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Narrator

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Interviewer

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EH: My name is Eleanor Hallin. I was employed at Fairmont Foods in personnel. And one day there were two fine young men who came up to apply for work. There was only one who was interested, and that was George Sanda. And we happened to have a vacancy in our territory department so we did hire George Sanda. He did bring someone else with him. I think it was mostly for moral support. He brought Paul Eidbo with him. And I have Paul Eidbo here with me and we'd like you to tell us a little bit...First of all, tell us what your name is and maybe where you were born and a little bit about your education.

PE: Ah, thank you. I'm Paul Eidbo and I was born in Bowdon, North Dakota, which is about in the middle of North Dakota, in 1927. And grew up in that country and came down to Moorhead first in 1946 to attend Concordia College.

EH: And you graduated from Concordia about in...I think you said about 1949, is that right?

PE: Yes, I graduated in 1949.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: Yeah.

EH: Do you have anything you want to tell us about your parents? Anything at all that...?

PE: Well, my parents were in church work. My father was a Lutheran minister at Bowdon. And they had a desire to see all us children—there were ten of us children—and they wanted to see us given a chance to go to college. And primarily they liked us to go to Concordia College.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: So from my earliest youth I had heard about Concordia and there never seemed to be much discussion as to which college we'd ever go to but Concordia. And to make a long story short, all ten of us children attended Concordia College.

EH: Very good.

PE: And eight of us graduated and two transferred on to other schools.

EH: Then when you were in Moorhead, you did meet...you met your wife here in Moorhead, did you not?

PE: Yes, I made a lot of friends. One of them was this George Sanda, first of all, that you mentioned.

EH: Uh-huh.

PE: And ah...my wife was a student at Concordia also. She was born and raised here. Her name was Joyce Elmquist. And her father [Carl "Chester" Elmquist] was a honey producer that lived here in Moorhead and had a shop here.

EH: This is one of the reasons, I suppose, why you went into the bee business. Since your father in law was connected with it.

PE: Yes, that's right. I...

EH: Now what is the name of your company?

PE: We call our company now Eastgate Industries, Incorporated.

EH: And where did it get that name?

PE: Well, the shop or plant that we have here in Moorhead is located on Fourteenth Street and First Avenue North in Moorhead. And when we incorporated it, ah...there was quite a bit of debate about what name to give it. And ah...we both could recall that when First Avenue North used to be Highway 10, there was an archway or an arch sort of across First Avenue right at that corner. And on one of the posts was a small sign which just said, "Welcome to East Moorhead."

EH: I rather remember that, too, there from the days that I used to come in from Dilworth. I used to teach in Dilworth.

PE: Right.

EH: So I remember that.

PE: Well, we took our name from that. We combined east and the archway as a gate sort of and we came up with Eastgate. And we all agreed on that so that's what it became.

EH: That's quite interesting, too. So you are incorporated. That's...you and your father in law and your wife, is that right?

PE: Yes, it's a family corporation.

EH: And how many employees do you have besides?

PE: Well, in addition to ourselves we usually have five or...or more perhaps part time.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm. Ah...who does your bookkeeping?

PE: My wife is the bookkeeper and does the checks and enters the accounts in the books and then we of course have outside accountants.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: Tax people to help us there.

EH: Now you do have to follow a...there are rules and regulations, I suppose, in regard to your bookkeeping. I mean you have to have Social Security and fringe benefits...

PE: Oh, yes.

EH: And...and hmmm...

PE: We have to have...same as any other business, you have to have...withhold Social Security and we withhold taxes from the employees and we also have to pay workman's compensation and unemployment premiums.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm. You do follow pretty much the regulations of any other business, I suppose. What about...? You're not unionized, I don't imagine.

PE: No, we aren't.

EH: And what fringe benefits do they have? Do they have some kind of fringe benefits?

PE: Well, we...we provide a bonus based on production and upon completion of critical seasons in the year. And then the employees, if they stay through the main season, then at the end they get a bonus based on the production of that season.

