

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Paul Evans

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

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AK: The today is December the 4, 1992 and I am in the home of Paul and Sarah Beth Evans. And this is Apartment 405 in the Renfrew house up in Rideau Heights. I guess we could call it Rideau Heights. Yeah, right. And I'm very pleased to be here today, Paul because you have a long history of involvement in the oil patch, having come up here from the States. So, I'd like to get from you the year you were born and where, and a little bit about your parents.

PE: Thank you Aubrey. I was born in Galesburg, Illinois on June 13th, 1915. And my parents moved from Illinois to Texas when I was only one year old, and they settled it Ranger, Texas. And my father worked in the oil business for about a year, year and a half, and then they moved to Fort Worth. I was raised, in my childhood in Fort Worth and later went through, graduated from high school and went to Texas A&M in 1933 and graduated in Petroleum Engineering in 1937.

AK: Okay, that's a good start. Just let's go back to your dad. For whom did he work? And what was his job in the oil business?

PE: My father worked primarily in the sales industry. He was a truck salesman, worked for White and Mack Truck Company during all of my school time and he was still working with them when I went to college. After my graduation he had a heart attack and died in 1951, which is just after we came to Canada.

AK: So, actually he wasn't in the oil business per se.

PE: No.

AK: No, not like you were?

PE: That's right.

[00:02:51] AK: Okay. Let's go back to your childhood. And when you were going to high school, what were some of the summer jobs you had while you were going to high school?

PE: Aubrey, you recall that this was the big Depression years and there wasn't too many jobs available. But during my high school career, I was in a lot of athletics of all kinds, we had football, basketball. I was an All-State basketball player, and received a, what was in those days a scholarship to go to Texas A&M. Scholarship was that if I made the freshman basketball team, they would get me a job for the next three years which would pay for my room and board. I was fortunate enough to do so, and I finished my college career and the total cost of, for the four years education was 1,600 dollars, which is quite

amazing based on the Depression day times. In the summers, when I got old enough to work, my dad was fortunate enough to help me get a job with the warehouse, people that he sold trucks to. And that meant that I got to unload trains with hundred-pound sacks of flour from morning until noon and the whole day. So, I become quite active, then I did that for four years, except that on my senior year and prior to entering A&M my father got me a job on a line... the electrical company's line, they were extending lines to West Texas. And I went out there and stayed and worked with the Mexicans in the hot hundred-degree summer to get enough money to start off to school. And then of course after graduation, I had no experience in the oil industry and my teacher, they had one at Texas A&M, put us all in the classes, we had around 35 graduating in the graduating class in Petroleum Engineering. And since I didn't have any field experience, he selected the Gulf Oil Corporation for me to go to work for. And it was the Gypsy division out of Tulsa Oklahoma. They had one of the most excellent training programs for young engineers at that particular time. So, I signed on for the normal salary of a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. And they trained me in every division of the company I worked in. New Mexico, Illinois, all in the mid-continent division, Kansas, etc.

AK: Well that's pretty good. So, just to recap, just to make it clear that those summer jobs while you were at A&M. That's short for Texas Agricultural and Mechanical isn't it? A&M.

PE: A&M.

AK: Yeah.

PE: Agricultural and Mechanical.

AK: Mechanical, right. But during those summer months while you were attending, you had this other job, just a laborers job. You didn't have any oil and gas related jobs.

PE: The only related job I had with the oil and gas was in our senior year, at spring holidays, we had two weeks off so we worked in the oil industry, and my job was in East Texas to work with the Commissioner in that area. Which mainly just took cement jobs and they had to put pressure control on them for 24 hours on surface ??? only not long strengths. And get a reading and see that the pressure was holding and that the cement was setting up. So that for the two weeks I reported every morning to this man I was assigned to, the Commissioner for that area, and we reported to the pool hall. And for 14 days, I watched him play pool, and the people bring in the charts and he would sign his name to him. And then after the two weeks, back to school, and that was my training, and I think my instructor had the right idea. I didn't have any oil field operations prior to my graduation.

AK: Tell me, this Commissioner, was he an employee of the Texas Railroad Commission?

PE: Yes, he was.

[00:08:40] AK: Yeah, that's what I thought. Now, when you were attending A&M, at what stage was the science of Petroleum Engineering? Could you give me just a very brief idea of the... where Petroleum Engineering had gotten?

