going into a Consolidated Alcohol's tank?

Jim: They had tanks reserved for an amount of percentage. OK, so you would have this row, Consolidated Alcohol's, this row here of unmatured product. Then you would have a row of molasses spirit. They new and they had these charts and each tank had a label on it for what was in that tank or for what it could be used for. They knew all of the time. We had a Jewish Rabbi come down and he blessed two or three tanks and that was for kosher alcohol. He had to come down and do a whole service on the tanks to make sure that it would be OK because they wanted alcohol for pickling or something like that and it had to be kosher.

Chris: Then, you would have to watch or ...?

Jim: Sign the documents and everything stating that these three tanks were for your product only and one of their representatives had to be by when they were canned or shipping.

Chris: In general, what happens if Consolidated Alcohols needed more capacity than there were tanks?

Jim: That was easy. It was all the same company. Consolidated Alcohol and Hiram Walker and Gooderham and Worts there are all owned by the same. It is just like it is two licences. It is like another distillery that the company bought and they bought it for their

Interview #2: Jim White

licence. So, Consolidated was all industrial alcohols or Gooderham and Worts was all the unmatured and drinkable products, the beverage.

Chris: But, why go through the joke or the show of having the tanks labelled differently?

Jim: You had to produce a certain amount in order to keep a licence valid. You had to run, I think, two weeks out of a year. So, what they would do in order to keep Consolidated Alcohol's licence valid is they would run the still for two weeks out of the year but it would be running during a G & W run. What they would do is take one licence off, hang a Consolidated Alcohol's licence on the still saying that for the next two weeks this still is producing Consolidated Alcohol spirits. So, anything that came off for that was written over to Consolidated Alcohol.

Chris: And properly and duly recorded by Excise?

Jim: Everything was recorded. All the transactions, all the weights, everything was charged to Consolidated Alcohol. That way the licence could still be in effect. On distilling licences, about \$1 million, last I heard. They only grant so many and there are only so many of them out there, so, they are as good as gold.

Chris: So, they would want to keep hold of them?

Jim: That's right. I'm sure Windsor still has G & W licence and Consolidated's licence, McGinnis' licence, Corby's licence.

Chris: And they, as you say, hang a different sign on for a certain amount of time?

Jim: In our still right now are two stills. They could, theoretically, run two stills at once.

Chris: Right.

Jim: Some of them both share common systems, common parts of the still but basically they are the same. One of them is in half decent shape and the other one is all rebuilt. They spent hours and hours rebuilding it because they were going to run it and they never did.

Chris: Which one is the...?

Jim: On the second floor on the panel board, it is on the southwest corner [of Building 5]. The bare column there is all renovated.

Chris: The southwest corner?

Jim: The southwest corner, yes. All renovated still.



Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: So, it is that little unit, the little control panel...?

Jim: The little control panel up against the wall. That controls that still.

Chris: When was that rebuilt?

Jim: Late 60s, early 70s. It hasn't been run since.

Chris: So, you were only using the big panel?

Jim: The big beer column and that was it.

Chris: So, the other one has literally sat there for...?

Jim: Yes. As some pieces are needed, a couple of pieces have been taken off here and there, but it is still relatively complete.

Chris: But, you are saying that on the big panel and the big set of stills, that in itself was two sets of stills or that was just 5 column still?

Jim: One 5 column still and then on the other half of the room, you have smaller columns. It is set up different. It is a much smaller still, but the beer column is large.

Chris: Was any of that equipment used then, in conjunction? Could you tie back and forth?

Jim: Oh, yes.

Chris: And did you?

Jim: Oh, yes. We use a dephlegmator, the exhaust column. That is common to both of them. I have never seen the other still run.

Chris: That beer column, never ran?

Jim: Yes, I have never seen that run. I have been here 10 years. I doubt that Mike has ever seen it run and he has been here 15 years. Dave, my foreman, was here 25 years, I sure he probably saw it when he first came here. I think they were still running. He came in 1968.

Chris: And they just didn't need the capacity, I guess?

Interview #2: Jim White

Jim: They weren't producing 200 million gallons. They were 1.5 million gallons? or 1.5 million litres? I think it was 1.5 million litres that they were producing. They weren't producing a large amount. It was large enough for us because that was all we could produce. Our stills could run every day of the year but we would have a lot of down time. We could probably run for two months and then be down for one month for repairs because it is old and falling apart. Different things would have to be done. We could only run the beer column for two months before it had to be shut down and cleaned out because the steam from the bottom bakes the molasses on all the plates so you would have to send a crew in there and that is two days; two 8 hour shifts.

Chris: Of chipping molasses?

Jim: With a little bit large than an ice pick, punching out the holes.

Chris: Reaching in through those inspection...?

Jim: You climb in to your waist. They give you a trouble light and you climb in to your waist and you punch and you punch and you punch. Then you take the down pipe out and then chip that out outside. It is two days. For two days you are soaking wet and you smell of molasses because you are chipping away on your one holes and for that beer column the openings are staggered; one east side one west side and then you go down the next one. It is flowing straight through so, you are punching your holes onto the guy below you and he is scrapping up everything that you are dropping down on him and then you give yours a rinse with the hose and then it constantly drips. So, after you do the first one, water is constantly dripping down on you. The steam valves don't hold so steam is still coming up through the bottom. You hear all the bubbling and percolating of it down in the very bottom. If you are claustrophobic, it is no where that you should be.

Chris: It would be hot and humid, then?

Jim: It is very, very hot and humid. That was one of the first jobs I had when I came here. They said, "This is our distillery. You are going to get to know it very well. Do you know what you will be doing today?". "What?" "This is Al McPhee. You are going to be his helper. Al, take him away." He pops off the manhole and says, "You go in there. Here's your tools you have to choose from." They had these six or seven different types of bits the guys would custom make. "This would work pretty well for here." "Gentlemen, arm yourselves and away you go."

Chris: Did you want to stay on after doing that for a while?

Jim: That wasn't a fun job but a lot of the time they would pick cellar men to do it but because I was new here, you have to be introduced to it. It did it once.

Chris: You were never asked to do it again?

Interview #2: Jim White

Jim: Maintenance is too high paid help to be doing a lot of the little jobs. I was always told that I was too high paid. I am a tradesman not a grass cutter to go cut grass.

Chris: Sounds good to me.

Jim: My carpenter did it. I was an apprentice and I was here to learn so I served my five year apprenticeship here and then I went and got my licence. I got my licence after six years or so because you pass your licence exam in school. I went to George Brown College. You pass your inner, classroom licence and that gave you everything. You were free and clear of all the responsibilities that you were supposed to know what you were doing. All your safety features and then if you wanted an interprovincial licence or to work elsewhere in Ontario other than your company, you went and you wrote a three hour exam. If you got over 80, you got your interprovincial.

Chris: And you have that?

Jim: Yes, I can work anywhere in Canada that I like as a licensed millwright. A millwright is basically a jack-of-all-trades. I can do carpentry work, I can do plumbing, steam fitting, air conditioner, refrigeration. I started taking courses in that. I can do boiler work. I called up to get my Stationary Engineer's licence. They won't give it to me because of the boilers I have here at the plant and I said, "What licence can I get that will enable me to work it confidently?" I already know how everything on it but I went through a phase where I still want to get as many licences as I can while I am young. The more you know, the more you are a valuable employee for somebody. I don't know the full features of what is going to be going on down here. What my place will be in this, if there is a place. I am hoping there is a place. I have a lot of connections but the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Affairs said, "Well, the next thing we can say to you is get a millwright's licence.". Well, I have a millwright's licence. "Well, there you go. Work away at it." "OK", I said. If you insist on getting an Engineer's licence, they said, "Take it through night school or something like that." I have looked for some courses but I haven't had convenient time with all the filming and everything going on, to be taking the time to go in there. Going through the management company, they said, "Well, if you want to get that licence, fine. We will stick you in one of our other building's boiler rooms.".

Chris: So, you mean that is the problem? In order...

Jim: You need practical experience.

Chris: On different boilers than these ones?

Jim: Yes.

Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: You mean that a month or two of experience would then enable you get your Stationary's Engineer's licence?

Jim: Yes. There are four separate classes. That would give me the Fourth Class.

Chris: It seems like a joke in one sense that you are doing all the work and you are just not licensed to do it.

Jim: That's right because they say it doesn't need an operator. All a Fourth Class Stationary Engineer would do is mix chemicals, regenerate water softeners. Well, I regenerate water softeners. He would do simple maintenance on it. Well, I do more than simple maintenance on it. I rebuilt all the pumps. I replace all the fan bearings and belts and the whole bit. I reseal the back doors that like a cement mortar mix, replace orifice nipples, the whole bit. I do everything to keep the boiler running that a normal engineer, more than what a normal engineer would do. But they say it doesn't need an engineer station to pat it 24 hours a day, to keep it running. Most boilers have a manual blow down valve that has to be depressed once an hour. What that does is remove any sediment off the bottom of the drum. Ours have automatic blow downs so you don't need it.

Chris: So, you are not learning that skill, is that it?

Jim: I am not learning the skill of sitting at a desk, watching the clock and saying, "Well, OK, it is time for this hour.". Bang. Depress the pedal and away you go.

Chris: Why did you stay on? I guess, with Mike as well. Were you given a choice or were you asked to or did you want to stay on?

Jim: When the word came down in April, of 1990 that the plant was shutting down, it was like "Oh, no.".

Chris: It was a surprise?

Jim: It was a surprise for most everybody here but they knew it was coming because everyone that was here had been told that for years and years and years. "Well, we may have another year left, we may have two years left." There was always that threat of being shut down and then it became a reality and the axe man who came was George Chandler. [See Interview #1] I don't know what his title is anymore. He may even be retired now.

Chris: From Hiram Walker?

Jim: From Hiram Walker. He came down and said, "Listen, this is the way it is going. The plant is going to be shutting down. I am giving you your four months notice. August

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31, 1990 is the last day anyone is going to be here.". Before he gave that presentation, Paul had strong an associates, I think, down for a little presentation and he was doing renovations that they had been working on for the plant and Paul had promised most of the employees here. "Don't worry. There will be lots of jobs. You can be cutting grass or changing lights. You don't have to worry about it. The company is going to look after you." I think it was a week later that George came in and dropped the axe and a lot of them were really shook up. 90% of the employees here won't ever come back to the plant.

Chris: They were really hurt?

Jim: They won't call. They don't want to come back to the plant. I guess they feel betrayed.

Chris: How many employees were there at the end?

Jim: It think there was 33. That's the number that comes to mind. Off hand, I can't tell you. [See Interview #1]

Chris: Then were you asked...?

Jim: OK. Prior to the meeting, before everybody, the three maintenance had a meeting with George Chandler. He said, "We were going to keep two but Paul [Allsop] decided that we should have three down here. They convinced us that we should have three down here, so we are offering you guys a chance to stay on here. Same pay. Business as usual but you will be here by yourselves keeping the buildings up. What do you think?" I said, "Ok, sure." He said, "OK, go get lost for a couple of hours. I don't want you here when I break the news to everybody else." So we left. He broke the news and then we came back. It was a major shock for a lot of people because a lot of them still had mortgages or something like that. A lot of them got good severances. Hiram Walker treated their employees very well for severances.

Chris: One thing I keep wondering about is the plan to call that area "Farewell Court."  
[See Interview #1]

Jim: That was our last party we had in behind the production office, in behind [Building] 52. We had a barbecue there, the maintenance guys and a couple of other guys. We got a little party organized and they brought in some retirees and they had a cake. So at the end of the barbecue, we were still employees so the three maintenance guys were left to clean up while everybody left at noon or one o'clock but we had to stay until 4:30 p.m. We had an 8:00 - 4:30 schedule. The next day, I think that was a Friday, but the next working day was a shock for about 5 months because every department was if the next day was coming. All the coats were still there, lockers were still there, work boots, sweaters hanging up as if the next day was a working day and it was holiday and we were in on a

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weekend or a summer shut down or something. We left it exact same. We didn't touch anything for five or six months.

Chris: At the risk of sounding cynical, was it the employees' idea to call it "Farewell Court" or was that a management idea?

Jim: Management.

Chris: How do you feel about it being called "Farewell Court?"

Jim: That's fine with me. I tell everybody the story of who was there and who was crying their eyes out and who had too much to drink, who got sunburned too bad. It was a hot day and most of the people almost had sun stroke.

Chris: My suspicion is that morale must have just plummeted after the announcement came through. Did things just sort of fall apart then for those couple of months or did everybody keep working?

Jim: Everybody kept working exactly the same way they were. They had been going on and on. I think everybody thought that maybe it was a joke or something could change between now and then, but it didn't.

[Interruption]

Chris: The last question I had for you is that I have always been curious about how many buildings must have been abandoned even during the time that you were here. The malt house, some of the rack houses and the mill building, for example. What were these spaces used for? What did it feel like to have that abandonness around?

Jim: It was always a reminder that nothing is forever. Jobs aren't forever.

Chris: What were they used for?

Jim: The buildings, themselves, were in reasonably good shape. They were empty. We still had to keep them heated because of active sprinkler lines within the buildings. Mainly they were just used for storage. Building 35 was used for lumber storage, that was it. First floor lumber storage for some old rack houses that they had taken down and they saved the lumber from them and that was just some spare blocks for our bridge supports out on the streets.

Chris: The upper floors were empty, then?

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Jim: Empty. Well, there was rubble up there. Just old lumber. Building 36 totally empty, not used for anything. Building 3, all the way up the five stories, empty. Just storage of some old machinery, 45 gallon drums of oil storage, next to nothing.

Chris: Did you every use them to hid, get a sleep? Have a drink? Read?

Jim: The newest guy and the youngest guy in the plant was 17 just turned 18 didn't want to hide anywhere. Just trying to learn the ropes. I didn't very easily communicate with most of the people here when I first started because I was very shy, everybody was so much older and really didn't know what to say. You had to learn the ropes. You learned how everybody reacts to different situations here and you know when people have their good days and their bad days. After I learned that, it was no problem at all. One big family. Barclay's still, Building 54, 55, 56 and 57 totally empty. There is some old still equipment in there but that is like a ghost town.

Chris: Don't you think people were tempted to use those as places to hide from? I guess there were so many places you could hide and you were so busy...

Jim: Maintenance was usually, usually busy.

Chris: Wouldn't there also be a fire hazard? I may be days or weeks before you go into one of these places or was there always inspection?

Jim: You always had to go through. Once or twice a week, you would go through and make sure everything is fine in there. Especially through the winter time, you have to go in every couple of days to make sure the heat is going and there is no leaks. You don't want pipes freezing up on you. Other than that, Building 4 has an old boiler but the distillery, we were still using a majority of that except for the grain part. Everything else was still used here.

Chris: What about Building 46, the old boiler house?

Jim: That was still used.

Chris: For?

Jim: Salesmen. Salesmen had all their lock ups in there. They had all their promotional stuff and it was for storage of old flyers and advertisements from years gone by. It was just in there for storage. It was like a treasure hunt. Look around and you find. Slowly, one by one the buildings stopped being used. One of the first ones was Rack J, Building 65. They stopped using that rack house for storing finished product, for aging. They would put empty barrels in there. The next one to come was probably Rack H, the next farthest one, north of Mill St. Then came Rack D, Building 42. They condemned the elevator and that meant taking everything out of there and putting it into M. Since I

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started, there has always been a decline in the amount of barrels that we had. They would gain a little bit but then that was it. They would start shipping out because everything was due to be bottled and everything goes on a prediction of what is going to be happening four, five or six years from now. So, if they over produce one year, they have a surplus left over and they don't need to produce as much the following year. Right now, the only shops that are used is the pipe shop, the carpenter shop, and ...

End Tape One, Side Two  
Start Tape Two, Side One

Jim: It is a large change from having full production going to being totally empty now. There is not a whole lot to do within the buildings other than normal maintenance for leaks: steam or sprinkler leaks. But, to offset that we have film companies coming through using our different spaces now that we have cleaned up. It is used quite extensively now. They call Gooderham and Worts, "Hollywood North."

Chris: How many films?

Jim: Roughly, I think about 130-140 within the last 2 1/2 years. This is the most film spot in Toronto right now.

Chris: I like it. It has a nice architectural feel to it but how can 100 plus films need this type of location? It is only a certain kind of architecture.

Jim: Well, there is quite a few things. Number one being that it is isolated from the City. There is no public access. Number two, they have lots of ample parking. They can control the people. They don't have to worry about city people. Number three, they have any different type of look that they want. Whether they want horror films or they period pieces like "Anne of Green Gables" or "Road to Avonlea" or that's 1800s or yet "Return of Elliot Ness" which is 1930s and they bring in all of the 1930s cars. We get quite a few of the older stuff. We get either Chicago or Boston, anything like that. We have different countries represented. Buildings 53-58 often gets used as France or for "Kung Fu" it is going to be Kiev, they are turning it to Kiev next week. We have a lot of facilities available. It is such a large drawing attraction that there is such a variety of architecture that even if it doesn't have to be period pieces, it is very interesting for foreground.

Chris: Are the large spaces, like in [Buildings] 61 and 62, just used for sound stages?

Jim: Everything. They get used as that. They get used for music videos. There is very little dressing. They like the large windows. They like the absence of equipment. They like the columns, wooden floor, sky lights, all that is a bonus for most of them because they put it, to put manpower hours for carpenters, for painters, for set decorators, it is just so expensive. If they can come into a place and make something work for little, it is such a large drawing attraction. So far, it is paying off.



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Chris: Without being specific, I suspect it helps pay for the heat and the upkeep of the place?

Jim: We are not in the business to gouge. Canary Restaurant [a nearby restaurant with an old fashioned interior], they get a film crew in there say for three days and they may charge \$15,000-\$20,000 for three days of filming. What we charge is \$500 per day for prep day and \$2,000 per day for film day. We are not in to get rich off of it, we are in to get public awareness alive. They want as many people to come through the site. We are trying to rebuild the image of the company as a place to come. It can only be more of a drawing attraction if people come to the plant and say, "Hey, I saw that in 'Three Men and a Baby'. I know that Building. I saw that on 'Kung Fu'." It can only help company image.

Chris: You think that is a deliberate policy? To make this part of Toronto again because it is so isolated?

Jim: It has been forgotten and now we are trying to revive that image. Of course, the little bit of money that we do get has helped pay for some of the heating. It pays for about 2/3 of the heating bill. So, like I say, they are not in it to make a killing.

Chris: Just as an aside, you are saying that the Canary Restaurant, the little restaurant at the corner, they get used as a movie set?

Jim: Oh, sure.

Chris: They must lose business, though, when they close?

Jim: That's why they jack it up. They probably don't make that much on sales but that's what movie companies are willing to take because they want that old style of country cafe. The last one that I can think of that went in there was with Bette Midler. I think they paid \$17,000 for two days. There are so many famous people that come through. The old past people like Al Capone, presidents or who ever we had like that. A large variety of movie stars that come through. I am surprised that we don't have people trying to break in or anything like that.

Chris: Were movies made here before it closed down?

Jim: Very, very few because with all the alcohol on the plant, we had very, very high restriction and all we allowed was exterior and it was only for a very, very few and no small companies. Only big ones. So, for years, General Motors came here for their new car lines, those cars weaving in and out of buildings or around turns. Most of all that was done here. One of the biggest ones they had was Red Skeleton's Christmas Special; just a little bit over ten years ago and even that was exterior. It is quite a nice change from the

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first year. We had very few people here on site to going to full blown production studio having 100-200 people here on a given day. It makes our jobs very challenging because we have all of our Building maintenance to keep up. This has been a bad year for that, for trying to get ahead of the game because we must be in one of those 20 year cycles where the pipes are wearing out quicker than we can change them. We have that to deal with.

We have historical tours going through. We have a lot of historical archives, material. Trying to sort that out and make everybody's life a little easier by having some kind of an inventory system and a storage system so everybody can just come in and take a look.