EH: And you do have hospitalization.

PE: And we provide hospitalization and doctor insurance.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm. Tell us a little bit about that building you have. What...?

PE: Well, it's a building that was built originally for this purpose of honey production, and it was built in three different stages. It's a cement block building and it's a sturdy, good building, that's about all.

EH: And you do have insurance, of course, and heat and light to take care of there.

PE: Yes. Yes.

EH: Is that the original building that your father in law started?

PE: No. He originally came to Moorhead in about 1928, I suppose, 1929, somewhere in there. And has a...built a shop at...below his residence, which...the shop now is on the edge of Woodlawn Park in South Moorhead.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm. What do you...? Do you remember approximately when that was...when...whenever your business started?

PE: Well, my father in law started the business himself when he was a young boy. And he comes from down by Minneapolis, north of Minneapolis a little ways. And started in the honey business in 1916, I believe, 1915-16, and has been in it continuously ever since and is in it today and works every single day.

EH: And you joined him...? What year did you join him about then?

PE: [Sighs]

EH: Approximately.

PE: That's a good question.

EH: [Chuckles]

PE: I joined him about...I think it was about 1958.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: 1957-58.

EH: You have no retail business, do you? This is...

PE: No, ours is strictly a production procedure. We are...we're much like farmers. We produce a crop and we extract honey from the beehives. And then we ship it out bulk in liquid form in barrels by truckload to the processor and bottlers.

EH: In other words, you're a commercial producer.

PE: Right.

EH: Now you mentioned something about being a member of a honey production association. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

PE: Sioux Honey Association is an association of honey producers. There are about five hundred active members in the United States. And they range all the way from small beekeepers on up to large beekeepers or honey producers. And they have...six bottling plants, I believe, in the United States at present, and their main office is located in Sioux City, Iowa. And our production has always been among the larger members.

EH: Hmmm, what about your inventory? Do you...can you tell us a little bit about inventory?

PE: Well, we don't inventory any product as such. We...our warehouses are full of beehives and the supers that we use on the beehives in the summertime, plus the machinery and the trucks and various equipment for producing honey.

EH: How many trucks do you have over there? I know I've seen some of them over there and I've also seen some of your drivers. Do you have several?

PE: Yes, we have...I think seven units, if I'm not mistaken.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: From small trucks on up to semis.

EH: Now you also have to have some protective clothing, do you not, when you work with these bees?

PE: Well, you wear a veil usually over your face and head. And there's other clothing available like gloves to protect your hand and coveralls if you need them. Usually, when a person starts in the business, he's sensitive to bee stings and you'll give him all the clothing that he wants or...or should have. And they'll gradually become immune to bee stings. And as they do, why, they gradually get rid of most of their clothing. But usually they always wear a veil and...

EH: Mmmm-hmmm. Well, that's interesting. I didn't know you could...I've always been a little afraid of bees myself.

PE: [Chuckles]

EH: [Chuckles] That's why I thought maybe, well, it would be a little hard to work with them. But apparently you get quite used to that.

PE: Yes. No, you'll build immunity, so...it isn't very bad.

EH: Now your principal type of work, like you said, was raising honey and extracting it. Tell us a little bit about these farms that you have, that you...I'm a little interested in that.

PE: Well, we contact farmers in the area. And our area goes...in Minnesota and in North Dakota, we go into Minnesota probably as far as fifty miles, sixty miles; and in North Dakota in some areas we go out two hundred miles. And we contact the farmers in areas where we feel that there's enough flowering type plants to support the bees and from which the bees can get their nectar. In this area, that would...the biggest crop would be sunflowers now. It used to be sweet clover, now alfalfa. And ah...but as that's diminished, sunflowers have come in and...so, fortunately, that's a good honey plant. There are other types of honey plants like basswood trees make a good honey. Hmm...

EH: You said something about the leafy spurge, too.

PE: Leafy spurge, yeah. [Chuckles] That's a...

