

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Garnet Edwards

INTERVIEWER: Susan Birley

DATE: October 1984

SB: This is Susan Birley and I'm interviewing Garnet Edwards at his home in Edmonton. I wonder Mr. Edwards, if first of all we could just talk about your early background, where were you born and raised?

GE: I was born in Belmont, Manitoba and moved to Alberta when I was 12 years old, moved to Lethbridge. We were there about a year and then to Okotoks. At this time my dad was working in the oil field.

SB: What was he doing?

GE: He was a mechanic and driving truck. With us in Lethbridge go only got back home. . he had one day off every three weeks.

SB: You were living in Lethbridge and he was working around the area then?

GE: He was working in the Turner Valley area. However we moved to Okotoks in the fall of 1929 and we lived there until. . I think it was 1931 we moved to what was called Mill City Camp, it was 10 miles south of Black Diamond.

#019 SB: Was everybody there in the oil field?

GE: Oh yes. It had been a big camp for drilling contractors. The drilling had slowed down with the recession and this camp was converted into houses for people to live in. It was a well built place, they were big buildings. Two families being partitioned off, could live one on either side. I believe now they are three bedroom houses, each side.

SB: Were there any other people that you remember being around, living in the same area at that time?

GE: Well, there was a lot of them but most of them are gone. The Liepers, they lived next door to us, two of the boys are still in the oil business, their parents are both gone, Jimmy Brown, he and his family lived there, they're both gone. The schoolteacher lived there, he's gone.

SB: Had a lot of the people come in from other places in Alberta or Ontario or anything?

GE: At that time, no it was mostly people who had worked in the oil field before the Depression were still there. There was some big camps in the area, there was the Mercury camp right close by, a few hundred yards away and it would handle probably 150-200 men. It had a huge cookhouse and bunkhouses. The crews off the different rigs nearby stayed there.

#038 SB: What drilling contractor was it, like you said Mill Creek camp was. . .

GE: Mill City camp was built by Boulder, Sherwood and Boulder, who have been gone since

the Depression years. I went to school with one of the boys. Glen, he's now living in Ventura, California and the other boy, Dresden, he's in Bakersfield. There were two girls, one is dead and I have no idea on the other one. They were from Oklahoma.

SB: And they came out to take part in the Turner Valley boom I guess?

GE: Well, the Drilling Company was known as Boulder, Sherwood and Boulder, they drilled many holes there, they East Crest wells and the Mill City well. At that time it wasn't unheard of at all to take a couple of years to drill a well so the contractor was there quite a while. But they had built this camp, it was a real nice place, well laid out. I would say at the time we were there, there was probably 18 families lived in it. There was a public school about 2 miles away and then high schools were in Black Diamond which was a bout a 10 mile drive.

#053 SB: What company was your dad driving truck for?

GE: Union Drilling. They were one of the larger drilling contractors before the recession, like in 1929. They had 13 rigs as I recall, 10 cable tools and 3 rotary rigs. When we moved out there in 1931 of course, it had slowed down so much they probably only had about 2 or 3 rigs working. They were kind of a development company, you know. It was formed as Union Drilling and Development and I don't know for sure, whether all those holes were contract holes or whether the oil companies had an interest or not. They did extensive work for the Mayland companies, which was Mercury and . . he had several as he went along. Originally it was Mayland Wells, they Mercury Wells and many others that he had bought over. . .Sunlight and Van Peg and Valley Oil Operators, this sort of thing.

SB: Who were the owners of Union?

GE: There was Bill Mahn??? Sr. and I believe there was a fellow by the name of Bill Livingston, he had a good share in it and then George Muir, this is George Muir Sr. He was Drilling Superintendent and he had a part of the company too I believe.

#071 SB: And were they all Canadians?

GE: Yes. All of them were Canadians. Bill Livingston is from Vancouver and George Muir from New Brunswick, Bill Mahn, he had been an American, yes. He was a master carpenter by trade originally and into water well drilling and from there into oil well drilling.

SB: Did you know much about A. H. Mayland, his background?

GE: No. I don't know too much about his background, outside of he was a pretty difficult man to work under. I've read about him but I don't know that much about him.

SB: I guess he had American money backing him, did he?

GE: I don't know where he got all of his money. He had packing plants in Calgary. I've forgotten the name of the one that he had there, which was a huge plant. He had extensive oil interests that generated money. He formed Purity 99, which was a big company, built a refinery there in Turner Valley and they had gas stations all over Alberta as I would know it, maybe in some of the other provinces. Many, many stations. I think saving his money was how he accumulated his wealth.

#091 SB: Do you remember when the Depression struck, I guess you were fairly young at the time but do you remember the impression it made on people?

GE: Yes, I certainly do. It was a pretty grim deal all over. When it struck we were living in Turner Valley, which was the winter of '29-'30. I remember when my dad was laid off, he had about \$150 or \$200, whatever, not any more anyway. We were living in a rented house and he had bought a car and was still making payments on this, which was. . . payments were low and rent was low. We lived on that over that winter until work started up again in the turner Valley and he was let back. He was off probably 3 or 4 months. Then 1931, '32 was pretty rough. There was a little work going on. Mind you in all of turner Valley there was only about 3 or 4 rigs working, Union Drilling had one of them. They started this well of their own in the south of Turner Valley, it was sputted on the last day of 1932 and then it was shut down for periods, for other periods we just worked 8 hours a day on it and this sort of thing. Then it was shut down overnight until the next day. So it was kind of a long drawn out procedure. I worked the summer of 1932, they had a rig. . yes, there was a rotary rig working, it was on Marjohn 1. And I worked the summer holidays hauling mud. We dug it out of pits and loaded it on trucks and hauled it out to the rig and unloaded it again there. I got 25 cents an hour for it. The rotary was shut down that fall, it finished the well and I went back to school and the I went to work again in 1933. The Depression was still hurting pretty bad. We had the well going in Turner Valley, the Union Drilling well, and then Union Drilling had a couple of contracts down, right on the border. One was from Maylan, 50 miles east of Coutts and two were west of Coutts in the Red Coulee field. So I went back driving truck that summer and we were hauling between Turner Valley and those locations down there on the border. In those days there wasn't a sign of any pavement. It was gravel and dirt and prairie trail and such. It made for quite an interesting time.

#131 SB: Was that the year of the dust bowl, the years of the dust bowl, did you see that very much in southern Alberta.

GE: We didn't see too much of it there, it was in eastern Alberta more, east of Calgary. So I didn't get to see much of it but I saw a lot of the things. . .that was when Relief had just come in and I remember when we were hauling back and forth to the border, in south of Warner the road used to go around a big hill and in order to keep people earning some money and getting enough to eat, they built a road straight through that hill and it was all done by hand. You seen camps there with tents and the men just pretty well dug the whole works by hand, some teams used but they were only getting about \$5 a day and their food. But they straightened the road out, the stretch was about a mile or so long. There was more wheelbarrows and shovels working. . .

SB: When they had to shut they rigs down for periods would they go out and try to get more money or. . . ?

GE: That was a lot of it yes. They would just run out of money and they would have to stop and see if they could raise more. Then other promoters were in there doing the same thing. There was several started wells and they'd make a few feet of hole and then run out of money and then they'd have to stop everything. It was in this time that the new scheme

came in called. . .instead of all your pay, we got hold back. This was a scheme where they would pay you \$4 a day and you would get say, \$2 or \$2.50 a day in cash and the balance would be paid to you when the well came in. If the well didn't come in you didn't get it, if the well wasn't finished you didn't get it. I had a fair amount of that. And then there was promotions went through on that, there was one old fellow, Steve Hale the insurance man in Turner Valley. Everybody knew him, his home was really in Calgary but he worked the Turner Valley field and he would sell you so much insurance for the hold back. Well, he would get in and he in turn was unloading it at a discounted value to someone else. It was quite a system. In 1933 I was getting \$2.50 a day and I did my own servicing and repaired chain and all this on my own time. This was a common thing. You paid compensation, I think at that time it was 3 or 4 cents a day, that was taken off your pay and boarded ourselves along the road. But you could buy a real good meal for 35 cents, soup and coffee and dessert.

#173 SB: That's changed a lot

GE: Yes, it's changed a little bit. The well we were drilling east of Coutts there, 50 miles east, it often took us 48 hours to make that 50 miles. The roads were so bad and wet and snowy that winter, not much frost in the ground. But they didn't get an oil well so it was suspended. Then we come back to Turner Valley and I was driving truck off and on. There was some slack periods I wouldn't be on and then they'd have to haul cement or casing and I'd drive truck at night, my dad drove in the daytime. I think at that time, we got \$3 a day for a 12 hour shift. You bought your own meals when you were on the road because we had a fairly long haul, about 35 or 40 miles from Okotoks, around by High River to the location. And then 1934, this was like early '34, George Muir's son, young George, he got hurt on the rig, it was a cable tool rig, they were working 24 hours a day then. So they had me go to work dressing tools in his place. That lasted for about a week or ten days and I got two fingers cut off. There being no penicillin or anything like that, I spent 8 days in the hospital with them and was off work 3 months.

#200 SB: Did you get compensation for that?

