

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: L. R. John Baxendale - CSEG Presidency

INTERVIEWER: David Finch

DATE: May 2000

Video: 18:01.17.10

DF: Today is the 24th day of May in the year 2000 and we are with Mr. L. R. Baxendale at the offices of the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicist in Calgary. My name is David Finch. Can you tell us how you first came to be associated with the CSEG?

LB: I can't remember just exactly when I joined but I presume I joined when I moved to Calgary and that would be when I went to work for Great Plains as a geophysicist in 1966. That's when it would be, right.

Video: 18:02.06.15

DF: Okay. And what was the CSEG's role in the oil patch in those days, why did you join?

LB: It really wasn't very prominent. We were trying to learn about the seismic business because we were all new to this type of work in Canada and the easiest way to do that was to have meetings and try to find people who were experts. Most of those experts came up from the States to give us lectures. But we certainly didn't have an office or anything like that during those early days.

Video: 18:02.53.27

DF: But you were competitors weren't you?

LB: We were all competitors. But we were in different parts of it. Some of the people who were in it were the people who did the field work. Like, the people who owned seismic companies were in it, they wanted to learn too. Others of us of course, worked for various oil companies. But Calgary was always different than any other place in that competitors were friends. And you won't find that any other place in the world I don't think, other than here.

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DF: How do you explain that?

LB: The only way I can explain it, I think the Canadian is a bit more trusting person, a bit friendly than people from other parts of the world.

Video #18:03.42.10

#030 DF: How did you come to be on the executive of the CSEG?

LB: I'm pretty sure that my good friend Pete Savage had something to do with that because he seemed to like that sort of work all his career and I think he's the one who got me into it. I can remember giving a paper when I was in London, actually I gave the paper to the

geologists because the geophysicists didn't want me at that stage, or they weren't. I don't think they were prominent enough, but I did give a paper on exploration in offshore England at that stage. I guess I'm like a lot of the Calgarians and it didn't matter who taught me, I was willing to listen. I felt if I was going to be in the business that I should be part of it.

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DF: You were President in 1970 but you probably spent a few years on the executive before that, what else did you do?

LB: Not really. It was so new that in those days we didn't have many sub-committees. I think the reason that I got on to it was that I was the co-Chair of the SEG Convention which was in Calgary in 1969. Pete Savage was the Chair and I was the co-Chair and I had attended conventions in the States before that so I was familiar with the way that they operated. So that's what really got me going I guess.

Video: 18:05.32.28

DF: The SEG coming to Calgary was a big deal wasn't it?

LB: It was a huge deal, yes. I think it was the first time it had been out of the States, I'm positive it was. So we wanted to show them and we did.

Video: 18:05.49.03

DF: How so?

LB: We had all kinds of exhibits and displays around the city, wherever we could put a bunch of trucks together or a bunch of drilling equipment, we had them, they weren't necessarily in the Convention Centre, they were all over the city where it was convenient to do this sort of thing. And we entertained them in a much different way. I don't think we took them to a Stampede that year, but when they come back they're going to the Stampede. It was because we all pulled together so much better than the other groups did.

Video: 18:06.34.15

DF: What were your specific duties as co-Chair of the SEG Convention?

LB: David, I don't think I can remember, but I think Pete and I used each other as a sounding board more or less, just to see what was going on. Of course, when people came to town before the convention then one or the other of us was always there to help them. I think we just helped coordinate things.

Video #18:07.07.04

#060 DF: Let's talk about the year you were President, that's 1970. In the Annual Report for that year, you mention something about a week long session of 11 geophysics professors from across Canada. What was that all about?

LB: This was another way of us trying to learn. But besides that, when we had talked to some of the geophysics professors in the various universities we found that they knew nothing about the seismic business and we felt that it was time that they learned something about the seismic business. We learned about their business and we tried to figure out how we could help each other so that was why we organized that group of people.

Video: 18:07.54.21

DF: And the forestry seminar?

LB: The government of course. . . . [stopped the tape for something]

Video: 18:08.05.25

DF: Okay, what were we talking about, the SEG?

LB: Yes, we were talking about the SEG and why Calgary seems to be able to do such a good job on these conventions and what's our incentive for doing that.

Video: 18:08.33.17

DF: Where do you get all the people for them?

LB: There's a big industry in Calgary. It's changed. It used to be people who were strictly in geophysics but now you've got all the processing power from the various companies that do digital work for us and the oil companies have still got a lot of geophysical personnel.

Video: 18:09.05.06

DF: But you were also talking about the volunteer spirit, could you say more about that?

LB: Whenever I've gone. . . I've gone to a convention in New Orleans, I've gone to one in Houston, and I've found those rather cold. But when people come here, all of the local people will go out of their way to talk to them and make sure that they know where they're going or if they don't know how to do something, they'll help them do it or they'll even take them. They'll get in their car and take them someplace if they want to do it. And that's unusual.

Video #18:09.52.03

#090 DF: The year you were President, a plane load of people went to the SEG in New Orleans.

LB: That was a fantastic experience.

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DF: So tell us about that.

LB: I can't for sure remember how it was organized but I know someone came to me and I said let's do it. We had no trouble filling an airplane up to take people down there. And then, after the convention, we took them over to the Caribbean for awhile, for I think, the weekend, and back again. It worked out so successful that they did it again.

Video: 18:10.37.23

DF: How big a plane was it?

LB: It must have held 100 people anyway.

Video: 18:10.45.04

DF: And the CSEG put that all together?

LB: Yes. Now, in those days you've got to realize that the airplane business wasn't doing that

well. An airplane went down and sat for us for a week in New Orleans and it sat for us over on one of the islands and flew us back. So it was great. And of course, when you take a group of people like that then they meld together too and they get to know each other better, so it was good publicity for the CSEG.

Video: 18:11.22.03

DF: What has been the role of the Ladies' Auxiliary?

LB: It's a changing role. In those days. . . in the 70's and the 80's, the Auxiliary did. . .well, they started off by helping us with the conventions, they did all of the registering and they provided entertainment for the ladies who came up as wives of the geophysical people. So they looked after them. This hadn't been done in other conventions either, so these people were treated extremely well from that standpoint. We put on. . . I think we put on a little stampede for them someplace but I can't remember for sure. So when they came up here, the first time they came up they were so impressed that they were ready to come back to another convention here without any problem.

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118 DF: Tell us about the spring dance and the ski weekend?

LB: I can't remember much about the spring dance David, but I know the ski weekend is still going. Now, the ladies have taken that over and they organize that now. It used to be held out at. . .oh, it was in the Windermere Valley, I guess it still is, isn't it. It's not at Panorama but it's right across the valley from there, I forget where it is. I'm not a skier so I've never gone. They go out and they can either do downhill or cross country skiing in that. So it's a going success. Now, the Ladies' Auxiliary, nowadays all the wives are working and so they don't have the time to do this sort of thing and the Ladies' Auxiliary, I think, has really slowed up as a result of that. It's not that well organized I don't think. I don't know what they'll do for this convention that's coming up.

Video: 18:13.51.28

DF: This is the 50th Anniversary of the CSEG, what do you think of it's 50 years, what it can do in the future?

LB: Well, it's been a great 50 years. And I think they've accomplished tremendous things through this idea of trying to boost us all as far as science is concerned and expose us to new thinking. But I don't know what's going to happen from now on.

Video: 18:14.35.18

DF: Okay. Well, on behalf of the CSEG and the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project, I'd like to thank you for very much for spending this time with us and allowing us to record your recollections and we'll end the interview at this time. Thank you very much.

LB: Thank you for doing it, I appreciate it. Good.