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: That's a weed that the farmers try to get rid of and have an awful time with it but actually the bees get a lot of nectar out of that in the early summer.

EH: Pollination is the main source or the main thing, I suppose.

PE: Pollination is what makes most of the farmers real receptive to letting you put bees on their land. They enjoy benefits from the pollination, primarily in sunflowers. And if they're raising seed for alfalfa seed or sweet clover seed, then pollination is usually necessary.

EH: It's...now, you contact the farmers, they do not contact you, is that right?

PE: Well, it works both ways. We have a lot of farmers contact us and request us to bring bees out and locate on their land.

EH: The reason I'm interested is because I have a brother living near McVille, North Dakota; that's where I grew up. And he has bees on his farm. So I do get a chance to taste some of the honey that you people do give them. I understand you give them...is it two cases of honey a year?

PE: Yes, we give each of the landowners an allotment of honey every year, and then that's in lieu of any other kind of payment. And on the other hand, we don't charge for any pollination that might accrue because of that because our bees are out there. But neither do we do any commercial pollination. We've done a minimum of it, but it's only been in some special cases.

EH: You said something about distance and from one farm to the next. How about...?

PE: Well, it's generally agreed among beekeepers that you should keep the bees about two miles from each other. And some feel that a mile apart for the bee yard locations is enough. But for instance, North Dakota has a state law that you can't be closer than two miles to the next beekeeper. And other states have that law, too. Minnesota doesn't have it now but others do.

EH: Hmm...now I remember as a child they used to swarm. Do you have any problems with anything of this type? Or what about that?

PE: Well, part of the management is to prevent swarming. And good bee management would take that into account and try to keep swarming at a minimum. There's...there's swarming that takes place, but it's...like I say, it's minimal.

EH: So that is not a problem.

PE: No.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm. And of course, like you said, you have to have licensing and bees and so forth for all of these, too. Do you ever have any auditors that come in and check on you, or like any person...?

PE: Well, we have...aside from the usual auditors as far as our financial books, we have the normal amount there. But we also have bee inspectors that are employed by the state, various states. And because of a disease called foulbrood, they've always inspected bees. That disease used to be very...and still is very contagious. And there was no known cure for it. And if you got foulbrood in the beehives, the state would make you burn them. And now we've...we're fortunate to have modern medicines, I guess, like Terramycin, and we can actually keep foulbrood at bay. A new threat now, too, in the beekeeping industry is the mite. It's a new mite that infects the bees. And we've been clean in the United States of this mite up until the last couple years. And that mite has come in now, and so the inspection services are getting more concentrated all the time. If you...we operate in other states, and each state has their own inspectors. And each state will inspect you even though one state has [already]; the others will want to do their own also. So there's a lot of inspecting going on.

EH: Which is very good because otherwise there could be problems, I'm sure, with...

PE: Oh, yes.

EH: So that's a good thing. Now in the...as I understand it, maybe is it in the fall you go down to Texas? Or what happens when winter comes?

PE: Well, after our honey season in North Dakota-Minnesota...and we depopulate approximately eighty percent of our hives. And the rest, the other twenty percent, we keep and transport to Texas. And those hives are used almost like seed. From them we raise bees in the winter in Texas. And we raise all new queens and then we repopulate all the hives that we depopulated in the fall. And when we start, we start moving to Texas in about the middle or end of November,

and we usually get all our live hives down into Texas before the first of the year. And then again we...our whole crew will move down to Texas as they have now. And oh, we make up all these hives and so on and get them ready, raise all the queens. And then we'll start moving back into this country end of April and first of May.

EH: Well, that's quite interesting. I have seen...[Coughs] Excuse me. I have seen some of your drivers and it seems to me they travel quite frequently.

PE: Yes.

EH: To Texas. [Coughs and clears throat] Now I'd like to know a little bit about your civic and political involvements that you have been involved in, excluding your present occupation. I know you were a County Commissioner at one time.