Chris: I was going to jump back for just a second about the emptiness of the buildings. One of the things I remember when I was here in 1990, I was looking back over some of the notes I made and it was saying specifically in Building 46 that there was a lot more stuff in there than there is now and similarly a lot of tanks have been scrapped. There must have been a clean out done after the plant was formally closed. Is that right? There was bottling equipment or something over there that has been moved.

Jim: In Building 46, there was a lot of furniture, a lot of old broken pieces of equipment, left over sales promotional items, lots and lots of stuff that wasn't worth saving.

[Interruption]

Chris: I was just asking about Building 46 and where all that stuff has gone.

Jim: We took any half decent furniture that was worth saving and put it in Building 74, on the ground floor. Everything else that we decided was junk, we threw out. We threw out four 40 cubic yard bins of old paper and cardboard boxes and you name it. We were just trying to clean up the place because it was a fire hazard with only three of us here.

We didn't want to have any unforeseen problems coming or something going on in the buildings. Besides that, we thought we would call the bins in as we didn't know when the renovations would start. We can only be helping by getting rid of the garbage now then for them to have to pay somebody to do it years from now. A lot of the equipment that was in there was gone. For bottling or canning, there is a couple of conveyors in there from when it was used for canning antifreeze. The tanks all got cut out.

Chris: I was going to ask you about cutting out the [fermenting] tanks [in Buildings 6/7]. Did you do that?

Jim: In 1991, Greenspoon did it.

Chris: Greenspoon came in and...?

Jim: That was little bit on the sly. We got a phone call from Paul [Allsop] in Windsor saying, "I'm coming down. Go to the hardware store. Buy me three cans of green fluorescent paint and three cans of orange fluorescent paint. I will be coming down with

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George Chandler." "Oh, OK Paul." He came down and my foreman, Dave [Sellers], Paul and George Chandler went around and put 'X's on what was to be removed.

Chris: Which tanks?

Jim: Which copper tanks were to be cut out and sent to scrap. As far as I know, to the best of my knowledge, no one was ever contacted through historical [societies]. It was just something that was done inter-company on the spur of the moment. That happened on a Friday and Monday Greenspoon was here with a whole wrecking crew. They has plasma cutters. [The tanks] were cut into two foot squares. It think they removed either 125 or 128 tanks. I last heard it was an estimate of 400,000 pounds of copper. Grade A copper is pure copper, no tin, no lead, or anything like that. Ours was third grade because it was coated with linseed oil on the outside. It was tin with solder and lead on the inside so, of course, Greenspoon tried to get a good price on the Canadian foundry market and they kept requesting samples so, they would come in and cut out a sample, give it to them and then it would be rejected because it had lead. Canadian standards forbid lead being smelted, so the best price they could get in Ontario was \$.17/lb. for melting it down. They called one of their subsidiaries, Heckle Recyclers, in Buffalo. They came, picked it up and charged them \$.03. We are down wind anyway, so the Buffalo foundry melted it down and it came across the lake and got us anyway.

Chris: So, they had it smelted in Buffalo and then brought it back into Canada?

Jim: Yes, all the raw copper.

Chris: Well, it seems almost like peanuts in one sense if all you were going to get was... I know it was 400,000 pounds, but..?

Jim: 400,000 pounds at \$1.00 per pound, so that was \$400,000. Greenspoon probably took about 1/3 of that for labour costs. They were here for two months maybe.

Chris: It is interesting that in one sense it is probably just as well that the tanks were taken out before any real decision was made because then it would have been harder to decide which tanks to leave but on the other hand, I agree with you, it seemed like it happened, to take them all out...

Jim: I have photo records of where they were, what the buildings looked like. The scale tanks were saved. Most of the scale tanks were saved. Three or four of them didn't get saved.

Chris: The ones in the Cannery [Buildings 58/59]?

Jim: The Cannery, on the top floor and then the high wine scale in the distillery didn't get saved. I don't know why they cut that one out but they did. We have problems where

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they took the tanks out now. It is just a void where people could get hurt. It is not very cosmetically appealing now. It looks like it is totally bombed out where when the tanks were there, you couldn't do anything with the building but it was attractive. It think they should have left them in [Buildings] 61 and 62. It think they should have left pure spirits alone until it was decided what was going to be done with it.

Chris: Or at the very least, one or two?

Jim: One row would have been sufficient.

Chris: The same with the fermenting tuns [in Buildings 6/7]. They were all copper too?

Jim: The fermenting tubs were all copper, but they were fiberglass 3/4 up green. They were not in very sound condition to store liquid in. We were still using it for that but that was one of our jobs to go inside and resolder the seams every run. A lot of the time we would go in there and solder the seams and the tank wouldn't make the full run. It wouldn't make the four to five months of running. We have to get it in its cycle where it would be empty and washed and go in and solder the tank. Some of them, the tanks are so thin they would solder and if we applied too much heat, the tank would start to buckle on the opposite wall. We had to start putting support rods from the top of the tanks into the ceiling joists to help hold the tanks up. We also had to make sure they were full of water and not left empty. If they were left empty, we thought for sure they would cave in.

Chris: But, you wonder why they wouldn't have left a couple of those?

Jim: And yet we had proposals early on for the renovation proposals. We had people coming in [looking] for tanks 19, 20 and 21. They were about 40,000 gallon tanks. They wanted to put classrooms inside of the tank.

Chris: These were in the fermenting...?

Jim: In the fermenting cellar [Buildings 6/7]. They wanted to put classrooms in there. History classes. They would be teaching history classes or something like that. Totally ridiculous. That would never be safe.

Chris: Why was the beer well left [in Building 6]?

Jim: The beer well is steel.

Chris: And nobody wanted it?

Jim: It is not worth anything. It is not worth anything for scrap. It shows you a little bit of an idea of how the size tanks were but it is not a very good representation because

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it mild steel. Even that, the acid ate away at the insides so badly, I had to redo the entire seams, reweld the entire seams, one year. I think I was in there two months. Two months of constantly welding because, where the weld was, metal had turned to fibre - one inch either side - and it all just turned to dust.

Chris: Well, that is an interesting one because we're not even recommending that they bother to keep that tank because it seems to me, you right it does give a sense of how big the tanks were but since it is steel, since it is larger than the fermenting tanks, we're just saying, "If you need the space, take it out.". What is your feeling on that?

Jim: One fermenter tank can fit inside of the beer well. So volumetrically, they are the same.

Chris: They are taller than the fermenting tank?

Jim: Yes, it is taller. But that beer well is also supported on a frame. There is a two foot space below the frame, so theoretically, they are very similar. It just doesn't have a top on it. It doesn't have a vent on it. It is an open tank compared to a closed tank. One of those beer well tanks will last four hours running through the still. So, that is how they always judged it. One tank in. They knew how far along they could go.

Chris: So, there is some argument then for maybe keeping that tank as an example?

Jim: It is really hard to say.

Chris: It is an ugly thing, though.

Jim: It is not very cosmetically appealing. It was always painted copper to foul everybody but then again, it is not a realistic thing because the copper tanks here were rivetted. The cellar tanks? I think the bottoms were rivetted on the cellar tanks. At least we have some examples of some copper tanks.

Chris: In fact, those ones in the scaling loft give that sense of how big some of the tanks were. But, they are now the biggest tanks left, aren't they?

Jim: Yes. They are the biggest. I try to help as many people as I can so as to helping the architects. My idea suggested to Mark [Langridge; architect in Roger du Toit Architects office] that the three tanks [in the scale loft of Building 61] come down to the ground floor. [Chris made a facial expression at this point] No, no, hear me out. They were wanting to make apartment buildings and hallways and everything up there and they needed that for access so I figure, the company was thinking on entombing it. Therefore, no public access, so I thought that you have the mazes down below. If you kept one whole row along that wall and you kept the row there and you had the mazes, they could take out 2/3 of the floor there and you had a section of all the brick arch work for all the

## Interview #2: Jim White

supports for the tank; you had the wooden floor for the wooden bases for the tank and then you had the copper scale tanks. They are not in their original location. They are dropped down 20 feet but they are all in the same area and I could hook all the pipe everything back up how it was. But that way, if you were using it as a hall, the first thing you see when you enter that room is BAM' those tanks. Look at those scale tanks. Isn't that nice. I would rather see that than have them entomb it and nobody go up and see it. You can't have tours walking through there because it is only one foot wide, unless they expanded the roof out.

Chris: That is what we are trying to suggest. Because they are so distinctive in their setting up there, the best place would be to leave them but the question is as you say, "How can you bring people in there?"

Jim: Safety: you can't bring people in there. The only other way to do it is to take off that back wall and expand out and have a roof garden or a patio garden. That's conceivable.

Chris: Jim, this interview has gone on far longer than I thought. I have really enjoyed it, but I do have one last question. What and where did all that wretched aluminum paint come from? When did that become Gooderham and Worts colour?

Jim: We have our own colour. The green you see around the plant is actually called Gooderham Green. You can go to a paint store and buy it. It has other names now too because other people have copied it but it is Gooderham Green or its Shooter Green or Hunter Green. It is all the same, basically. Some different companies have different colours. The aluminum came from in the 20s when they started to produce their own steel drums for industrial alcohol. Aluminum, I think at the time, was colour coded for alcohol. It is either that or else it is the colour that the company chose and during the summer time shut down and slow periods through the year, they would hand guys in different departments paint brushes and say, "Go to it.". Paint, paint, paint. They painted all the wood, ceilings, walls, doors. They painted anything that wasn't moving. They didn't paint the floor. Everything else though. In turn, it is not that bad. It is kind of a shocking colour when you first see it. Everybody always says, "Why aluminum?". I always tell them that originally it was white wash. Why would you paint a wall white? I always wait for people to answer and well, "It's clean, white reflects light.". So, aluminum is also a very good light reflector. You don't need any hydro in the buildings. Most of the buildings have very minimal hydro for lighting, anyway. For as much natural, day time lighting as you can, it is reflected around.

Chris: You think it actually started back in the 20s?

Jim: 20s and 30s. I'm sure that is when it started.

Interview #2: Jim White

Chris: Literally, it became the interior colour for every building. Which is again, what makes it so remarkable that the scale tanks survived as well as they did that they didn't get a coat of aluminum.

Jim: All denaturing tanks were painted aluminum. [In Tank Houses] #4 and 9 the tanks are still copper.

Chris: So they had painted some of the copper tanks? But just in denaturing?

Jim: Just in denaturing. All the distillery tanks were copper too. The fermenter tubs, the top half was painted aluminum because they needed as much light in there as they could get.

Chris: Interesting. It certainly is distinctive.

Jim: It is very hard to say. There is nothing in writing so you have to go by what people tell you. What retired people tell you. You can go up to a wall and there is a 1/4" of paint on it. You can break it and you can see the layers.

Chris: Layer after layer of aluminum?

Jim: Yes, you can see aluminum, aluminum. You can see white. You will see aluminum a couple of years and then a white over it and then maybe something else and then it always comes back to aluminum.

Chris: Actually, the other place I have noticed is not painted is the back of one of the floors of the grain bins in Building 3. You can go back and see the original red wood and the plaster wall and there is no aluminum paint on that. Have you ever noticed that? It really stands out and you get a sense of the...

Jim: In Building 3?

Chris: Building 3, on the grain bins on either the second or third level of the grain bins. You know how there is those narrow walkways, one of them is unpainted with the aluminum. It is just interesting that it managed to survive.

Jim: Yes.

Chris: Jim, I very much enjoyed this interview. Thank you very much.

End of Tape

## **INTERVIEW NUMBER THREE: Bob Morrison**

**Interview With:** Bob Morrison, former plant superintendent for Gooderham & Worts;  
now working for Flavourchem Inc

**Conducted By:** Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Limited

**Location:** Former Hiram Walker Offices, Gooderham and Worts Property, 55 Mill  
Street, Toronto

**Date of Interview:** June 29, 1994, interview started at 7:25 P.M.

**Notes:** After the interview Bob talked informally for a few minutes and began to mention a lot of other stories. For example, he noted that the same security staff was providing site security for Drivers Jonas. He mentioned that Lexan window panes were put into the cupola of the malt house and the old administrative building because birds kept flying into them. The flower garden in the parking lot in front of Buildings 25-27 was a special project of Dave Sellers. Dave had had some difficulty getting the plants to grow but they were doing quite well now.

Bob would be a good source of further information about the plant and its people. He wanted to walk around the plant as we talked.

Occasionally Bob's voice is very quiet and it is impossible to hear a few words.

### Start of Interview

Chris: Let's just start off by stating who you are, when did you start at Gooderham and Worts, when did you leave and maybe briefly what you are doing now?

Bob: Of course, I am Bob Morrison and I started in August of 1951 as the office boy and moved along the ladder into the inventory department, order department, purchasing, plant superintendent, accounting.



Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Chris: Is that what you finished?

Bob: I spent 25 years at this plant and then I became the Manager of Sales and Marketing Administration for Hiram Walker. I left this plant and went with them for 5 years. I guess it was a little tough because I had a massive coronary. Administration is a little heavy. I returned here after I had been with Hiram Walker six years, I returned after a six months absence and sort of worked back into my way down here because I handle the whatever the pressures. I spent the last 8 years at this plant. It is total of 39 years with the company.

Chris: When you were with Hiram Walker, were you here in Toronto or down in Walkerville [Windsor, Ont].

Bob: Here in Toronto. The Gooderham and Worts administration was handled by Charlie Lynch, here in Toronto and the Gooderham and Worts sales staff were here as well and the Hiram Walker were in Windsor. They decided to amalgamate the two and rather than sending it all down to Windsor, they wanted to spread it around so they brought the marketing of the administration here in Toronto and Charlie Lynch took it over. He needed an assistant so I went up with him. He retired and I took over.

Chris: What year was that?

Bob: Oh, 25 plus 76.

Chris: OK. My understanding, the building that we are in, 58 or 57 [actually Building #25], anyway, this was built for the Hiram Walker sales staff, right?

Bob: That's right.

Chris: But you started at some other place?

Bob: Yes, it was up at Yonge and Lawrence, the northwest corner. I don't remember the building now but it is right on the corner and we had the bottom floor of that building.

Chris: I think it was Paul Allsop, I think, that said you had the extra space down here.

Bob: They had the buildings and actually, when I was up there, I used to talk about coming down here. When I was working I thought, we have all this room down at this plant, why don't you utilize it. I guess they were listening and possibly Paul was talking to them later on about the same thing when he came down here and they decided to come down. I didn't believe they could do what they did but they certainly did a wonderful job. It looked better than it does right now.

Chris: When it was in use?

Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Bob: When it was in use and clean.

Chris: I guess it only ended up being used for about 10 years or so.

Bob: It wasn't even 10 because I had been back with Gooderham and Worts and I was only here 8 years when they shut it down so they didn't start the renovations until after I came back here. I would say it was probably 7 years that they were here.

Chris: I think the building that we are in now will be demolished so probably very little of the actual renovations will stay on.

Bob: I don't know what they are going to knock down but it will be heartbreaking. Believe me.

Chris: Have you followed the development?

Bob: I have been reading it in the paper and they told us what they thought they were to do when they told us they were shutting the place down this was what they had in mind. Actually, they told us what they were going to do with it before they told us they were shutting it down. It was a surprise later. I imagine they will follow part of the plan but, from what I read, in the papers. They were going to make Rack D into a shell, that is the one on the other side of the street but I understand that they are not going over there now. They will probably stay within this area.

Chris: Well, Rackhouse D and the two beside it, the two smaller ones. The two smaller ones are going to go. Rackhouse D is apparently going to stay. Have you been to the Seagram Museum [in Waterloo]?

Bob: No.

Chris: It will probably be used in something like where they hollow out the...

Bob: They had originally intended on gutting the entire building and leaving the walls and then putting offices on the inside perimeter leaving the centre of it open for gardens or whatever and then the top they were possibly going to put skylights over which is what they did with the stable across the street that we used to work in.

Chris: Before we go on with the history, just a little bit more of the current developments. One of the ideas is to have residential at the west end where the tanks are - the molasses and glycol tanks - and use that open area where the parking lot is for new condominium construction. The area along Trinity Street on both sides is viewed as the historical corridor so the buildings that really front onto it will be retained. On the east

### Interview #3: Bob Morrison

side, will be the office/commercial. There will be two new areas with the historic core in the middle.

Bob: It is nice to know what is going on. I still feel attached to the place. You can't spend 39 years with a company and sort of forget about it. I was sort of hoping I would finish my days with this company but obviously that wasn't to be. Maybe I am. I am still here. I am still collecting a pension from them so I guess I am part of the organization.

Chris: Talking a little bit about the plant process, you are the first person I have talked to out of a half a dozen that started while grain mashing was still underway so you must have remembered the mill in operation.

Bob: I remember the mill in operation, I remember the spent grains because the riboflavin concentrate, the remainder after the product was manufactured with dry grains. It would make me itch. When I went into the building where it was bagged, I just about went crazy. That's one thing that I do remember.

Chris: From the dust?

Bob: I don't whether it was the riboflavin, whether it was high in protein or what it was but it used to drive me crazy.

Chris: Is that Building 4, just off where the mash cookers are?

Bob: The cookers were over there. [pointing] There was the distillery building and the cookers were here and right at the front of the building, where the grain came in. Actually, outside you can see where the scales are. Of course, you have been upstairs and you saw where the grains went in. I guess they mixed them with water and cooked them.

Chris: I was just thinking when you were talking about the mash drying or the spent grains and that, it seems to me that there is still in Building 4, which is just on the north side of where the distillery building is...

Bob: That's where the dryers were.

Chris: . It has a rack. It looks to me that the grain would have gone up and maybe dried somehow. Is that the area you were talking about where the spent grains would be?

Bob: Yes, that's is where they were manufactured. This was wet, soggy grain and it was dried. It was dried Actually at Walkerville you can see it coming off in sheets because they have more modern equipment down there. They still sell it. It is sold to barns for cattle feed.

Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Chris: It went out bagged or in bulk?

Bob: They would bag it.

Chris: So there was a bagging operation in there as well?

Bob: That's how I got involved because when I was in inventory, I would go in there and count the stuff. Every August that's what I was doing. It would really get to me.

Chris: The other thing I have often wondered because it [the equipment] has all been dead, that area, when I have been here, was there much noise. Do you remember anything in the grain part of the mill?

Bob: No.

Chris: And the mash cookers?

Bob: No. I suppose there is more noise now than there was when the boilers were going full blast. The current boilers. I think they are still there. I haven't been in there in a while, but they have three 10,000 pound vapour steam boilers. I guess the furnace must have made a lot of noise. They had big coal burners in there then and that was cleared out and that is where the boilers are now. In fact, one of the boilers is still there.

Chris: A boiler and coal bunker and all that, is still ...

Bob: Yes, Jimmy Woods used to drive the truck all day long down to where they would pick the coal up and he would bring it back and dump it down into ... The grates are all gone now. They covered them over, but they would dump it in the grates and they would feed the furnace that was going all day long. That's all his job was.

Chris: Until the gas boilers went in in the 70s, it was coal?

Bob: Well no, we were oil. To the west, in fact the boiler is still there, the bunker used to burn Bunker C oil. There are three gas burners. You want to see them?

Chris: Well, the three gas units that are sitting there?

Bob: Right. This side [pointing] is where the oil burner is. That's a 30,000....

Chris: Oh, a big boxy Allis Chalmers. Is that it?

Bob: Right. That's a beaut.

Chris: So that was the predecessor to the three boilers that are there now.

### Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Bob: Yes. Previously to that would be coal fired furnaces.

Chris: Ok, because there is that brick one that is still sitting there.

Bob: Yes, it is on the south side of the three boilers.

Chris: So that was already dead when you arrived?

Bob: No, No.

Chris: That was in use as well?

Bob: Oh yes. When I came here, they were feeding it with coal.

Chris: So that was the coal one and the oil one was in the ....

Bob: The oil went in.

Chris: And then all of that closed down and then the gas ones...

Bob: Yes, it is more economical to run for several reasons. These boilers over here do not require engineers to operate them. Actually, you could leave them alone and they would run themselves except that someone would have to check the water. You can't put junk into them because they would scale up so quickly that they would shut down. So you had to watch water quality and just check them to make sure that they were running well. But they run themselves, basically. The other ones you had to have engineers to operate them.