PE: I'll try Aubrey. Texas A&M put in the Petroleum Production Engineering course starting in 1934, and graduated the first... I'm sorry, they put it in and they graduated the first group of engineers in 1934. So,

it was a newly organized course. Of course, we took two years and did nothing but just take a predominately engineering course: calculus, mechanical drawing, all of the various things that associated with all engineers. And then we only went into the Petroleum Production courses for the last two years. So, the industry at that time was a new industry that came into existence after the Second World War primarily. Right prior to the World War. And Texas was the leading producer at that particular time, and it was an ideal place to start it. The next course that I can recall was one that was started at Oklahoma University when they started. And then when I came to Canada, they were already Canadian boys, it was Floyd Airing, Merrill Rasmussen, Jim Drumheller, and others who had gone to Oklahoma and graduated that came up and worked for me in the engineering department to start setting up the engineering part here in Canada.

AK: Okay. I was just thinking in terms of say, some concepts, for instance, was the concept of super compressibility understood in those days?

PE: We didn't even know the word. They hadn't invented it at that time. All we do primarily was the... rotary drilling rigs had just come into bearing. We had a lot of superstructures on, that were built out of wood for the derricks and that to work on. And most of the rigs were either cable tool which was still operating in that time, not particularly Texas, but up in Virginia, West Virginia and up in the Hard Rock country. So, we did not have any preconceived ideas of those big words that you use now.

AK: And yet they're commonplace today.

PE: That's right.

AK: Yeah. Let's... give me a bit of a rundown on Gypsy. That's G-Y-P-S-Y, Gypsy. And where did it have its beginnings?

PE: Originally, the Gypsy Oil Company was organized around in the early 1900's prior to and about First World War times. They discovered the fields around Drumright, Oklahoma, shallow oil fields, and the oil company that participated in the drilling in those days was called the Gypsy Oil Company. Gypsy Oil Company over periods of time were, the shares of the company were gradually taken over by the Gulf Oil Corporation. The Gulf Oil Corporation out of Pittsburgh did not recognize it as a really large entity until in the early 1930's. And they then started... when I went to, graduated in 1937, I signed an agreement to go to work for the Gypsy Oil Company on the understanding that it would be a division of the Gulf Oil Corporation on June of 1937. So, it was formed and had all of its background from around the Tulsa area, and in all of the fields of small production and shallow oil and gas fields around the town of Tulsa.

AK: And did Gypsy finally get wound up? And did it... it got taken over by Gulf completely, corporate wise?

PE: 1937.

AK: Yeah, right. Dissolved...

PE: When I went to work in the middle of June, I went to work for the Gulf Oil Corporation, Gypsy division with headquarters in Tulsa.

AK: And you mentioned your salary. Well, then you worked as an engineer per se? Or what was your first job with Gulf?

PE: Well, we were classed as student engineers, and we were the outcasts of the Gypsy division. Because the entire working force, the field working force and lot of them in management, had felt that bringing on these engineers, and there was 35 that they hired in the year of 1937, was that we were just going to take everybody's jobs, and would be running the oil companies and all of that, because the oil companies up until that time didn't have a lot of college graduates. And my original training I started out working in a roustabout gang in southern Oklahoma. And I worked there for three months, and then I went on into the Seminole office and worked in the machine shop, worked in the office there, and then I worked out on drilling rigs, rotary drilling rigs, which I also worked on them as a roughneck. I was a tool man on the cable tool rigs. I was sent to Illinois when the Illinois boom around Centralia went on, and I learned all about drill stem testing at that time and was given in charge of drilling operations on a particular rig and followed through.

I worked as an observer on, in southern Oklahoma as a what we called, an observer, was what it was. We had two engineers, we work 12 hours a day. We kept all the pump strokes, all the mud weights, everything that happened on the rigs and reported it to Tulsa. So, during a period of time which was originally set to be a short two-year program, it ranged into a three-year program. And then when I left out of that I was appointed District Engineer in Michigan. They had just started drilling in Michigan and we had to get some oil wells. And then my next tour of duty was with the US Army. Because all Texas A&M graduates, I mean the majority of them, we all had a commission in the reserve. And the war came on December the 7th, and I was in the army in February. Spent from February of '41-42' until the war was over and I came back home in 1945 and went back to work for Gulf, and they assigned me to New Mexico as the District Engineer in that division. It was the biggest district which they had at that particular time, the Gypsy Division. And I worked there until my transfer to Canada in 1949.

AK: So, you had mostly gas out in New Mexico, or was it mostly oil?

PE: Gas was a by-product. Oil was the product. And we ended up with some gas wells that when I came back out of the service we used to lift the oil.

AK: Yeah. Well tell me, at that time did they capture the gas and make carbon black out of it? Or do you remember that?