PE: Well, yes, I...ah...where do you want me to start on, the politics or...?

EH: Well, I think it'd be alright to start in the politics. That's a good...Wouldn't...?

PE: Okay.

EH: Wouldn't you rather start in that?

PE: Well, I got interested in politics when I first got into business in Moorhead. And I took it to be a person's patriotic duty to be involved and be aware of what was going on in politics, and so I got involved in politics. I remember I attended a precinct caucus the first time. And ah...I know another time I heard there was a county convention and I...I became a Republican. I don't know exactly why I chose Republican, but that's what I did. And I heard the Republicans were having a county convention downtown in the Comstock Hotel. In fact, down in the basement. And so I happened to be down near there, I was looking around to see what was going on. And I met one of your old timers out in front of the hotel and was talking to him and he...

EH: Was that Fred Bailing[sp?]?

PE: No, that wasn't Fred that time.

EH: [Chuckles]

PE: That was Inge...[Arlen] Inge[hart] Stangeland.

EH: Oh, mmmm-hmmm.

PE: Our present representative's father. [Chuckles] And he asked me if I wanted to attend the convention and I said...I said, "Yes, I sure would like to." So he took me down, and he was going to the convention, too. And I remember that convention because there were only about ten people at it, at the whole convention. And ah...well, from there on it kept going. And I went back

out and I went to the next precinct caucus and was elected the precinct chairman. Because in those days it was at a very low ebb in the political activity here and ah...so anybody that would take the job was...in fact, had it. [Chuckles] And I remember there was...Gaylord Saetre was...who is a present judge here now, was chairing that particular precinct caucus. And so I was elected precinct delegate...or a precinct chairman that time.

EH: Well, that is interesting because I was a chairwoman of the Clay County Republican Party with the...when Judge Gaylord Saetre was chairman.

PE: Oh, yes.

EH: So we worked together and we had some interesting times.

PE: Yes.

EH: We went to St. Paul. You went to the convention, I suppose, at St. Paul.

PE: Well, I worked in the politics...ah...got real interested in it and worked quite a bit, actually. And worked through all the various offices for [unclear] I became the second ward chairman in those days. Then I got up to the city chairman and after that I well, got...actually ran in a contest for the vice chairman of the county. And by that time the county Republican Party was becoming more active all the time. And so to be vice chairman you had to run for office, and it was a heated contest, and I was elected. And then from there I became county chairman.

EH: It's interesting, too. I'm also interested in knowing how you...how come you met Governor LeVander? Tell me a little bit about that.

PE: Well, I...I was active, as I said. I was a district and state delegate from the county then to the Republican conventions. And we had several candidates running for governor, including...I think it was John Pillsbury and a man by the name of Randall, he was an attorney in St. Paul or Minneapolis and Harold LeVander.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: And again, I chose to support Harold LeVander for the governorship. And as it turned out, there were not too many supporters of him out in this area. And ah...so...and I was enthusiastic. I worked hard for him and got to know him and his staff pretty good. And as it turned out, he was elected governor. So I continued our relationship with him for...through his term.

EH: You were even offered some kind of a job with him, too, were you not?

PE: Yes, he offered me different jobs and...or...or appointments. I...I didn't want any job. And...[sighs] He told me the story then that he had a hard time to believe that, he said, because since he became governor he...he never had a phone call or a person enter his office unless they wanted something.

EH: That's so true.

PE: And so it was...he was, I guess, pleased that somebody didn't want everything. [Chuckles] But I did...he did appoint me to a commission, and I served on that without pay, but...it was an experience I enjoyed.

EH: Then later did you become the County Commissioner later after that? Or was that...?

PE: Yes, after that I...in fact it was, I believe, in 1969 I ran for county commissioner from the Fifth District of Moorhead and won that election. And I served four years and took my term as Chairman of the County Board for one year. And it was then that we started our operation of taking our bees to Texas. And so it became impossible for me to fulfill that... the duties of County Commissioner and still travel back and forth to Texas.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: So I didn't run again.

