

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Mary Dickson

INTERVIEWER: W. J. Wood

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Jim: Mary I wonder if we could start off by your just talking about your family background a little bit. When and where were you born?

Mary: I was born in Hamilton, Scotland and my family decided to come to Edmonton in 1913 and the reason we came to Edmonton, my aunt and uncle were already established in Edmonton and they had come in 1902. And it was just to better the family fortunes. The jobs were just whatever they could do, labour. . .or my father worked in the coal mines for a little while. Then he decided to try out in a general store and that didn't work out, then he tried selling insurance and that didn't work out. Then in 1914 the war broke out and he had been with the militia in Scotland, so he joined up and went overseas. And my brother who was only 17, he joined the army too and he was a prisoner of war when he was only 17 years old.

#018 Jim: Did he survive that?

Mary: Yes he survived, he came back. Edmonton was a very small city in those days and there were a lot of families like us, their husbands had come from the old country, England and Scotland and Ireland and they joined up because they were patriotic and wanted to defend the old land.

Jim: What do you recall of growing up in Edmonton at that time?

Mary: I was very happy. We had a very happy home life. I had five brothers and. . .

Jim: Were you the only daughter?

Mary: I was the only girl until my sister arrived. She arrived a year after we came here. There were lots of empty lots around and we played baseball and then the church had tennis clubs and lots of community. . .

Jim: Where were you living then, do you recall?

Mary: Yes. We were living north of Alberta Ave. and 95th Street. It was a small community. And there were several churches there that had places for young people. We didn't pay much attention to what faith we belonged to, we went to St. ??? Anglican for the young people's. They had a very active young people's at St. ??? and my best friend belonged to St. ??? so of course I went to St. ???, the young people's. And then my family were Presbyterian so we went to Ersley??? Presbyterian. And then we went to the public school up until grade 8 and it was called after Bishop Gray, it was called the H.A. Gray School. I think I was lucky, I had a good experience there with the teachers. Then when we went to high school, it was grade 9 and 10, and that was Commercial High School. And that's

when we got to know Mr. Page and started playing basketball. Although we had played basketball in public school. But public school just had outside courts, but in high school we had the indoor gym.

#049 Jim: Right, so you could play in the winter too.

Mary: So we played in the evenings. . .well, we didn't play evenings until after we were graduated. But somehow or other Mr. Page got permission from the School Board, in those days the School Board were very particular and he got permission for us to practice at the Commercial High School gymnasium.

Jim: Well, we'll talk about the basketball in a little bit. How was it with five brothers, were they supportive or was it a struggle?

Mary: Oh, yes. There were little fights but we got along very well. My two eldest brothers also joined the army. My eldest brother was with the Princess Pat's. He came back, they all came back and then he moved out to Vancouver.

Jim: What was your first job, I guess you graduated from the Commercial School?

Mary: My first job was a two week job with the Edmonton Bulletin. I worked for the Honourable Frank Oliver and I was scared stiff. But I was only there for two weeks because the girl was on holiday. Then I worked for Soldier's Settlement Board, you see that's after all the soldiers came back in 1919. And they had opened up this Soldier's Settlement Board where men could apply for farms. They weren't really farms, they were homesteads.

#065 Jim: In the Edmonton area?

Mary: In the Edmonton area. And some of them got very poor land, they weren't farmers. The department I worked for was called the Salvage Department, it was where the men didn't make it and then his equipment and the money that the board had loaned him, they had to sell the chattels and everything.

Jim: Do you recall how much land was given to these people?

Mary: They had a quarter section.

Jim: A quarter section. That's kind of difficult in some of that area to make a living on a quarter section.

Mary: Some of them did quite well. It depended on the kink of land they got. But that was the drawing interest for these men but a lot of them gave up, they couldn't make it.

Jim: So were they given land. . . today they're obviously given money in one form or another. . . veterans.

Mary: Well, it was really loans, they got loans to buy their equipment. But they were supposed to pay it back. But of course, a lot of them couldn't. But it was a nice place to work. The salaries were not very good, it was the federal government. In those days we didn't use the word federal very much, it was the dominion government. I, having been inexperienced and not very old, I think I was 17, I got the lowest salary there was.

Jim: Do you remember what that was?

Mary: I think it was about \$65 a month. And if you were a little older and had had a year's experience you got about \$20 a month more.

#086 Jim: Were you still living at home then?

Mary: Oh yes. In those days nobody left home.