GE: Yes I got around \$1 a day and a final settlement of \$105 for the two fingers. That fall there was a well starting at Lundbreck and Union Drilling had an interest in it, it was supplying the rig. So they offered me a job there to go to work on. It was called Raven Oils. I went down there driving truck at \$75 a month and my board when I was in camp. The hours ran anywhere up from 8 - 10 hours a day. I had to haul coal from Blairmore which was about 35 miles, shoveled it on the truck there, hauled it back out and unloaded it. It took a lot of coal to keep a boiler working for a rig. As soon as I would get a little bit of coal ahead well then they'd send me somewhere to haul casing or something like that back for the well. I worked there for 2 or 3 months and in this time, Union Drilling had put a rotary on the Union Drilling well in Turner Valley and I was hopefully getting moved back there and getting a chance to go on the rig. However before this happened another fellow went to the Calgary office of this Raven Oils, it was a dentist handled the financing of the well and this fellow, married and 3 or 4 children had to have work and he

offered take the job at \$10 a month less than me. So he got it. I had hold back in that well and I couldn't get all of my wages from them. But I had some dental work done, I had my teeth cleaned and a couple of fillings put in and this sort of thing.

#231 SB: By the same dentist?

GE: By the same dentist. He offered to do this as part payment of what they owed me. I think I still had around \$30 or \$0 coming after this. That was just forgotten then. However I came back to Turner Valley and there just wasn't anything for me to do at that time. Later on in the year I went on pumping water for Union Drilling. We had wells within about a 3/4 mile radius of the rig, we had 4 or 5 of them. This is how we got our water supply to keep the rig going. So I worked 12 hour shifts on that for quite a long time.

SB: Where would they get the water from, the river?

GE: No, no, wells. There was a couple of springs and there was a couple of water wells that they had drilled. The pipeline put pumps in them. We walked back and forth to them to keep them running all the time to keep the rig going.

SB: How would you keep them running?

GE: Some of them had engines on them and some of them were pumps that ran on natural gas. In the winter you had to keep the lines from freezing up. We had natural gas piped right all the way down. You'd have heaters along the water line, every so often. You had to see that they were all going and keep the water going so it wouldn't freeze up. It was a pretty heavy amount of walking for 12 hours. Whenever they'd be shorthanded at the rig I would go and have to help out there roughnecking. I worked for some of the old ones, some of the older drillers we had there was Scotty Baird and Red Young, Bill Henderson. That's the main. . drillers didn't change very often in those days. They got to work for a company, they stayed there to get a few dollars. The drillers were only getting \$8 a day then and \$4 of that was in hold back.

#268 SB: And were they the highest paid on the crew?

GE: Yes. We lived in a camp right on that location. We had moved from this Mill City camp over to the Union lease. There was 4 or 5 families lived there. The nearest high school of course, was still Black Diamond and we used to drive my sister back and forth. There was some other people over at the Mercury, they would take a turn. We'd drive that far and then they'd drive for one week and then they'd drive the next week and this was all, the reason you were able to do was we were all using this Turner Valley naphtha instead of gasoline in the cars.

SB: How much would gasoline have cost at that time, do you remember?

GE: Well, the wild gas we called it, 18-20 cents at the pumps, a gallon. But for the most part you could always get some from the wells that were producing it. They gave you a tank full or a barrel full. You could by a barrel full for \$4 or \$5 and that would keep you going quite a while.

#288 SB: What was it like getting equipment and supplies, any distributors up here in the 30's?

GE: Oh yes. There was Oil Well National and Continental Ensco or Continental Supply at that time. In fact, I still have a catalogue of Continental Supply from 1925. It's in Amoco's office right now. I was going to go down and get it today and I didn't make it. They closed down a lot and Continental sold out in 1933 or '34, sold their stock out at unbelievable prices, like a case of hand saw for \$1 and rope just next to nothing and tubular goods and such. Union Drilling bought many hundred tons of it and then we hauled from the warehouse in Okotoks out to our warehouses. I think the saws were about a dime a piece and now they'd be worth about \$20 or \$25.

SB: Were they used for building the rig?

GE: Yes. And for maintenance around there and the rope. . .you used an awful lot of rope on rigs. And it was all made use of, the cable and the pipe, for drill pipe and for casing and whatever. It was an extensive . . . the amount of tools and rope and cables used on rigs.

SB: And what happened when Union closed back or closed down a lot of their rigs, did they just keep them in storage?

GE: Yes. This lease we had in the south end, which is just a mile east of Longview, we had I don't know how many racked in there.

End of tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

#024 SB: We were just talking about the rigs that Union had to. . . ?

GE: Well, the cable tool rigs, there was no amount of pipe or anything like there is with the rotary rigs so . . what you stored. . .the derricks were left behind, they were wooden derricks and they were left on the last location. It was just storing main timbers and what we called the rig irons, that was the machinery end of it. . and the tools. A lot of it was, when you finish a well you just leave the machinery sit there, it didn't matter if it stayed there for 4 or 5 years. Nobody's was going to steal it, they might borrow some of it. I worked in the warehouse there for Union Drilling for several months painting equipment. We used to buy the paint in 45 gallon drums. I think I got \$2 a day when I was painting. I became familiar with a lot of the equipment that way.

SB: Even as a tool dresser you had to have a certain knowledge about welding I guess. Did you just pick things up on the job?

GE: On the job or we had a big blacksmith shop there. There was another fellow there welding, Johnny Muir Jr. He was a blacksmith too, that sort of thing. With steam equipment in those days, you could repair most of it right in your own yard. Welding was a big part of it and straightening it up, that sort of thing. So much of it was wood on the cable tool rig. So with wood you could really repair that in a hurry.

#044 SB: Would they ever take part of a wooden derrick and reuse the wood on another derrick?

GE: Not too much at that time. They would build what they called combination derricks when they started. That was a high derrick, high enough to use rotary equipment in and they'd use it for cable tools, make the first part of the hole and then move the cable tool rig out and put the rotary in and use the same derrick. But for the most part cable tool derricks were shorter, they run around 84', 96', some shorter still and they were just left behind. If you moved a rotary in, in the majority of cases you took that derrick down if the wind hadn't got it ahead of you. That's quite a thing in tuner Valley, often there would be 15 or 20 derricks blow over in a night, with the high winds. Wooden derricks made such an obstruction in the wind that it would just blow them over, save getting rid of them. In later years we pulled them over with trucks to get them out of the way.

SB: Do you have any idea how much it would have cost for the whole rig, the cable tool rig in those days?

GE: I wouldn't know what that would be. I had that catalogue. The price of the parts was just so low it would just startle you. You wonder how they could be manufactured for the price. But this Bill Mahn of Union Drilling, I worked for him off and on and Continental Ensco came back into Canada, that would be about 1947, their salesman came to call on him and wanted to handle some of his business. Old Bill he was a pretty gruff old guy, he said, is my credit as good as it was when you people were here before. The salesman said, I don't know but I imagine so, was it pretty good then. Bill said, yes, I owed you people a million dollars. That was for three complete rotary rigs and the other stuff I needed for the cable tool rigs. At that time that was a tremendous price. When you think about it that

was only about \$300,000 for a complete rotary rig, today you don't get much of anything under \$5 million. You were asking about using the wood off the derricks to build others, no they didn't, I can't remember of them taking one down to use the lumber to build another one. Usually they just bought new stuff.

#075 SB: I guess if it wasn't that expensive they wouldn't be worried about it.

GE: The amount of spikes that were put into each one, there wasn't much profit in the salvaging of them.

SB: It would have taken them more time to take it down than put it up probably.

GE: When we used to drop them to salvage them we'd pull them over so it would come down on one corner, then go along and saw the lumber off each leg rather than try to get those nails out. Because there would probably be two ton of nails in one derrick, spikes. That was a cheaper way to do it.

SB: You worked for a welder for awhile as well?

GE: Yes. I learned to weld when I was with Union Drilling. I never did have papers but I worked at it a long time with them, welding on the rig and cutting tool joints and welded on water lines, what have you.

SB: Did you ever have any special projects where, you know, the driller would want you to design something to meet a certain purpose?

GE: You were always trying to design something to be a little more handy. I didn't have anything in the inventive end of it. I worked for some pretty strange characters in the oil field.

#091 SB: Like who?

GE: Some of the old drillers were pretty rough old characters, they had come up the hard way. Blackie Murphy is one that comes to mind. A very exacting man, if he told you to do something, he usually told you how to do it and if you didn't do it that way it wasn't right. It didn't matter whether you had a better idea or not. Until after he got used to you a couple of years. I worked for him I can't remember how long, maybe 2 or 3 years and I was the lowest man with him. And then when Leduc started he came to work for me as one of my drillers.

SB: That must have been hard on him.

GE: No, it wasn't hard on either of us. I didn't like the idea because I was, at that time, considered a young tool pusher. I had 2 or 3 of the old drillers I had originally started working with came and worked for me. And I appreciated their help, they were good men. Some of them had forgotten a lot more than I knew, I'm sure. But at the same time they had been out of touch with the later methods. They had been, what you might say, more or less quit the business for awhile.

#105 SB: Did a lot of them find it hard to make the changeover from cable tool to rotary drilling?

GE: No. A lot of the men were both, a combination. This Johnny Muir I mentioned, he still lives in Lethbridge, he drilled on both, he pushed tools on both. He was one of the more

capable men in the oil field. He could do a little bit of anything and make it work, welding or driving truck or building derricks or anything, he was all for it. He had started when he was about 15 or 16. He could do anything in the oil field. He could fire up boilers, he could work on the production end, it didn't matter to him. As cable tools died out, he had roughnecked and then he went drilling on the rotaries. I drilled against him on my first drilling job. I was about the second young driller to drill in Turner Valley when I started. This Glen Boulder I mentioned previously, his dad owned a drilling company and he set him up drilling. Until that time men were usually 40, 45, whatever before they started drilling. I think Glen was about 23, 24 and I was 25 when I started drilling. They put me in between two old drillers. I followed one and another one followed me. They made my life pretty interesting for awhile. I learned fast. It was good experience I guess.

