



Peter Hopps

B.Sc. (Agr.) 1969

Interviewed by Logan Tyszka

So, how's the weather down in, California?

Well, it was cool last night. It would be maybe 15 °C today. It's nice and sunny. Pretty normal for October for California. I'm down on the ocean area. Channel Islands by Ventura, south of Santa Barbara an hour, I guess, right by the ocean. It's always cool for us, you know, 15 °C is cool for us, sort of thing. So, it's nice.

So, can I ask you, what major are you in, or are you just starting out or? Do you know what you're doing yet, or?

Currently I'm pursuing major in history but, I don't know, I don't know if it could change, but right now I'm enjoying it.

I'm a 69 graduate. So, you know, if I go back 1000 years, they used to have two years of general, then two years of whatever you wanted your major to be. Is it the same way now, or is it different?

It's pretty different as in, if I want to pursue this major, I have specific classes I have to take throughout my whole career. So, if I want to continue this, I'm doing two courses this semester of history. I have two more required next year. And I have to have at least eight courses in history to be able to graduate from a history major.

I majored in dairy science back then. Now they just have food science. Right. There's no dairy specific, there's not enough people. There was only three in our class. In our lectures, we used to kind of sit around in tables, it was kind of unique with only three students. I forget when they closed down the dairy; it got sucked into the food science. I imagine food science is still there. Now, Dr. Goff, I don't know if you know him, he was the head of food science. I had him over in Korea. We'll get into that. But I had him over in Korea a few years back and he did a lecture for the team over there. I lived in Korea for seven years, helped them build some factories for Baskin Robbin. So, but that was Dr. Goff. He actually came over and, and we paid him, and he did great. He was the one that got me into doing stuff with OAC as an alumnus. They did an article on me, a

few years ago. I forget who it was. It might be good for you if I can find that. I don't know if I can find it but.

I'll try to find it.

It was a couple years ago. Some lady did it. She was really neat. Ok. Enough of me. What do you need and want to know?

I'm mainly asking you about your experience here at the University of Guelph. Are you still friends with people from university, for example.

I got out in '69, so we'll see what I remember! So, four years, two general, two specific in dairy. We lived in the admin building, believe it or not. The admin building is still there with the cannon and all that, right?

Oh, yes.

We lived in the admin building for two years. Back then, you could actually have your dorm in the admin building. So, for the first two years we lived there and then the last two, we moved out, like most people, I guess, and rented a basement of a house, a couple of guys, you know, and we spent the last two years doing that. So, that was rather unique. We painted the cannon. I don't know if you paint that cannon anymore.

It still happens.

So that was a big deal. And we took all animal husbandry and all that stuff. And we went into physics and the dairy stuff, of course. Dr. Pearson, he's long retired, he's probably dead now. Dr. Pearson. And then there's a few other doctors that were head of the dairy science and we made all the cheeses and the different kinds of milk and yogurts and stuff in the dairy. It was nice, I really enjoyed it. To me, in retrospect, why do you go to university? Why do you go to the University of Guelph? Well, obviously I was a dairy guy since I was 15. I worked in a dairy. My boss said go to University of Guelph, do it right. Get a degree. I was from Oshawa - GM Town, didn't think much about it, but I thought, oh, heck and I applied to the university. Well, why not? The best thing I ever did, and I didn't know it at the time. I was 18 or something like that, maybe, 19. The beauty of it for me was learning the right way and the scientific way, it made me more of a scientific buff. So, it obviously taught you all the, the things you normally learn in university, the classes. But then you meet a lot of people from all over the world and that's a neat experience in itself that makes you grow up, it makes you more open to the world of today, specifically today, and more tolerant to people because people from all over the world come there, and that was a key learning too because you room with guys from South America or South Africa, I guess it was and stuff like that. So that was a key learning thing and, and to learn how their culture is as well as your culture. Guelph is a

cool place anyways. Now, it's a lot different. Our 55-year reunion is coming up next June. I hoping to come do it. See how many are alive.