Jim: So \$65 could you get along on that all right then.

Mary: Oh yes. We were living at home and the old Scottish way, I handed my salary over to my mother and she bought me my clothes and gave me my pocket money. After awhile my best friend she was giving her mother so much a month and she kept the rest, so I rebelled. So then I started giving my mother \$40 a month and I was to buy my own clothes but I never felt that I lost anything because. . .you know. But my mother needed that money. Our parents were not well off and the family all. . . . But I don't know whether it's just Scottish but the Scottish people, the regular routine was that you gave your parents the money and then they looked after you. And then of course, if there was anything extra that you needed you'd get it.

Jim: Right. That wouldn't be too popular today I don't think.

Mary: Oh no. Not when I think of my family.

#103 Jim: How did you end up at the Northwest Company then?

Mary: Well, I got a bit dissatisfied with my job at the Soldier's Settlement Board because the Soldier's Settlement Board was expanding, they were hiring new people and I had been in that department the longest so I was showing the newcomers the work and helping them and I was still getting \$20 less than they were. So that was sort of annoying.

Jim: I can imagine yes.

Mary: So a friend of mine was working for the Northwest Company and she phoned me and told me she thought I could get a job there. So I went over there and applied and I got the job.

Jim: Who did you apply to, do you remember or did you get interviewed for the job?

Mary: I think it was the Chief Clerk, Joe Carr was our Chief Clerk. I was told that after six months I would get a raise. I started at \$85 a month and I . . .

Jim: Was that in 1921?

Mary: Yes. And that was good money in those days and in six months I got \$100 a month and that was wonderful.

Jim: Boy, I'll say, that's a good raise.

Mary: Yes. And then Miss Arsenal??? was very busy, she was Mr. Taylor's secretary and she advertised for an assistant and she didn't get any answers and so I asked her if I could have the job. She kind of looked at me, she thought I was a little young but she said she'd try me. So I got the job. So then I had to take dictation from Mr. Taylor and look after his file. . .

#122 Jim: Who was Mr. Taylor, what was his full name and position there?

Mary: It was Charles Taylor and he was the manager there.

Jim: Of the Production Department?

Mary: The Production Department of the Northwest Company.

Jim: And I understand the Northwest Company was a subsidiary of Imperial. Was it a wholly owned subsidiary, do you know?

Mary: Oh yes, I'm quite sure. We had a staff of about 12-14. Bill Applegate was our driller. Of course, he didn't have an office, he just came in occasionally. I kind of think he was from Texas but I'm not sure, he was an American. And there was Bill McAdam who certainly was a Canadian. He seemed to be in charge of leasing land and then Ted Link, he was

there right from the beginning I think. He was, as far as I know, the Chief Geologist. Of course, that was just in a very small office. Then later on, Neil McQueen came up. His father was Alec McQueen and I think he was the President of Imperial Oil as far as I know. Neil was very nice, I worked for him. He was only there about 3 or 4 months. And then they'd send out another man, they had Mark Mann, he was a geologist and Bruce Ross came out from Toronto. He was the nephew of Victor Ross who was the Vice-President or something of Imperial Oil in Toronto.

#148 Jim: Can you remember any characteristics or personalities of some of these people, Neil McQueen, Ted Link and others?

Mary: Well, I certainly can remember Ted Link. He was so happy go-lucky and he was always very nice to all the girls. We were just stenographers and we thought he was wonderful. He used to come in with a smile every morning and sort of cheer us up. He was really special. Neil McQueen, we liked him too, but he was very quiet. He didn't have much to say and neither did Mark Mann. Ted Link used to take pictures out on the fire escape and we all had our pictures taken.

Jim: Do you have one of those pictures here?

Mary: Yes. All these pictures were taken out on the fire escape. And I think Ted Link took most of them. I'm just sorry I haven't got dates on the backs of them, we should date our pictures.

Jim: Yes, I don't do it either. Well, now they come with the date.

Mary: Yes I know, I have pictures from my grandchildren. That was Ted Applegate and Maida Stewart was Charlie Taylor's niece and myself, that's out on the fire escape. And that was the new manager after Mr. Taylor died, Johnson Draper???, that's an odd name isn't it, Johnson. Johnson Draper was our manager and he was the one I think that came down to Calgary with the Royalite. This was Ted Link and our office boy. He was a handsome man.

#170 Jim: Where was the office located, do you recall?