#128 SB: You mentioned before that you worked with Sam Hector of Hector's Machine Shop?

GE: Sam had the only machine shop in Turner Valley and he got into supplying the water for the rigs and the BA plant that was built in 1934. He needed guys to go and weld on those, putting the lines in. The lines are made out of old used boiler tubing, which was difficult to weld, one, it was scaly and such. He had this Johnny Muir and I go to work for him on that, welding on them. And then whenever our rig would be shut down for whatever reason, Sam would usually get us to go and weld for him then if he had something going on. I recall one winter, his whole water line system froze up and shut down the rigs in Turner Valley, ours included. He needed help and needed it bad. Our boss, this old Bill Mahn, he told Johnny and I, Sam may need some help, you guys go ahead and go to work for him if he needs you. He said, he's always been good about helping keep our rigs running, we'll help him anyway we can to get him running. So that was one example, we went to work for him, it took him about a month to get this straightened out and we worked for him all that time. Working on those older rigs you had to be able to weld a little, had to learn some mechanics and such in order to keep the rig going. I spent quite a bit of time, when the rig would be down and I'd be working in the shop doing welding or some black smithing or driving truck. Anything to keep the kids eating.

#154 SB: Had he been. . was he a Turner Valley resident?

GE: Yes. Well, they came from Calgary but they started a machine shop in Turner Valley, I guess it was in 1928 or '29. Sam was the oldest son of 3 or 4 and his dad had a bicycle shop in Calgary, repairing and selling bicycles. Sam was inclined towards the machine work and he got started in Turner Valley and then his brother Morris moved out with him and some cousins and they were the main machine shop for the independent companies. Royalite had their own, did their own work. But he did the custom work, he did a real good job and if people couldn't pay their bill on payday, he just helped them along until they could. Bill Mahn I worked with, he told me more times than one that he though Sam was just a real top man, whenever he was in trouble he was willing to help. They didn't have any money and had to have machine work done, there was no argument about it, Sam did it, in the middle of the night or when. So he was a pretty well thought of man.

#172 SB: So he must have been busy all the time?

GE: Yes. And then he sold to Russell Steel as time went along. Sam is dead now. I don't know where Morris is, if he's still in Calgary. That Union Drilling well I've mentioned, it started the last day of 1932 and I finally finished it the summer of 1936 and it wasn't any good. Breakdowns and run out of money. One fishing job that lasted over a year on it. And then we did get it into completion stage it was very marginal so they decided they'd shoot with nitroglycerine. Fooled around there for. . it seems to me now, the better part of a month, shooting and fooling with it and then this one day they ran a shot in the afternoon and the well had froze off down below. They were trying to get the shot through it and the line came ff the shot and left the shot sitting there. So Charlie Stalnacher is the shooter, he though, that was no problem, they'd just take and close the well in overnight and this would thaw it and then the shot would go on down to the bottom in the morning and they'd be in business again. They chased people away from the lease whenever they were going to shoot, for many days and we'd been away that day. The next morning they started about 7:30, they went in and quite a bit of pressure had built up on the well overnight to be closed in. And they just opened it up and it was blowing straight up through the derrick and let the pressure off of it. Everything looked great. So they said, well, we'll get some breakfast and then let's get after this thing and we'll put another shot on top of that and get it going. This was about 7:30, quarter to 8 in the morning. So everybody walked away from it and went to the houses around and about that time the well surged and the nitro came out and it struck the top of the derrick, it just wiped out 2/3 of the derrick, broke all the windows within about a 1-2 mile radius and was heard for I don't know how many miles. But it set fire to the derrick that was there. I know we were living about 100 yards from the rig and there was 2x12 planks, 16' long had gone clear over our house and were 50 yards past. Outside of a few holes in the roof and all the windows knocked out, I'll tell you we just came out of there looking to see what was going on. And the solidified nitro was scattered all over the lease, it hadn't exploded. Our first worry was to get the well shut in. Everybody was tied right into it. I wasn't working at it at the time nor was my dad and we went up there and helped with getting the fire out with water hoses and such to get the well shut in. Then we had to cover all that lease by hand picking up those little pieces of solidified nitro scattered around. Because if something was to hit them or kick them or something, they might go off. It was high old excitement I'll tell you. They even heard of it in High River, which was 18 miles away. Somebody had heard the explosion and it was common knowledge what was going on out at the well. This one lumber man, he phoned somebody nearby and it was. . .yes, the Union well blew the top off it and it was on fire and everything else. So this guy come sailing out in his Model A and he sold more windows that day than he had sold in his life he told us.

#233 SB: So Charlie Stalnacher, was he some service. . .

GE: Yes. He was out of Shelby, Montana. He had a magazine down there and he used to bring the nitro and he was the main shooter. And he had Choppie Stanyer???, who's in Red Deer yet, he was his helper.

SB: Did he have a company that he worked for?

GE: Well, Charlie owned the company, it was called International Torpedo Company. He manufactured his own explosives at a plant there out of Shelby. He was one of the characters of the industry. He used to come to the old timers do's in Calgary in recent years. I saw him there not too many years ago.

SB: That would be quite a challenging job, you'd have to be pretty steady handed.

GE: Well, they told you more of that than was actually the truth. I worked with another man in later years, he was abandoning wells, he was quite a one for doing the shooting. He was quite a talker, he'd have me helping him and he'd say, now, you just handle all this carefully because if you drop a piece you won't be here to pick it up. About 2 or 3 minutes later surer enough, he'd drop one and he'd say, see I told you we were lucky that time. Pretty near killed us one time over it. At the end of an abandonment we just had a small amount of nitro left to take and burn it off, rather than hauling it around. The way to do that is just to cut it up into smaller pieces and put some grass or something around it and a pail of oil a little ways off and set this oil on fire and it would burn up. We did it this one time, it was down east of Coutts and there was a sump wall there. Why the three of us just put this trail of oil down behind that wall, we went down there and set fire to it. It dug a hole as big as a sump when it went off. It wasn't supposed to do that.

#269 SB: So you worked for Union for quite a few years off and on.

GE: Over the years it was a long time, I think about 13 or 14 years.

SB: You mentioned that you worked for Snyder and Head for awhile too.

GE: I worked for them in 1941 I think, 1940. Our rig had finished a hole and they didn't have another location to go to so I had to work, Snyder and Head needed a cat head man on their rig so I went to work for them. I worked there, I don't know what it was, five or six months, four or five months. Until our rig started again, then I went drilling for Union Drilling when their's started up. That was a short job, I've forgotten when we finished it. Anyway when we finished that well I went to work with Valley Oil Operators. A lot of the crews off that rig I was on moved over to Valley Oil. This was a Mayland project. I worked for Snyder and Head again in 1946 when I went out to Hanna on the first well drilled at Hanna with them.

SB: They were one of the older drilling contractors at the time too.

GE: Yes, they were.

#299 SB: Do you know much about how they got started?

GE: I know some. There was tow, the Snyders, Clarence was the main stay of the company and they started with cable tools in Turner Valley. They drilled a lot of the wells, a lot of the older drillers have worked for them like Lloyd McCallum, Lloyd Stafford, different ones like that. They would know the full history on it, they'd be the better ones to get the history from.

SB: How were they to work for?

GE: Terrific. They were real good. Snyder's son, Dolby, he managed it when I worked for them and he was a very fine fellow to work for. A little guy, big drinker but a darn good

guy to work for.

SB: I was wondering in the Turner Valley oil field at that time, say in 1936 they made the other discovery, was there anybody pretty optimistic about the oil industry at that time?

GE: I really don't know how optimistic they were. It had been a long Depression and there were wildcat wells strung out all over Alberta, not all over but a lot of the places. I don't know what the optimism was like before they struck that crude well there in Turner Valley but once it was struck then the boom was on. But previous to that there was some rigs working, there was one I just read about the other day, drilling out of Cardston. In fact, my dad and I, we went down and hauled casing to them from Union Drilling, they had some at Warner, we hauled it over. And it was another of those deals where money was scarce and my dad had been badly burned, he wasn't able to drive but he had the rig and I did the driving. I think we got \$30 to go down there, which was about 150 miles, 100 miles from home. And we didn't know how many loads of casing we were going to have to haul. As it worked out we were gone about 5 days. It was \$30 between us.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

GE: We had orders from Mr. Mahn, we'd go over to Warner and load a load of casing on the truck and before we went out to that well out at Cardston we had to stop at the Mormon temple and there was one of the bishop's or whoever it was there, would give us the cheque for the pipe. He was handling the finance somehow. If they didn't have the cheque we were just to head to home and bring the pipe with us. We got to about 3 or 4 loads and then stopped there for the cheque and he said, you go on out and unload it and when you bring the next one I'll have a cheque for you too. So my dad told him politely, he said, well, that isn't the way we were told to do it, we have to listen to what Mr. Mahn said to do. We were to have the cheque before we were to go and unload your pipe, you know yourself that's the way it's been every load so far. He said, I know, there's a little delay, dad said, well we can't do anything about that, I guess we'll just take it home. If you want to phone Mr. Mahn and make other arrangements go ahead, and he said, no, go ahead take it home with you. So we brought the pipe home but there was a rig working there at the time.