Chris: In fact, beside that oil burning one [Allis Chalmers] is the control panel and smack in the middle of it, is it a Waterous steam gauge? Something from about 1880 is mounted on the panel. Maybe afterwards you can just go and take a look at it. It seems so bizarre that here is high tech 1950s and 1960s or whenever it went in and they have this 1880 steam gauge on it. It seems bizarre.

Bob: [unclear]

Chris: I guess what you are saying is that you don't really remember the grain mashing?

Bob: Not really. When you are 16 years old, you are looking for a job back then. I quit high school and, what the heck, I had to go back to school later on, actually to Ryerson. Its a job, its Gooderham and Worts, so what. Its General Motors, its anyplace, who cares. You just come down, make your bucks and go home and spend it when you are that age. Paul Allsop was more - you have spoken to Paul obviously - he was quite interested in this plant but he came from a modern plant down to this place and to him it

Interview #3: Bob Morrison

was a toy ... not a toy, but something new. It was an old building. It was the beginning of Hiram Walker, Gooderham and Worts so he really delved into it and I just treated it as a job.

Chris: Right up until the end?

Bob: No, actually with Paul, I got more interested in the place with Paul because him and I used to run tours here for the, what is it, Canada's First Post Office [Toronto's First Post Office, 260 Adelaide St. E.] I forget, Joan .... I forget her last name but every once in a while they used to take people around to old places in Toronto and this was one of their highlights of their tours. We would take them around and show them all the buildings and tell them the history of the place and afterwards we would go upstairs to the reception area and have a few sandwiches and a drink. It was quite nice, actually. This was near the end, of course.

Chris: You discovered it....

Bob: Yes, I have the stuff at home. I have the plans of the buildings when they were built and a bit of the history so you can read it.

Chris: You finished off as plant supervisor here. Is that it? What were the job responsibilities?

Bob: All of the plant. Like Paul was a plant manager/Vice President. This plant was his responsibility but all of the plant personnel were under my jurisdiction. All departments - pure spirits, denaturing, the distillery, maintenance. Everything was under my...

Chris: So you were responsible for the production?

Bob: For the operation, basically, really.

Chris: So if Walkerville setup of, I don't know, 10,000 litres, or whatever quantities you would be working in, it would be your job to see that they got the spirit that they....

Bob: We would produce molasses alcohol here that was either put in barrels and put away, aged it for a few years - or we shipped it, in its state, to other distilleries, to Corby's, possibly to Walkers - It all depends. We also had grain spirit here that was sent up to us from Walkers because they were concerned about strikes. This was not a union plant. They didn't want to be a union plant because we got everything that the union plants got anyway and then to have to pay out union dues. So they would send the product up here and we would keep it in tanks and if there was a strike, we didn't bottle it at this place but we could ship product to places in the U.S. like bulk stock to the U.S.

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We also maintained outside warehouses for bottled stock which we brought. One of the fellows here, Danny James, was the Manager of these outside warehouses. He ensured that there was product in these warehouses at all times. Actually, it sounds sneaky but even the people that were in the union realized you had to do this because there is brand loyalty. If you go into a liquor store and there is no Canadian Club and there is a bottle of Seagram VO there and you have to buy it, you might get to enjoy it and if you get to enjoy it, then you don't sell anymore Club. These guys that are coming back to work after the strike may not have a job because there is no product. I think they allowed it to happen but it just made it difficult.

Chris: Which I suppose was the purpose of the strike. It got both sides talking again.

Bob: Oh, yes. But you didn't want to take your product from the shelves. You just wanted to make it difficult for management.

Chris: Difficult enough so that they had to agree...

Bob: You weren't being held under the gun but you didn't want this thing to go on forever either. You just wanted to get rid of the strike. They used to agree. I don't think they ever had any real problems.

Chris: You were responsible for [everything], once the order was placed. I presume what happened towards the end is you were producing for Hiram Walkers...

Bob: We produced the rum for our organization which was Hiram Walker/ Gooderham and Worts.

Chris: Who set the production schedule?

Bob: That was done in Windsor. They knew what they required, how much. All the scheduling was done in Windsor. They would send us a schedule once a year or maybe update it and say we require so many gallons or litres of molasses spirit for February or March or whatever and we would produce the alcohol and know that we had to have so much ready. That was my job. I had to make sure I had the molasses into the plant for production and make sure we had enough production to fill these orders. They wanted so much shipped in bulk and so much put away in barrels. They put it away in barrels because they had to look down the road, two or three years. As far as rum goes, you don't age it forever. Whisky you age a little longer, 15, 20 or 30 years but with the rum they would say, OK our sales ....

Its a tough job, actually, to figure what you are going to require because you have to look down the road. Its probably getting boring at this point, now I am starting to think like the sales end. You have to look at who is coming out of school, who is going to be drinking certain brands. Are they going to be drinking scotch or are they going to be

### Interview #3: Bob Morrison

drinking rye or are they going to be drinking beer. You look at the blue collar guy, he's drinking beer. You know that if he gets a raise then he's going to move up to rye and if he really hits big time, he's going to move to scotch. You have to look at the population and see who is going to university and who is not.

Chris: And then you get hammered by the health trend. Isn't that what really did this plant in?

Bob: Well, I think it has done all of the distilleries in, really. It is the health and the government that hurt. This has nothing to do with the plant but it is the government taxes puts such high taxes on alcohol that they feel they are going to have great benefit from all these taxes. But people then say they can't afford to buy it so they don't buy and the taxes really, the money isn't coming in. They jack up the taxes again because they are not getting enough and less people buy it. And yet again, if you take the taxes down and you make it too cheap then everybody is drinking. Its a catch 22 thing. Then you have the social problem. But the government really doesn't understand.

It is not only the distilleries that are getting hurt, it is the tourist industry. Like you can have the Masons or the Shriners that are down in the States and they are going to have a convention. These guys spend money big time so they look at different places that they are going to have their convention. They have had it in Toronto several times. It is a great city. It is a good tourist town but then they start saying, "Hey look at the booze up there. I can get a shot down in Brokeneck, Arkansas for \$1.00 and its going to cost me \$5.00 up here" - so they just don't come.

Chris: Not now. Not with a \$0.72 dollar [making Canada cheaper].

Bob: It's tough.

Chris: Although it seems to me that tax has been around for a while and everybody grouses about it but it really was the health kick that hard liquor is bad and wine and beer isn't good for you that... Didn't that do in hard spirits?

Bob: If you drink enough. It's alcohol. Beer is alcohol, wine is alcohol, whisky is alcohol. There is 40% alcohol in whisky. Wine has got anywhere from 8, 9 10% up to 17, 18%, so if you have a glass of wine and you have an ounce of whisky you are still consuming the same quantity of alcohol. It really is a joke as far as I am concerned.

Chris: So maybe it is more demographics and that. What about the bottling? Was it ever done when you were here?

Bob: No, that had stopped when I came here.

Chris: Way back?



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Bob: I don't even know when the bottling was stopped. I think it was stopped possibly in the war years. I really don't know. It could have been even before that.

Chris: The canning line that is in Building 58, 59 was antifreeze. Was that going then full strength?

Bob: Oh yes. We had a great canning operation here. When I started here, we used to do Hot Shot. This is how it started. Hot Shot alcohol antifreeze. It used to be all alcohol antifreeze at one time and then glycol came in so we also had Hot Shot alcohol and Hot Shot glycol antifreeze. Then we took contracts. We used to do Canadian Tire, we did General Motors, Chrysler. Basically, they were ethylene glycol but with different inhibitors in them and different colours in them. Chrysler was a violet colour. Actually, we did government formulations too. We used a black dye in that because that's how they knew it was government antifreeze. Nobody sold black antifreeze but the government. We used to buy the glycol from a company in Chicago. We used to bring it in in barges which we still did up to the end pretty well.

Chris: Barges?

Bob: Yes. Down the end of - I don't know if you are aware of this - Parliament Street we had our own dock.

Chris: Beside the Victory Soya Mill.

Bob: Yes, Victory had their dock on one side and ours was on the other side. There was lines for molasses and for glycol and the ships - barges, they looked like barges - would bring in molasses which would pump through the molasses line to the molasses tanks and other ships or barges would bring in the glycol which came up their own lines into the glycol tanks. There are two sets of tanks. You can see them. One is 1 million gallons the other is 300,000 [unclear]. We used to buy from this company in Chicago and then we got involved with Dow Chemical, who are a big manufacturer of ethylene glycol. We started working with them.

Chris: When was this switch?

Bob: I would say it was in the late 50's.

Chris: That you made this switch from this Chicago firm?

Bob: Yes. The Company was call Industrial [unclear].

Chris: So that's when the barging of glycol ended in the 50's?

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Bob: No, no. They still continued to barge glycol in but it was from Dow Chemical. The molasses was continued to be barged in until they stopped running the distillery

But what happened was small canners started popping up. You would get a guy that would have his garage as a canning operation. Basically, it was his garage. He would have a canning line and we were selling in bulk to these people through Dow Chemical. They would, say, ship something to Brad Penn. Maybe Brad Penn, at that time, was a garage. It is a big company now. The truck would come up to the guy's garage and sit there while they actually canned or bottled - they were using plastic bottles back then too - and they would bring in temporary help. They would say that they wanted the tank truck there at 10:00 a.m.. The temporary help would be there at 10:00 a.m.. They had to pay them for 4 hours. They would have that thing run and probably have that tank empty in maybe 4 or 5 or 6 hours but at least they got their 4 hours in and they were paying them peanuts. When their thing was done, they would say, "Goodbye, see you tomorrow", and there would be another tank truck come in. Well this killed us because we were paying top wages at this plant. We had the kids from the university and high school come in here during the summer. They were getting good bucks. They were working 24 hour shifts. We just couldn't compete with these small guys anymore so we just went into the bulk. That's when the canning operation shut down. It was costing us money, actually, to produce. We were losing money on every gallon we filled.

Chris: And when did antifreeze shut down?

Bob: I don't know. I couldn't even guess.

Chris: Even by a decade?

Bob: Well, it could have been the late 60's. I left here in '76 ... I sold all the equipment ... It could have possibly been the beginning of the 70's, somewhere around there.

Chris: So the line that you see up there, what is left of it on the top floor [of Buildings 58/59], you are saying that you got rid of the saleable equipment, is that it? The rest of it just sat there since it shut down.

Bob: You are talking about the conveyors?

Chris: Yes, the remains of the conveyors that [unclear] from the bottling.

Bob: There was a gallon canning machine and a quart canning machine. Then there was a rotary filler to do the plastic bottles.

Chris: There were three lines upstairs, is that it?

### Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Bob: Yes, first there was the gallon and the quart line and then when the plastic bottles ... Dow Chemical, of course, were into plastics which they still are, so they said "let's try plastics." Well that was a joke for a while. When this thing ... the rotary filler was an excellent machine when they finally got it figured out. What was happening was that there was little bit of plastics still in the bottles - they were coming up and these things, a little tube, went down into the bottle and would fill and when it would hit a certain spot it would shut off. These things would lift out and the bottle carry - you know, you have seen a bottle machine - these little bits were getting up and jamming. The things would continue to fill when they were already filled and the stuff was all over the place. We used bags and bags of sawdust. Finally, they said we should clean the bottles out first before you put them on the machine. That was a mess.

Chris: That is interesting because I always wondered when that line had shut down up there. It also makes it more logical because there is some kind of waterproofing asphalt underneath the machines, isn't there?

Bob: Oh yes. That's for spilling.

Chris: Is it asphalt?

Bob: Yes.

Chris: And it is just for those kinds of machines?

Bob: Yes. It wasn't built for that because it was there before that rotary filler was put in, that asphalt. That was right under the line. You are going to have spillage and you don't want it on the wooden floors, although they are not wooden floor up there. The whole thing is asphalt, I'm pretty sure it is.

Chris: That replaced the bottling line that was up there?

Bob: Yes. That was the bottling room but it was antifreeze when I came here.

Chris: I have often wondered what the difference between alcohol and glycol antifreeze. I've heard that alcohol can hurt the rubber hoses, it makes them brittle?

Bob: I don't know if that is true or not. You put inhibitors in. This is why you put inhibitors in antifreeze so it will protect the hoses, it will protect your rubber. We used to put in arsenic, which was bought from Chipman Chemicals. It used to come down in tank trucks. The tanks are still down there that we used to keep the arsenic in. The arsenic protected the components: your rubber hoses, the metal.

If you just put pure antifreeze -pure ethylene glycol and water ... our sales people used to do this. They would have a little container and they would put a nail in it. The

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nail would start rusting because it was water, ethylene glycol straight. It would probably ruin your engine. But then they would put it in with the proper inhibitors. There was dipotassium phosphate, borax and arsenic ...

Chris: A witch's brew?

Bob: All this. You could leave the nail in there forever and nothing would happen to it. There was rubber, mercaptomenzothiazal [spelling?] was used for, it was called nacap. There was a tank down there for that. I'm not sure if the tank is still there. We had to convert one of the tanks into sulphuric acid - no, no - I bought that tank from General Steelwares. The nacap was a rubber, it would protect the rubber hoses. You had these things in your both antifreezes. You had inhibitors in there. I imagine at the very beginning they used pure alcohol and water. You couldn't use pure alcohol because the alcohol boils off.

Chris: True, it wouldn't be much of a coolant. But there was a shift from alcohol antifreeze to glycol in, what the 50's?

Bob: They were doing both when I came here. It would be probably the beginning of the 50's. The first antifreeze was alcohol until they switched over to glycol.

Chris: For cheapness?

Bob: No, it doesn't boil off. The glycol doesn't have a boiling point. You can leave it in there all year. Alcohol would be gone. Actually, you can imagine leaving it in over the summer time, it would just boil right off. Which it did. Alcohol used to go to a lower temperature. We used to use it. We still sold alcohol antifreeze right near the end to some companies that were away up north. They had to put alcohol antifreeze in because the glycol only protected to -30 to -40 and this stuff would go even further. It would go down to -60 to -70. It depends how much alcohol and water you mix, of course.

Chris: The other chemical that Paul Allsop mentioned to me was as a result of the Chernobyl disaster that some company from Europe was looking for something zanthate. Did you ever hear that story?

Bob: I did and I didn't. I really never got involved. They may have been talking to him or talking to Walkers about it but I never knew anything about it.

Chris: They needed fusel oil, wasn't that it?

Bob: Yes, that's possible.

Chris: Because that was also a byproduct that always intrigued me. Was there anything you could do with fusel oil?

### Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Bob: Fusel oil was used in the plastic industry. There was a firm that we used to sell our fusel oil to that would come around with a truck and would go to the different distilleries and pick up the fusel oil. Walkers didn't do it because they used to burn it. They could burn their fusel oil with their burners because they had combination gas/oil burners down there. You could feed so much fusel oil in and burn it off.

Chris: And get cheaper energy, you mean?

Bob: Yes, I guess it was more economical to burn it than to sell it. It sold quite cheap. You would sell it for peanuts like \$.15 a litre just to get rid of it. There was nothing we could do, we couldn't burn it and the other distilleries couldn't burn it but Walkers, they have some pretty massive equipment down there, pretty high tech...

Chris: In itself, although I'm not sure I have ever seen any fusel oil, I hear it is sort of miserable...

Bob: It stinks. I bet you if you go into the distillery, you can still smell it. I don't think it ever leaves. It must permeate that wood in there.

Chris: So you mean that smell...

Bob: If I went in there now, I would smell fusel oil. There is a couple of cans of fusel oil sitting around here that I have to pick up, actually. We use fusel oil in our business [at Flavourchem Inc]. Very, very small quantities, in the flavouring business. You get artificial rum flavours and you use just a... like that [gesturing with his hand] ... but the parts the smell that is fusel oil into the product at which is part of the alcohol smell. If you drink, I don't know if you drink scotch, but there is fusel oil in scotch and that's why it tastes like hell. That's why I enjoy it.

Chris: Somebody else mentioned that. Like a single malt scotch is pretty much the smell of fusel oil. I don't know if that a crude way of saying it?

Bob: It all depends on which malt you buy. There are some that are pretty rough. Milton Duff is an excellent single malt scotch. It is like drinking cream, actually. But then there is other ones, I can't remember the name of them, but they are terrible, absolutely terrible. Like a scotch is a blend. They are single malts, of course, but you can get a blend of, maybe, 20-30-40 scotches. They go around to the different distilleries and they want so much Aird Bog [Spelling?] and so much that. They all had different names and they would blend them. They would put a half an ounce of Aird Bog [Spelling?] and two ounces of Milton Duff and so much of this and then they would come up with Ballantine's or whoever it happens to be. They would all sell them individually, too. As I think you know, Milton Duff, which is this company's [Hiram Walkers] product and I think they have a few others now. I think it is the Aird Bog [Spelling?] that is terrible.

### Interview #3: Bob Morrison

You can't drink it. A guy gave me a bottle of it, and I like scotch. And I opened it and the taste is awful. And yet people drink it. I gave it to my brother-in-law and I said that this stuff is terrible and I can't drink it but you can drink anything, like turpentine ... And he can't drink it - that's how bad it is.

Chris: You are tempting me to give it a try.

Bob: I should get the bottle off him and then we could have a shot of it.

Chris: You would never do blending here or did the rum base have to be blended?

Bob: No, the base is a base. We used to bring the heavy rums from Jamaica, from Guyana, etc., bring it in in bulk and barrel it off. What they would do, again this would be a blend, you would have your base of molasses spirit, we produced here, and then you would blend it with the different heavy blending rums. Demerara rum, Guyanes rums ...

Chris: But you didn't do that here?

Bob: No. Corby's used to do the bottling and Walkers did. They would say that they required so many of ... As you barrelled it and put it away, you would keep a record of it so they knew that there were 463 barrels of this in stock and so they knew what they were going to be barrelling and they would say they want so much of this, so much of this, etc. They would give us a schedule because they would be bottling rum and their bottling gin and bottling vodka, so they have to have a schedule to bring it in.

Chris: What you sent out from here was then straight out of the still and aged if necessary, is that it?

Bob: Yes.

Chris: Now, some of the tanks, like there is tank storage down there, but that wouldn't be for aging though, would it?

Bob: No, you had to age it in barrels.

Chris: So what was the purpose of all those?

Bob: Just storage. The stainless steel tanks that were down in the bottom [of the property - Tank Houses 48-50], I think we sold some to Barcardi's, they were [unclear] but we had three tank houses with copper tanks in them. When you produce alcohol, it came off the still at about 96% alcohol, you could store it in these tanks. Obviously, you are not going to have it coming off and putting into barrels. You have to store it someplace. So, we used to store it in these tanks and then when it was time to barrel it, you would pump it to the pure spirits [department], across the street, and then they

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would barrel it off and put it into the rack warehouses. Or, Walkers would say ship us a tank truck of product that we just made and they would barrel it off and put it away. Or, Corby's would do the same thing. Then, this gets down to sending bulk spirit up here because of strikes.

You couldn't put low proof alcohol in because it would pick up the copper because there is too much water in it. The alcohol in there is 96% but the alcohol that they were sending down to us was maybe 70% or 65%. There was too much water in it and it tended to pick up the copper. The high proof alcohol never bothered it. So they said, all right, in case of strikes we are going to have to have a place to store low proof alcohol that we had down in Walkerville. So they sent it up to us. We tore all the copper tanks out of the very last tank house and put all stainless steel tanks in there for that.

Chris: Specifically for low proof alcohol?

Bob: Yes. And then there was alcohol that we brought in. The Demerara rum used to come in ship loads, a large ship would come in and it would be 80% for Barcardi's because that was their business and it still is, of course. But McGinnis and Gilby's and ourselves and even Corby's would say that they wanted so much Demerara, so much of various rums. We would have to have our tank trucks going down there. They would bring the ship in. You had to have a ship unloaded in so many hours, within 72 hours or something or they start charging you demurrage. So you would see tank trucks going down there all night, 24 hours a day, unloading this ship, mostly Barcardi's. We used to store some of it for Barcardi's as well.