Mary: It was right in the centre of the city in the Tegler??? Building and we were on the 5th floor and we had about 3 or 4 small offices, all disconnected. Ted Link and his stenographer were down the hall about a couple of doors down. And the Chief Clerk and the Bookkeeper were in another little office, all right close together. And our office was sort of divided, like there was the stenographers and then there was little office, Maida Stewart had with the comptometer over here and Reena Arsenal had a little office of her own, and then the big office that Mr. Taylor had with his big rosewood directors table in it and all sorts of books and things and the files, his own personal files were in there.

Jim: I mentioned that you were in the Production Department, do you recall what kind of activities that department was doing out of Edmonton?

Mary: It was mostly Norman Wells and they were drilling and Poughskeepie but I don't know whether they ever produced at Poughskeepie, whether they were successful there but I know they were successful at Norman Wells.

Jim: Oh yes. And they were eventually at Poughskeepie but I don't know if it was that early.

Mary: I don't remember that. But I just remember Poughskeepie was. . .

#190 Jim: So Ted Link and some of these other geologists would be going up to Norman Wells fairly frequently I guess, so they'd be in and out.

Mary: Yes. The two ladies that the planes were named after, I think they got a trip to Norman Wells and we were promised a trip but we never got it. But you know, my son and my husband got to Norman Wells. Bruce, when he was about 16 got a job at Norman Wells painting barrels, during summer vacations. He went up with Gordie Latham and we knew Gordie Latham very well. Did you know about Gordie Latham?

Jim: I know of him is all.

Mary: Yes. He was a nice. . .he died you know, he was a very nice man. I know his wife. She's in Edmonton yet. Bruce had a wonderful time at Norman Wells. He went up with a boy from Calgary who he had played hockey against. And Eldon Willich???, his father. . .well, I don't know what job he had but it was quite an important job he had. So Bruce and Eldon bunked together and they certainly were well looked after. And I had a picture of barrels here someplace, the barrels they painted.

#209 Jim: You mentioned the ladies the plane was named after, maybe you should just talk a little bit about that, what airplanes those were?

Mary: Yes. That was Reena Arsenal and the plane. . .

Jim: She was your supervisor?

Mary: Yes. She was the managers secretary and she was more than a secretary.

Jim: An Administrative Assistant.

Mary: Yes. She interviewed . . .Charlie Taylor was a bit particular, he didn't want his time wasted so Arsenal would interview these people and see what they wanted to talk about and see if they were allowed to go into the inner sanctum.

Jim: Screen them, sure.

Mary: Yes, she'd screen them. And once or twice. . .I didn't screen them but I had to answer the phone and find out who they were. And that was embarrassing for me, I was quite young and I didn't like to ask people what they wanted to see Mr. Taylor about. But I had to do that and Mr. Taylor would get a little annoyed at me sometimes if I didn't get the names straight. So anyway those two planes, they were Imperial Oil Junkers named Reenie and Vic and. . .do you want to know the pilots?

Jim: Sure.

Mary: George Gorman and Elmer Fullerton. They went up to Fort Norman and they had a lot of trouble. They broke two propellers and then the propellers were hand made out of oak planks and moose glue. But they had more trouble but they finally got back. They had a lot of trouble up there.

Jim: So their planes were named after the ladies in the office?

Mary: Two girls in the office, yes. I think this is sort of interesting. It says this was the beginning of the opening up of Canada's north land by aircraft. And the part played by Canadian bush pilots and their mechanics was very important.

#242 Jim: That was, that opened that whole north.

Mary: And that story about Wapme??? of course, there's quite a bit about that. And Pat Reid was certainly a very interesting man. He was a bush pilot too but then he was . . .in fact, I think he was in charge of aviation for Imperial Oil. He came up from Toronto. And his

two sons, I read in a book somewhere, are both pilots. One's with Air Canada and the other one is with. . what is it Canadian Pacific.

Jim: Canadian Pacific, that's right. That was later though, 1936 or so. Back to your little headquarters in Edmonton there, do you recall the hours of work and working conditions and those kinds of things.

Mary: Oh yes. We worked from 9:00-5:00, we had an hour and a quarter for lunch. And we worked Saturday's until 1:00 and we'd get hungry between 11:00 and 12:00 and somebody would go down and bring up a cheese sandwich or something. And in the elevator we'd meet the boss and we'd sort of look down.

Jim: And hour and 15 minutes for lunch, did you buy your lunch then, did you go to a coffee shop or did people bring their lunches?