EH: Now I think we should know a little bit...you married Joyce and you have, did you say, six? Is it six children?

PE: Yes, we have six children. We have four boys and two girls.

EH: And what are their names?

PE: Well, Carl is the oldest and he's thirty-two years old. And then we have Eric, and Louise, and Joel, Robert, and Emily is our youngest. And all six of them have completed college. Three of them...I shouldn't say completed, the youngest one, Emily, is a senior at Concordia College now. We had three at Concordia College and we had one graduate from Bemidji State and one from Moorhead State, and one from Texas Lutheran in Seguin, Texas. So they all got a college education.

EH: Are there any grandchildren?

PE: And then I have...we have one grandchild. That's our oldest son and his wife Marilyn have a daughter named Ashley and they live in Fargo.

EH: Oh, they live in Fargo. And you just went to a wedding in Texas, as I understand it.

PE: Yes. And our second son just married a Texan. So we all went down for that wedding.

EH: Yes. And you're going back to Texas now, as I understand, maybe next week, is that right?

PE: Yes, I'm leaving shortly for Texas. And I'll spend considerable time down there now, like a couple months, with our men and crew and stuff and get bees ready for coming back.

EH: So it's not a vacation exactly, hmmm?

PE: [Laughs] No!

EH: [Chuckles]

PE: [Chuckling] I like to let people think it is. But actually, we work...and the men work quite hard down there.

EH: And of course you're going to escape a lot of our cold weather yet, so...

PE: Right.

EH: You're not coming back until May, you said.

PE: No.

EH: So that's going to be kind of nice. Now how do you feel about running a business in Moorhead?

PE: Well, Moorhead is a fine community. We...my wife and I chose Moorhead. We didn't accidentally get here. We liked Moorhead from our school days and we wanted to live in Moorhead. And originally I worked other places, and we couldn't wait to get back to Moorhead. And I feel Moorhead is a real good town for business or otherwise.

EH: That's nice to hear. Hmmm. You told me once about that you were...you taught at Dazey, is that right? You taught at Dazey?

PE: Yes.

EH: And I thought...in regard to banks, when we were talking about banks, you said something about doing business with the bank about...one thing you did was in regard to these warrants that you got from when you were teaching school.

PE: Yes.

EH: Now tell us a little bit about that.

PE: Well, after I graduated from college, my first job was teaching out at Dazey, North Dakota. And I still had a lot of friends in Moorhead, be from the school days. And so we'd come here quite often to visit over the weekends. And I was paid normally out there at Dazey. And one weekend I came down with my check and went to First National Bank to cash the check. And the

teller said I'd have to have an officer approve that check because it was out of town. So she directed me to an officer who I didn't know at all. And he looked at it and invited me to be seated and he explained to me that the check was really a warrant. And it was a...it was good only if the money was in the bank. So he invited me to just wait a moment and he'd call the bank for me. And which he did, he called the bank in Hannaford [North Dakota] and they assured him the check was good and...or the warrant was good. And...and everything was fine.

Well, I was quite appreciative of his help, and I offered to pay him for the long distance phone call. And, "My goodness, no," he said. He was just so happy that we were...that young people and teachers from North Dakota or wherever would come into his bank that he was glad to do it. And I guess to make a long story short [chuckles] I...that was my first meeting with Mr. Morritson[sp?]. And I've always held him in high regard ever since. And I still have an account in that particular bank to this day. And when I'm solicited by other banks to withdraw any accounts there and put it in other banks, I always tell that story, because to me he was a real nice friend.

EH: Yes, I knew Mr. Morritson, too. I was manager of our credit union at Fairmont Foods. So I did a little business with him, too.

PE: Yeah.

EH: And I found him very helpful in many ways.

PE: Yes.

EH: He was the president of the bank, wasn't he?

PE: Yes, I believe so.

EH: I think he was, too. Would you recommend any changes that we might do in Moorhead? Can you think of anything that you think should be changed?