Chris: You mean just help them out?

Bob: Yes, we had a bit of a time with Barcardi's. We owned a piece but then they sold it. Distilleries may compete but you try to work together as well.

Chris: Well, it is a small enough group, I would think. You mean, especially at the plant level. If you needed something, would you sort of phone up Bacardi?

Bob: Yes, Bacardi used to buy our spirit from us that we produced here. I used to go up there the odd time at night before I went home. I would drive up to Brampton with samples of the product that we were going to ship and then they would test it in their lab. They said that they redistilled it but I think that was a lot of nonsense. I don't think they redistilled it. We would take it up there and they said they redistilled it because it was not good enough. It was probably the best. Actually, somebody told us once that it was the best alcohol produced in Canada. Our alcohol really came off the stills very clean. It was really a good alcohol. There was really no off odors or anything. You get and off odor in some alcohols but ours was very, very clean.

Chris: Why?

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Bob: I don't know. It was the old, old copper stills and they just ... I have never really thought about it until now but the stills, you had to watch these stills because they were old. You had to be careful. All the new stills are automatic but ours weren't automatic. They ran, you didn't have to go and pump things to make them go but I imagine our guys were watching the needles and always making sure that everything perfect because if it went off, they had to run like Hell to shut the valves off. You know how the stills work? The product is fed in and it drops. It drops through the plates and then the steam drives it up. Well if you loose steam pressure, everything would go down the sewer, so you have watch all of this. The guys go crazy. If there is a power outage and your boilers go down and all of sudden you loose your steam, there is 125 pounds of pressure that is gone. You're finished.

Chris: So you mean, you have to jump to shut it all down?

Bob: Yes, there on the operating floor. They are just sitting there most of the night. There was an operator and there was a fermenter man who would make sure that the product was fermenting in the tubs and then he would weigh out the product and bring in more molasses and add yeast to it and ferment it and add water and then send it to the beer well and then send it into the stills. Well, he was busy all night long because he had his hoses that go from tank to tank and all this. The guy in the distillery had to have the knowledge to operate the still but he would sit in a chair all night and watch these things or go and turn them down or make sure that everything was perfect. If something went, he had to really hustle.

### End of Side A

Chris: There probably weren't any automatic alarms, the person had to be vigilant.

Bob: There were alarms, if you lost pressure. But, you had to run and shut everything off manually. Nothing stopped. The alarm would get the operator to move.

Chris: So, something like steam pressure would be...

Bob: You would know your steam pressure .... everything would stop dropping. Actually, I will tell you, if you can get Pete Nicholson, he used to work in the distillery, he was a still operator and he can tell you more stories, he is a great one for stories. He is probably the best guy to talk to about the distillery. He was an excellent still operator. He ended up as a Manager of the pure spirits department, but as a still operator. He worked in the cellar, he worked on pretty well everything around here. He would be a great guy to talk to.



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I never actually worked in any of the departments. The paperwork, yes I did, if there was something wrong over in the denaturing. When I was working with Dick Martlin, who was the Plant Superintendent before me, I went around to the different departments just to see how they operated. I didn't actually do any work because I just had a heart attack. That is why I also came back here. If I saw people doing paperwork that wasn't necessary in a department, that was my bag. I would change it, because it would bother me. If one of the department Managers was sick, I would go over and try to fill in for him and by the time he came back he only had half as much paperwork to do because I didn't like the way it was being run. People get caught up in paperwork. This is one of the things that happened up in Walkers.

Chris: As a digression, I always think that the computers haven't made paperwork any less.

Bob: It has made it more. There is more paper in our little company that I am with now. I have tons of paper up there. I have cabinets full of paper.

Chris: All computer...

Bob: All computer paper.

Chris: Maybe this is another question to ask Pete Nicholson, but is the control panel there newer than the still equipment? It seems to me it looks like it is 1950s or even 60s, but you don't remember it going in?

Bob: I would say that equipment was there when I came. I would say it was there in 1951. I don't think that has changed at all. Well, it is possibly changed since the beginning, but the stills themselves have been updated since 1830 odd. Since it began, obviously. I still think the distillery was in this building [Building #25] at the very beginning.

Chris: The one we are sitting in?

Bob: Yes. When they built this place, they had to pour a concrete floor in here. Actually, what we are in now [Building #25] is an old ice house that had to do with the carbon dioxide production and there was a store room over there. They all had wooden floors and everything. All this was torn out. Underneath it was all arches. You don't put an arch under a foundation. That is for walking through. So, I feel, it was full of sand because I guess they filled it all up, but it looks to me like this was part of the distillery operation at the very beginning. I think the big grey building was built after.

Chris: Are the arches still under here? They have added...

Bob: Everything under here is full of sand.

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Chris: An you only noted it when you were doing the renovations itself, is that it?

Bob: Well, we noted a little bit, we had a problem with the washrooms backing up before they even did these renovations. This was even before I left here. We had to tear the front floors up to get at the pipe work. We noticed it then that there were arches underneath here.

Chris: Just before we started this interview, I was asking if you can get under the malt house from where the Board room is now, more or less and you remember those doorways there?

Bob: Yes, it is an elevator, actually. I don't know how it operates because I never used but it is up higher here than it is in those buildings. Do you want to see it? I don't know whether we can see it?

Chris: I don't know if there is any light?

Bob: But if you are walking along underneath, you can see that it goes up to the next level when you come into this building here. It is hard to explain, really. If you were walking towards this wall, for instance, you would see that the next building the floor is up here and the slanted doorway here. It almost looks like an elevator. Whether they used it by hand or not, I don't know.

Chris: But it went into those arches below the malt house?

Bob: Yes.

Chris: Well, all of this stuff is going to show up when the renovations are being done. That's the time to take another look at it.

Bob: Have your camera ready.

Chris: This site has been photographed to death. What about excise that went on here?

Bob: When I started here, I started off as office boy. Then after I had been here almost a year, the chap that was in the excise department, the company man that was in the excise department, they asked me if I wanted to take this job which I did, obviously, to move up.

Chris: This was in the late...

Bob: This was in the early 50's. Just after I started here. Now back then, there was an excise man in every department. In fact, there were two in some departments and in the

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distillery there were more because they ran a 24 hour operation. They had to have shifts. Denaturing had excise officers. I would say there were about a dozen officers here when I started working here. They did away with a lot of the officers. They got down to a point where they had one that stayed here and if there was a problem you went to him. If there was leak or something, he went to look at it. Now, they don't have any officers whatsoever. They come in and do an audit. You bought so many ton of molasses, in this case, and you produced one gallon of alcohol, now is that right. It seems awful low. Stuff like that. He would check the cases - case goods. You brought so many cases in, you shipped so many out. This is just a straight audit. That's what they do now. There are very few excise officers around.

Chris: It always struck me that being an excise officer, or being involved in excise at all would be a tedious job. There can't have been much...

Bob: It is boring. It was a government job, as all government jobs are. There was more people than you require and you have to have a certain type of person. I don't think a person with any goals can work for the government.

Chris: In any level of excise?

Bob: Yes, because if you have any ambition at all, you want to be moving along. I think that an excise officer, or any government employees, are happy to be making the money and get their wonderful pension when they retire.

Chris: I can also imagine that they could also be a real pain. Couldn't they?

Bob: Some were. Some of them went by the book. Some of them didn't go by the book. You have to use your sense. One guy says, the book says this, which they are supposed to do but if you use your noodle you don't have to... As a company employee, working in the excise department, I kept a set of books exactly the same as the excise department. The excise officer in the case goods warehouse, for instance, had a set of books. I had a set that matched his exactly. The guys in the denaturing department where they denatured the alcohol had a set of books. I had a set exactly the same as theirs. So I kept these books. Their departments kept their own books. At the end of the month, we had to compare them and make sure that they were exactly the same. All the excise papers, the K-50's, all the different papers they had away back then were all posted into these books.

Chris: You said a K-50? It sounds like it is burned into your mind.

Bob: A K-50 is a month end statement. They don't have all that. But there was one excise officer, who will remain nameless, who used to drink an awful lot, he would always be hammered. He used to keep a set of books and I would work late at nights, I shouldn't say this, but I would do his books for him because he was incapable of doing them. If I

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had been caught doing that I guess I would have been hung because doing government books which were supposed to match with my books, which they always did. Quite a few of them drank, but this guy really used to drink a lot.

Chris: I would think that with all this alcohol, there would have been a lot of temptations among employees.

Bob: It is amazing how many, I guess everybody had a drink, people didn't overdo it as compared to other businesses. Like printers are notorious for being heavy drinkers and yet in this industry, well I don't know about the industry, but about this plant, there were guys that drank and there were some alcoholics but there weren't as many as you could find in a print shop. It is amazing.

Chris: I guess, given the products and the way in which it was handled here, without a bottling line, it must have been very hard to get a hold of the product.

Bob: Well, we had tankfuls of this stuff. You don't have to drink it out of a bottle. Even if it is 96% alcohol, you can water it down. You can't drink it at that strength. It would close your throat.

Chris: That is an interesting point, though. You mean you could pour alcohol out of any open tank then and it would never be noted on the excise, so there really would be temptation.

Bob: If you were ever caught drinking ... As in any industry, you don't want to be drunk while you are working because you kill the person you are working with. They are moving a barrel which weighs 500 pounds. You get two guys lifting the barrel and one of them is hammered and he decides he is not going to lift it anymore when you are halfway up, the other guy's back get broke. I frowned on drinking at this place. That was one thing that really bothered me, if anybody drank at the plant.

Chris: I suspect their colleagues, I mean if you are working with somebody else you wouldn't want your work mate to be..

Bob: And yet there was a couple of drunks up here, real heavy duty alcoholics and the guys protected them because they didn't want ... There was one guy here who drank and we sent him away to the place up on Bayview. Its a rehab up by Lawrence and Bayview by Sunnybrook Hospital. It is where you go for a month. You dry out there. It is like a barracks. You stay there. You eat there. You clean the lawns and that. They watch you. You had Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and you come out. And this guy came out and he was great and looked great and everything was perfect. Then he got drunk again and we were going to put him back in again. Like the company pays for the whole thing. They pay his wages while he is in there - paid for the whole shot up there. It is not costing the guy. The only thing is, he is away from his family for a month. Well, this

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guy did it again. We wanted to put him in and give him another shot at it and he said, "no". I said that if you don't go, and this was near the end - you could almost see that things were going to shut down around here - so you don't want to fire a guy when he has maybe a year to go because then he wouldn't get any benefit at all from the company so you are kind of lenient with him. I guess I was a real soft, I wasn't a real hard Superintendent. I worked with everybody and I used to get hell from my superiors when I was younger because of this. You aren't tough enough with these people. Why do you have to be tough? Can't you work with them? They are just people like you are. We got along. Everything got done - what the heck.

Chris: How did you feel about the quality of plant as you knew it was getting near the end? In some ways, I get the sense that there was less maintenance done. That would make sense, over the last 5 or 10 years, there was a feeling that it would...

Bob: No, the last 5 or 10 years the plant was still operating. As far as we were concerned, it was going to operate forever. We were only notified that the place was closing, 6 months in advance.

Chris: So there was new development plans in the works?

Bob: Oh yes, before they told us it was going to shut down.

Chris: So, the plant was maintained as fully operational?

Bob: Yes.

Chris: Was there any expectation of what the life of the plant was?

Bob: Everybody felt that something was going to happen because if you are going to change, for instance, the rack warehouse into an office, they were talking about having a dummy distillery. Rather than bringing molasses in and manufacturing molasses alcohol, Walkers would send down alcohol and we would run it through the stills for tourist. They would come and see. The people would continue to work. Now you still need still operators because you have to run it through your stills, you still need maintenance people to look after the grounds. We would also continue, possibly, our industrial alcohol division which was at the other side of the plant. Then they were talking about putting in a liquor store for the "Wines of the World" type things where each, not all wineries, but you would maybe have a winery from Germany with a section to themselves and one from Italy and one from Spain. This was going to be so people could come and buy our products as well. But this was going to be a super wine store. People would come down, there would restaurants here. Everybody would be employed. They may not be doing what they were doing today but they would still be employed. This was how they were looking at. Then, they brought plans. They were showing us what they were going to do with these buildings. They were going to have restaurants. These

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were not really carved in stone type things but they were all thoughts and they were presented by people with knowledge.

Chris: This was during the 1980s?

Bob: Well, we shut down in 1990. Yes, in the late '88, '89, they were talking about all this. The guys were kidding. Well, he's manager of a department, what am I going to be, a tour guide now? They all felt that they were going to have jobs so who cares but that's not what happened.

Chris: So, in some way you knew that the plant as a distillery wouldn't be upgraded to a modern ... At some point its useful life was going to end as a distillery.

Bob: Yes, they even shut down Corby's. The whole thing was shut down. I didn't think they would shut down Corby's because they were putting in new equipment the year before - which was kind of strange. Paul and I went down there to look at some equipment that we were going to have brought up here to use in our museum. The whole plant was going to be a museum because there was going to be restaurants, shops. This was what they were talking about. We were going to bring up some of the old equipment to show people old bottling equipment. They were putting brand new equipment in Corby's and then they shut it down. I couldn't believe it. When I heard that, it broke my heart. That was a nice little distillery down there.

Chris: We went up to visit it in March of this year [1994], again to see if there was anything left over but totally gutted. In a way, Gooderham and Worts or Corbyville - it is all the same story.

Bob: The thing that really burned me is Allied Lyons [purchased Hiram Walker in the 1980s]. When it gets right down to it, the Reichmanns screwed this thing because they are the guys that tried to take over Hiram Walker and then we wanted a white knight by calling in Allied Lyons - not knowing that they were just as bad - although they are still running it as a distillery. The part that bothers me is that Paul was pushing and pushing for this to be a historical site, which he accomplished by the little plaque out there. The people over there [in England] say, "What do you mean, historical, so what. It is 150 years old. My house is 150 years old. These castles here are thousands or hundreds of years old." They had a different outlook over there. It is not 600 or 700 years old, it is not old. How do they expect anything over here to become old if they keep tearing it down. This is one of the oldest ... Actually, I understand that this is the oldest continually operated industry in North America. It started out as a mill, but a couple of years after it started became a distillery and its been a distillery every since. Now there may be buildings in Kentucky or distilleries down there but they probably started out as a distillery and then became a shoe factory. The buildings might be there but they aren't still doing what they started out doing.

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Chris: I have heard that too, that Gooderham and Worts have a strong...

Bob: It is a shame really. This place could have still operated as an industry and a tourist attraction. There is lots of room around here. All these buildings were empty. They could have done things.

Chris: I guess part of the history will be maintained the way the buildings looked but it won't be operating.

Bob: If it was operating, it would really be something. There was another problem, though. You have to remember that I think that our sewage is going into combination sewers around here. I don't think they have storm sewers and sanitary sewers. They are combination sewers down there. We had a deal, I won't say we were putting in garbage, we weren't anything into the sewers that were going to harm anything but you have spent molasses. It was quite acidic. We had to add caustic to it to level the Ph I think it was running around 6 or close to 7.

Chris: When you put it into the sewer?

Bob: Yes. They [the City of Toronto] checked the sewers out there because we were putting this stuff in and the sewers were beautiful. They were absolutely clean, spotless because, I guess, whatever we were putting into them kept them neat. They weren't destroyed at all. They would go out and be checking our sewers. But we had an agreement with the City because we were here before the City. We started making in 1832, the City started in 1834. I guess James Gooderham paid all the damn taxes for Canada, or for Ontario, or something - he was quite a guy.

Chris: What was the deal, though? You mean in flood time?

Bob: No, we could use .... We could put stuff into the sewer that other people around couldn't put into the sewers because they had an agreement with the City that we could discharge into the sewers the spent molasses where other companies can't do that.

Chris: That was kind of like a unique situation. You mean that another company that would have a similarly innocuous...

Bob: If they started now, they couldn't do it. In fact, if you started up right now, you couldn't do from here anymore. You couldn't operate that way anymore because we've stopped doing it so we are out of it now.

Chris: That's interesting. Let's stop for a sec ... One of the things that has always intrigued me is the aluminum paint throughout the building. Has that always been there? I have asked all the others interviewed about that.

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Bob: We used to use a lot of aluminum paint here by the metal drums. We just had lots of aluminum paint.

Chris: So when you needed to do interior painting...

Bob: In the plant, obviously, not in the office. We used to buy 5 gallon pails of aluminum paint. We would buy 30-40 pails at a time. Aluminum paint, as you know, is very thin, like water. We were in the industrial alcohol business as Consolidated Alcohol. When the drums came back, we used to clean them with chains - you have probably seen the chaining equipment over there [pointing] - and they would repaint them. Well, 30-40 5 gallon pails of paint would go a long way. But when the guys were doing nothing, and you wanted to smarten the place up: "Hey, go grab a bucket of aluminum paint." Why go out and buy some paint when you have got piles of it there.

Chris: That great. In some places it is practically a corporate colour. In fact, the same thing that I noticed was that one of the few places that seems to have missed painting of any colour is that scaling loft in Building 61 with the three big scale tanks. The bottoms are aluminum but the scale tanks themselves and the beams and that...

Bob: I would say that probably those tanks were not open top tanks, but you were walking around the top of those tanks and the tops of those tanks could be off quite often. Now, when the excise were there, the tops of those tanks were never off. There were always two locks on everything. You may have noticed double hasps on everything around here. They would have their lock on and we would have our lock on. Nobody could get in without the other. But, I imagine, and I am only guessing, that with those tops off or lifted even when the excise were here, the tops were lifted. They didn't people up there painting around and have it go down into those tanks. I would think so.

Chris: It is just that it is a really pleasing place to be in. I don't know if it is because it is one of the few places that has big tanks in a small area. I has really been cleaned out in the last while.

Bob: I understood that all the tanks were gone. In the tank houses, are they?

Chris: Well, yes.

Bob: I know the stainless steel ones went because I talked to the people that have them but...

Chris: The hardest one for me was in the pure spirits building where they had 24 of them. They took everyone out without...

Bob: Pure spirits are gone?



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Chris: Yes, all of them are gone.

Bob: When did they take them out.

Chris: Well, I guess when they took the tuns...

Bob: Well, I guess there isn't going to be a pure spirits building so they don't need tanks do they?

Chris: Well, no. But it always struck me as a shame is that for whatever you get for copper, I mean, sure they have recycling value but that they still would take them all out and not leave one to give a sense of that feeling. I remember going in and they were there and then going in afterward. It was a totally different...

Bob: I haven't been in since they have done it. I think it would break my heart.

Chris: Have you seen the fermenting tuns [in Buildings 6-7]?

Bob: No.

Chris: It is the same thing. It changes it into a big warehouse.

Bob: I remember one of the fermenters collapsed on us...on a weekend. Boy that was a mess.

Chris: One of the fermenting tuns? It was too weak?

Bob: Yes, what happened, I don't know if you saw them before they took them out but you may have seen them wrapped in fiberglass at the bottom. That was because of this. What happened, there was always fixing little pinholes. I mean, they are old tanks, and this one, we assume, acted like a zipper. It was full of water, fortunately because they used to fill them full of water when they weren't using them. I guess the weight and a bunch of pinholes, it just went zzicht and the water rushed out and the tank collapsed upon itself. That was it. It happened on a weekend. Dick Martlin was the Plant Superintendent at the time - he was a smart cookie. He got these people in that did fiberglass. The fiberglass on the bottom had to be 3-4" thick wrapped around and then as it got to the top it got to nothing. All your weight was at the bottom. We had everyone of those tanks fibreglassed. They were all copper but we just couldn't take a chance after having one collapse on us.

Chris: Is that why you kept them filled with a liquid all the time? Just so they would stay upright?

Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Bob: They were weak enough. They had been there a long time. You are putting air to these tanks and bubbling them around and over the years it would act like an abrasive and start wearing the copper away.

Chris: So they were really quite thin, then? You could feel it?

Bob: Yes.

Chris: Well, that is probably another reason why they are not there, anyway.