So that was one of the other key things I liked about it. Of course, you're away from home, you're more responsible. I had a car; I had no money. So, everybody chipped in for gas, for the car back then. If you had a car that was unique, right? The only real regret I have is that I didn't get a master's. I just got a bachelor's degree. I should have gotten a master's that would have done better for me in business. I worked for a company called Silverwood's, it used to be the biggest Canadian dairy there was, and I was never going to work for an American firm. I was always going to stick with a Canadian dairy. I joined them and we were an experiment for Silverwood Dairies myself and Dave Goslin, he was graduated the year before me. We were an experiment for a Canadian area to try university students because usually they don't know much, you know, they're not dairy people. They haven't come up, you know, all that stuff, old school. And we did ok. We were smart.

Silverwood's went into chapter 11 and Baskin Robbins had the first right of refusal to purchase the facility, which they did. I was leading the BR production for Canada then and had the top quality and lowest cost Baskin Robbins facility in North America at that time. So, they asked me to move to Glendale, CA, USA, to work on International Baskin Robbins manufacturing development. So, I moved, and became an international manufacturing director for Baskin Robbins.

I read a small thing about, about you, how you were a graduate, how you were helping over 300 Baskin Robbins. That's this short article I read.

Yes, that was Canada. But when I became international, when I came down to the States to California, I traveled around the world opening plants: Russia, Japan, Korea, China, India, Australia, we messed around there. I ran around international troubleshooting for Baskin Robbins making this stuff, the right way. I met Irv Robbins before he died. Learned a lot from him. I was a Canadian, but I had a dairy science degree, that meant a lot. I didn't think so before, but I knew then that I should have got a master's, you know. I did that for 40 years. I'm still on contract with Japan until Christmas because they're redoing their plant and expanding. We developed a thing called Peace Cakes for BR. It's unique. I'm still doing it but on contracts as a consultant. That's a better deal. If you ever get down the road, be a consultant, it's a good deal. So, all the years are just Baskin Robbins. Because of the University of Guelph, because you have to have that degree, especially today. Today, you probably have to have a PhD or a master's but, if it wasn't for Guelph, I don't think I'd probably be where I am today. I didn't know it then. But thanks to that Dr. Pearson and the gang and Dr. Goff. If you ever run into him there, say hi to him for me. In the years I was there, I met a lot of people. We did a lot of crazy things that I don't want to get into. But the normal stuff and we went to downtown Guelph and all that and, the atmosphere was good. I took a computer course as an elective just for fun because I thought computers might be important down the road. I'm talking '69 or '68 or '67 here. They might be important down the road. You

didn't know, right? They had the cards with the holes punched in them to give you some idea. You've probably never even seen that. But that's how it started. That was a tough course, logic and all that, zeros and ones, the binary code, all basic stuff. Now you don't even think about it. I'm glad I did that. If it wasn't for Guelph, I wouldn't have done it. You know, I wouldn't have been there. I wish I would have taken a secretarial course on how to type better and an agricultural course, how to do horticulture, how to do gardens better at home and stuff like that. All the stuff I never thought about that was available at Guelph. I think they have people that help you out, I don't know what they call them nowadays, but do you have somebody you go to and say, What do I want to be? Where do I want to go? What do I have to do? There are people like that that you can go speak to.

I think that's guidance counseling. I don't think that's a course.

Maybe not in history? But it's nice to do if you got somebody kind of help you. What should I take. What's good for me down the road? What do you want to be? And that's hard because they never prepare you for that stuff enough, I don't think. But what do I have to do to get there? What are my options? Things you don't think about when you're young. It doesn't hurt to at least get an idea of what's out there. It's a big world. It's bigger than Canada, believe it or not. And a lot of great cultures, great people and business is business. You know, you have to be tough in business. You eat your young in business. You have to be tough. My philosophy always was and always will be, you deal from strength, and you deal from strength because you got a good degree because you're good and focused in, let's say history or whatever you want. You got that background. If you don't have that background, it's not as fulfilling. You got that and they can't mess with you, you know, that's how I felt. So, I went down to California and said, listen, I know how to make this stuff and I do it right, leave me alone and they left me alone, they let me do it. So, you don't mess up, but you deal from what you've learned. Guelph gave me that. It probably could have given me a lot more, if I would have paid more attention, if I hadn't played virgin poker all the time. We used to play in the old cafeteria there. It's probably gone now.

All right. I don't mean to interrupt but unfortunately Zoom is you have to upgrade to pro to extend the time. So, we only have eight minutes. I'm just going to give you some rapid-fire questions. So, the first question is just, why Guelph? Because you probably had a lot of options but why, why did you come here?