Mary: I think we carried our lunch. I can think occasionally and had lunch at, it used to be the Owl??? Drug Store, where they put out good lunches. No, I think we had a bag lunch, I think we carried our lunches from home. I'll have to ask Edith about that, I think we did. You know, we used to walk to work, we used to walk about 2 ½ miles.

#272 Jim: Were you that far on 95th Street there?

Mary: Oh we were a long way from the Tegler Building, the Tegler building was right downtown. 95th, we were north. . .

Jim: Way up on 95th, that's right. Oh, I know where you were.

Mary: Alberta Avenue.

Jim: That's right.

Mary: Our big amusement. On Saturday afternoons we'd have lunch at the Owl Drug Store and go to the Elm Theatres, the Empire Theatre, they had plays there and that was a big event.

Jim: Did your office colleagues, you went together then?

Mary: Oh yes, a few.

Jim: Anything else you recall about working with the Northwest Company at that time, before we move on a little bit?

Mary: I'm trying to think.

Jim: You mentioned that office machine before we started the tape here, the comptometer.

Mary: The comptometer. Maida Stewart, that's all she did, she was in that little office by herself and she checked accounts and ran up accounts and it was a glorified bookkeeping machine with adding and subtracting and multiplying. Although we had a bookkeeper, a man, I can't remember his name. He was our bookkeeper.

#301 Jim: When you went to high school, commercial school, did they prepare you for this? Did you take typing in there and dictation and all those skills?

Mary: Oh yes. We took bookkeeping too. We took English, bookkeeping, geography, typing shorthand . . .Mr. Page was our shorthand teacher. There were no dictaphones in those days. Let's see what else did we take. They were very strong in Physical Education at Commercial High. Every third Friday everybody would gather together in the main auditorium and we'd have little concerts, somebody would play the piano and somebody would dance. I remember a girl dancing the Sailor's Hornpipe. And then we had, what they called the President of the Literary Society and I ran for President but I lost out.

Jim: Oh dear that's too bad. We're going to turn the tape over here, real quick.

Side 2

Jim: Can you recall any of the other aviation activities that were going on that were going on at that time when you were working there?

Mary: There was a lot going on . . . the fellows that had come back from overseas were having a very hard time getting jobs and at that time people didn't want to put the money into airplanes because they didn't know whether it was going to be worthwhile. But John Michaels, who was quite well known in Edmonton, he had the newspaper, he had newspapers from all over the world, Mike's Newsstand.

Jim: Oh yes.

Mary: Well, John Michaels was a wonderful man. He and some other man, I can't remember who it was, they financed a plane and it went up north with vegetables and things because they couldn't get fresh vegetables in those days. It went for a little while but I think it didn't work out very well. There was a lot going on but I really don't know what . . .

#020 Jim: More specifically I meant I guess with the Northwest Company?

Mary: Yes. There were a lot of people landing up there looking for gold. Punch Dickens, I didn't know Punch Dickens but my husband knew him. You see, with the Marketing Department he knew a lot of these fellows because he had to look after the refueling and. . . . And all these bush pilots that went up with some of the big companies that were staking land and looking for gold.

Jim: When did you get married, let's find that out?

Mary: 1926.

Jim: So I understand then, the Production Department of the Northwest Company was moved down to Calgary.

Mary: They were moved, I think it was the end of '23. Because when I went overseas with the grads, that's how I remember, I went with the Northwest Company, I was back with the Soldier's Settlement Board. I went back with a higher salary because I was older. I didn't stay there very long, I got a job with Scott Fruit???, the manager of Scott Fruit was a Rotarian and it was very easy for any of the basketball girls to get jobs. We were important to them.

#037 Jim: We'll talk about that in a second. So was your husband to be, was he in the Marketing Department when you were in the Production Department?

Mary: Yes.

Jim: He had been working down there. You mentioned a little bit about him having to look after the fueling for the airplanes and so forth. Do you recall anything else that the Marketing Department at that time was involved in in Edmonton or your husband's activities?

Mary: I don't remember except that if anybody was flying in, like what was her name. . . Simpson. . . they had to look after them while. . .and Wile E. Post, I had a picture somewhere of Wile E. Post. Who else came in that was so important. . .and boy the Marketing Department had to be on their toes to look after them.