Bob: Actually, if things had stayed, we would have had to remove everyone of those tanks and replace them because they were to a point where they were quite dangerous. Actually, the tanks probably wouldn't have collapsed because they had become fiberglass tanks. It just would have been the outer shell that was left. It was pretty rough. There was one that wasn't there. It was there when I started. It was a big wooden one. You probably saw the base for it. It was just by itself. It was wide open, that great wide open area before they took the tanks. There was one there that was wood. It was a great wooden tank. It was there when I started and they took it down because they weren't using it anymore. You had to keep it full of water all the time or something because exactly what happened, happened. They would dry out and then they would be useless. Apparently, the wood was cypress, so Dick told me anyway. He took some of these staves and ran them through a planer and he said the wood was just gorgeous, beautiful wood. He made a small deck out of it at the back of the house.

Chris: So there was nothing wrong with those tanks, it was just that it was harder to maintain.

Bob: Yes. You were always repairing them.

Chris: When did it come out then, in the 50's?

Bob: That tank. Yes, it had to be in the 50's. It came out shortly after I started. Dick started working there a year after I came. He started in '52 as Plant Engineer and it was shortly after that they took the tank down.

Chris: Any other comments? We haven't really talked about employees, although you mentioned about unions and that. How did you feel? Was it a good..

Bob: The company, as I was saying before, this company was probably one of the best companies in the world. It was a good company to work for. Oh sure, you had your bosses that you didn't like, but every company has that. The people, everybody, were like relatives, like brothers and sisters. You weren't numbers here. You were people here at this plant. You weren't that many. There were quite a few when I started here. I think there were over 100, 150 when I started here because of the stills and the shift work. You

Interview #3: Bob Morrison

had so many things going but it cut down to, well when we left, how many were left? 30 I guess. We could still operate our rack warehouses and our pure spirits department and our case goods warehouses and our stills. Maybe the 150 people weren't necessary.

Chris: Like your paperwork?

Bob: That's right. It was really a great place to work.

Chris: Was it a social? Were there picnics and such?

Bob: Not picnics. It sort of deteriorated because I guess as people left, there became fewer and fewer people. When you have a lot of people, there are more picnics, more this, but when you have 30 people left in a plant, you really can't justify a picnic or a dance or something. We had a long time, anyone with other 10 years service, we had a dinner at the Royal York Hotel every year or whatever hotel it happened to be. Usually it was the Royal York and that was always good because you got the old timers, the guys that retired, the guys in their 90's. It was good talking to them. We would talk about the old days.

Chris: That's when you really got the stories?

Bob: Yes. It was a great company. I was always treated well. I worked my way up. I went back to Ryerson and took Business Administration - not the full thing but ... That's what got me where I was for a while and then took accounting although I never did like that. I went through every administration area of this plant except in the case goods. I never worked on the case goods desk. It's strange. I was the office boy, inventory, purchasing, order desk, excise, Plant Superintendent and then as far as Walkers goes, Manager of Administration.

Chris: The other thing that intrigues me is how many buildings were vacant by the time the place closed. In particular, something like the malt house. There was really no reason for its existence for the last 60-70 years.

Bob: It was empty when I came here. Actually, it was for drum storage. We stored drums in there.

Chris: Was that partly a feeling? There was just no need to take it down. It wasn't costing anything?

Bob: I shouldn't tell you this. This will kill you. You know how this building [Buildings 25,28] is a low building then a high building [Buildings 32-33] and then a low building [Building #34] then there is the rack warehouses [Buildings 35-36] beside it which are taller. I was going to have them torn down. All the ones from this low building, this was before it was made into this office. I was going to have them all taken

### Interview #3: Bob Morrison

out and put in a level parkette in there with benches and fountains for the employees or anybody who really wanted to use it. I even had the permit to do and we were going to have it torn down. We had the wreckers in and they told us what it was going to cost and that they would like to keep the lumber. They worked it all out, but the historical people started fighting it. I will tell you why we wanted to tear it down. Obviously, number one, as you said, there was no use for it. We weren't using the buildings. It needed a new roof. It was leaking and you had to put a new roof on. You couldn't let it leak in because the building eventually rot and fall down so you had to look after it. We had to keep it heated because we had sprinkler systems running through this thing. All of this was an expense for no reason at all. So we were going to have it torn down, but the historical people fought pretty hard and they talked to Cliff Hatch [Chairman of Hiram Walker] down at Walkerville. He said that it really wasn't worth the aggravation so we kept it.

Chris: And this was the 70's, wasn't it?

Bob: Yes, just before I went up with the sales people, as a matter of fact.

Chris: To me, I think that malt complex is one of the more interesting buildings.

Bob: It is. It is fantastic. Back then .... I don't feel that way now. Now I wouldn't tear it down. It really bothers me to think that I could have done this. Dick and I were all raring to go. We had it all planned how we were going to do this. We had the blessing. It was going to go, but it didn't happen.

Chris: The other thing is, I can see why it would go because it is a useless building in many ways, isn't it?

Bob: Yes, it is. Yes, they made a bunch of movies in there. The fellow that was more dinners, what was it, an ad, Oliver, I can't think of the name. It was going back to "more dinners, sir"....

Chris: Oh, "Oliver Twist"?

Bob: Yes, and they did that upstairs in the building next door to us. You know, where it is wide open and a very high ceiling. They did that in there and then they did, downstairs in the malt house at the far end where the kilns are, they did the "Whiteoaks of Jalna." There was supposedly a military hospital or something and they were down in there. The actor, I remember the actor, he was a red-headed guy, it was the officer's bath. He was in a bath tub. The poor guy. He must have spent 2-3 hours in this bath tub, shooting and shooting. God! It was funny.

Chris: These were movies that were made while the plant was still in operation?

Bob: Yes.

Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Chris: I keep hearing now about [the TV programme] "Robo Cop"...

Bob: Back then, we didn't like them doing it during the day. In fact, we didn't let them do it during the day unless they could keep out of the way. We had trucks coming in here all the time and we didn't want them stopping trucks and all this jazz. The odd one we let do it because they had to have daylight but, I remember Dick used to charged them peanuts to come here. I got talking to some of the people. They were only charging like \$30. He was charging what it cost to have one of our guys stay at night to supervise in case anything went wrong. So if they had one or two, that's what he would charge them. So, if the guy was making \$20/hour, or for overtime say \$30/hour, that's what he was charging them. I was talking to one of the people from the television studios and they said that this was awful cheap. If they had gone to so and so, they charge us \$2,000. I told Dick that I was going to do it, to let me figure this one out. So, we made a pretty good buck while I was doing it. It was silly. Why should we allow them to come down. They were happy.

One guy almost got away without paying us, so we started asking them for \$1,000 down. "Give us a cheque for \$1,000. We are not going to cash it." If it mounts up, like they did with "Three Men and a Baby" here, well it went on for several days so it got to be a few thousand dollars because guys were here day and night. They had to work then. We would say give us a cheque for \$1,000 now and if it is \$2,000, give us a cheque for another \$1,000 when it's finished. If it is \$800, we would give them back their \$1,000 and they would give us \$800.

One guy almost didn't pay us and we were going to stop allowing anybody in here because of this. So, there was a woman by the name of Robin Rocket. If you have ever seen the "Friday the 13th," the television thing? It is still on, they call it something else now but it is the same thing. It was made here. It actually showed the front of the building. It started on CFTO. Well, Robin used to really enjoy coming down here because she had the run of the place and she had a lot backdrops. She was the location manager. She got mad when I said we weren't going to allow movie shooting and you could see why. I told her what happened and the people that had stiffed us and she went and got the money for us. She was very, very ... I don't know.

Chris: It was the best collection agency you ever had...

Bob: Oh, yes. She really got mad.

Chris: Well, thanks a lot.

Bob: I don't know what else there is. I guess that's it.

Interview #3: Bob Morrison

Chris: After listening to the tape, if something comes up again would you be interested in talking some more?

Bob: Sure.

Chris: Thanks very much.

End of Tape

## **INTERVIEW NUMBER FOUR: Peter Nicholson**

**Interview With:** Peter Nicholson, former manager, Pure Spirits Department, Gooderham & Worts; now retired

**Conducted By:** Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Limited

**Location:** Former Hiram Walker Offices, Gooderham and Worts Property, 55 Mill Street, Toronto

**Date of Interview:** July 27, 1994, Interview Started at 6:15 P.M; finished at 8:30 p.m

Start of Interview

Chris: Thank you very much for coming Peter.

Peter: My pleasure.

Chris: As you can see, I have a list of questions but we don't have to follow them at all. The only one I would like to start off with is identifying who you are, your name, when you started?

Peter: I am Peter Nicholson. I worked for the company for over 36 years, almost 37. I started here in the summer coming from school, a part time job and decided I wasn't going to back to school at age 16 and I stayed here until Christmas and I got laid off. Then they called me back and I was there right up until the last day.

Chris: You started when?

Peter: 1954.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: 1954?

Peter: Yes, the summer of '54.

Chris: You worked in a lot of areas?

Peter: Yes, I was fortunate. I liked my job. This was an awfully good place to work. I started out like everybody else, in the cannery. They used to can antifreeze here for Dow. I worked in there for a while. They kind of moved me all over the place. I worked in the pure spirits [department]. I worked in the denaturing department, the paint shop and, as a matter of fact, I was in the pure spirits when I got laid off that Christmas. When they rehired me, brought me back, I believe it was sometime around March. After that March, I stayed in the pure spirits until they weren't as busy. I more or less travelled in every department, wherever they were busy, that's where they sent me.

Chris: If we just go back to the antifreeze canning, when did that start? It was going strong when you arrived?

Peter: Oh, yes. I don't know what year it started. That was one of the reasons that they took on a lot of summer help. The company was hiring students.

Chris: So that's how you got your job?

Peter: Yes. A few of my friends that I played ball with during the summer, worked here. They were long time employees. They knew I was looking for a job. Their brothers, the older ones, they put a good word in for me and I came down and filled an application and you know...

Chris: The rest is history.

Peter: Yes, it helps.

Chris: Were you on the top floor of the canning line of Building 58?

Peter: I am not sure of the building numbers. I just know the buildings and where they are. It is right on the corner. The top floors were where the tanks are that hold the antifreeze. It would be, I think, the third floor or maybe the fourth.

Chris: What was it like?

Peter: It was, well, at that time nobody wanted to work in the cannery because it was very tedious and you were always moving. You have to keep up with a machine and the older buildings being what they were, weren't sort of set up for the entire operation. When you got the cans in, the cans came in on a tractor trailer and everything had to be "hand bombed" off the truck. Everybody was the same there.



Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: Was it noisy or smelly?

Peter: No, it was smelly. It was noisy because, you know how the cans are rolling around on the machine and you usually had two lines going at once and being young guys, horsing around, whistling and playing jokes on everybody. There was a fellow who used to put the empty cans on the machine, then you went from empty can to packing, then from packing to gluing and if you weren't working on the line, you were downstairs taking them off and piling them on the floor, moving them a couple of days later. Guys would be there with the glue brush and they would glue you up a bit, rather than the cases. One year we got a bad bunch of fellows -this is later on -not bad but full of beans these guys. They didn't particularly care for their Shift Foreman, so one of them somehow got a hold of his keys and dropped it in one of the cans and the can was sealed. They found the keys eventually.

Chris: But they had to open up a whole bunch of cans?

Peter: Yes.

Chris: Or shake them, I suppose?

Peter: Well, they usually come in either gallon or quarts. In the quarts, I believe there were 16 to a case and 4 gallons to a case.

Chris: What about the floor? It has a waterproof on the canning line, sort of an asphalt surface?

Peter: That's right. I believe what it was, was like a tin floor with an asphalt thing on there so it would cut down on the noise a bit and it wouldn't be as harsh standing on there and if anything split. That was the main thing because antifreeze is very slippery. Believe me.

Chris: Ok, I will take your word for it.

Peter: They used to can, for argument's sake, Tamblyn Drug Stores, Shell, Esso ...there was a Bull Dog antifreeze -I believe that was run for Eatons. All these outfits were into antifreeze.

Chris: Didn't Gooderham have its own?

Peter: Yes, they had Hot Shot. That was their line. That was on another machine. That was their own formula. But basically - the cannery operation - you did the different companies' brands with their specific formula. There might be a little different dye in it or maybe a little more of something else.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: And that is where the mixing tanks came in?

Peter: That's right. It was mixed up at the end of this building, away down here [pointing] where the big tanks are. There is a big tank by Parliament Street. That holds about one million gallons, I believe. There is a little mixing room just beside it [Note: room still in Building #9 in 1994]. It would be pumped into a scale and your inhibitor oil, or whatever they put into the formula would all mix there and then pumped up [to the top of Building 58/59]. A lot of the tanks ... the dye was put in upstairs [on the top floor of Buildings 58/59].

Chris: Is that why the tanks have the propeller...

Peter: Yes, that's right an propeller. Some of them [tanks] had air as well. You have to blend it.

Chris: So, even if they put the chemicals or additives in over here [in Building 9], they still weren't mixed properly?

Peter: They were mixed but it is just to ensure that it was a good mixture. I don't know if you have ever been up there or not [top floor of Buildings 58/59]. I can't particularly remember - the tanks were a fair size but they weren't huge. For argument's sake, if Esso wanted you to run 20,000 gallons or 40,000 gallons or an 80,000 gallon mix, you had ensure that it was of the dye, the colour was right and by mixing... As you know, when you mix things, especially with the colouring, if you are adding a powder to it, you have to make sure you get it up. It is just like if you were going to mix yourself a chocolate milk out of a Hershey powder, if you just put it in like that and don't stir it. They seem to get caught on the inside - you have to break it up.

Chris: Okay. I was impressed because the propellers there look like they are off a motor boat or something like that.

Peter: Yes. You have to get the good agitation.

Chris: And then was it gravity feed? They weren't pumped to the fillers?

Peter: It was pumped up into the tanks [at the top of Buildings 58/59] but from the tanks it was gravity fed. On the top of the canning machine there was a large, sort of holding tank. They could adjust it. There were also valves there. The valve upstairs would be wide open and you could just cut back on the valve here and there was a float in there that would also cut the flow off.

Chris: There is nothing there now. [See pages 94-98 of Gooderham & Worts Heritage Plan Report #6: Industrial Heritage Assessment]

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: Right. I can always remember a float ... and you know.

Chris: When did this close?

Peter: I don't know what year they lost the contract from Dow and then it turned out that they sort of lost .... There was a bunch of 'fly-by-night' outfits that moved in and what they would do is can for Dow a lot cheaper because what they did - they would have some little warehouse somewhere with machines and what-not and if they had a two day run, they would run it for two days and then let everybody go and then maybe three days later start again, work for two days. That was one of the ways it was cheaper. Then they [the car companies] started into the bulk. They used to come down here with tank trucks and take it right to General Motors and Ford or whoever purchased it. They would put it right in the cars as they came off the line.

Chris: You were, for the bulk of it then, sending it right off to the assembly plant, is that it?

Peter: It is like everything else. The antifreeze, as far as I was concerned, at one time it was quite expensive to buy. It was a speciality thing. Like Shell had their own brand. Chrysler had their own brand. Esso had what they called Esso Rad. I believe Eaton's was Bull Dog brand. I don't know how many different brands.

Chris: You just think today that there is - just sort of - Canadian Tire...

Peter: I tell you, I worked on the trucks too and we used to load them up right in that laneway there [pointing]. A roller would come right out into the truck and then two of us, the driver and the helper, would start loading in these cans. You couldn't load just one side of the truck because it would start to ... [gesturing to show a lean in the truck] And we used to just run them up here to Princess Street. Esso had a plant here, like a warehouse. And then like I said - Tamblyn Drugstores - boy, some of them you had to carry them into the drug stores, down these little wee steps into the basement. The drug stores weren't equipped to handle 50-60 cases or whatever. Boy, some of those places, you would be trying to carry those cases down.

Chris: It also struck me as odd that antifreeze has nothing really to do with the Gooderham and Worts distillery.

Peter: No, I guess it was just what you would probably call in the early days, of diversification. They had the storage tank here. I don't know just whether Dow and Gooderham's kind of had an agreement, maybe half each. We used to do a lot of antifreeze as well in drums, like to different customers: International Harvester or whatever. They would take it in bulk. I believe it was also through Dow but we were like the people that would .... Dow would get the orders and we would fill them.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: So, in effect, it was really just a packaging operation for Gooderham and Worts?

Peter: I believe so. Nobody even questioned it. It was a job and you just went and did it. Everybody would come down here to work. To a lot of us, it didn't really seem like a job. You knew everybody and the way the company was operating. Boy, it was nothing to have a guy [work here for] 35 years. I think when they closed it down, I think the fellow with the least amount of seniority on my staff had 25 years. At that time, when we closed, I believe I had about seven of the fellows working for me. There was even a couple of them that had more years than me, like 38, 37, 37. I was down here last week [July 22, 1994] for Jim White. He was the last person hired by this company. He is just now making ten years. But that was the way the company was. You pretty near had to shot somebody to lose your job.

Chris: It was also well run. It was a good place to work because you felt...

Peter: It was. I think a lot had to do with who worked here as well as how the company was run. Like anything else, you are going to meet people that you don't agree with or whatever, but generally, I can speak for myself, the 37 years I was here, I only had a few years where I wasn't very comfortable here.

Chris: Because of a boss or something like that?

Peter: Yes.

Chris: That seems quite remarkable. I guess, what you are saying is that most people found it that way too.

Peter: Yes. It is hard to explain to somebody unless ... Most of the time it was people who really liked their job and if you think about, and I guess the proof is on the old honour role type of thing. Long time employees. One of my first bosses - I ended up being his son's boss and he retired here with 51 years service and his boss left with 52. Now if I would have been around to go to age 65 - I left here four years ago and I was 52 - so I would have just made 50.

Chris: If the plant had stayed open, there was no reason why you wouldn't have?

Peter: Well, no, actually, myself, I had set myself a goal. I would have liked to have been gone at about age 56, 57 where I am now. I went four years earlier. At first I was a little bitter.

Chris: You sure don't look like you are complaining now.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: I have been fortunate. Everything that I have done has gone well for me since I left.

Chris: Now when you say you were a little bitter, was it really a surprise that it was going close?

Peter: I don't know. Maybe it was in the presentation, I don't know. I can't speak for anybody else. For myself, I guess the old saying, "I wanted to be the one to say, 'that's it.'" I wasn't quite ready. I had a plan that I wanted to implement to kind of make my retirement the way I wanted it. I got a very nice settlement from the company. The only thing, with my years of service, my age was against me for my pension. As you know for pensions, that's for the rest of your life for however long you live. With a few more years, it could have been substantially more.

Chris: So it was more bad timing?

Peter: That's right.

Chris: But you sort of knew the plant was going to close? At least talking to Jim and others, it wasn't a total surprise.

Peter: I will tell you something. They had a huge, huge layoff here in 1957, big layoff. They shut the distillery right down and from then on they were only running it for a few weeks a year just to retain their license. There was a large layoff in 1957 and when you were laid off and come back again, from that day forward the joke here was, "we're closing." It got so much that everybody was talking about closing. It was closing since '57. There were things being done to try and stop it from closing, however...

Chris: '57 seems to me that was when they closed grain mashing down.

Peter: That's right. That's why I say, the distillery itself.

Chris: It was just molasses mashing after that?

Peter: Well, no. They did wine lees which are dregs from the wine companies. The Canadian grapes aren't strong enough so they would run them through the still and get the alcohol. It would be classified as wine spirit because it had derived from the grape and with that alcohol they would fortify the Canadian wine.

Chris: So our famous sherries and things like that?

Peter: Any wine, yes. When you are in the distilling end of it, if you were making rum, the government says that it is derived from molasses and therefore it is rum. If it derived from corn, therefore its corn whiskey. If its derived from - etc. etc. That is how it picks

#### Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

up its gender or whatever you want to call it. The still as it is now was a neutral spirit still at the end. There was very little odor to it at all but the classification came from what it was made from.