PE: Yes. During the war they required out a lot of carbon black for munitions work. So, they came into existence. The price of gas, if you could sell it, was 3 cents a thousand cubic feet, which wasn't very much. So, it didn't give you much incentive to drill for gas. You found gas when, and most of it out there, except for shallow depths, was all... had hydrogen sulfide it. And there was big plants all over West Texas, New Mexico of carbon black. Which of course you don't see down there when you drive through that country anymore because the gas is too expensive to produce... process.

[00:19:36] AK: Okay. So, when did you first hear that you might get this transfer to this frozen North? And could you give me a little detail about how that happened? Somebody come into your office and...

PE: Yes. The rumour had gotten started around that they were going to need an engineer in Canada in the early part of '49. And through Eddie Gallagher, he one day walked in my office and said, we're going

to have, somebody's going to have to go to Canada. And before he could get very far I said, well it's not going to be me. Because it's too far away. I was raised in Texas, and round down here, and my wife has not been, so and she's expecting a baby. And so forget it. Well, he said your name has come up. I said, well just tell them when they call you to forget it. I'm not coming. So, in July I was out on a job in which it was a squeeze job, when we're trying to squeeze off a casing?? leak. And Eddie Gallagher, while we were setting up all the equipment, Eddie Gallagher came out, and his car, parked it out at the edge of the lease and didn't bother anything. Eddie was quite good at letting you do the job but he would be there to help you if you needed anything. So, I thought it was just a routine thing because it was quite a difficult squeeze job. And I went on with the work and occasionally would walk over and talk to Eddie and tell him how it was going on and how it was running. And then when we finished up on the squeeze job, instead of going on home he was still there. So, I walked over and he said come on, get in the car. And I did. And then he said well Paul, I know you don't like this, but you have got to do it. Mr. Bohart called, he was the Vice President of Operations. And he said that he wanted to see you tomorrow morning in Tulsa about going to Canada. I said, Eddie I told you what my answer was. He said Paul, I don't care. When Mr. Bohart says come to Canada, I mean come to Tulsa for an interview, you go to Tulsa if you want to keep working for this company. And I said, well I do. And I loved working under Eddie, he was an engineer and understood things. And he was a wonderful man to work for.

So, I, and he said I've already got your ticket and handed it to me. So, I bumped into Tulsa the next morning. And went up to see Mr. Bohart. And he didn't give me any time to say, Mr. Bohart I'm not going to Canada. He just told me that I was on my way and this is what is, go downstairs and see the personnel man Harvey Davis, tell him when you can leave, and go. And I finally got out of his office and downstairs, and Harv told me, he said, you've been selected for this. And I said, hell, I've been demoted to coming up to Canada where there's nothing that I know about it, but igloos. So, I did say my wife had just had a tubal pregnancy and was in the hospital in Ardmore, Oklahoma where her parents lived. And I said, I can't throw this on her right now. And Harv said well fine, it's Friday. Why don't you go down over the weekend and call me Monday morning and tell me what your decision is? So, I trailed off to Ardmore that evening and talked to Sarah Beth. And we finally figured out, I sold her on the idea that we could come to Canada for a short period of time, and when we got, had a long weekend off living in Edmonton, which was where I was going, we could take it off and drive up to Alaska. And she thought that was a great idea.

AK: For the weekend?

PE: For the weekend. And so, I told him. And then that week we came up to Canada in August. And Gulf had been doing a lot of drilling in Redwater at that particular time. And the early part of August there was a big tour by the president of Gulf Oil Corporation, was coming up to see the operations.

AK: What was his name?

PE: Swensrud. I forget his first name.

AK: I think it was Ole, wasn't it? O-L-E?

PE: No, S-W-E-N-S-R-U-D. Swensrud.

AK: Yeah, but I meant his first name.

PE: Oh. Could have been. I don't recall his...

AK: Because he was Swedish.

PE: Yes. Yeah very definitely.

AK: Yeah. I think it was Ole.

PE: It could have been. But I didn't get that close to him. So, I came to Canada for his coming, and we went out to Redwater and showed him up and Jack Bevel, who was the head of the local organization at that period of time. And he had dinner for him etc. So, then I returned to New Mexico and picked up my family and came across the line into Canada in the first part of September. And we were listening to the radio to the damn football game. And it happened to be a playoff game between Regina and Calgary. And I had played football, and enjoyed football, got in to all the A&M football games, and pro teams hadn't started yet, so we were listening. And we heard this, Les Layer was the Calgary coach at that time. And it was also that he was playing guard. Now that was a funny incidence. We had, most of our coaches were older and didn't play guard. We had also heard of how conservative the Canadians were. And as was going along every time the third down came up they'd punt it. And I said, guys we had them at the fourth down here. That is real conservatism. To punt at third down. And so then we went on to Edmonton and got settled up there and found out that they only had three downs at the time.