#019 SB: Did he ever call for that load?

GE: We never took any more down, the well was never finished. It was quite common during those Depression years for a well to run out of money before they were 500' deep, maybe never get started again, or they might make it 800' or 900' or 1,000', whatever and that was the end of it. I don't know whatever became of that well.

SB: So we were just talking about Valley Oil Operators, that was another Mayland company?

GE: That was a Mayland company and we drilled what was called a Van Peg??? well, right up on the point of a hill above the ??? plant of his. We were there a long time, I'm trying to

think how long it was, probably about 7 or 8 months. I was on that one, one Sunday morning and the driller I was working for wanted to show me what to do on the pipe racks about sorting some pipe and we went out to look at it. He just sat down on one of the timbers and I was moving a piece of pipe and Mr. Mayland came over the hill, walking and he waled past us into the derrick and on out the other way, his car was parked a little ways over, left and he sent out orders to fire that whole crew because nobody was working. There was one man working, that was me, and I just happened to be rolling a piece of pipe. But he fired the driller and one of the other fellows. Bill Mahn came out and told the rest of us, he said, don't be sitting around when we're working for that man, be doing something, if you're standing still shaking a rag even, if you're moving he won't mind.

SB: It sounds like he was pretty enterprising though, he started his own refinery, he had service stations.

GE: Yes, he brought that refinery in from the States and that meant a terrific thing for Turner Valley for work. He had many oil wells. My first trip into Turner Valley was in Easter of 1929 and Union Drilling was drilling Mayland #1 then. My dad and I stayed at that camp for a couple of nights and he drilled many wells in Turner Valley along with having that meat packing plant going, things like that.

#059 SB: I guess it was a rival to Royalite then, that was about the only other competition was it?

GE: No, that wouldn't be the only other competition. It was the only other refinery in Turner Valley, yes but I thought you were referring to drilling.

SB: Well, the refining too, how did it compare in size of the operation, the refinery?

GE: It was smaller and the operation was smaller. Royalite's refinery supplied the gas for Calgary, after it was treated and Mayland's did not of course.

SB: But he was able to supply all his service stations just from that one refinery.

GE: Yes. And farmers, everything. Many people made a living hauling gasoline out and selling it to farmers. They'd get an old truck and load 12-15 barrels on the back and go to the Mercury and get it filled with gas, go down as far as Lethbridge and sell the gas to farmers there and make a few dollars on it. Mayland went further, he still had an active company when we came into Leduc in 1947, Leduc Consolidated, which was the first wells I drilled in. The first rig that I moved in was a Union Drilling rig and before I had it ready to roll, it was a steam rig, Mayland's own rig, owned by Valley Oil Operators. . . I'm sorry, I brought his rig in first. And then before we got started we got the next rig in on the next location to it. We had a half section of land adjoining the Atlantic on the east side.

#086 SB: And how many other oil companies had been in there before you, would you have any idea?

GE: Drilling, you mean in Leduc? I don't know, there were quite a few. They were just completing the second Imperial well when we started moving in, the first of May. When Bill Mahn talked to me about coming in and taking care of the rig, he had this chance to

drill for Leduc Consolidated, which was a Mayland interest and it was on a footage and they were to supply the fuel and the water for the rig. By this time Sam Hector was running a water line up through that part of the field so that we could get water and we hauled crude oil from Lloydminster to fire the boilers. The first contract hole there, apparently had been 62 days. When Bill Mahn had me sit down with his he said, now do you think you can in there and drill a hole in less than 62 days. I said, I can sure try, I'm not familiar with any of the drilling or anything. He said, well, that's the time we've got to beat in order to make a dollar on it. I said, I can sure try. By this time there was a little better knowledge though mud engineers and this sort of thing. I think our first hole we were 58 days, so we got under by about 4 days and the other we were about 54 days. Then I went back and redrilled another one of their wells in that batch . We only got one well out of the four locations.

#115 SB: When Leduc was discovered a lot of companies probably started up too, did they?

GE: Well, yes. And they were all in there to buy land wherever they could. The man that was doing the land work for Mayland, he got this acreage right on the east side of where Atlantic was later drilled. It proved to be just too far east.

SB: Do you remember what his name was?

GE: Yes. Red Phillips. He'd been an old. . .it seems to me he had a rig one time in Turner Valley. He was promoted. I remember his very well. He had even tried to buy that land the Atlantic had and Mayland wouldn't got high enough money for it.

SB: I guess at that time they were buying right from the land owners, were they?

GE: Right from the farmers. So many of them in that area had their own mineral rights because they homesteaded in there. The people we were dealing with was Harrish, they were right on the east side.

SB: You also mentioned in 1946 you worked for Oil Well Reef Flow, was that. . . were you actually working for them?

GE: Yes that was. . . you may have heard some about it already. . . a fellow by the name of Myron Zanmer, he later got into his own National Petroleums and this sort of thing. He was a geologist and professor of geology from Stanford University. He had a theory that he could control a shot of nitro in the formation and detonate it so that it would rejuvenate the well. So in some way he got hold of this one west flank well in north Little Chicago, the West Flank 2 and he was trying to get ??? to put some money in to help him out. I forget what Mayland put int but Union Drilling gave him a cable tool rig, this is all he wanted on, gave him the use of a cable tool rig to do this. I think they paid our wages, I'm not sure now who did pay our wages. At any rate we went down there and got a derrick built and rigged up the cable tool rig and went to work for him. That was about the 1st of September, they figured it would be only about 3 weeks and we'd have the well shot and be done with it. As it was I left there the 1st of May the next year and it still wasn't finished. However we got things prepared and a lot of his original ideas didn't work out. He was going to use a sewer tile on the outside of pipe, of tubing to go down and use it, what he called, for tamping, so that it would make the force of the nitro go farther out to

detonate. We started running that in and it shattered. So he sat down with some of the Haliburton men and decided we would go down to the Haliburton shop, he had forms made and we'd form cement on the outside of this aluminum tubing, with spacers and rubber bumpers on it and what have you. So we tried that and it looked like it was going to work like a charm. We had to run a piece of 3/4" welded steel pipe inside this for a pilot tube for the nitro to go down to ????. And then we had a ton of marbles, glass alleys, had to put them in one at a time around there for more tamping. We started this in the well and we only had a short cable tool derrick, it was an 84' derrick and we got down about 200' and for some reason we had to pull it back up and discovered the couplings were leaking on it. And this would have been dynamite because the nitro would have leaked out and detonated probably. So we pulled it back out and had to haul it into Calgary and get the threads changed and more fooling around, special lubricant on it. But we had to saw this inner piece of pipe out by hand and get all those marbles back out. We had to wash all them by hand and it was a cold spell in the winter. But we got over that hitch and started it in again and then the casing in the well had collapsed. So we had to pull it back out with the cable tools and drill that out, got it, what we call swedged out. But it was quite a well, it was flowing gas all the time we were working on it. And it was reasonable strong, it was flowing at 10 lbs. pressure out of 6" pipe, which is pretty good. So we'd have to keep putting a bunch of water in it, say 500 barrels or maybe 200 barrels in order to keep it dead. At any rate we got it organized at last, we had this tricky shoe on and we had the tubing going in and the pilot tube and all the marbles in. . . . I missed an operation in there. The operation. . . we had to wash this formation, and his theory, wash it in soap, this was 7,500' down. So we had 3 or 4 tons of soap in a powdered form, we'd run the tubing down in and we've got Haliburton's out there to mix this soap and we were going to pump it down under pressure to wash this formation. As soon as we started mixing the soap the suds started coming, the pumps couldn't handle it with the air in the bubbles and we had foam just about 4' deep all over the yard, clear up to our waists. And tears almost. So we forgave that operation and went ahead to get the nitro in. He had hauled the nitro from Portage la Prairie before the plant shut down there after the war. He made two trips, two truckloads each trip and hauled it all the way up to Turner Valley. He'd been in touch with us about a place to store it and had a warehouse built over in the hills about a mile from the rig, just 75 yards from where there were people living and stored this nitro in there, in cases. He didn't dare let it freeze because the crystals rubbing together could detonate it. So they had kerosene lanterns and kerosene heaters in there. They had to keep checking every day and the people living there knew nothing about it. His theory of pouring this nitro was absolutely out of all reason. They said it could never be done, it had never been done and wouldn't. CIL sent a man up from the east somewhere to see it. But we got it all in place and went to pouring it. We stayed with him until they started pouring it. We had already poured the pilot tube full before I ran the tubing in. And it was a slow procedure, you didn't dare let it have a jar or anything for fear of detonating it. But he got it in and got everything tied down and then we had to put a mop up solution in behind it to wipe the pipe. And there was a thing to detonate it, they called the shadow. One of the fellows that designed it has a machine shop over here now,

Peter Jacobs. So we run this thing down, in order to detonate it, we put the water from the water tank go in on top of it and when the hydro-static head of water got great enough and the sheer pins in the shadow, that would detonate it, explode the nitro. We had a big wide gauge board on the side of the tank facing the road and a weight we could see. After having everything tied down we all went back out to the road to watch it. That went off, there was just a spurt of water came up in the air and broke some cables and a few things like that. But the shock on the ground was pretty severe. So we went back in to see how much had happened. I have pictures of it, Zanmer and the rest of us. He told me, just don't do a thing for a few days. ??? haven't put any money in yet, if they want the information, they've got to pay for it. He said, don't do a thing, you guys come to work, clean up, do what repairing you have and when we get the financial end organized we'll let you pull that tubing out of the hole. So we went to cleaning up and we took all those old cans that had what they called mop-up solution to put over whatever nitro was spilled. There must have been about 75-100, the men made a bunch of scrap lumber and went out and built a fire and then started throwing them cans on. They blew up as bad as the nitro. We had a lot of excitement. It was quite a deal working on that well because they had to shut the schools down once they moved the nitro on the lease and hundreds of people left the town. They just loaded what they could in their car and left. And they residents where we had the nitro stored, they didn't know it was there until 2 or 3 days before we were moving it onto the location. It was that well taken care of it. Actually there was no hazard to it. . . Oh, I guess there would be. But I worked a daylight shift and went right through, and it was an interesting do. Because some of the dreams that he came up with. . . And the Energy Conservation Board kept a man there from the time we started until the job was finished. That man was Frank Maniluk, who later headed up the Conservation Board and is in Calgary now I understand. Got to know him pretty well.