Chris: So, you mean in '57 you were making beverage alcohols with a real flavour or taste.

Peter: No, No, No. It was just a little different still operation. There would be, it is very difficult to tell a layman, but there would be a little different scent to the alcohol. You couldn't say that is definitely corn or that definitely what it is. One of the biggest things we were told was that it is the same as the aging process. It is very easy it to darken it but it is too hard to lighten it. Therefore the neutral spirit was just a better spirit. They upgraded the still and it produced what they classed as a neutral spirit, no odor.

Chris: All this happened in '57?

Peter: No, in '57 they closed the operation down of the grain operation because of economic reasons. They had a bigger still in Windsor and they could produce enough alcohol for everybody, like for the Corby's which was tied in and different places and their still was working to capacity. This one was so small, it was producing 5,000 gallons a day. They could do that in almost two shifts. They would double that easy.

Chris: So why didn't it close in '57?

Peter: From what I understood, you had to - there are many reasons - but, you had to keep your license as a distillery, you must run the still. So it was deemed at that time that they would run so many weeks of the year. Well, then the wineries got involved, the stripping of the lees to give them wine spirit. It got to be another paying thing and then they decided that all the rum for the organization would be made here. It was strictly a rum operation. If Walker's were running grain and when they switched over to molasses or rum, they would have to clean all the plates of the still and they would down for several days while they were cleaning. Then when they switched back from the molasses, they would have to take everything all off the plates of the still. So it just worked out that all the rum was done here eventually.

Chris: So it gave it almost a second life then?

Peter: Exactly. When I started here, the only thing I had to do with the distillery. I used to go in and load the grain bags in the railway cars after they cooked their mashes and got the alcohol out of it. They would dry it and bag it and sell it to the farmers for feed. Well I was one of the peons that carried the bags coming down the chute and pile it up, 540 or 550 bags to a car. They had a few stills down there. They used to make absolute alcohol at the time and also Consolidated Alcohols was part of this operation here which was a subsidiary of Gooderham's. They were all tied in. We had beverage alcohol plus industrial alcohol. Then we also handled finished products through the Company's

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

trucks, we were delivery our own product to the various LCBO outlets in the area. We delivered to, something like, 81 stores we handled from here. Just Hiram Walker's, Gooderham's brands.

Chris: That's why there is those case goods warehouses?

Peter: Yes.

Chris: Coming back to this layoff. I hadn't really heard that it was such a massive one. Do you remember what the numbers were?

Peter: It was for here because during the war, apparently, this was at peak as far as manpower operations were, from what I understand. Through the war time, they needed alcohol in the manufacturing of munitions and various other things. From what I am told from the old timers that I had worked with, you couldn't fire anybody here during the war.

Chris: So a layoff of any sort?

Peter: In '57 different things went on and maybe down in Walkers, they got that new still and maybe in Peoria [Illinois - site of another Walker distillery] or wherever, they decided, as I mentioned earlier - about the still operation.

Chris: Did it go from suddenly 200 people to 80 people?

Peter: No, no, no .... a lot of them from the distillery were placed .... What they did was offer some employees .... Some of the employees came forward and they left of their own accord, others stayed. A lot of them came over into the plant so to speak - three or four of them were spotted in one of the department's I was in. It was done well. Everybody seemed to be happy with the way it went. They got a package deal - "x" amount of cash for so many years, or so many weeks pay for so many .... The formula from what I talked to different ....

[problem with equipment and changed tape recorders]

Generally, I can't recall anybody that was bitter about it.

Chris: But it was a cultural shock, was that it?

Peter: Yes, it all stems back again to long time employees. It was like a big family down here. Everybody knew everybody. If I can tell you just how good it was, just one little incident. I don't know if you want this on tape or not. There was one fellow here, Johnny Bagley, he was quite a nice fellow. He was a great New York Yankee fan and most of us didn't like the Yankees because they were always winning. Another fellow by

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the name of Kitch Jefferson said the Yankees aren't going to win and John, he never swore. His harshest words were Son of a Sea Cook. So any, he says to him, "I'll tell you what Kitch, if the Yankees lose the world series, I'll kiss your behind right on the City Hall steps at high noon." Well, lo and behold, the Yankees lost. So one morning - Monday morning - everybody gathers in the pipe shop and I mean everybody. Kitch is going to get paid off on his bet. We bring him down to the machine shop in a wheel barrow. Kitch walks in. There had to 50 people there. John Bagley said "I know what I said and I'll honour my bet." So Kitch got right up on the work bench there. They took a face cloth and washed off his behind. One of the boys took a powder puff and puffed his rear end with baby powder. John walked over and kissed it. It was that type of an atmosphere. There was a lot of kibitzing. It didn't seem like a job to a lot of people.

Chris: I mean, even after that, the fact that people didn't start job hunting and looking somewhere else even though everybody thought it was going to close...

Peter: Yes, I was laid off for a brief period of time and then when things got better, I was brought back again. No, a lot of the fellow that did move on -who left - as I said to you earlier left of their own accord. They had contacts. It was a case of "Alight Chris, your a friend of mine. Well look it, even though I have five more years in this company than you do, I can get a job so I'll take the settlement and get the job if you can't. There were things that did happen like that. Some fellows were older. When this came about - the big layoff in '57 - it was after that that they didn't hire anybody. When a person retired, that was it. They didn't hire anybody to take his place. Outside of, maybe - that I can recall - about a half a dozen fellows. That would be it.

Chris: And so you mean that ....

End of Tape One, Side A

[Chris's question not repeated]

Peter: Yes, for argument's sake, if there were eight fellows in the department and one of them left and retired, then there would seven regulars in that department. Then they also worked on the fact that if you needed more men, you got them from the departments that weren't busy. So everybody ended up, towards the end, they worked everywhere which was good because you were never stuck for an operation. You had some experience all the time.

Chris: Did you feel it was more seasonal then? You would be moving into different parts of the...

Peter: Yes, wherever you were needed. If they happened to get a big job or a big order and they needed drum fillers or they needed somebody in the paint department to paint the drums or whatever. Whoever wasn't busy was going. At that time the foreman, they



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used a little discretion, too. They didn't send a long time employee on the job where he was going to be busting his can. There is no modern things down here. Everything was push, pull and lift.

Chris: But it still must have made money for the company to still...

Peter: I believe so. You can't get into the specifics when the company is that big or what they are doing. You never know. We always heard that we were losing money but what else can your boss tell you. The old saying, if your getting a raise, but when you see the little figures in the paper of what they showed for their quarterly profit that would be the whole organization. We should be so lucky.

Chris: When did it go into rum production? If you said that the place closed for a while .... was it a year do you think?

Peter: No, maybe a little longer than that. I can't honest say. They ran the distillery just enough to keep their license. Maybe some wine lees. I would have to think it would have had to have been in around '64 that we got rolling pretty good on it.

Chris: On the rum?

Peter: Yes, like on the rum and more wine lees. That also got bigger. I believe they used to have it done by one of the, a few small distilleries in the Niagara region, like Ryder but they were having problems with what was left in the tubs. There would be burlap bags in the wine lees. What it was, if they had the wine and then it would sit in the tank and they would decant it off. In other words, all the undesirables went to the bottom and they took it off the top. The sediment and everything would settle down in the bottom. When they shipped the wine lees to us, you would get grape stocks, burlap bags, where they have thrown sugar bags and everything in it. There would be all kinds of things. If you had an area where there was going to be some ... anything flying around, it just gets attracted to it and it would be in there. I'm not saying ...

Chris: Like seagulls?

Peter: Well, maybe, that just an example.

Chris: That would be trucked in here?

Peter: It would be brought in by tank truck. It would be right here at this side door [of Building 5]. The pipe is still probably there sitting outside the wall. There was large steam pump in there - piston steam pump. You would pump it up, it would go up right through the pipe and right into one of the tanks. Right into one or two tanks, depending on the amount there was. There would be different wineries that would send lees. It started off, Brights was our best customer. But Brights was also in the Hiram Walker

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chain. There was Barnes Wines. There was Chateau Gai Wines. They would send various amounts. The smaller places would be in touch with Brights and Brights would say they were going to send up 100,000 gallons. Well, we could do a good run for them and it was more economical. Whereas Barnes would go in with them. They would send their own trucks in and we would keep their spirit different, away from theirs. If you were doing 100,00 and Barnes sent 10,000, it would be a costly operation for them. They were right in with the same sort of run.

Chris: You mean, in effect, you ran it as a continuous [operation] or you would actually separate out?

Peter: You would judge the amount of alcohol there would be in the yield. There would be an analysis done in the lab and as long as you were in a ball park figure and then, I would say, as a still operator, if I put all of what was in the beer well, I sent it to the still. I knew it would take 3 1/2 hours or 3 hours 45 minutes by the amount of feed to finish that product. That is the way we judged it.

Chris: Then you would say at that point that you were moving on to Barnes contract?

Peter: Yes, possibly it would ... When you did that analysis of the wine that they sent it, it wouldn't show you what the alcoholic content was in there and you would say that they sent us 5,000 gallons at such and such a figure, we will probably reclaim 2,700 gallons - in around there. When you were operating the still and you were feeding 40 gallons a minute...blah, blah, blah. See we would mix those wine lees with water when they would come in because we would have to send it through the still at approximately a 7% alcohol solution.

Chris: You mean it wouldn't work if it was ....

Peter: Not if it was too strong because what it was was a continuous flow still. If you put 40 gallons of alcohol in, you take 40 gallons of alcohol out. You couldn't take 33 or the next thing you know, your still isn't working properly. You dealt with various temperatures.

Chris: Just backing up for a moment, you said that there was a problem with the lees coming in with all these bags and that. Did that sort of gum up the still?

Peter: Well, what we would do is we would have to shut off the pumps. They all had screens and filters in them. We would have to shut it off, take everything apart, clean it all out and start again. I have seen us start sometimes start to pump through the beer well before it has been fed through the still. I would see us start to pump and be pumping and you wouldn't see the level going up in the tank and you would have to shut it off and go down and clean the screen and start it back up again. I have seen it clog up in minutes.

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Chris: What a pain.

Peter: Yes, but it was part of the job. But you normally wouldn't get that until we got down to the end of the tank. What would happen is they would pump it. As I told you before, there were two 50,000 gallon tanks, three 25,000, and all the rest were 12, 500 gallon tanks. If, for argument's sake, Bright's sent 100,000 gallons, you could do it in the two 50's [50,000 gallon tanks]. When you filled those two 50's up, then you would have to level them out with more tanks so that you would get that down to a 7% alcohol. They may have sent in 100,000 gallons of lees but by the time you get it ready to go to the still it might be 175,000 gallons.

Chris: Because it might come in at a 12% or 13%, is that it?

Peter: Yes, whatever the figure was. That was determined, like I said, they would take it to the lab and take an alcohol content on it.

Chris: When did that end because when the plant closed you were only making rum spirits, weren't you?

Peter: Yes, I can't tell the exact time.

Chris: But it went on for 10-15 years?

Peter: When it was turned around and the still was refurbished. I think it was kind of like a mutual thing. The company didn't want to handle the lees anymore because of the bothersome thing of... nowadays they are a little more conscious of what you do with the refuse. You just can't dump it or this and that. It would have created a lot of wear and tear on the still, itself because there was a lot in there. They didn't even wash the grapes. There would be, maybe, two feet of sand in the bottom of the tank. Sand on copper is very gritty.

Chris: You said the stills were refurbished.

Peter: Yes. They fixed them up and they made a few adjustments on it - that I spoke to you earlier about neutral spirit. It was a better distilling process. With other stills that we had ... we had three stills in there, two of which were operational. We took the two operational ones and through different columns that we used, we made it into one still. But we also made it independent. We could operate just the beer well to get the beer out of it and not have to run the other part until we got everything ... I guess to the layman, when it was a continuous flow still, you fed into the beer column first and then from there it went to the different columns. When they changed it around, you could feed into the beer column and run the beer column separately. Once you got that alcohol from there, it went into another holding tank and then it was fed to the other part of the still. So, you could shut one down. We had a problem: if the beer column - which at that time was

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where all the feed was going - it would clog up quite often. So, we would have to shut it down. But, when it was a continuous flow still, we had the whole shooting match down. So, by changing it around when we got into the molasses quite heavy, those plates had to be cleaned, but we had enough alcohol ahead to run - to purify - while this was being shut down and cleaned. Two men would be working on it and it would sometimes take you three days.

Chris: Jim [White - see Interview #2] made reference to that, where he'd be going in with, like, a little ice pick to chip ....

Peter: You would have a little scraper and you'd have a punch because the plates on the still were what they called a sieve plate and that's all it was. It just looked like one of your floor drains with all these holes in it because the product runs over the top and works its way down to the base of the column; the steam comes up through and the temperatures pick the alcohol up out of the product. When you start on the fourth floor, by the time it got to the bottom floor and with the temperature at the base of the column being the boiling point of water, alcohol - I believe -boils at 160 degrees and water is 212 degrees [Fahrenheit]. You don't have any alcohol coming out of the bottom. That's the idea.

Chris: How often would the still have to be...when you went on to molasses, it was worse then?

Peter: Yes, it got kind of a syrupy coating. The easiest way to explain, when you were a kid and went to a carnival, you used to get those candy apples. That's what would happen. You would get kind of a glaze over it.

Chris: How long would that take of running, to get that glaze?

Peter: Well, it would depend on the type of molasses. There is different types of molasses that they used. Some molasses is a little heavier than others. Depends on many, many things.

Chris: It would it be a week, or six weeks?

Peter: I don't know. The last of the operations, when I got out of there, I believe you could go for 3 1/2 weeks. You would go by your gauges, your temperature, how much yield, and how much you feed.

Chris: You would sense the clogging up?

Peter: Oh, yes, for sure.

Chris: You would see everything run slower?

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Peter: Yes, that's right.

Chris: When it got to a certain point, you would realize that you would have to send Jim in to chisel it out.

Peter: It wasn't only Jim. Jim was [unclear]. He did it once. What used to happen was the poor fellow that was working in the cellar used to get the bulk of the job. What they called the "cellar man." There was a cellar man and a still operator. And when the still operator wasn't watching the still, he was also helping. But normally, they kind of left the still operator to run his still. You can't be doing two things at once because the other part was going off. But, when you had to shut the entire thing down, everybody was in there.

Chris: Sounds like a particularly ... Well, you wouldn't want to be claustrophobic.

Peter: You wouldn't want to be claustrophobic and boy, if you can't stand wet. Because you had to take a hose in there with you and there was a manhole on the side. Once you got your shoulders in there ... Not a nice pleasant odor either. It wasn't harsh or anything but you would pick up enough.

Chris: So, he would have to do that every two-three-four weeks?

Peter: Yes, that would be the average.

Chris: But again, just trying to get a time on this, when you said they tweaked up the stills for the neutral spirits, was that in the mid 70's?

Peter: [figuring out time] Say around the 70's.

Chris: The early 70's?

Peter: Yes, I would think early 70's, late 60's. In that range somewhere.

Chris: You were saying that it was the mid 60's when the wine lees really took off but it was only a short time that ....

Peter: They did the wine lees and when it was finally decided that we would do the rum for the organization, then the wine got less and less. I believe Ryder distilleries started to do a little more wine lees for them. Instead of sending from St. Catharines to here, they would go from St. Catharines to Grimsby.

Chris: If I can just ask you about the stills, it seems to me that there was an anhydrous still, the Badger one from the 30's.

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Peter: Yes, the Badger one from the 30's, part of that column when into the Vulcan still. That was the change. The anhydrous still was ... I have never seen it operate.

Chris: When you were first there, it was just plain abandoned, is that it? In the 50's?

Peter: Yes, after '57, I believe, it was only run two or three weeks of the year.

Chris: The old Badger - the anhydrous still - wasn't even used then?

Peter: No, the anhydrous still never was. The Badger was. You see, there was what they called the anhydrous still, the Badger still and the Vulcan still.

Chris: The Badger was tucked away in the corner? [unclear, both talking at once] There is basically just the beer column there...

Peter: There is an oil column.

Chris: And an oil column.

Peter: Yes, that's one of the columns that they used. It was the oil column. It did a little better stripping job. They put it in in conjunction with the Vulcan. They tied them all together.

Chris: Before it was all tied together, the Vulcan had the most number of columns. It had a beer column of its own, doesn't it?

Peter: That's right.

Chris: So, it was self-contained?

Peter: Yes

Chris: But the Badger one was never...

Peter: No, the Badger had a beer column.

Chris: It had a beer column but did it have the other stripping columns on it?

Peter: I tell you...I haven't seen it in so long... It had the beer column, the fusel oil column. I don't know if it had the aldehyde column or not. There might have been a partial one. I believe it was three columns where the Vulcan had four [columns]. And it was a much larger still, by the way.

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Chris: You get that sense just looking at the control panel. It is a much bigger control panel for the Vulcan and it is quite small for the Badger.

Peter: Yes, they would tie in. They would use the same condensers, just that the charts were on that side for the Badger.

Chris: Alight. But then, was the Badger never meant to be run to produce...?

Peter: I don't know.

Chris: It was always sitting there?

Peter: Obviously, at one time, it was used quite extensively. I believe it was the first one that went in there. If I am not mistaken, that and the anhydrous.

Chris: There is talk now, in the new development, that it would be the Badger column area that is going to be kept to show what it was like.

Peter: Oh yes, because it is out of the way.

Chris: And the Vulcan side would be removed.

Peter: For my own part, I was very familiar with the Vulcan - with the newer type operation. I don't ever recall running the Badger myself. At that time, I was a cellar man and I worked myself into a still operator and I only operated the Vulcan.

Chris: Does that mean somebody else was working the Badger or...?

Peter: Well, no. As I told you before, there was two fellows on a shift; one still operator, one cellar man. You worked three shifts a day. It went 24 hours. For a while, we were also working only two shifts of 12 hours. 12 hour shifts: seven in the morning to seven at night then seven at night to seven in the morning. A fellow used to come in and start up Sunday night at 11:00 p.m. and you used to shut down at 7:00 a.m. the following Saturday morning. And I know because I was almost a year on 7:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m.

Chris: It must have been kind of lonely, wasn't it?

Peter: I tell you, you had a lot of things to occupy yourself if you were handy. I know I ended up drawing the entire still.

Chris: Drawing it?

Peter: Yes, making a plan of the still.

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Chris: Oh, I see, a schematic?

Peter: Yes, you had your duties to do. Most of the problem was washing out tubs and preparing them for the next day's mashing or whatever or running warm water. It was like anything else, when you got yourself into a routine, you were doing OK.

Chris: So, as a still operator, you were also responsible for the beer well?

Peter: No, that was the cellar man. The still operator, what he was in retrospect, was the shift foreman.

Chris: Oversaw the cellar man as well?

Peter: Yes. See, most of the times when the still operator had been operating the still for so long that the younger fellows, who were the cellar man, picked up our knowledge...there were a few fellows here that, older still operators, they took on the, how do I put it to you..."I'm not going to show you anything because if I do, you're going to take my job" or "I had to learn the hard way so you are". But, that was one of the things you lived with.

Chris: How long were you a cellar man before you became a still operator?

Peter: Four or five years. You would come over here and do a two month run and then go back and work on the other side. At that time, I was in the pure spirits department. They would come to me and say I was going to start up April 1. You are going to run April, May and part of June and that will be the end of that run and then you will be back here. They tried to run it in the colder weather because it was more economical. Their cooling water that they drew from the Bay was ice cold. Of course, Lake Ontario was always cold anyway but that's the way they worked things.

You weren't as busy in the winter over there as you were in the summer. They kind of tied in hand and hand.

Chris: When you said you were working four years or so as a cellar man, that was like four years but for a couple of months each year?

Peter: Yes. That would be the early part and probably the last two years I was a cellar man, it was almost 10 months a year. It got that we were quite busy. We were doing molasses and a lot of wine in those days.

Chris: So this was back in the 60's?



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Peter: Yes, it was before they changed the still over from the continuous flow. They updated it.

Chris: When you say from a continuous flow, it became more of a batch operation?