[00:26:54] AK: Right. Now when you came up, did you drive your own car, or did you have a company car then?

PE: No, I drove my own car up here. And then when I got here I was assigned a car.

AK: So, where did you first live when you hit Edmonton? Do you remember the address, or what part of town, or whether it was rented?

PE: Yes. Our first stay was in the McDonald Hotel. We stayed there about three to four weeks trying to find a place to rent. Because it was assumed that we would... I was working under the, there was a fellow by the name of Paul Gasset, who was the field man up there. It was the operational headquarters for the Gulf. And we operated under Tulsa. We didn't operate under the, there was a land department down here that was headed by Jack Bevel. And we didn't operate... we operated separately in the drilling and all of that concerned with it. And Paul took care of the drilling and I took care of the engineering. So, there wasn't much housing to find in Edmonton. And finally we did find the place out off Jasper Avenue in the West End right across the street from the famous landman, Snap Lawson. And Snap took me under control and taught me all the Canadian ways and everything how to be done.

AK: We got to say that Snap Lawson was working for Superior Oil.

PE: That's right. Now, so we rented that place. We had a one-bedroom house for three of us, but we took the dining room and made it into another bedroom for our daughter. And we stayed there until we moved to Calgary in the latter part of '51. And we again rented here until we moved to our home that we got in 1954 on Riverdale area.

[00:29:30] AK: Right. Now, when you were up in Edmonton, did you have to make many trips out to the Redwater field?

PE: Well practically daily. And if you recall the winter of '49-'50, was one of the most severe winters we've had in Canada. And it was very difficult to get me used to driving out to Redwater in the mornings and supervising whatever engineering work was having to be done. The telephone system wasn't too good, and nobody wanted to answer the telephone. And that winter it was quite difficult. We used to lay flow lines from the wells to the battery. We used to have to have four crews out there. One working and the other three warming up. And they'd work 15 minutes at a time in order to get done. And the steel pipe, lots of it, if you would go out and take a hammer and hit some drill pipe, especially casing or flow lines, they'd just come apart. The steel was not made to be used in that kind of weather. So, it was a real difficult job. At that time Ray Tull was doing the majority of the drilling through the company from Tulsa, Oklahoma.

AK: That Cambridge?

PE: Yeah, Cambridge.

AK: He'd come up had he?

PE: Yeah, he was here before I got here. And they were doing most of the drilling for us out there. It was just a real difficult time. It was costing us... those were around 3500-foot wells, and it was costing as much up here at 35 feet it would drill a well in the States to 5,000-6,000 feet. Primary reason being was we, you could bring crews up here. And you could bring, if you brought in a rig, you could bring in the crews in the States, but with expansion and then they're buying rigs here for drilling at Redwater and other shallower areas, they had to educate people quite quickly. So, you'd think nothing unusual about seeing a man in... working for this drilling contractor for a year and he would be a tool pusher.

AK: That's right.

PE: Whereas, down in the States, the tool push would usually have 15-20 years experience. And that was what was causing... it was the training programs and all of that which was causing excessive price. And anyone that had any knowledge or had seen a drilling rig was way ahead of everybody else in the field. And I had worked on them, and I had had some experience, so I got along pretty well with it.

AK: Yeah, right. So, we'll just stop here for a minute because I want to show you this map.

[00:32:51] Yeah. Okay, we can resume here. Yes, that's right. In those days the CPR was giving the land away, and the rentals were practically nothing. And this was all part of this acreage that was under reservation. And then when they... when Redwater hit well then of course Gulf moved in.

PE: They were leasing.

AK: Yeah, they applied for leases.

PE: There's quite a story about Mr. Greenslade, who was the Vice President of the Gypsy Division. He told me this story personally when he used to come up every so often. And the acquisition of that.

AK: I'd like to have... yeah, go ahead tell me.