When I was 15, I worked in Oshawa for Ideal Dairy, which was bought out and is probably closed by now. The manager, his name was Wilf Pasco. He was my mentor. He was a bitch of a boss, but he was a good boss and I'm 15, 16, 17, right? I'm getting paid cash. I'm cleaning the floors in the dairy, and you know, cleaning up. I really liked it. And I said, well, I'm going to leave in another year and work for General Motors. My dad did. Make lots of money. And he says, listen, you like the dairy business. You're good at it. Why don't you try to go to this place called the University of Guelph? They major in

that stuff. Why don't you try it? And he prodded me on it. He's the reason I applied to Guelph. It's the only university I applied to. I didn't care. I was dumb, young, and stupid. And he said, go for it, get a degree because he wanted me to come back to run the dairy. He said you go get a degree in university and you can run the dairy, take over as general manager later on. I never even thought of that, you know. And then as I said, I got into Guelph and then I wanted to work for the biggest dairy in Canada. When you're 18, you don't have any experience. So, I had this degree and that helped me get into Silverwood's. My mentor - he has a book out. It is called The Story of the Milkman. I don't have it. It's an old book. I don't know if you, you could maybe find it somewhere. He's in there. They created the bag machine - that triple bag pouch machine, you know, pouch that you get milk in, do you still get it? He created that. He brought it to Canada. He's a guy. I was the one running the machine, you know, and him and Stan Bag and a couple of other guys in this book, they, they ended up going into bulk tankers. They used to have eight-gallon cans to haul stuff from the farm. These guys put together a bulk tanker. You can't even think of it not having a bulk tanker hauling milk from the farms. These guys started it. So, I was really lucky to be involved with Wilf. And then when I came to California Norm Klipfel, took me under his wing because he was the head of everything. And I was the lowest cost producer and the highest quality br and all the systems in the world for a lot of different reasons. But these two guys shaped my life. University of Guelph gave me the base and thank goodness for Wilf and Norm, these guys kind of kept me on the straight path to do the right thing. But Wilf's the guy that got me to go to university and I never looked back. I worked for the government Cream Quality Control Program in the summers to make money for my car. I was always working, and I worked the weekends - I was a janitor cleaning the Dairy Science building for money for the car and for the courses and stuff, you know, pay for it all. If it wasn't for me working in that little Ideal Dairy, I'd have been working for General Motors, I guess. Boy am I lucky. I got a good mentor. Got to get that. It doesn't hurt. I don't know if you get one in history but, I'd look for one. They, help.

**All right. What was it like when you first came on Guelph campus?
Like, did you like it? Did you not like it first, but it grew on you.**

I was petrified. I was scared. I'm a local boy from Oshawa, you know, big university. I was scared. My dad took me and dropped me off and then as soon as I met the guys in the dormitory. It was three of us who lived together, Joe and, Ernie and myself. They were Aggies but they were dealing with farming. Then once you meet your buddies then all of a sudden, it's ok. That's why it's kind of nice to room with some guys because then you're not alone. That was the biggest thing. It was big, a lot of people. Scary. And you're on your own, mom and dad aren't there, right? You're on your own. You grow up and that's the other thing that a university gives you if you live on campus, not at home.

I live on campus but the only reason I came to Guelph is because of my parents worked here.

Oh, that's handy. But stay away from them, you know, do your own thing, you know what I mean? Don't recognize them when you walk down the street, and they pass you. I'm kidding. But, yes, it was scary. But then you meet the guys and, you know, all of a sudden, you're ok. And you learn to adjust and adapt, that's important, adjust and adapt and grow up. You've got to do your laundry, you've got to show up for meals and you know, all this stuff. It's the best time of your life and you don't even know it.

Oh, yeah, I look back at this four years, four years down the road and I'll be like, man, I wish I was back in uni.

And you will, you will. Yeah. All right. We're, yeah, we're really close to running out of time.

Not a problem. Ok. Is there any, like, photos you have of university that you would be willing send me to share anything?

Oh, no, they'd be long gone. I'm not a memory type guy. We didn't have cell phones and that kind of stuff. No, I'm sorry. I don't have anything like that.