Peter: No, you could work the batch separately and it ended up making a better product because the alcohol was of a better quality.

Chris: You could control it better?

Peter: You could control it better but the columns were there and the stripping columns were doing a better job with an increase with the one off the Badger and a few minor adjustments through the engineering department. They changed several things on it but we would be here for two days talking about technical things.

Chris: That would be interesting but ... And what about the panels, themselves? They look like they date from the 1950's?

Peter: They were there ever since I came here.

Chris: They are older than that.

Peter: Some of those controls would probably be older than me and you.

Chris: The other thing I noticed is ... Isn't that where all those banana stickers on one of the weigh scales?

Peter: Yes, one of the operators...

Chris: He must of loved bananas.

Peter: Yes, he ate a lot of bananas. John Nichols used to stick them on.

Chris: And there must have been hundreds ... there are layers ...

Peter: Yes, but other guys would add on it.

Chris: It has been interesting to hear about those stills because it kind of confirmed what we were thinking that there were these three units. What about over in the pure spirits [department], you know, those tall buildings, Buildings 54, 56? There was a still in there?

Peter: Yes, in the front of the building. That wasn't in operation when I came down here. That's is, what is known as Barclay's; Jacs. Barclay. That used to be their still and I think it was the same type of thing, what I told you about. You had to operate for so

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long to keep your license and it was just ... I don't know why it was named that. I think Barclay had something to do with this distillery at one time. It was before my time.

Chris: So that was always empty or vacant space? It was never used?

Peter: Well, they used it later on. They used a few of the tanks over there, later on - the front building [Buildings 54,55] for antifreeze. They were doing some antifreeze drumming in there for a while. They had done various things in there but nothing really ... It was an empty space but it wasn't a space that you could really make good use of.

Chris: It was a tiny room, wasn't it?

Peter: Yes.

Chris: Would you ever cut parts off the old still there?

Peter: I believe some of the maintenance here might have taken some lines, like old copper lines and flanged them and used them in various parts because at one time, all the lines in here were all copper. Everything was copper. I would imagine they would have had their hands full changing everything over. Maintaining it - costly.

Chris: Just talking about the copper, it always struck me as such a shame that they've taken all of those tanks out now in the pure spirits area [Buildings 61,62].

Peter: Oh, are they gone now?

Chris: Yes.

Peter: Oh... I don't know how many times I walked across the top of them tanks and somebody would say something and I would turn around and BANG, I would hit my head on a beam. You see I was a scale man up there too, at one time. That was how we used to get the alcohol. It would go into the tanks and you would pump it out. In the first early years, we had a steam pump and then we got a centrifugal pump and I was a scale man. They would say that we have a tank truck coming in and we need 6,000 gallons. You would do it by weight. The strength of the alcohol would give you the specific gravity, so 5,000 gallons would weigh "x" amount of pounds. You would get it all weighed out. You'd call an excise [officer] over. You would take a test out of it, so that he could see the test and verify that it was at a certain strength and punch a ticket that was the correct amount that you were sending them. The boss would make out all the paperwork for it, so that the Government would get their duty and blah, blah, blah all the way along. Any alcohol that came into the plant had to come either by tank truck or tank car and it was pumped off and weighed upstairs, in the pure spirits [department], and tested and when they found the weight with the specific gravity then they would record how many gallons they received. Not how much was shipped, how much they

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received. Everything was verified by the customs and excise people. [See pages 98-100 of Gooderham & Worts Heritage Plan Report #6: Industrial Heritage Assessment for description of Building 61]

Chris: It sounds like a lot of paperwork?

Peter: Yes, but it is like your job, once you have done it for a few weeks. I used to say to my one scale man, when we left there, that 7UP wants a load. He would know the weight, exactly. I wouldn't even have to tell him the weight. We did it so many times. Pat LaChapelle, who was my scale man, at the time ...

End of Tape One, Side B  
Start Tape Two, Side A

Peter: As I was say, Pat had been the scale man for so long, he made your job that much easier. He would even be a step ahead of you. He would say, "Pete, they phoned from the office while you were down over there and we have a tank truck going out this afternoon at such and such a time". I would just go ahead and do the paperwork and he would have the tickets punched and everything because after a while - as you know - the excise left here and kind of put you on your own. While they were at the other end receiving it, they would check you through. He knew his job and he did it. It made my job easier. All I had to do was whip up the paperwork and he would give me the tickets. I would take them over to the office and they would be recorded. The permits would be made up by the excise clerk and away it goes.

Chris: So you worked in the scaling loft area?

Peter: Yes, I worked in the scaling loft. What happened was, you used to have steam pumps. There used to be two fellows who worked upstairs. One guy was the scale man and the other guy was the pumper. He would be down at the steam pump and when the guy got close, when the pump would be shut off, there would be 30 pounds drainage coming out of the line. So, 30 pounds before his weight, he would ring a bell and you would shut it off and then disconnect all the hoses and everything and clear everything up in case you wanted a different type of alcohol the next time. How I ended up there was I had a pretty serious operation and when I came back, they gave me a light duty job. That was the light duty job, the helper. Through attrition and people retiring, it got to be a one man operation up there. When they changed to a different pump...

Chris: To a different electric pump?

Peter: Electric pump, centrifugal pump and they had the switches upstairs, right on the scale. You operated it yourself. All you did was walk down and hook up the .... You

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had a pipe that went into the tank, a movable, portable pipe which we used to call the sucker and then with camlock fittings, you hooked the hose into it. Went upstairs and made sure the bottom of your scale was closed, the line open going into it, pushed the button, set the weights on the beam and put a little lever with some keys underneath the bar. When the bar lifted, the lever would fall. You would walk up, put it to the weight you wanted. As soon as the beam started to rise, you would shut the button off and it would drain in and you would call the excise to check the weight.

Chris: So, the warning that you were getting close was just a... it didn't turn off the pump or anything like that?

Peter: No, it just dropped. There were three scales there and then there was an area there where the fellow had his papers or could sit down.

Chris: Where those manifolds are, leading out over the roof?

Peter: Yes, right there, exactly. There used to be two chairs there. It used to be for the pump man and his helper. You would set it up. Rather than standing at the scale for 35 minutes, you would go and sit in the chair. You would be sitting there and it may be in the far scale and you would be talking to the man or whatever, discussing last night's ball game or whatever. All of a sudden you would hear the thing drop to the floor, up you would get, walk over there and it would be ... Soon as he saw that, he would go downstairs. You would set it for, say 1,000 pounds, so you knew when that dropped you were within 1,000 pounds or 500 or whatever you set it at and you could judge by just how much time he had to get down to the pump so that when you rang the bell, he would shut it off.

Chris: Was that something that was fixed up just on the scale... Fairbanks...

Peter: No, I don't who set that up but it might have been the original scale man. It was just something that you do. It was just part of your job. Rather than just standing there, you could leave it. As a matter of fact, what you could do sometimes, we have had up to three different operations going on at one time, one in each scale. You could do them with that when you got close, if you were finishing this off, this was later on with the electric, you could shut that off and then concentrate on this one. Finish that off and then go back and finish this and then go back and finish that.

Chris: I have noticed, in a way, that is the only way modern thing in the scaling loft is the electrical control box on each scale. So that was quite recent then?

Peter: I couldn't ... It would have to tie in with when they were doing the renovations. I couldn't tell you what year the pumps went in. It would probably be in the 70's. Before that, everything here was a steam pump.

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Chris: Oh, of course and then they put the gas boilers in.

Peter: Well, they went from coal boilers [in Building 2] and then they come to the back part here, there was one right here, Bunker C [in Building 4]. Then they went to the gas.

Chris: It was at that time that they cut back on steam production?

Peter: They cut back on steam production a little bit when they went to this one here, to Bunker C. They kind of replaced one pump and they took their time and replaced another one. So I don't know the dates. They didn't all of a sudden convert everything over. They just did one area then area. They would say that they were budgeted now for \$10,000 so let's put that pump in.

Chris: And, then they just left the old pumps?

Peter: They left some of the old pumps right where they were because, well you have seen them, there were encased in concrete, bolts up into the concrete. When they built some of the things here, they were meant to stay. You need dynamite to move them.

Chris: It wasn't for any other reason? It was just easier to leave them?

Peter: Yes, and when they left some of them, from time to time they did take some parts off of them to repair other ones.

Chris: Were there any steam pumps used right at the end or had they, by then, they were all electric weren't they?

Peter: Yes. They were all electric. When I started down here, there was down in the little pump house [Building 60], there were four steam pumps, three or four in the pure spirits [department], there was one in the pure spirits in the far room [Building 62A] where the denaturing [department] used to pump off their tank cars with the line that used to come right up through the pure spirits. When I first came here the only electric pumps they had were in the tank houses. Everything else was steam.

Chris: In some ways, it was probably because they were so far away. Probably getting steam down to it would have been a problem.

Peter: Yes, that probably would have been the main one but the pumps that were down there were like a portable. They used to get 2-3 guys and push them from one tank house to the other.

Chris: No, they are not there but maybe I remember seeing them.

Peter: They probably were there.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: The other thing I always thought was neat about the scaling loft was that it was in such good condition. Whereas everything else had been painted and that...

Peter: Well, you know what we used to do.... There again, it was the guys that were working. They would come into the store room and get a bottle of Brasso and take a couple of them and when things weren't too busy you would be... You would get to, at least once a week, you got to polish the beams up. You used to keep everything nice. We had, what they called test cups there, and we kept them polished.

Chris: Why those ones and not like ... There are some really nice scales over in the...

Peter: Well, that's what I'm saying. What would happen here [in the distillery] is you would be in here for two months and then gone for five months.

Chris: So then you aren't looking after the...

Peter: There was nobody here to look after it.

Chris: The scaling loft was always...

Peter: Every day. That was an every day operation. Nothing moved in and out of this plant, in alcohol, that didn't go through there first.

Chris: So, you think maybe when the stills were in use continuously, then there might have been people looking after the scale tanks?

Peter: Sure, they used to have guys that would be on a shift and mop floors, mop wooden floors. They were almost white, at one time.

Chris: That is interesting. So it just gradually got less and less use?

Peter: Let's put it this way. Let's say you had a cottage and you went up there 2 weeks of the year and didn't do anything. What would happen when you got there? It looks seedier than it really is.

Chris: That is interesting, as well because it like it really hasn't been looked after for a long time. Before it even closed, it must have had that look. It couldn't get it that quickly, could it?

Peter: No, I know what you are saying but you have to remember, too, the buildings are really, really old. You could sweep the floor and 20 minutes later, it would be dusty. It is just the nature of the... when it was in operation, when we were operating seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, they had made some changes to the flooring and everything else.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

One of the jobs was the cellar man, once a week, on whatever shift was designated, had to mop all those floor. They were kept up pretty nice.

Chris: You remember that when you first started there?

Peter: No, not when I first started. This was later on.

Chris: Even later on?

Peter: Oh, yes. When they made the changes and the renovations, the cellar man that was part of his job. He would mop the floor.

Chris: There are also those slats in all the floor. The floor boards....

Peter: Oh no, you couldn't mop them. I'm talking about going up the stairs and the floor around the front of the still.

Chris: Where the linoleum is on?

Peter: Yes.

Chris: By the way, why the gaps in the floor. Was that to let steam through?

Peter: I really don't know. I don't know what it was for.

Chris: Was it steamy?

Peter: Yes. Steam would seep up through the floor. If you walked down there you were in a dungeon. As a matter of fact, they filmed one of the Jekyll and Hyde, Jack Grants did a series here and they used smudge pots and they used bottom floor, that green door on the bottom floor was the infirmary, so to speak. When we used to walk in there, going to work, the concrete floor was in pretty rough shape, there were holes in the floor and the steam would come up through the holes.

Chris: You said you also worked in the racking warehouses?

Peter: The rack warehouse, yes.

Chris: The one building that intrigued me was the lunch room in the biggest of the rack houses.

Peter: Rack house M [Building 75].

Chris: It has the big bracing through the lunch room there.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: The one with the sign on it, you mean?

Chris: The one with the sign on it.

Peter: Rack House M. I think that held 40,000 barrels capacity, I believe. I used to know all the capacities because that was part of the my job, in the later years. The pure spirits foreman took care of the pure spirits [department] and the rack warehouse. One time there used to be separate crews for each but through attrition and everything else, it got to be that if you weren't working here, you were working there.

Chris: It has been about a year since I was in that lunch room but it looked like a really nice....

Peter: No, that was a change room.

Chris: A change room not a lunch room.

Peter: They had a sink in there, a water fountain and lockers. Man, oh, man, when I worked in there, if you put your clothes in that locker, when you went home on the street car everybody just looked at you. You didn't think anything of it because you are in that odor all day long.

Chris: They would have thought you had been into the juice for a long time.

Peter: For sure. Without a word of a lie, you used to go in there on a Tuesday morning of a long weekend and you would open the door, flick the light on, you would swear to God there would be a blue haze around the lights. Especially, like say this long weekend coming up, if it was warm weather. You have eight floors of barrels. They are just sitting in there.

Chris: You are sure glad there was explosion proof lighting in there.

Peter: Yes. They were about as safe as they could get it, I would imagine. We have had people come in there and without even thinking, I had seen a guy light a match in there. I nearly croaked. He lit a match and a cigarette in there. I said, "Put that out".

Chris: But nothing happened?

Peter: No.

Chris: Was that just luck of the draw?



Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: I don't know what the person was thinking. I guess he wanted a cigarette. He wasn't one of the workers. It was a visitor. A lot of them were told that there was no smoking here. It was a reflex thing. I'm sure you have done things like that. I know I have, without realizing you are even doing it.

Chris: You would only do that once...

Peter: Yes.

Chris: It never happened... There were never any fires or explosions that you remember?

Peter: No, the closest thing that came to a fire was one of the tank houses. A fellow was down there with a torch and some sparks went on and there was a little bit of a smoldering. The fellow ran across the top of the tanks and with the top of the tanks, whacked the sprinkler heads with his hammer.

Chris: So it broke it off?

Peter: Yes. As he was running out. We used to curse those sprinklers because where they were placed, whoever put them in, you didn't have a lot of headroom and you would pulling hose along the top of the tank to fill them and your back would be a little bit on the stiff side so you would go up there to ease your back and BANG, man-oh-man, you would hit your head. Who was the son-of-a-bitch who put those there.

Chris: In the tank houses, in particular?

Peter: The worst was the pure spirits department because the office, and you had to work on the top of those tanks and their would be the wooden beams. I swear to God, in the early years they must have thought everybody was going to be 4'9". There used to be a little fellow down here. His name was Alf Taylor. He ran the store room which would be in approximately the area where we are now [Building 25]. They had a large store room here. You could get your supplies like paper towels, soap, brushes - anything that you needed was in the store room. I had only been upstairs a short time in the scale room and this gentleman liked to imbibe a bit. When I first came down here, there were a lot of people like that. Towards the end of the years, when we left, I don't think there was anybody. But he would always come in in the morning. He knew when the boss left for his coffee and you could always hear .... [making a footstep noise]. "What was that - it sounded like somebody running." Well, it took me a while but I finally saw who it was one day and sat at the top of the stairs, leaning down and he was the only guy I knew that could run under those beams and be erect. He would check the test cups to see if there was a little "something" there for him to wet his whistle and then he would run back.

Chris: With all this open alcohol around, there could have been plenty of opportunity to get at it.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: There was. It was the same as if you worked in a chocolate bar factory. It was there. There were a few fellows that it got a hold off. Generally, there was a lot of excise around too. There used to be four custom and excise guys in the pure spirits [department] alone. There would be one in the case good warehouse, one in the denaturing room. There was always an excise around and he was sort of... he would be the government watch dog and make sure everything was on the up and up.

Chris: Mind you if you lost a pint of alcohol, he would never notice it.

Peter: No.

Chris: But, you would never want to take a drink in front of an excise guy.

Peter: You wouldn't take a drink in front of him just out of respect for him. It is the same thing, I know for a fact, that if somebody wanted to drink and they sensed that he wanted a drink they kind of turned their back for 30 seconds. "I didn't see anything," type of thing. They did their job but they weren't a warden.

Chris: Also, the alcohol that must have been around here would have been pretty rough stuff. You would really have to want a drink, isn't it?

Peter: Without going into specifics, there was a fellow here that would have to have three drinks in the morning before the first one stayed down. He would pass it over the water. Just turn the water on, put it in the glass and run the glass through and then up it would come. Third one would stay down and he would go "Ahhhh!"

Chris: It must have been 80% or 60% alcohol.

Peter: British Sykes hydrometer goes 0 - 100%, American goes 0 - 200. It would probably be what we classify as 50 over proof which would be 1/50. It would be ... A shot of liquor is 30 under proof, so judge from there. If you had one ounce of that, you would have to put an ounce and a half of water to get it down to 30 under proof.

Chris: Which would then be like drinking it straight out of a bottle?

Peter: You got it.

Chris: If nothing else, doesn't that dry your skin out?

Peter: Well, as I said to you, a lot of the old timers when I started here -there was a lot of people that drank. I can honestly say over the last 25 years, we may have had a problem with two or three.

Chris: If nothing else, wouldn't that be dangerous?

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: Well, you watched them. You knew who was doing what. You would go up and say "hey watch yourself. You are having a little too much. I don't know if you realize it or not". Most of times...

Chris: So you looked after...

Peter: It is the same old saying, if you know the guy's been imbibing you certainly don't send him out on the street to walk around. You say "Go over there and sit down." And he appreciated that.

Chris: But what about just falling into one of the tanks....

Peter: Oh, yes. I will tell you, I was in the paint shop one day when one fellow had had a bit too much to drink and he had a 45 gallon drum with black paint in it. What you used to do was take your paint can and dip it in to get your paint to paint the drums. He was about 5'2" and he leaned in and it was pretty low on the bottom and the next thing you know, he went head first into the paint.

Chris: Looking for a drink in the paint?

Peter: No,no,no. He had so much to drink. He was looking for paint to paint his drums but he lost his balance when he went in and he went head first in. There happened to be about 8" or 9" of black paint in there and he went right up almost into his mouth.

Chris: That would have been dangerous if nobody had been around.

Peter: Oh, yes. A lot of things happened. We used to line up at night to punch out and this guy would be walking down the lane right by where that new office is [Building 52] across the road, on the north side. He would be walking down that wall with his hand propped against the wall and somebody would say, 'How are you doing?'. Instead of waving with this hand, he would take this one off and wave and the next thing you know, he started nosediving right out the gate.

Chris: It is interesting because today, a company would not tolerate that, would they? They would send you off to dry out.

Peter: Basically, the company, they didn't look the other way. They didn't know everything that went on here. This wasn't really, really a job type of thing. You did your work. Early years, you were never overworked unless you were really young and you worked in the cannery - because every other department had enough fellows ... There was always enough fellows to do the job. We had no modern equipment here.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: Where did the bosses come from? If you were promoted up through the ranks and you knew what was going on. You would be wise to it.

Peter: If you are a boss and you have your guys to do their day's work and do their jobs, you don't want to create problems either. Same thing as you said that there was a lot of excise people around while just because you were in excise, I wouldn't walk up to you and pour myself a drink. I would have too much respect for your position. The excise would say that if they caught us with a bottle they would take it off us. But, they could also turn their head the other way. What you don't see. You could discreetly take the fellow aside and say, "Look, whether you realize it or not, it is creating a problem with your work. What you are doing. You had better ease back because some people are watching." In my time, that I was here, there were only a few. You could count them all on your hand.

Chris: But when you started, there were a lot?

Peter: Yes, all the old boys. They were one year out of retirement, or whatever.

Chris: I wonder why that would change. Did the tradition change?

Peter: Ok, let's put it this way, why are people drinking less and smoking less now than they were 30 years ago. It is just a change in times.

Chris: So it wasn't that they were alcoholics in the way that we think of people that need help...

Peter: There were a couple.

Chris: But, you think the other ones...way back when you were saying that at the beginning it was just the nature of the job. There was alcohol around and it wasn't unhealthy to drink so you might as well have a drink.