PE: Gulf's interests in Redwater were acquired through on CPR lands which they had a big block of under reservation. And then they could take out particular leases and drill on them. Mr. Greenslade, being the Vice President would come up here and he was quite a storyteller and truthful man. He told me that Jack Bevel was personally responsible for the acquisition of the CPR lands. They knew that they were going to give out these reservations and Gulf didn't have a long history in Canada as other ones did, but Jack Bevel worked with the CPR. And he finally got an offer from them. The offer was to take this reservation at five cents an acre, royalty, and then you'd take out a lease when you wanted to drill on it. And he had to put down around \$25,000. Well, he didn't have... the company didn't have \$25,000 at that particular time. And any lease acquisitions of that nature had to be approved by Pittsburgh. So, he got everything down and Bevel sent everything down to him and all of it ??? and he had to have a cheque by a certain date or else they would give, they'd lease this to someone else, possibly Imperial, which would have caused havoc in the whole organization. So, time went on and rocked on and Bevel kept calling. And he'd say, well I haven't got approval from Pittsburgh yet. So, finally they called him on the night that he had to have it at eight o'clock the next morning, with a cheque in with him and told him, he said, Mr. Greenslade, he said, I'm going to put up the money that's needed, \$25,000. I borrowed it from the bank in the morning, and if Gulf wants it I will take it out in their name, and if they do not want it, then I'll keep it myself. So, he said now you can't do that. There is no way. So, he said I'll try to get home and I'll get an answer back to you prior to eight o'clock in the morning. So, he called back at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, I mean in the night, and told Jack that Gulf would take it. He said he had a hell of a time. He had to get the president of Gulf out of a meeting in Pittsburgh, and he wasn't very happy about that, but that he'd finally gotten it approved. So, it was a surprise to me to know that the Gulf did not have \$25,000 in the bank up here at that time.

AK: Well, they had a million dollars to buy that quarter section at Golden Spike. You remember that? And that was a bust.

PE: That was after.

AK: Oh, yeah. But even then there was a lot of controversy over that.

[00:37:38] Let's just go back to Redwater. Now, did you have anybody beside Cambridge drill? Did you have TT Eason?

PE: No. I can't recall, Parker drilling company had some ???

AK: Yeah, Parker had some too.

PE: They drilled in there. They also drilled for Gulf in Pincher Creek.

AK: Well, then when Ray Tull come up, he brought his crew with him, did he?

PE: Yeah, but they didn't know what to do.

AK: Well, no that's right. They stood there and looked, but didn't take them long. Well now, when we mentioned Falcon Seaboard, was Dallas Hawkins mixed up in there?

PE: Not to my knowledge. I can't... Frank somebody was...

AK: Not Frank Curley.

PE: No, no. No, no. This was...

AK: Later on.

PE: This was... and with the Cambridge organization. He came up with Falcon Seaboard, and if my memory serves me right, Frank Bridges was the fellow's name that originally then bought out the Seaboard interests up here, and then they formed Cambridge. Ray Tull came up here with Seaboard and then moved to Cambridge, and he operated it. Frank did the business work.

AK: Well now when you were drilling up there, do you remember Max Littlefield coming up and looking at the cores?

PE: Yeah very much. Max Littlefield was the geologist that was given the credit for the discovery of the Pincher Creek field. He had a new method of sedimentation, study of sedimentation, and he put it into effect. And they drilled their first well, Gulf's first well up here, which was in, I think it started in latter of '47. Maybe '48. And they drilled at Pincher Creek and come in Discovery and he became a hero. And then when they got acreage in Redwater, Bob Lockwood was the Gulf geologist that stayed here. He worked all through the mountains during the war and stayed here and worked. And then when Leduc was discovered things became more active.

AK: That's right.

PE: And then they... it already got started down in Pincher Creek with Max Littlefield's work. And then he tried to use the same technology into other parts of Canada, which never did work.

AK: No. Well, I guess there's a story about Lockwood and Littlefield not getting along too well. Is that an understatement?

PE: That's an understatement. To be real truthful with you, Bob Lockwood didn't get along with anybody very well. He was a loner, very muchly so. And that is one of the reasons why he was admittedly given credit for a lot of the acreage which Gulf acquired in western Canada. But administrative wise, he had a hard time working with the department, working geologists. He expects them to work like he did and it was, not later. So, Lockwood never did go as high in the organization as he could have, had he had a different personality about him. They finally transferred him to Toronto when they had opened an office back there, but that was really to get him out of this operational area.

AK: Well, then there was Oscar Erdman who is a pretty fine...

PE: Yeah. Oscar was a great guy. Got along with everybody and an excellent geologist.

[00:41:56] AK: Right. So, were there any other anecdotes about the Redwater scene? Like special happenings that took place that you recall? You know, hilarious ones?

PE: Well, I don't know exactly what you mean. But I do know that during this period of time that we're talking about, there was quite a few people came in to Edmonton. I was responsible for organizing a... or helping organize, along with the Oilfield Technical Society. We had a... started having our meetings. I had some, a lot of work done with the ??? No, I had with the CIM also, but that was later. But then in New Mexico was the Norton thing... ah, my memory...

AK: IAME?