#044 Jim: So there was then obviously the network of gas stations and fuel points and all

that, they were . . . it was more of a direct supply in that sort of thing. Okay. You've mentioned a couple of times and now would be a good time to talk about it, that you were an Edmonton Grad. I wonder if you could mention first of all, just what the Edmonton Grads were?

Mary: We were graduates from Commercial High School and we kept on playing. We started playing just in school games and we won the city championships and then we went farther afield and won the provincial championship. We played Calgary and ????. Then there was what they called the Underwood Trophy. And that had to be competed against down in Toronto and in London, Ontario. The Grads, they didn't have any finances in those days, so some of the businessmen in Edmonton got together and helped out a little bit but each of the girls. . .and they didn't take me that time, I can't remember why. But they just took six players, they couldn't afford to take anybody else. In fact, I read somewhere where they took their own lunches or took a basket lunch or something. Anyway they went down to Toronto and played half a game in girl's rules, which we always played, girl's rules. And then they played boy's rules.

#064 Jim: What's the basic difference or what was between boy's and girl's rules at that time?

Mary: Girl's rules, the floor was divided into three and forwards couldn't cross over the centre line and guards couldn't cross over. There was the centres, the forwards and the guards and they were separated you see. Boy's rules you could go all over the floor.

Jim: What was that, they didn't think the girl's could run as far or they'd get tired?

Mary: I don't know. Anyway when they came back from Toronto, they won, they won both games and they came back. I was evidently very fast on my feet and I could run down the floor. So I had been playing with them then but just kind of off and on. So when they started the boy's rules I was on the regular team.

Jim: You were recruited.

Mary: Yes. So that was in '22, they came back from Toronto. And then we had two men. . .now I've got a picture of them somewhere, in Edmonton who were promoters. Deacon White and Joe Driscoll, Joe Driscoll had a sports shop. . not, you don't call it a shop, what do you call it, a store.

Jim: Yes, a sporting goods store.

Mary: Sporting goods. He was very keen about the Grads and Deacon White. They started to promote international games with the United States. So then in '23 we played against, now I think it was Chicago and the Cleveland ????. At that time the Cleveland ??? little shorts with World Champions at the side. So of course, we beat them very badly and so we decided we were World Champs after that. All the service clubs in Edmonton, the Rotarians, the Kiwanis and the Gyros???, they got behind us. And every time we had a visiting team they entertained us at a luncheon. They played the American National Anthem and then the Canadian National Anthem. The girls that came up from Chicago and the Cleveland ???, the first thing they wanted to see was a Mounted Policeman. They wanted to have their picture taken with a Mounted Policeman. We practiced regularly. Before a big game. . .you see they put a hardwood floor into the arena where the ice was, they put a hardwood floor over the ice and that's where we played our games. That's where we had 6,000 people at a game. And that's where we made the money to go to

Europe.

#098 Jim: Who was the coach of . . .

Mary: Percy Page was our coach.

Jim: And he was the one who sort of got the whole ball rolling too, wasn't he?

Mary: He was the principal of the high school. It was Mr. Page but it was these men that sort of persuaded him that we had a good team. And I have a picture of . . . I found this last night when I was looking. . . I wouldn't have had this only my mother kept it for me. That was the 1923 Eskimo team.

Jim: Oh, rugby though.

Mary: Yes. And you see, these two men, Deacon White and Joe Driscoll, they were the ones that promoted us. One of those men in there was my dentist and another one was my husband's hunting partner. That picture is kind of precious to me because I didn't remember that I had it. I wouldn't have remember until I started looking when I wanted to. . . My mother kept all the newspaper clippings of the Grads when they were overseas.

#113 Jim: You mentioned then you got a chance to travel a little bit with them. Could you talk about that and where you went and how that worked out?

Mary: In 1924 the Olympic games were in France and we had collected enough money, we had \$14,000 in the bank, just from the receipts from the gate of our games. I don't know how it came about but they decided we should go to the Olympic games. Basketball wasn't on the regular program, I don't think men's basketball was either, I don't think basketball was. But we played exhibition games in Paris and we were invited to the Olympic Ball where we met Australians and Canadians and people from all over. We had a great time.

Jim: Terrific. Who were your opponents in these exhibition games.

Mary: Teams that were playing there in Paris. But they played on outdoor courts and they hadn't played like we did. We won all our games.

Jim: You were a pretty aggressive bunch of basketball players.