#320 SB: Yes. The whole operation, was it. . . ?

GE: Well, I was there the 1st of September and I left the first part of May the following year. And they were still trying to bail water out. We put so many hundred thousand barrels of water in you could never get it all out even with modern methods, you couldn't.

SB: Did the idea work, did they crack the formation?

GE: Nobody knows.

SB: Is that right. You mean it's still sealed?

GE: Well, there were rumours, how true they were I have no idea, that different places, their production had increased a little bit. Others said that there's was less so. . . . There was never any fuss or lawsuits about it so I don't think there was nay verdict reached. Another man that spent all that time with us was Vern Meyers, he had the Oil Bulletin. He has since become a famous character because he wouldn't pay income tax in Canada, he's in the United States now. You've no doubt heard of him.

SB: And he was working for your company, Union?

GE: No, he was out to report on it. Lorne Green was working for CFAC I believe at that time, he was one of the reporters, they set up about half a mile away. Pat Freeman was there and some of the other old announcers to watch this whole show and record it and wait to

see the blood and bones around. They were really put off, after the shot was off, somebody came down and they saw us start to walk back into the well. They wanted to know what was the matter and we told them the shot was off. It just blew water up in the air about 20', that was the only indication. But it had driven the tubing up the hole about 1,000'. What had been heavy 3 ½" diameter tubing ??? 1,500' was just flat like a piece of spring steel coming out of there. And part of it disintegrated.

#370 SB: I wonder, how would they get that many marbles?

GE: They were clear alleys, they came in boxes about 10" square, 6" deep. I think every kid down there had some. They were around that rig by the hundreds and pretty well everybody took his lunch kit home half full of them. I think there was 2 tons shipped to us. We stored them in the Union Drilling warehouse in Black Diamond until we were ready to use them. He had been going to use gravel originally for this tamping but there was no way he could calibrate the amount of space for the nitro to go in around it. So he went to marbles which are a uniform size. . they were clear alleys. If you had any in the pick-up you had to lock it up or somebody would clean the back end out while you were thinking about it.

SB: Did he have any engineers helping his design all this?

GE: I don't know but he is a very clever engineer himself and a promoter. It seems to me he held an engineering degree, along with geology. And he had taught at Stanford University for quite awhile.

SB: So was that his last venture in this area or did he stay . . . ?

GE: He eventually acquired National Petroleum and they drilled a lot of wells down in the Whiskey Gap area and had quite a little refinery deal going there and all that sort of thing, for many years. I only saw him about once or twice after that. I left there, I believe I went to Wainwright and drilled some wells.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

#033 SB: So I guess it was around 1946 somewhere, you went pushing tools for Union in Wainwright?

GE: Yes. Just briefly back onto that, the shooters they brought up for that were from California, there was Hassil Green and Casey Ball. They were real explosive men. Casey Ball later went to work in Lloydminster in the explosive business, he was out there quite awhile. I think it was 1953, he wanted to form a company. . . no it was earlier than that, he and Lyle Caskell and myself were going to form a company for shooting out and controlling wild wells. He came in from Lloyd one day, he and his wife and he phoned me. He was staying over at the motel, I was about half ready to go home and he said, how about stopping by for a minute, I think we better have a talk, I want to get something going, he was a real promoter. So I stopped by his motel room and talked to him for a few minutes there. I was on my way home for my dinner. . . he was a very heavy drinker, so he said, you come by this evening and I said, yes I'll be back around 6:30-7:00. He said, great. I went home and just as I was finished my dinner the phone rang and it was his wife and he said, Garnet, Casey's dead. I said, you're kidding, she said, no he just fell off his chair and he was gone. He was a terrific guy with explosives. He had handled a well when I was working out here at Bon Accord and I had worked with him on one down there south of Lloydminster. He was a terrific man.

#062 SB: So did you go into any venture at the time?

GE: No, it seemed like a good idea at the time.

SB: So I guess we were up to working at Wainwright.

GE: Yes. By the time I was finished with that Oil Well Reef Flow, Union drilling had an interest in this acreage at Wainwright and we moved a steam rig in there and drilled a well there. We picked up some water and such so we fooled with it pretty well all the summer, testing it and bailing it, trying to get enough oil to make it really good. By the time fall came it was time to leave it on pump and go back to Turner Valley. I stayed with Union for awhile, we had a bunch of machinery to overhaul and this sort of thing. Then Snyder and Head were going to drill this well in Hanna and I got in touch with them and they said, yes, we were going to start right after New Year and I had a job. So I went out there drilling for them, I think it was the 6th of January I went out in '47. There was Al Howse, Tom ??? and myself and Ray Tilliston on there as the drillers. We were snowbound most of the time we were up there. We were up there til about the end of March. I think the warmest day we had all the time we were out there was 16 below zero. Luckily the well was just across the dam from the town, it would be about 3/4 of a mile, we walked back and forth from work all the time across the dam. They'd get the roads plowed out or the rail would get the drifts plowed out and another big storm would come in and we'd be blown in again. It was a pretty tough winter but we were there when Leduc was discovered. I remember being in the cafe and picked up the Albertan, here it

was about the Leduc discovery in February. It wasn't long after that, Commonwealth got hold of Al Howse and told him he wanted him to get on the go to get his rig moving in there. And I came out and I was supposed to go to work for Turner Valley Supply, they wanted me to go to work I should say. Which I didn't want to because I was interested in the drilling. But I had quite a little time with them. Finally Bill Mahn of Union Drilling, he came out to Diamond one day, I was working around the shop there for him and so he said, what do you think about the Leduc. I said, well, I'd had offers to go to Edmonton or the Leduc area, I had had other offers to come up here and go drilling as soon as it got going. So he let me in on the secret that he had a contract pretty well signed up. He said, if I would stay with him, with moving the rig in there, I had to drill one more well at Wainwright and then at that time they would be moving a rig in at Leduc and he wanted me to go and push it for him. So I stayed with him and went to Wainwright and drilled another well and moved on location and drilled one, then moved the rig over to Blackfoot, which is just out of Lloyd and then got set up. By that time, they were ready for us to start making a location in Leduc. I think it was the 1st of May I came over here and got organized to get the lease made and we started in with it.

#127 SB: Were there very many rigs operating in the Leduc field then?

GE: There was about 20 I would say in there and moving in. Moving in mostly because there was only one major trucker and that was James and Reimer and they couldn't cover them all. We were trucking the majority of the stuff from Turner Valley. Some came by rail but it meant handling it so often you had to have somebody there to truck it from Turner Valley over to Okotoks to get it on the railroad and then ship it here to Millet or Leduc and get their trucks at this end to pick it up and move it out for you. It was just a losing fight that way. As I mentioned they were completing the number 2 well when I was moving the rig in. But there was many other, Young Drilling were in and Commonwealth and Ocalta and a lot like that. We drilled our first well there and it was a duster. Our geologist on that was Joe Irwin, a friend of Aubrey's I believe. The second one also was. In the meantime the Mayland Company wanted to get in on this oil as quick as they could so they had General Petroleum move a rig in on the northernmost location. They got a well there but it was only 3' above the water so it was just, you might say, a marginal well. Then we shut our two rigs down and just stacked them there. By this time it was getting on into October I think, by the time I finished stacking them. . . .yes, along about then because I had to make another run over to Lloydminster. And disband the camp and this sort of thing. Leduc was pretty rough, there was no place to accommodate the men. We built our own camp out there on the location. Drilled a water well for them, put in a root cellar, all this sort of thing. And we didn't get oil, so the farm people were thoroughly disgusted of course, because they had a royalty they were looking at. They wouldn't buy the camp and they wouldn't let you do anything about the land and all the rest, so I had quite a long session getting rid of everything we had and getting the rigs racked up and abandoned because we had had a blowout in the first well. The Viking formation blew out on us and we had a real strong gas well. It run wild for five days before I got it under control. At this time there were no blow out preventers working in

the field. Some of the rigs were right down, you could just step from the ground on to the derrick floor. No one had had any experience with blow out equipment.

#180 SB: Hadn't there been any need for it in Turner Valley?