PE: No. It was the... I'll think of it in a minute. Anyhow. So, I got a group together and we started an oilfield technical society, which did not, you did not have to have a degree to be in. You just had to be working in the oil business. And one of the things that we did, and I can't remember the old Edmonton newspaper that is non-existent now.

AK: The Bullet.

PE: The Bullet. That was it. And I think it was 1950. We organized a first oil show in Leduc. And had ??? we got ??? with Haliburton, and we got Jack Godwin with National Tank and all of, service people, and got them all organized. And we had a one-day meeting and Jack Godwin had a tent that we had put up for him to show all of their stuff. And back in the back room we had some refreshments. And during the day, it was just a day affair, we brought in drilling rigs, we did oil things for the people, to come out. And during the day I traveled quite heavily handed through Jack Godwin's place. It was a nice area for everybody together and you could get a pick up a refreshment or two. So, the Bullet came out in the afternoon and next morning I saw what I said. It was a big splash on the first page. What a wonderful show it was, and it was going to beat the Tulsa Oil Show. Wouldn't be long until this would grow into a bigger show then at Tulsa. And I had a hard time living all that down. The big Texan just coming up and just popping off. But it was Godwin's fault, it was never mine.

AK: Well, and Godwin had his barbecue there, too didn't he?

PE: Yes. That's why the barbecues... Actually, I didn't participate too much in his barbecues. I don't remember one in Edmonton at that time. I think it was after we came down to Calgary' was when he started, the Oilfield Technical Society barbecues started. And then Jack of course, went on to bigger and better things then barbecuing. He... I don't know how many barbecues during the summer he would put on. But we had another, my wife and I got involved with down here. We were good friends of the Godwin's and they had a place on Elbow Drive just off Fourth Street. And Jack was never much in athletically, but he used to go attend the curling bonspiel. So we... and I wasn't a curler either then. So, we went out too. On a Friday afternoon they started, and Saturday morning we went out to the place. And Jack, every time he went out there he got a little more enjoyment out of being there. And they were usually some refreshments around those places too.

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AK: Talking about this announcement that Jack Godwin was going to make.

PE: Well, Jack Godwin made the announcement over the system that from four o'clock till nine o'clock Sunday evening there would be a barbecue at Godwin's place and everyone was invited. And so starting from there we came home and told our wives that Jack had a big barbecue pit. We went to the store,

bought stuff and put the wives to work, and by that four o'clock Sunday evening we were ready and there was around 400 people that came over, dropped in, had barbecue and went back to the event. But that's the kind of things he would do. Just be right off the... And of course later on he was Mr. Barbecue to the oil industry, and any associated...

[00:01:03] AK: Let's just go back to Redwater. Now you had watched Redwater in its early days of production, and there was pretty flush production there. But when did you first note that there was going to be a water problem?

PE: It was after I left Gulf. In the originally... see I left Gulf in 1951, and at that time Redwater was still being developed. And there was not too much... the drive was... we all thought that the drive was water, because there had been some dry holes drilled out off the sides and picked out of the water too low. But I didn't... while I was with Gulf, didn't have water drive. Now, when we drilled Big Valley is when I first became really associated with the water drive field. Because Gulf was the predominant developer down there, and we were just getting started, and we were preparing for it. But at Redwater I didn't have any particular... and then after I went to work for West Canadian, you couldn't get into Redwater because we didn't have that much money.

AK: Well, they were pretty well all sold. And at that time in West Canadian, was that the time that McIntyre and Webster were purchased by British Empire and West Canadian?

PE: Yeah, I was instrumental in that, buying the drilling rig, and McIntyre, he was an excellent driller. And we... you see British Empire was Jack Bevel's company. And then West Canadian and Fina owned the company. And we operated all through the time I was there, but there wasn't much operation to it because McIntyre took care of all that. He had a partner that didn't...

AK: Harry Webster.

PE: Yeah, now wait a minute. Harry Webster is the guy we...

AK: Harry was the...

PE: Man that stayed on.

AK: Yeah.

PE: Yeah McIntyre had left.

AK: I think Boyd had sold out.

PE: He sold out when we came over. And Harry stayed on and run. Yeah, I got those two mixed up.

[00:04:04] AK: Can you give me and about 20 words or less your opinion of Harry Webster? A thumbnail sketch of old Harry.

PE: Harry was a wonderful individual. He was an honest man. His word was his honor. And no one could do anything but admire him. He didn't, he'd never do anything that hurt anybody, only helped everybody.

AK: Yeah, that's right.

PE: Harry was... I had a wonderful relationship with him. And Mr. Nitescu...

AK: Yeah, well Nitescu hired him.

PE: Yeah, he hired him. And then later they got rid of the rigs.