Mary: Yes. And then from Paris we went to Stratford, Alsace-Lorraine and we just played one exhibition game there. We met some very nice people. We were welcomed everywhere we went. Canadians were welcomed. Then we went to Germany. We took the train to Mainz and then we got on a boat and sailed down the Rhine to a place called Coblenz and in Coblenz there was a boat bridge and it was just 1924 and the French were still in occupation and the French soldiers would march up and down. Mind you just a small group, in front of our hotel. It just happened that they were there, we used to watch them. And we had a wonderful time in Germany, people were so good to us. Germany was more like home than France. They served the same kind of food, for breakfast we had bacon and eggs, the kinds of things we had at home. A very nice hotel and it was very nice. While we are talking about that I must remember to tell you, in Paris we stayed at a family hotel. It was during the tourist season and hotels were terribly expensive.

#148 Jim: Well, and the Olympics too.

Mary: Yes. And we stayed in this quite nice family hotel. But there was only one bathroom on the whole floor. There were 11 of us and ????. And we had a guide, Ralph Forester had

been a student of Mr. Page's and he'd been in the war and he spoke French fluently, which none of us did. So we met him in London, it was all arranged before we left. We met him in London and he took us through. . .he looked after luggage and everything. It was super that he looked after the luggage and we were just there. So there was a long table when we went down for our meals and they used to put wine on the table and Mr. Page used to always go down about ½ hour before and take the wine off and instead of the wine we had vichy water. And the water was one franc more than the wine per bottle. We had bowls of fruit in our rooms all the time. Page would look after that, they were super.

Jim: Boy, that was a wonderful trip.

Mary: Then from Germany we went back to Calais and we had a week there just recuperating right on the beach. We had a lovely time and then we went to England. I was allowed to go up to Scotland for a week with my relatives. I had a really nice time. We went to Loch Lomon. We were in Edinburgh for a few days.

#176 Jim: That was quite a trip. When you came back to Canada and Edmonton, were you still on the grads and continuing to play with them for awhile?

Mary: Oh yes. I played with them right up until '26. After you got married you weren't allowed to play. Mr. Page was very particular about that. But I was ready to quit. The next year we went on a trip down to the States, 1925. We played in Guthrie Oklahoma, the hottest place, in woolen uniforms.

Jim: In the summer.

Mary: In the summer.

Jim: In that humidity.

Mary: And we played in Tulsa at an indoor court and the girls we played against had silk uniforms and we had woolen uniforms. I'll never forget it. Then we were in Dallas, we didn't play in Dallas I don't think, and then in Tulsa and we went across on a train to San Diego. We didn't play in San Diego but we played in Los Angeles and we played in San Francisco. We were there a few days. And Mrs. Page's father was the Canadian Consul in San Francisco, so they entertained us. Then we were taken to Chinatown and we had tea in a very posh place in Chinatown. And then from San Francisco we . . .I guess we took the train again, it was all train in those days, we took the train up to Victoria. Would we take a train all the way to Victoria, I can't remember.

#201 Jim: Well, you'd have to get on a boat somewhere along the line.

Mary: Maybe we took a ferry. Anyway we played in Victoria, we played in a high school in Victoria. And then we played . . .I can't remember if we played in Vancouver, but we played. . .I came across it in one of these things that I had forgotten about, we played in Kamloops and then home. We were gone five weeks on that trip. We were gone ten weeks when we went to Europe. It was very nice, all expenses paid.

Jim: And people would take care of you like they did too.

Mary: People were wonderful. Going through Canada, we went to Niagara Falls, we went to Toronto, we went to Quebec, stayed at the Chateau Frontenac. I mean it was really. . .

Jim: Just deluxe the whole way it sounds like.

Mary: Something that you'll never forget.

Jim: What finally happened to them, the Edmonton Grads.

Mary: Well, the war came along in '39 and the Grads had been winning too many games. People said, oh well, the Grads are going to win. And people sort of . . . you know, the audience fell off. And so in 1940 the army needed the arena and so the Grads folded then. Of course, Mr. Page was getting on in years too.

#222 Jim: That's right. These were all grads of the same high school?

Mary: Yes.

Jim: That's amazing.

Mary: With the exception of two, Gladys Fry, Gladys Fry lives in Calgary, she's Gladys Douglas now, her husband was Jack Douglas, he was the President of the Chamber of Commerce here. Gladys came from the university and Daisy Johnson came from Victoria High School but they were the only two.

Jim: All right. You got married in 1926 and your husband was with the Marketing Department at that time.

Mary: He had been with them for quite a few years.