Peter: I would say that would be pretty close. Right there - just the way you said it.

Chris: They might have turned into alcoholics but they didn't....

Peter: Over the years there were a few. I worked with one of the fellows for a while and it just got the better of him and finally another mutual agreement type of thing. He left. They did alright for him and it wasn't too long after that he had a pretty serious operation and it stemmed from his drinking.

Chris: I guess that is the difference. If you work in a chocolate factory all you do is get fat, but if you work in a distillery you get drunk.

#### Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: At one time in the breweries, they used to go after their shift and they could have their four-five drafts or whatever it was. Being the nature of things, a lot of guys felt that they were probably entitled to a drink.

Chris: Just about the change room in the Rack House M, I don't know what was interesting about it but maybe it is because the other change rooms that I have seen looked like they had been closed down longer but this one looked like it had been used right until the end.

Peter: It was a very small area and it was painted up...

Chris: Really bright and the rest of the building is dark.

Peter: That's right. I haven't seen it since before I left, but I know that when they did paint it in there it was with a real good battleship green enamel that kind of stood up. You didn't spend much time in there. You went in there in the morning. Now when I worked in there, I didn't even keep my clothes in the locker.

Chris: Just because it was too fragrant?

Peter: Right. I used to change. I would be down there at 7:55 a.m. ready to go to work, already changed. You were already in your work clothes. You would pick up that smell. It was just something that I didn't change there. I had my locker in one department and it was OK by them so I used to change in the pure spirits [department] and then go down to the warehouse.

Chris: Where was the change room in the pure spirits?

Peter: You know where the demineralizer is now?

Chris: Yes. [Along the south wall of Building 62]

Peter: It was just east of there. Right in that corner. There was a cooper's bench there. That was the change room. Upstairs there was also a locker upstairs on the top of the tank. That was where the Assistant Foreman used to change.

Chris: That's right, but it is all gone now but you can see the paint on the walls where the lockers were.

Peter: We had a wooden locker plus all these metal lockers. We used to change the change room around from time to time. We even put a carpet in there once. One of the guys had new carpeting put in his place or his next door neighbour's and he brought in this carpet and we laid it on the floor. You walk on it with your socks.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: There was another change room in the case good warehouse [Building 74].

Peter: Yes, down in the corner, right by the washroom.

Chris: You stepped on a big, high concrete...

Peter: Well, that was the washroom.

Chris: Oh, that was the washroom. Ok.

Peter: But the lockers were right there at the back of that wall. There was a table there where we used to eat our lunch. There was a window here, a table, some lockers sat along that wall there and then there was a couple over to the side. I think there was maybe a half dozen lockers against that wall. That raised part - that was the washroom. You used to have to step up to go in there.

Chris: I wonder, was it raised to get the plumbing underneath it because it was put in later?

Peter: I really don't know. Ever since I have been here, that's the way it was. That could very well be the reason. They had a toilet and a urinal, plus a sink in there. That's where you used to go a night to wash up before you went home.

Chris: Then there was another one in the still Building #5 with a big, huge sink?

Peter: That was the locker room when the distillery was going full bloom, pre-'57. There was maybe 50-60 lockers in there.

Chris: Because it is huge. It is the biggest one of all of them.

Peter: Oh, yes. All the distillery personnel kept their clothes and changed in there before they went to work. There would be maybe, I don't know how many there would have been to a shift. I would have to probably say there were 60 to a shift.

Chris: Was that the biggest of the department's then?

Peter: When it was in operation, yes because there were guys that operated the cooking, guys that were in the bagging room, guys that were drying it, there were cellar men, there were yeast men, there were still operators and guys that help on .....

End of Tape Two, Side A

Peter: Every department had their own change room - change areas.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: When you moved about, you would change your change room?

Peter: Most guys, as I said to you guys would go to where it was busy, but if you were in the pure spirits [department] you were still my man. They would come and say that they needed a couple of extra men today, could you spare anybody or you may be there for two or three days but you would still change ... Because I was your foreman or your department manager, I accounted for your time and I had to say that he came in at 8:00 a.m. and wasn't late. That's the way that was. Guys were reluctant to take their lockers...

Chris: The other thing you reminded me of is the yeast area. What did you call that little penthouse?

Peter: That was the donor room. [See page 83 of Gooderham & Worts Heritage Plan Report #6: Industrial Heritage Assessment] They had a small stainless tub. They would start off with the yeast culture in the lab and then take it there. It just keeps building and building and that would be dropped into the yeast tub, split up between the three yeast tubs. Then they would feed down below. They had a little better control on it. When you start off with the yeast, the germ and everything, it all starts off pretty small. As with any fermentation, it builds but you don't want to put a little wee bit in a 5,000 gallon tank. It may never work. That was like a jacket and it was the heat around it and they could cool it, many things. You can control fermentation by temperature control.

Chris: But why up in that little room?

Peter: Gravity. Well, that's the way it has always been. They designed it that way. You walked up the steps into that room and you started everything right there. From the lab to there. Once that got going to a certain stage where they wanted it and then they would feed it to the other three tubs.

Chris: And then from there..?

Peter: So much would make so much makes so much.

Chris: Ok, alright.

Peter: To answer your question, I don't know why it was set up that way. Maybe that's the way the original guy, back in 1832, decided that's the way it is going to be.

Chris: It is such a neat little room with the windows up there.

Peter: Too bad you didn't see this cellar [in Building 6] beforehand. You know how you go down there now and you have the railings, you can see ... It was a one floor right across and at the tops of those tanks they used to have pipes come up and there were

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

traps there with water in them. They would save the CO2 gas. And - what's the name of the outfit - Liquid Carbonic was here and they would send the CO2 gas over to them. They would use it for dry ice and what not.

Chris: So that was on when you came here?

Peter: That was finishing up then.

Chris: That must have also closed in '57, or something?

Peter: I don't know what year it closed but it wasn't too long afterwards if it was. I think they were pretty close to '70 before they moved.

Chris: They were taking the CO2...?

Peter: No, they weren't taking the CO2 gas when I came here.

Chris: Oh, I see, but they were still here?

Peter: They were still here. Another thing you might be interested in. When they were doing the molasses, or the rum, they would get it fermenting in the tubs ... You'd have a very tough time to even light a lighter there with that gas coming off the tops of the tanks. You could take a lighter, light it and go there, and it would put it out immediately.

Chris: CO2 is heavier isn't it?

Peter: Right. Well it would come out and go right down to the bottom. When you went downstairs to open the bottom of the tank to send it to the beer well, sometimes you catch your breath. It would take your breath away.

Chris: Because there were no exits down there?

Peter: No, there weren't. In later time, they got a few fans, exhaust fans, pulling it out of there. You just didn't keep your head bent over. But you could walk along there and the further in you got, you could feel yourself...

Chris: Suffocating?

Peter: That's right. It was harder to breathe.

Chris: While we are down on that floor, there is an odd iron set of pipes that are just sticking in the concrete, way over in the far wall just before....

Peter: Oh, there was a heater there.



Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: Is that what it was?

Peter: Yes, a big long heater. Against that wall, you mean, underneath the stairs.

Chris: Under where the scale tank is, right on the ground.

Peter: There was a long heater against that wall. You used to turn that on and you could almost get live steam out of the water hose. It was a chamber of some kind. It didn't really work all the time.

Chris: The only reason why I have been continually been curious about is that one photograph from the days of the British Acetone, when they were making ... In the First World War, there is a picture and it looks an awful lot like one of those....

Peter: I will tell you, what I can remember about it, it was probably about three feet wide and about 15-18 feet long and I don't know if it was fed from the boiler room or where it was fed. I don't know why it had to go through there.

Chris: And it wasn't really used very much?

Peter: No.

Chris: I just wonder if it was something left over from that British Acetone and they just figured...

Peter: It might have been and then they might have made some kind of an adjustment to it. There were lots of things around here. That's the way they did things.

Chris: It is getting late, but I would still like to talk about the denaturing. You worked in the denaturing as well?

Peter: Denaturing, yes. And the paint shop. I also, for a few days, worked on the coal truck. I used to go down to the docks and get coal and then bring it up for the boilers here and he would dump it and you would kind of shovel it down into the pit.

Chris: Then there was a bunker up above the boiler. Would it go down a hopper and then you would hoist it up?

Peter: Yes.

Chris: With the weigh scales just outside the building as well....

Peter: I can of vaguely remember them.

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: You can see the outline in the concrete. But that was long gone.

Peter: I believe it was. I think, if I recall right, it was a weigh scale and that's the way they used to weigh the trucks when they would come in with the coal full and then empty.

Chris: Off your own coal dock or when you bought it from the City?

Peter: If you bought it from the City, maybe both. Maybe they just ... Like I say, things change. You would go down there and BOOM, they would fill your truck up and away you would go. Maybe they would used to take their word for what they got.

Chris: You never drove across the weigh scales? They were gone by then?

Peter: No, I believe they were gone. I was on it for a few days, just giving the guy a hand. Rather than sit around, they always got you something to do.

Chris: Talk about the denaturing building [Building 47 - see page 122 of Gooderham & Worts Heritage Plan Report #6: Industrial Heritage Assessment]. Again, it was all closed by the time I ever saw it. It sort of looked a little poisonous in there...

Peter: Well, what they would do is make up different grades of denatured alcohol. The main think for denaturing is so you don't drink it. It is poison. Some of the things they used it for would be... I think it was 2D that they used to clean printing presses with.

Chris: 2D? That the brand?

Peter: That was the brand. There were so many number 1's, so many number 2's.

Chris: Oh, Ok, I have seen a chart with that on it.

Peter: There would be formulations as to how much denaturants you would add to it and whether you would add wood alcohol or whether you would add tobacco, different things. The main thing in there was when they made a mix, they found out how much alcohol they needed. They would phone the pure spirits [department]. The man would weigh it. Send the alcohol over there. When the alcohol was all over, the mixer would then mix up the denatured alcohol. That would be so it would be drummed off for a customer. That's all that went on in there: the drumming of denatured alcohol and then they would ship it out of there.

Chris: So, it was for mixing and drumming?

Peter: Yes. Mixing and drumming, that was the operation.

#### Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Chris: Because of the chemicals that were in there, would you have to be more careful? Was there special training or something like that?

Peter: You were trained by the previous mixer. You had a book with the formulas there. As a mixer, you also kept a book as you made your mixes. You used to keep it in your back pocket and you would look back. You would say, "Oh there is my 2A and I put 'x' amount of qusin [###spelling?] in it, some of this, some of that and a lot of times the excise [officer] would be there and watch and work with you while you were making the mixes to make sure you put the proper amounts of denaturant in it.

Chris: Although, once it was denatured, it would be of interest to excise because then it was...

Peter: No, but they had to determine that that was indeed what you made, 2C or 2B or 1B. Whatever the formula was. You can just say that you made a 1A when in fact, you made a number 2 mix.

Chris: But I thought the whole idea behind excise was to get their tax off of it but industrial alcohol wouldn't be taxed or was there a tax?

Peter: Various things. Hospitals all paid tax on it but then they would get a 99% rebate. Everybody pays the tax, whether you get a rebate or not. That's like the GST, if you pay somebody GST and you are in business for yourself, you can claim it. I know, that's what happens to me. It is a pain in the ...

Chris: Yes. It is like what you were saying earlier, you just get to live with it. A couple of years ago, I really thought it was terrible but now ... Well anyway the accountants look after it.

Peter: It was just verifying that that is the mix that he made. Once it is in that tank - at one time - when the customs or excise were always here, they would lock the bottom of the tanks so you couldn't get any out. If you wanted to take some of it out they would come and unlock it and when you finished you had to go and tell them and they would lock it up again. A customer would order say 30 drums of product and you knew by your bin cards that you had 27 drums in there. You either had to make up a mix of 3 or add a 30 mix to it. They just kept it in stock and if it wasn't in the tank, it was in drums.

Chris: So, in a way, although it was another department, it wasn't much different in the type of work? There is a big mezzanine...

Peter: Yes, you used to walk...there was a scale upstairs first. It would go into the scale and then from the scale, you would hook up the hose to which tank you wanted to go to.

Chris: Was it Jim [White] or somebody that was saying that it was impossible for that alcohol to get back into the system again because there was only gravity feed in that...

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

Peter: That's right. Gravity feed into the tank and then gravity feed when you were putting it into the drum.

Chris: It was virtually impossible for it to get back into the plant again through the pipes.

Peter: That's right. Unless you pumped it out.

Chris: Unless you were really trying to screw up the system.

Peter: Right. Well, you had to watch too. If you had a alcohol that was really, really, strong odor to it and you were making up another one which had a distinct odor to it, what you would probably do is he would say... well, one of the worst ones was what they called 2D. It stunk. So what you would do is flush the lines with alcohol. Now I want a 2D mix and then they would mix it and once that would go through there they would say now give me a small 2A. So, you would pump up the alcohol for the 2A. It would go through to flush that line out a bit to sweeten it up. Then we would give him the number 1 mix. The alcohol for the 1 mix.

Chris: And there wouldn't be an residual in the pipe of the ....

Peter: No, very little. What it would pick up, if it would pick up any of the 2D into the 2C would be negligible but that could stand the odor whereas the last one couldn't. You didn't want... you wanted a different odor to it.

Chris: You would almost know what you were going to do that day and try and put the worst ones...

Peter: He might get three mixes at once and he would look at his cards or the boss over there would say we're getting low on this or low on that or he would know that this company was going to order 30 drums of this so he would yell down to the guy and tell him to drum off 15 drums from there and I am going to order a mix for 30 and once you do, let me know. I will get them to pump it over and we'll fix it and then we will flush it with this stuff and then we will go to that. It is knowing what...you have to be aware of what your stock is at all times. Certain customers used to want their drums on certain days.

Chris: It was stuff you would never get out of a textbook, it was just what you learned. The order to do it in?

Peter: You got it. It just like the cannery, you can never get through to one guy's head. He used to like to run Esso Rad and you used to say to him, they take their order on Tuesday, why don't we run it on Tuesday. Instead of piling it on the floor, it goes right out the door to the truck. But, he would say, " Cause I said so". Finally, a little later on

Interview #4: Peter Nicholson

down the road, it was his idea then, so then you would start to run it on Tuesday morning. It is like your kids, if you have young kids they say your not very bright Dad and all of a sudden from 18-21, did we ever get smart.

Chris: Well, its getting late. I really appreciate your [time].

Peter: Like I said to you, my time is going to be really busy now for the next...

End of Tape

## Interview Questions

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions For Peter Nicholson  
Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Limited

Interview is to obtain personal feelings about recent working history in plant; not intended to provide absolutely correct dates or historical facts.

Take photograph.

### IDENTIFICATION

Who are you?

Title and job descriptions

Start association with G&W? In what capacity?

What other jobs did you have?

### PLANT PROCESS

Process changes?

molasses mash

grain mash

mash cookers; spent mash dryers

materials where did they come from

### History of Stills

-maintenance - modifications carried out

-physical condition at closure?

-capacity of plant at closure? Maximum capacity?

-problems with equipment due to age/condition

-advantages of equipment due to size or design?

-unusual equipment to age or uncommon process?

- i Anhydrous Still - Badger c1930s (Building 5)
- ii. Badger - small control board; in corner (Building 5)  
-one proposed to be kept
- iii. Vulcan - main control board; east side (Building 5)
- iv. Wine Still: Pure Spirits building #56

Production

## Interview Questions

- i. Did type make any difference: beverage alcohol - industrial alcohol?
  - ii. By-Products: carbon dioxide,  
fusel oils
  - iii. What about: Consolidated Alcohols  
Barclay Distillery  
McGinnis Distillery
  - vi. Relationship to Hiram Walker Facilities  
HW Companies (ie Corby's) use property for production, etc.  
Send/receive products for finishing

### PEOPLE

How many worked for you?

Shift work

Seasonal

Repetitive? (Jim White talked about chipping plates of still)

Dangerous

Work alone or in teams?

Effect of excise people on you?

Type of Company?

work environment? -lunch room, shower room

labour relations

Fires/accidents/etc.

What did you think of closure? Was it expected?

ETC.

Glycol: brought in?

when did anti-freeze production end?

Was it an important product?

Memory of sounds, smells, movement of people do you have?

What other buildings did you work in?

When were Scales Building, Liquid Carbonic, etc demolished?

Interview Questions for Gooderham and Worts Employees  
Christopher Andreae, Historica Research Limited

## Interview Questions

The interviews are to obtain personal views and feelings about the recent history of working in the plant.

They are not intended to provide absolutely correct dates or historical facts.

Hopefully, the interviews will identify additional historic themes associated with the recent history of the plant.

### Identification

Who are you?

When did you start association with G&W? In what capacity?

What was your title and job description

- before closure of the plant

- after closure?

### Corporate Information

What was the importance of G&W within the corporate structure of HW?

How big, any brands, importance of licenses, distribution centre?

Was a corporate image of G&W maintained? - letterhead, labels

How much independence did the Toronto operation have?

What was: Consolidated Alcohols

Barclay Distillery

McGinnis Distillery

Did other HW Companies (ie Corby's) use property for warehouse, production, distribution, etc. Was it beverage or industrial?

What functions did HW carry out on property?

When did the Toronto Hiram Walker operation close at G&W?

How were HW and G&W activities separated on the property?

Separate maintenance, utilities?

Any management, staff links?

When did recognition of the historic significance of G&W occur?

What was relationship to 1970s application to demolish malthouse.

How does historic recognition relate to 1980s museum feasibility study.

Who at HW/G&W were responsible for these decisions?

When was the decision made to close the plant? Who made it?

Why - obsolete, change in markets, etc?



## Interview Questions

### Plant Process

What changes in process do you remember;  
alcohol: Was only molasses mash used?  
steam power - coal to oil  
water supply, fire protection

What kind of raw materials were used; what sources did they come from; were the large storage tanks at the west end of the property in use and did they carry glycol and molasses?

What kind of products and by-products were produced:  
any bottling or packaging on the property?  
when did anti-freeze production end? Was it an important product?  
What by-products were produced such as carbon dioxide, fusel oils, etc. and how were they handled?

What was the production relationship to Walkerville (sending of products for finishing; receiving of products for finishing, etc.)?

What means of transport were used: tank truck, rail car, pipelines, barrels, etc.  
when did rail delivery end  
when was track scale removed

What was the production importance of beverage alcohol; industrial alcohol?

What memory of sounds, smells, movement of people do you have?

### Physical Plant

What was the physical condition of the property at closure?

What kind of maintenance was carried out on the plant?

What were the empty buildings used for; the mill building, the malt house, etc.?

What was the capacity of the plant at closure; was it working at a fraction of its capacity; was it gradually run down towards the end?

Were there any problems with the plant due to the age or condition of equipment?

Were there any advantages to the plant due to the size of the equipment or location of the plant?

## Interview Questions

Was there any unusual equipment in use in Toronto either due to its age or type of process that was not common in other distilleries?

Why did the three scale tanks in Building 60 survive in such good conditions?

### People

How many employees?

Was there a labour peak and then gradual reduction?

Or, was work force stable

What were the types of job descriptions:  
skilled, unskilled, professional

Where tasks repetitive? Did one work alone or in teams, etc.?

Who were the excise people, job type, end of this task?

How would you describe your job? What kind of process were you involved with? Who were the people you worked with? Any comments about the work environment?

How was closure announced; how long did announcement occur before closure?

What did employees think of closure? Was it expected?

What was the significance of "Farewell Court"?

What was your feelings about the closure?

### Conclusion

Why was so much equipment painted -especially aluminum?

How did the movie business develop? Prior to closure?

Any other non-distilling activities on the property?

G&W was a private place until closure ?

When was property fenced to close Trinity Street?

When did property develop a public profile?

Are there any stories that you can remember about employees or working condition?

Are there any feelings you have about the property?

## Interview Questions

Are there any other people that you think I or somebody else involved in a oral history program should talk to?

### Technical

When were Scales Building, Liquid Carbonic, etc demolished?

When was G&W sign on malthouse installed -were there others?

Were enameled building signs and numbers always in place?