GE: No we didn't use it in Turner Valley. And we had bought a blow out preventer coming in but it was an old one from Newell and Chander, they had used it in Turner Valley. But it had had cement get into it and blocked it open and it could have been that way for years before we got it. And nobody else had any. I had put it on, I didn't know anything about it. We were in a hurry to get it spudded and we didn't tear it open, just took for granted it was in good condition, put it on. After I got the rig running I went back to sit at home for a weekend in Turner Valley. The fellow I left taking care of the rig, the joint below it got to leaking so he just took it off and threw it out in the yard and welded . . . there was a flange below and he welded a piece of 8" casing on what we called the flow pipe and he went ahead drilling. I was a bit upset when I came back about him taking it off, I said, that was supposed to be left on. Well, he said, it was leaking, it doesn't work anyway. I said, how do you know, he said, I know it doesn't. I never had anything to do with one. At any rate we went ahead and we run this drill stem test. The Conservation Board man was on the location to see how it was run, it was Nate Goodman. We run a drill stem test, and there was no indication of anything in the top of the Devonian. We started to pull the tests, this was at night which was normal procedure. I stayed till we had about 500' of the pipe out of the hole and I'd been going many nights without sleep between the two rigs so I went to bed. It was just a matter of maybe 20-30 minutes, the Conservation Board man and the drill stem tester came busting into my bunkhouse, hey we got a blowout. I thought they were pulling my leg, what do you mean, leave me alone, I want to go to sleep. No, we're not kidding, we got a light on and here they were covered in mud. They said, just listen out there, I listened out and I could hear it roaring. I looked it over, all the crew was out safely but the derrick man hadn't shown up. He was up the derrick when it happened. When I got up there the other boys were back out away from the rig, I asked them was anybody hurt and they said, we haven't found the derrick man yet. It was a pretty empty feeling, you know, it was dark and everything, so we skirted around the rig, a couple of us one way and a couple of us the other way and about the time we got out of the way, he came wandering from the derrick. He didn't seem to know where he was. But he had come down the ladder all right and he wasn't hurt. His face was nicked up a little bit and his hands. We were fortunate nobody was injured and it was a steam rig so we just killed the fired in the boilers right away. So we went to work the next day to bring it under control. It took us five days. I picked the men to go in there with me on it. We had to go into the piece of 8" pipe that they had welded in, we had to saw that off by hand to get it out of there which was a bit tricky. Tricky on the nerves more than anything. And the mud under the derrick was up to our knees or higher from what had blown out. However I decided what I wanted to do, I'd have to get rid of that anyway and by having this one flange on the bottom, we'd be able to leave our pipe hang down there and get things out of the way and put a blowout preventer on. So as soon as it got good daylight I had one of the crews come out and start dismantling the blowout preventer to make sure it worked.

We had tried and couldn't get it to work so we had them pull it apart and it was full of cement. So it was quite a deal getting it cleaned up and getting it in working condition. We were governed a certain amount by the wind too. I didn't want to start the boilers up again until we had the wind blowing away from them so that the gas wouldn't come that direction. So I had one big guy that had worked with me for years, Austin Christie, and another little guy, Mouse Bisson, they were the two I kept going in with me. But we were fortunate, it went along the way we had planned and after we got rid of that one piece of pipe, our drilling string, half of it was in the hole and it was halfway up the derrick. I checked it, it was free and I could move it all right so when the wind was right we got our connections broke loose, unbolt this flange and set our pipe down there and skinned off the rest of it. We just reversed the operation and by this time the boys had the blowout preventer working and we put it on, up above the floor so we had lots of free room to work at. But it all took a lot of time. Every rig in the field shut down to look at what they had or what they needed. One salesman, Joe Redman, he came out 2 or 3 days after we were working on it. I came out from the rig out towards the road, we used to go back and forth there, to get some coffee or whatever the cook sent up to us. Joe was waiting for me, he said, boy I should kiss you but I'll shake your hand, before you had that blowout I had a flat car load of blowout preventer and drilling through valve to go back to the States. Since this blowout, he said, I've sold every one and I've got an order for a bout 20 more.

#297 SB: He didn't give you a commission then eh?

GE: No. However we got it under control and finished the well and it was a duster. After we had done our abandonment and got the rig all sorted out, they wanted me to go back to Lloyd to work for the winter and I didn't want to, I wanted to stay. I thought the future was in Leduc. Paul Guthrie of Northern Development, he had been by to see me a couple of times, wanted to know whether I was going to do another hole, I said no. He said, as soon as you're finished here, why don't you come over and work for me. I said, they want me to go over to Lloyd, he said, you don't want to go over there. So I went to work for him. This was Northern Development. It was a brand new rig they had moved in. Completely strange to me, it was all on air and diesel and jackknife derrick and all that but it was an interesting new. And he needed experienced drillers so we went to work there. My crew wound up with three taxi drivers that had never seen a rig before and one guy that shouldn't have seen another one. He was a real drinker and wasn't able to train the other employees. However.

#328 SB: There was a real shortage of men then?

GE: Well, yes. This was just after the war you know, a shortage of experienced men. But I worked for them that winter, the first well was right across the fence from where Devon was built. We watched the first building going in there of course, we were 50 yards away. I worked on two wells for them and by that time Valley Oil Operators were starting to go again, they approached me and wanted me to back and take care of their rig. Atlantic blew in, I think it was the 15th of March, blew out. Our rig was still stacked just straight over, the second location over. So we moved that rig out of there. It was 3' of snow on the

level and the catskin and I went to open the road, it was over 3' because he had a yard stick, you push it down through until it hit the ice or the ground and it was down below the top. But we got the rig out of there and went across the coulee and drilled one. By this time, Atlantic had blown out and relieved the pressure. . .this ??? well that Leduc Consolidated had turned to salt water. In fact it started producing all the red wood fibres and everything else that they had pumped down, the feathers and all that were coming up in their well. So they got permission to whipstock and redrill it. By the time I had finished this other well they had permission to redrill that ??? one that had turned to water. So we moved the rig back in while Atlantic was blowing and we came under their regulation and we set up to do a partial abandonment, you know, pull the casing out and then redrill it. One of the regulations, we had to have our boilers et 1,000' away which was against all the best wished of anybody on a steam rig and we had to set a wind sock up so that if the gas of Atlantic 3 started blowing towards our boilers, we had to shut everything down. However it all worked out all right. We went ahead and whipstocked the well and I think we kicked it over close to 400' towards the Atlantic and then we got terrific oil, which is still producing.

#393 SB: And it didn't affect your production at all, you didn't have to shut down for awhile when they. . .

GE: When the Atlantic was running wild. Well no, this well had turned to water anyway you see. We got a good oil well out of it but we didn't get it completed until after the Atlantic was finished. I'm not sure on that. At any rate. . .no Atlantic was still running wild when we were down close because I made a trip to Turner Valley to see family, whatever, everything was going along pretty good at the rig and we were on our way home, we were just at Lacombe when we saw the big flash in the sky. I said to my wife, we didn't make it because our crews were all in there and the thoughts that had gone around about the Atlantic, that if it ever did catch fire, how big an area it would cover and all this sort of thing. So I hurried all I could and I dropped my family in Leduc and I just hurried out to the rig. I got out there and of course, the police had all the traffic shut off. I couldn't talk my way into getting in so I left me pick-up and I walked in. The crew were sitting on the edge of the derrick floor watching the fire and just happy as could be, which was a big relief. At any rate we got a good well out of it.

End of tape.

Tape 3 Side 1

SB: So it must have been quite an event though, with Atlantic #3 blowing wild.

GE: It was yes. After it blew wild for so long it became kind of commonplace you might say. There was so much fuss afterwards, plus the clean up and that sort of thing that couldn't be done all the time it was running wild.

SB: I guess once it caught fire, there wasn't as much danger.

GE: Well, the danger was over then. It didn't take them too long after it caught fire to bring it under control. I know we finished that well and by this time Bill Mahn had a contract to drill one for Imperial. So we went down and drilled Imperial 179 and just at that time, about the time we were finished, Imperial were starting to cut down their drilling program, we were one of the last ones to start with them. So we were out. We had made good time and drilled a good well.

#021 SB: The activity in the field was slowing down some, was it?

GE: It was slowing down yes. So that was the last hole that Union drilling rig did there and they sold it after that. They kept me on for awhile getting it all moved over to that Leduc Consolidated lease. Bill Mahn offered it to me to take out contracting on my own but I wasn't ready to attempt anything like that at that time.

SB: What was your position in . . . ?