AK: Yeah, right.

PE: And Harry stayed on. Oh, Harry was an unbelievable man.

AK: Right. Well, I'm very glad because there is going to be a good section in my book on Harry.

PE: Good.

[00:05:09] AK: Yeah. Now, when you left... when you went with West Canadian, what area did you people try to concentrate on? When you were started on...

PE: Well, we had a mandate so to speak, to operate anywhere in western Canada. However, we tried to concentrate on areas which was where we could do log-heading work. And the drilling was not too costly. We stayed out of the deeper stuff like in the Foothills and got out onto the plains. And we did do a lot of drilling in the, well not a lot, but 10-20 wells in south Leduc when that was developing. That got us some income. And then we drilled in... we didn't go in for the shallow drilling at that particular time, like at Hilda, the town in there. But we were allowed... the problem with West Canadian, was the control still laid in France. And they were reticent about letting us have too much money in one gulp. I know I took a 25-thousand-acre reservation and caught hell about it because it was more acreage than they had ever gotten into in one play. And that was up around Hanna. But that was it. And also the reason I left there... Mr. Bruset, I stayed and got him, Marshall Taylor to come in and take over what we had acquired, but it was that the communication factor. A Texan trying to communicate to a Frenchman. And the way they operated, the way I operated, for instance, Mr. Bruset, all the time I was there, I was in charge of all of the oil, but he was the Director responsible. He used to call me, in the office he called me Mr. Evans all the time. The only time he would call me Paul was when he and I were one-on-one. And I wasn't used to that kind of stuff. He was a great man. I thoroughly enjoyed him.

[00:08:11] AK: Well then, you were attracted to Canadian export gas. And now, that was... wasn't that mining money in New York that was backing that?

PE: It was, later. But the original organization of it was not mining. When you're talking about Newmont Mines.

AK: Yeah.

PE: Newmont didn't... they bought into it in about '61 or a little earlier than that. But this was organized down at the Petroleum Club, Canadian Export Gas.

AK: It was?

PE: Yes. Wilbur...

AK: Gus?

PE: No. Gus wasn't in the picture. And neither was I. But Gus was over in Regina at that particular time. He was still with Imperial in Regina. Wilbur Griffith, and I can't remember who, they had two other people, they used to have oyster night. And oyster night went on to oyster morning. And they were sitting around in there in '50, this was '54, early '54 I guess in March when they had the oyster do. And then the big topic was the gas and the gas pipeline going east. At that time TransCanada was set to start operating in '55. And these three people came up with the idea of forming a company to get shallow gas reserves down in the Bindloss area, on Hilda and all those shallow gas areas down there. And the reasoning being behind it, because they would get the highest price for the gas. The first of the pipeline is going to start at the border, so they ought to get the highest price. And they went to New York and got a brokerage firm there, talked to them, that Wilbur had some connections with. And they thought it was a great idea. So, they raised a million and a quarter dollars and Canadian Export Gas was formed, but they were given some shares to get management. And Wilbur was to head up all of that. And so, first thing that he did was to hire Gus in May. Actually, the first employee was Jack Hunter, who later became the land man, was about February that he went to work for him, started getting some areas even before they got some capital. So, then with the shares and that he got, he hired Gus to head up the company, be president of it and also to be the exploration arm. And then in July, he hired me to head up the production, be vice-president, well at that time it was manager of production. And we built the company from there. Our first drilling was in Sessford??? Sessford gas field at Steville. So, that was where the... and that Newmont Mining in '60, they put off the pipeline year after year. It was '57 before they got going on the pipeline, so that we run out of money. And so at that time Newmont bought some treasury shares. And came in and got, they were a 19% owner, export. They couldn't go over 20% because of their rulings of ownership. If they went over that then they had to be listed and everything, so they stayed there. And that was where it stayed until, when Newmont wanted to buy a coal company up there, they needed money. So, in 1976, Gus had died in 1974, and I'd made president at that time. So, in 1976, I got a call one day from Phillips at home. Ross Phillips.

AK: Oh, Ross. Yeah.

PE: Saying you'll be hearing from Maleozamoff?? in about an hour, but I just wanted to tell you ahead of time that we've made an option deal with him to take over their shares. And wanted to assure me that we'd do company and this and that. Ross was very nice about it. And in an hour I did. And my communication with Maleozamoff, he was a Russian...

AK: How do you spell that? Do you remember?

PE: M-A... Gosh. No. It's just like it sounds.

AK: Yeah, okay fine. But Sophie likes the name spelled.

PE: Yeah.

AK: My secretary.