PE: Well, I used to be quite involved in the citywide activities as well as the county activities. And I guess since I've been out of it now for several years, I haven't really kept myself abreast of all the things that are going on. And I am not...I'm just not sure that I am qualified to give too much of an opinion there.

EH: What do you think about the future of Moorhead as far as the business community is concerned?

PE: Well, I...I don't think that we should, you know, worry too much about growing to be some industrial complex out here. I don't think that's our role. We have a nice residential town. We have two excellent colleges. And I think the colleges and the community can interact in a supportive way to each other. And whereas we need some industry and always welcome

industry. I don't think that we can, you know, get just all hung up on trying to get industry and forget everything else.

EH: I also see that at one time you were a member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Are you a member of the Chamber of Commerce now?

PE: No, I am not.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm.

PE: I was a member of the Junior Chamber. I was a member of this Chamber of Commerce for a while too, until I...my activities took me out of here so much that I am no longer a member.

EH: You're pretty busy. You're also a member of the Minnesota Beekeepers Association and the National Beekeepers Association.

PE: Yes.

EH: And I suppose that keeps you quite busy.

PE: Well, we...we have these associations and I haven't been as active there as I probably could have. And I did serve on the Minnesota Beekeepers Association. And I was...I stood for election as vice chairman of the Minnesota Beekeepers Association with the provision that I wouldn't be named chairman. [Chuckles] And I have been active somewhat there.

EH: And you're also active in your church, in The Good Shepherd [Lutheran Church].

PE: Yes.

EH: Mmmm-hmmm. Well, I think that pretty much covers...is there anything else that you'd like to mention that you think would be interesting? In regard to your bees or anything of that type?

PE: Well, not particularly, Eleanor. I...I enjoy what you're doing because I think it's so important to...not necessarily to get people my age but people at least my age and older and record some of the happenings that have gone on here. We've had some illustrious people, if we could only know their whole stories. And I have been fortunate to meet many of them, as you have. We mentioned...you mentioned Fred Bailing[sp?], well, he was a...he was a statewide figure here in Minnesota. He was a political activist and I remember getting advice and counsel from Fred and it was always right. I remember going to state conventions, and at one particular convention they were lining up for candidacy to the governorship. And it was a foregone conclusion, you had to get Fred Bailing's blessing before you could even be named a candidate. And there's many people here like that in various fields. Ah...and I...I just want to say, I want to encourage you to keep...keep on and...

EH: Well, thank you. I think it's a good project also. And I think we learn so much. Now I never knew that there was so much business in regard to the bee industry either. When you look at it from the beginning, it doesn't look like it'd be so complicated.

PE: No.

EH: You see, for someone.

PE: It's a low key industry. And our industry, for instance, we don't sell any products to the public. And so you really don't know...hear too much about it. And beekeeping has...in the past has been more of a hobby than a full time occupation. And so, consequently, a lot of people aren't aware of it. There's a lot of business there.

EH: Are there very many farmers now who have their own like they used to?

PE: Not really. That's disappeared pretty well. There's a few that have a few bees and we still enjoy many hobbyists around here but not on the scale it used to be.

EH: Which is a good thing as long as...see, they have to be...you have to be licensed and everything has to be inspected and that...

PE: Yes.

EH: If the average farmer has his own, a lot of that time...a lot of that might not be done.

PE: But we work...and most of the commercial operators will work with the hobbyists or with the farmers if they want a hive or two of their own. We'll provide them with the medications and with inspections and this type of thing. Because it's an industry where we...we're dependent totally on the farmer for our bee pasture. And so we have to, whether we want to or not. And...and I'd prefer to want to. We have to work with them.

EH: I think that's a very good idea. I never realized that there was medicine that you could give.

PE: [Chuckles] Yes.

EH: For such things as you mentioned. Well, thank you so very much, Paul. I think that this is information that's well worth keeping.

PE: You're welcome.

[End of interview]