Jim: And you were still in Edmonton then. I wonder if you could just talk about his job as you recall it at that time and the activities of the Marketing Department.

Mary: When we were married he was an auditor, he used to go out and measure the tanks and see how their books were and check up on them in the country. He'd go up to Grande Prairie and . . .

Jim: By car he would travel?

Mary: Yes, by car.

#239 Jim: Did you get to go with him?

Mary: No.

Jim: So he was gone a fair bit of the time?

Mary: He was gone a lot. When we were first married he was gone sometimes a month at a time. So I got myself a job. . . .

Jim: As we go on here, one thin I wanted to ask you as well, you mentioned your husband was driving to Grande Prairie and so forth, what were the roads like then, I know it wasn't a nice paved . . .

Mary: They were dreadful, dreadful. They'd get stuck in the mud and have to get a farmer to pull them out.

Jim: That must have been hard on your cars too.

Mary: It was very hard on cars. I think the longest we ever kept a car was two years. We traded cars in. We were always paying Imperial Oil for a car. \$20 a month out of a small salary was a lot of money.

Jim: So they didn't provide a car then?

Mary: No, not then. They didn't ever provide a car to us. My husband worked for them for 35 years. He started in as office boy when he was 18. He was going to university and then the flu epidemic came along and he was going to be an engineer.

Jim: 1913 or so.

Mary: No 1918.

#260 Jim: '18, that late, okay.

Mary: And he got a job as office boy and he liked the office and he liked the job. From there he was a clerk and then he was the auditor and then he was the Chief Salesman and then he was Assistant Manager in Edmonton. He used to go to Yellowknife and up north for the company.

Jim: That was a much bigger department than say the Production was then, when you were there?

Mary: Oh goodness yes. By that time it was a big office. Then he was overseas for five years with the engineers and then he came back and he was a year in Edmonton and they moved us down here.

Jim: When was that, do you recall?

Mary: We came here in '51, he came in '50. We had . . . the two girls were in high school and we wanted them to finish their grade 12. So we moved on the 1st of July in '51.

Jim: Into this house we're in today?

Mary: Into this house. The cheapest house you could buy.

Jim: Do you recall when the discovery at Leduc was made and how you reacted to that?

Mary: Oh yes, there was such excitement in the city of Edmonton, especially Imperial Oil. The staff all expected their shares to jump up and everybody would get rich.

Jim: Did they jump up, do you recall?

Mary: I think they went up a little, I don't think they went up a lot. In those days so much was taken off your salary, you bought Imperial Oil stock. Whatever amount, there was a limit to the amount you could put in. Our limit was small because we had four children. We didn't have a lot to put in. But we always seemed to have some Imperial Oil shares.

#295 Jim: So that was a pretty significant event, that Leduc discovery?

Mary: Very, very exciting, yes. I've read so many stories about it and every time I read them I feel excited. Well, we knew some of the people that were there. Although we knew mostly marketing people. We didn't know many of the . . . like, Vern Hunter, I didn't know him but I knew of him. After we moved to Calgary I got to meet him. So it was very exciting.

Jim: Did it affect your husband's job at that time?

Mary: No because he was marketing. And another thing my husband did that was quite interesting. After he came back from overseas and the Americans were giving up on the Alaska highway, you know, they were going back. He was sent up the Alaska highway to make the exchange. Imperial Oil was taking back a lot of those service stations and he had to make prices and make exchanges with the Americans.

Jim: I see. So the service stations on the Alaska highway at that time were American stations?

Mary: I'm not sure that they were American stations but they had something to do with the company. They had equipment and so forth that the company was buying back.

#327 Jim: One more thing lest I forget, you mentioned you started work with the Northwest Company, when did that become Imperial Oil, when did it make the change, do you recall how that came about?

Mary: Not as long as we were with the company in Edmonton, it was always the Northwest Company.

Jim: Really, up through 1951 until. . .?

Mary: Oh no, 1951, that's the Marketing Department, they were Imperial Oil.

Jim: Oh, they were Imperial Oil.

Mary: They were never Northwest Company.

Jim: Oh I see.

Mary: It was just the Production that was Northwest Company. No, my husband was always with the Imperial Oil Marketing.

Jim: I see okay, that makes more sense then. Okay we're just about out of tape here on this side. Is there anything else that you think we should talk about today.

Mary: I can't think of anything.

Jim: In that case. I sure want to thank you for participating.

Mary: Well, thank you.