GE: I was a tool pusher. They were still endeavoring to get other bids, they had some stuff pending they thought. I wasn't doing too much and Al Howse at Commonwealth needed a man, a driller got injured up at Redwater. So he called, wanted to know what I was doing, I said, not too much, why, he said, you're not working. I said, well, I'm still on the payroll, do you think you might have something come up. He told me what his problem was and he said, how about coming up and drill for us for a few days. I said, I gotta get rid of this pick-up and tell the union about it, he said, well, you better do this. So I called Bill Mahn and told him they wanted me to go out for a few days or whatever. He said, you might as well go ahead, we haven't got anything going on right now, and when you get back home you can do something about that truck then. So after Redwater, I guess I was up there for a month on that rig and then the driller came back. He came back and I just got off, it was 8:00 in the morning and he was coming back for the next shift. So I had a little sleep and started for home and stopped off in Edmonton with some of the boys. I got back to Leduc about 9:00 that night and my wife said, they've been phoning and phoning, what happened to you. I said, not too much. She said, well they want you back in Redwater. So I went back up and they needed a swing driller to take over the swing job, work four days on one rig and then four days on another. So I went back to work for them on that. That was at Redwater and up at Opal and down to Bon Accord. It seemed I never hit the same rig twice, it would be moved out and another one came in. I was supposed to leave them and go to work for Devon Drilling. They had approached me to push tools on a rig of theirs across the river. Commonwealth ran into some problems with the tool pusher at Bon Accord, he was leaving or something, so they asked me if I would stay and go down there. I said, no, I promised those other people I would go to work for them, I had given them a week's notice I was leaving. So they told me the

circumstances around this rig down at Bon Accord, they wanted to keep the rig there and finish that and they wanted me to go down and take care of it. So I went down and about 10 days afterwards, that one blew it. It wasn't supposed to, it was supposed to be a dry hole. We had drilled it and all the test showed dry, they run casing in it and they decided to test it further and they perforated and tested and everything dead. We were bailing the last of the fluid out when it blew in. It took fire as soon as it blew in, burnt the rig, burnt three of the men, not real bad but their hands and faces. So we spent an interesting time getting that one under control. But it was only about a day. . let me see, it blew in at noon, I think we were a couple of days getting it under control, a day and a half. It was another, we didn't have a blow out preventer on at that time, it caught us between blow out preventers. So we had to get the wreck off of it and then this Casey Ball that I mentioned earlier, I phoned him at Lloyd, wanted to know if he could come and shoot it out for us, which he was happy to do, work was scarce. So he come on over and we shot it out and got it killed. We were all finished drilling on it anyway. Well, then they had me go out swing pushing for them for awhile. I'd be a week on one rig and then a week on another one. It was interesting you know, it would give you different experience, you get to work with a lot of different guys. But I just stayed on that about a month and a half and Canada West approached me to come and take care of their rigs. They had 6 rigs, one was in Redwater and there were 3 in Leduc, 2 in Leduc and 1 in Hanna and 1 at Craigmyle.

#103 SB: Who owned Canada West?

GE: This was a deal George Lawrence. . he was one of Mayland's men at one time, he went promoting and he had purchased the rigs of Snyder and Head and the other equipment they had. He had 16 men that were supposed to put up \$5,000 and they'd have a share in the company and get it going. Well, they had been going for about a year but they were just losing ground, mostly through bad luck and mismanagement or whatever. At any rate, they approached me to come to work for them and I went down there to Leduc with them. I think they had just taken on the sixth rig, it was a shallow one. But the company didn't have any money and not enough equipment around when I went to work for them, it was quite a challenge. They made me an offer where if I could show where I could make them some money, that they'd pay me a percentage on the profits, nothing in writing. This was usual in the oil field, you took another man's word and that was the end of it. At any rate I went to work for them and we were able to upgrade the rigs and replace what was the last steam rig working in Canada. We retired it and put a new one on in it's place and got more equipment and the rigs painted up and it was going pretty good. A year and a half after I started with them, they had about 5 oil wells of their own, a controlling interest in them, they were selling oil. I was Superintendent for them and I was taking care of all the fishing problems they had, the casing jobs, the rig moves and also taking care of the production, which was a little heavy load. It meant for many nights in a row, you didn't get to bed much. At any rate they sold to Trinidad Leasehold and I got sold with it. So I stayed on with them for about a year and a half. I think I drilled about 17 dry holes in a row, which is about 10 times more than I'd ever seen in my life. They had done some promoting, getting some farmout acreage where somebody would

drill a well in a big block of acreage, if they didn't get a well, they would get all that acreage on condition they'd drill a well to further evaluate it. So consequently I was busy drilling dry holes. So they shut down about November of 1952, they were down to just one rig running and that didn't take a Superintendent, so I was laid off, it wasn't long before Christmas. I wasn't home too long until Cap Tracey of Eastern Oil Well Survey called me. I had worked for them, I was the second Canadian with them in 1942, I only stayed with them about 3 months. He called me and told me he had problems, his area supervisor and district manager had both quit to go in business for themselves and he didn't have anybody to take care of things. He and I had been very good friends all over the years so he asked me if I wanted to go to work for him. Gosh, I said, I don't know, I'm more interested in straight hole drilling as you know. He said well, he was a very fine old gentleman. . . we always had breakfast appointments, whenever he wanted to talk to me. . he was in Calgary and he said, look Garnet, I'll be there, meet me for breakfast in the morning. So we went for breakfast and he told me what had developed and he said, how about going to work for me. I said, I'll go with you for awhile until you get something else organized or whatever. So I stayed with them a year and a half. In that year and a half there was quite a change, Cap was eased out pretty well and another man came in that, he and I didn't see eye to eye anyway. And he had another fellow offer to take my job at about \$300 a month less than what I was getting. So I left him and Trinidad Leaseholds called me and wanted to know if I would go to Trinidad. They said, we've got some application forms here that are to be approved to people that are applying to go down and we need some men and we were wondering if you'd come and look them over, you know the people. So I went down and I went through them and they said, yours isn't in here. I said, no, I don't know anything about this. So the old gentleman, the superintendent, Dr. Suter, he said, you could fill one in with your name and sign it and just for the fun of it, send it down. So I did and in the meantime I had been mixed up with George Lawrence, he had formed another company, and he always maintained he had an interest in it for me, it was called Sheerness Petroleum, one rig. They were having problems with their tool pusher and that sort of thing. He phoned me and said, look you're not working now, you'd better come out and take care of your interests. I told him I'd go down and see what I could straighten out for him. He said, you get down and take care of that rig because I told you , you had an interest in it, you're going to have to work for it. So I went down, this was Drumheller and as soon as I got there, Trinidad Leaseholds wired me, my ticket was in Edmonton to go down to Trinidad. Well, I couldn't get away, I stayed and drilled that well at Drumheller for Lawrence and then came back to Edmonton and got my other shirt, you might say, and I was gone to Trinidad.

#229 SB: Was it a different kind of operation in Trinidad?

GE: Yes. Everything else is handled differently there. They offered me a tool pushing job when I got there, which I couldn't accept because I had no idea of their methods or conditions. It was as well I didn't, they needed steam drillers pretty bad and when they found out I was a steam driller, they said, will you drill on a steam rig and I said,

certainly. So I went drilling on a steam rig and it was actually the best job down there because as long as I stayed. . .the fields were 8,000' or shallower. Due to union conditions, we shut down every Saturday evening early. By early I mean it was 5:00 and you didn't start until Sunday midnight. That gave you every weekend off and whenever there were any holidays or anything like that you had holidays off and it was a good job. I enjoyed it. The only thing is I didn't want to stay there. I felt I was losing touch with what was of interest in Canada and my family was here. They offered to bring my family down which I wouldn't because there was no education for the kids. And the English attitude was, when they're old enough to go to school, put them in boarding school and they'll be all right anyway but I couldn't see it so I came back. But that wound up my drilling.

#260 SB: What year was that, that you went down there with them?

GE: I went down there in September of '54 and came back April Fool's Day of '55.

SB: And had the Canadian situation changed at all in that time?

GE: I really don't know, I couldn't say now. Work wasn't too plentiful in my way of thinking. I had the odd job in the drilling end of it offered to me and then Lou Lydecker??? of Lydecker Tools, he offered me a job selling well head equipment. He had a well head at ??? that he hadn't been able to get kicked off too well so I thought I'd give it a try. It was pretty low wages to start with but it was going to keep us eating. So I went to work for him. Then he had this tube test company, just starting it up and he took on some other accounts so I stayed with him, from '55 to '63 when he sold out to go back to the States. In that time I got to see so many of the other fields that were starting, such as Drayton Valley, they were starting ???. We were the second service company out there at ???. And Swan Hills, watched that go. I worked at Dawson Creek, worked up at Nelson for him, Estevan, Saskatchewan. In fact, I became the General Manager, I don't know when it was, '57 or '58. He had other interests he wanted to get mixed up in the States and he was neglecting his business here so it was deteriorating. He had offered to sell it to me at different times and he always had it too high so I couldn't touch it. Finally in 1963 he wanted to sell to me. It was too high so he said, well, I'll go in a round about way, he had a partner in the tube test part of it, a separate company. So he made an arrangement with him and this man that was his partner, he called him in California and told him he wanted me to buy it. He made me a very good offer and he said, I'll back you all the way with it. But I couldn't handle it alone, I had to have a partner so I go Mitch Sullivan to go in with me. He was a partner, he had worked under me. So we formed a partnership and we had two testing units and no money and lots of hard work. But we built it into a real nice business, so that when I sold out in 1978, my share of it to him, we had 10 units operating and 3 points in Alberta we were operating out of. We owned our own buildings and everything, it was a very nice company. But my wife had had a heart attack at the end of April and I had been thinking of selling and that made up my mind right then. So I stayed with him for a month and then I've been retired ever since. I did go back here, 3 or 4 years ago for Handicks??? Oil Company, supervised the building of a rig for them. Then when it was sold to the States in the big crunch, I went back for another month with them and saw it leave.

#347 SB: So you saw. . .I guess in the 50's the drilling business seems to have. . .well, I guess after the Leduc discovery, there was a rush of activity and then it sort of died down and then slowly built up again or. . .?

GE: Yes. I think there was as many rigs working but they were scattered so much. After Leduc, then there was Wood Bend field drilled out and Golden Spike and Redwater, Opal, Bon Accord. And as they were drilling they were starting to reach out into the north country and out on the prairies. So I think there was gradually getting more rigs working but they were scattered out so much.

SB: Do you remember when was the first time you heard of rigs drilling up in the north, like say in the Yukon or in the Northwest Territories.

GE: I first heard of some of that. . .I'm trying to think, it was in the early 50's. For the Yukon and that sort of drilling, in the early 50's.

SB: So people were just sort of spreading out, trying to find cheap land, I guess and . . .?