PE: Yeah. Well... M-A-L-E-O-Z-A-M-O-F-F. That's as close as I can get. And he told me just what was going to be done, and they had done this. So, I did not want to go to work for a large oil company. I told Ross that, but that if it had to be I would stay for a while. And the next morning I talked to Blaine Wuffer?? who said he knew of a company over in Vancouver that wanted to get in the oil business. And it happened to be Plasher?? Development. And from that point on I said, well I'll give you any help but it's got to be fast. So, out of that came when, after some conversations with me, and Duthy, Ross Duthy was the president, back and forth on the phone. He made an offer for all the shares of Canadian Export Gas and finally bought them for 55 cents a share or something like that. And that's how that came about. The whole shares going to Plasher Development. And then Plasher, later changed the name after they got all the shares, was Plasher Siegel Petroleum. And that was a great... they let us run the company, kept all of our employees. We expanded in money and in numbers and that 55-million-dollar investment got them about three-quarters of the... in '76, let's see... they sold out just recently in about '89, '88.

AK: Yeah, I remember that when Ray Smith left.

PE: Yeah, that's three quarters of a billion dollars. That's pretty good rate of return on the thing.

AK: Not bad, no.

PE: And then I retired from there when I was 70. Been out seven years. But it was a great time.

AK: Right.

PE: I think that I was very fortunate to come to Canada and to stay here. The country was real good to me. I think we gave a little bit back, became Canadian citizens in '65, and enjoyed it here. And we saw the best of the oil business.

AK: Yeah, it'll never be... It'll never repeat itself, no.

PE: It'll never repeat itself, and there will never be another Jack Godwin that could come to this country and take over, being the barbequer and the many times...

AK: Well, that's right.

PE: It was a fraternity; the oil business was in those days.

[00:17:27] AK: Can I switch over to another subject that's kind of important right now? The CIM as you know, started publishing JCPT in 1962. And prior to that there had been this Canadian Oil and Gas Industries magazine. And do you remember anything at all with your connections with the CIM about the pros and cons of setting up a JCPT?

PE: No, I was Chairman of this division for a while, but I don't recall any discussions at that time. We were just part of the CIM. And we had our yearly convention and really that's all that we took care of that time. I don't, I didn't get embroiled in the Canadian scene. So, I don't know a thing about it.

AK: Well, you remember that Canadian Oil and Gas Industry used to publish some pretty darn good technical papers.

PE: Oh yeah.

AK: You remember? That was Gordon Skilling.

PE: Yeah, and I even had one published.

AK: Is that right? How about that.

PE: Yeah, I did the first duel completion in Canada.

AK: Where was that?

PE: Up at Big Valley.

AK: It was D2 and D3?

PE: Yeah, D2 and D3. A very simple one, but I had...

AK: What did you use? A brown tool?

PE: I can't remember what tools, but we... I came from New Mexico and I worked up the duel completion work that Gulf did in those things out there. And so, then at Redwater, and I published the paper, and somewhere I've got a copy of it. I don't know where it was when it was published in the CIM.

[00:19:41] AK: Now, can I make a comment about that table. It's got 1937 on it. Is there a story behind that?

PE: That's the year that my wife and I got married.

AK: Oh, is that right? Good.

PE: And then we've got... Paul and Sarah-Beth.

AK: Oh, you have the names on the table. Right. Oh, that's really something.

PE: This was given to us by my daughter and son-in-law on our, over here...

AK: December the 26th it says.

PE: 1937. And on the back...

AK: Oh this was Boxing Day. But you didn't know Boxing Day in those days. You didn't know anything about that. That was something new that you found out up here in Canada?

PE: Yeah. We thought for a long time that the Canadians were just celebrating our getting married.

AK: Yeah. Well.

PE: The reason we got married on Boxing Day is very simple. Back in 1937, I had just started to work in June of '37 for Gulf, and they didn't look very fondly on... in the first place, they couldn't make me sign anything, but they said you won't get married while you're on the training program. And I said no, no way. Well I met Sarah Beth in October. Had one date with her. And the next date we went and bought the rings.

AK: Oh boy.

PE: And I astounded two families and we got married on December the 26th. And the reason for it was I was moving. And I said look, I want to get married. And she didn't want me to get away. And I said I'm going to be transferred away, and you know it's going to be hard. I may be in Illinois or where. So, out we went and got married on the 26th and astounded everybody because they said it wouldn't last and we're about to get to our 55th.

AK: There you are. Well, look it's been a real pleasure talking to you, Paul. And there are probably some other things that we should get into. There are a lot of other people that we both shared friendships with over the years. There is Bill ???

End of Interview