GE: Well, looking for oil development. There was so much went out into the prairies and you take in the 50's, Pincher Creek was just getting going good. As I look back on it, the places they have struck good fields and all that, were places that they were drilling wells in the real early years, in the 30's. Steveville??? was one example, Union Drilling had a rig out there in about 19. . . I know they had one in 1937 because I went down there in 1937. That hole was never finished but then later you know, they find a field there. Pincher Creek area, that's where the first well was drilled in Alberta and they got oil at a real shallow depth. I worked at Lundbreck, there's been wells drilled in there since that got good production. Lomond was another one in the Bow River area. And different places, like up along in the Peace Country where they're getting wells now. There was rigs in there, well, they were drilling up in there in 1918. The rig that's in OTS Park was working up there in 1918. They've got all the information on it. And it had struck some gas. It was just abandoned here in the last five years, really shut off. So they've been trying all over. In west of Olds, in Sundre, and back of Hunter Valley and that, there was wells drilling there 50 years ago. Nordegg is the same way. Where we worked east of Coutts, we didn't get a well, we had some oil and some water. Probably nowadays that would have been completed, separate the water from the oil and it would be all right. At that time, it wouldn't flow so they just abandoned it. And there's been a field developed in around there.

#429 SB: So they've been reworking a lot of the old fields then?

GE: Yes. With modern ideas and completion methods, they're doing well. Another example was Wainwright. When I worked there we were 6 miles east and 12 miles north of town. The roads were just terrible. Bill Mahn and I were going out one day and the roads were bad and I said, I don't know why you didn't decide to drill next to town. He said, there's no oil down there, what's the matter with you, now there's wells right from town, right on both sides of the road. This is modern methods and completions doing it.

End of tape.

Tape 3 Side 2

#020 GE: Well, I'm going to an old timers do on the 5th of October.

SB: How long have you been a member of the OTS?

GE: Since 1953 I think.

SB: Is that when it was founded?

GE: No. I think it was just shortly after it was founded. When I first started working in Edmonton I joined it. I did have a membership card here but I don't know where it is.

SB: Why was there a need for that kind of thing, was it just sort of a fraternity of oil men?

GE: That's the way it was started you know, and it was one of the finest things I have ever seen. Originally it was all oil men, still controlled by oil men, but it's the only place you can find where those men are in their business and maybe 6 or 7 drilling contractors, competitors, but when they're into that they all work together and get along great and they're always good friends, even in their business and it's that same with the services. It's the only organization I've ever seen that sort of thing. I was on the executive of it for several years. It was a really rewarding organization to work for. 1973-74, ten years ago, I was President.

#045 SB: Were there any issues that they dealt with during that time, like, did you ever get involved with any lobbying, political issues, anything like that?

GE: No, I didn't. I didn't have time to get into too much of that, I was mixed up in some of the other organizations that we started. One was the Oil Field Service Christmas Party, I was on the first committee starting that and I was on it for 11 or 12 years.

SB: What was that, all the service companies getting together?

GE: The service companies would get together and put on a party for our customers. Rather than one company giving out individual gifts to all their customers, we went together and put our money into that and had a real nice evening for the customers and their wives. It's still going. It was a real nice deal, I enjoyed it. I was mixed up on the executive of it for 11 or 12 years I think it was. Then I got into the International Oilman's Bonspiel. I got talked into helping out on it. And it was fun all the way through. I'm not a curler but it was just fun to work with those guys. We had a committee of, I think it was 10 when I started, we were handling a big spiel and everybody was working together so well it was just a real lot of fun, I certainly enjoyed it.

#070 SB: I was wondering what you think are the greatest changes in the industry since you first started in it? I guess that's kind of a hard question to ask.

GE: Yes, it certainly is Susan.

SB: Well, say from the point of drilling, what would you say have been the biggest improvements?

GE: I don't think a person could name it, I think everything has improved so much. The machinery, the technology and the people doing the drilling.

SB: Do you think people have changed that are involved in the industry today from the one's

that started?

GE: Oh yes, they've changed some but then as I look back on what I figure were the old guys, the ones before my time, they were a pretty smart bunch of people. They maybe didn't have the education but as I just mentioned, from the geology point of view and the promoters, they were drilling wells where they are being drilled today. They didn't know how deep to go but they were doing it, they were in the right spot. The machinery wasn't as capable of doing it as it is today. A lot more thinking had to be done on some points. You had no instruments to tell you whether your bit was getting dull or anything else, you had to figure that out from the cuttings and the drilling speed and all those sort of things. When I first went drilling, all the drillers I knew and by that time, myself, we knew all the formations in Turner Valley, one would follow the other and what they looked like. So you had a change in conditions in your drilling, you were going through that sample you would notice a change.

#097 SB: And would drillers today notice that?

GE: I don't think so, I don't think they'd have a clue. You take their instruments away from them today and they're in trouble. In our time sometimes we had a mud pressure gauge, sometimes we didn't, the same as a weight indicator. They worked about half the time and you would train yourself to work by the sound of your equipment, that's where a lot of us went half deaf was that noisy equipment we were working with.

SB: Was the rotary noisier than the cable, or which was noisier?

GE: Oh yes, the rotary was far noisier than the cable tool. Cable tool is a relatively quiet, smooth working.

SB: I was wondering, what do you consider some of the more memorable events that you witnessed, you've seen quite a few things?

GE: The way wells used to be brought in at Turner Valley. That's where the term gusher was used, it's where it originated. I've seen lots of them blowing up higher than the derrick, right through the derrick, I've seen them burnt up, I've seen some pretty rugged accidents on some of them. I saw the ice there, when they were producing those wells wide open, that thick over all the pipes on the hottest day of summer. There were a lot of things to see, they escape me now. One thing that a lot of people seem to have forgotten, there used to be wax wells in Turner Valley, every well the surface gas went on a flare, there would be wax wells and then a burst of oil would go up, there'd be huge smoke rings in the sky. So big that during the war those pilots training in the light airplanes, they'd be out there diving through them. All our living conditions have improved so much in the oil field, working conditions, everything. Mind you there were a lot of conditions we worked under were rough but I can look back on my days spent in the oil field and say that I wouldn't have had it much of any other way. There were some real bad times, that's true but after they were behind you they didn't look quite so bad.

#138 SB: What would you say would be your most significant accomplishment, according to your evaluation as a . . . ?

GE: My significant accomplishment. I don't think I ever had one, I really didn't. Some of the

big points in my life was my first drilling job. I was pretty proud of it and I was pretty worried whether I could handle it. And I would say in my life, I was always interested in making a living for my family and if my drilling job petered out and somebody offered me a roughnecking job I would take it so I would have grub for my kids. And it helped my experience no end taking jobs like that. After my first drilling job I went back to working derrick for about I guess 4 or 5 months. I was paying closer attention to what the driller was telling me and what he was doing. I went drilling again, it was no problem. And after I pushed tools, I went back and drilled, and it did me a world of good. It didn't hurt my feeling to do it either but I really learned a lot. Some of the guys I got to work with by doing those things, it sure helped me.

SB: A lot of people would probably decide they didn't want to go back to that I suppose?

GE: Well, I've seen a lot of people didn't want to be degraded in their job. But I couldn't see that, I thought I was learning more for myself and appreciating it and also keeping myself busy.

#170 SB: What do you think about the industry in general now, do you think it's going to improve in the future, what do you see as the best hopes for the future?

GE: I think it's going to improve from the way it is now. It is improving this past year. I don't think you're going to see too many people get carried away and get into another boom that we did before because it was just unreal. Anybody and everybody could get rigs, money, anything they wanted to. But I don't think you'll see it happen again, there've been too many people hurt by it. People that really shouldn't have been. They. . I don't know how you would term it, they got into a position that was too much for them. Too much of a debt load so that there was no way they were going to survive if things didn't remain good. So I don't think you'll ever see another boom anything like that last one. We went through booms in the early years, 1937, that was really something, there was about 40 rigs working in Alberta then, that was the boom. And then it's eased off and it would come up and down. But at that time people couldn't just go and collect unemployment insurance or something when the job came to an end. The thing to do was go out and find another one if you wanted to keep eating. And this is what we all more or less did. I remember in 1934 I guess it was, when they built the BA plant east of Longview. We lived about 3/4 of a mile from it and it was nothing to see 200-250 men lined up in the morning looking for work and 3/4 of them had walked 7-8-10 miles to be down there at 7:00 in the morning to see about a job. If you didn't get a job that day you would be back the next and lots of times they would hire 4 or 5 guys, lots of times none or whatever. Another kid and I, we worked for a contractor building the houses around there. We were wheeling cement with wheelbarrows and I think we were getting about \$2 a day doing it and boy, that was hard work and big wheelbarrows.

#217 SB: I was wondering, are there any more comments you would like to make before we finish up?

GE: Not that I can think of Susan. I just hope to hear more of this project, that you were able to complete it and get something good out of it. I think it's a marvelous idea.

SB: Well, you've made a good contribution to it and I'd like to thank you for taking part.

GE: Thank you, I don't know if I've made a big contribution but I think it's a good deal, something like family reunions, people keep putting them off and it's too late. Same in the oil industry, well, Ed Kott is a good example, before you got him all taped he was gone, and you're going to find a whole bunch more that way. I was alarmed at the last old timers do in Calgary, the OTS, 60 some names and there were quite a few they'd missed, died in the past year. So that's why I think the sooner you can get this the better.