

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Alfred John Goodman

INTERVIEWER: Jack Peach

DATE:

JP: [in mid sentence]. . .in the home of Dr. Jack Goodman and the address is 604 Hillcrest Avenue in Calgary, I'm Jack Peach. Well, Jack, in order to begin this story, I'd like to find out, you're an Englishman by birth, how did you get into the oil business?

JG: I got into the oil business originally when I left school, I matriculated and I joined an engineering company, Perkins-McIntosh. Perkins and McIntosh came from Petrolia and they established an engineering business in St. Almans???, England and I was apprenticed there and worked on engineering work as an apprentice and I used to go up to City and Gills??? College in London for evening classes, at the University of London. When the war broke out, I left Perkins-McIntosh and went into the Army, the Royal Engineers. First I was on coast search lights and then I went to France on the anti-aircraft search lights and from there I was transferred to #11 Squadron, Royal Flying Core and to 3rd Army Intelligence, where we mapped. . the french maps were out of date along the line and we used aerial photographs and a plane table to spot the German artillery. Then when the war was ended the government gave me a scholarship to Birmingham University, where I studied geology and got an Honours Degree. When I left the University I got a job with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, now BP and went out to Arab.

JP: To Abadan?

JG: Not to Abadan, to Majesty Solomon???, which was the big field then and we surveyed up all along the foothills and we got on with the Iranian tribes by carrying a medicine chest, which made us Hakin-Sahibs???. in this way we established good relations with the Persian nomads and we would put triangulation stations up and to help us we'd put a pile of stones, a triangulation point and we'd camp, we had guards from them, to protect the camp. We paid them of course, the company paid them and these nomads, in the night, they thought they were helping us, would put up about 14 cairns, so in the morning we'd have nothing to tie into. On one occasion, the warrior Pushti-Ku???, who's a ??? there, he sent us two sawals???, they're armed horsemen to the camp. He wanted dawa???, which is medicine for rheumatism in both his legs. Well, Tom Pipp???, they didn't come to us, they went to another geologist, Tom Pipp, he wouldn't carry a medicine chest, he carried a bag of scotch mints. So he gave them two scotch mints and a verse from the Koran and they went back and they came the next morning and said, it had killed the left leg and could he give them some dawa for the right leg. This must be the first time that arthritis has been cured in such a manner.

#036 JP: I would think so. Now, just before we go on with that incredible story, there's one

question I'm dying to ask you. Way back near the beginning, you talked about some people coming over from Petrolia, could you tell me about that?

JG: Well, these people came over from Petrolia, Perkins-McIntosh established an engineering firm and Mackenzie's started a firm at Shadelheath??? and Cheshire and they progressed famously. The BP dealt with them, ordered their equipment from them and then there was a firm over in Poland, McGarvie and Volksy???, he came from Petrolia. A lot of drillers went over from Petrolia to the oil fields in Galicia???. I met some of them in Persia, they married Polish wives and I met some of them in Persia who were working for the British Petroleum Company. So that's the story.

JP: Really. That's a great story of international work. Now, were these cable tool people?

JG: No. At that time they had the Canadian system, which was quite a different system, it had rods. I can describe it, it has a coil chain around a cast iron. . . I can't describe it exactly, without drawings, but there was a wheel which had a . . . a little lump in it which moved the rods up and down and then they had a shan??? pump, which was over a pulley, which was a piece of casing with a valve in the bottom and they dropped it to the bottom of the hole and pulled up the cuttings which we examined. And then there was another, the German Falk??? outfit, which was another type of rig. Those have all died out now. And I'd say the first rotary, which was the Parker-Mogul??? rotary, which was a puny affair, came into England, was imported by Perkins-McIntosh and it was my job as the apprentice, with two or three men, to take it to bits and make sketches of it and then in the drawing up, try to make improvements on it. It was quite as I say, a puny affair but it had the same principals as the rotary now. But it was little tiny mud pumps, just like engine feed water pumps and that was the outfit that was used.

#065 JP: The original Petrolia people then, were really innovators and then their expertise spread all over the world, because you're talking about them being in Persia with you. But they must have been fairly well groping themselves, because they didn't have that much experience did they?

JG: Oh yes. The Petrolia people had quite a lot of experience in Petrolia. I don't know what they used in Petrolia. . .

JP: They were using wooden beams. . .

JG: They had wooden beams, yes and spring. . .

JP: Yes, spring loaded. . .

JG: Well, as I say, from there, when I was in Persia, in Iran, I was sent by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, near the end of my contract, to the Sorbonne, for a course in sedimentary photography. Then after that I left the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and I came out to Turner Valley, where I worked for the Supervisory Mining Engineer. That was like the Conservation Board, only it was a Dominion affair and it was run by Mr. Colder???. Charlie Dingman was there and Grant Spratt and Colonel Steele. I worked there for a time and then the R. B. Bennett government came in and they washed all of us out and they transferred all the Conservation Board to the province. R. B. Bennett was Conservative you see, and he transferred everything to the province and it went up to Edmonton. Well, Charlie Ross, who was our boss told us that he could still keep us on

with the government, but it failed and R. B. Bennett wouldn't allow it. So I went back to England and studied, and went first of all to the Royal School of Mines to study. . . I took all my evidence that I had collected from the foothills and Turner Valley and I took this to the Royal School of Mines and worked towards a Ph.D. I also. . this was the dirty 30's when there was no work for anybody, so I didn't know whether I'd be able to get back into the oil business so I thought I'd study education to become a lecturer at university. Well, London then stopped it, I got my education diploma and they said, you can't take two degree courses at the same time. So I then went back to my old university and they said, what do you want to go to that London for, why didn't you come to us. So I worked there and did work on the stuff that I got from Turner Valley. I got my Ph.D., I was married then and had a son, and when I had finished at Birmingham I went out to Trinidad for Carrie Brothers???, they were coal merchants. The old man, Sir Hubert Carrie was a lawyer and all that he was interested in was making agreements with people. He tried to make agreements with the government of Trinidad and they forced him to drill on the lands which he had there. We put down one well and then there was a lot of trouble, there was an Australian driller on it and we had a lot of trouble. He got drunk and Sir Hubert Carrie rode out and blamed me for him getting drunk, I don't know why, so I quit and I got a message from Mr. Madgewick, who had been my professor at the University in Petroleum Engineering. He was up in Ottawa, working for the Mines Branch, so he called me up and told me to come up to Canada, which I did, and I was then engaged working on the Azdec???, which is the quartz, same as they use in a watch. This quartz was cut by the men there and I studied the quartz. You had to cut it on a particular pet crystal plane and we worked on this and we finally worked out several means of cutting this. Then Mobil was drilling on Prince Edward Island and I got in touch with the head of Mobil and came up to Calgary again and there I worked for Mobil Oil and I went down the Mackenzie. I did a lot of work in the foothills with pack horses and we did a trip down the Mackenzie to the Arctic in a boat, which we built in Edmonton and had taken up the Alaska Highway, over the Peace River bridge and put in the Nelson River and we floated down the Nelson River to, we called it Norman Wells and we picked up a tank barge full of gasoline. An airplane met us at Fort McPherson and we went up the. . the flies were terrible up there and the only thing you could do was work on foot, so the plane used to take us up to the top of the stream and we'd float down, surveying as we came down and then the plane would pick us up in the river. And then it took Don Axford and me up to Summit Lake, which is the old Klondike Road. We landed in Summit Lake and went down

#131 Rat River into the Eagle River, I think it is. We went down towards Old Crow, where we were met by the Mountie there, where we got a certain amount of food, and this Mountie, I've forgotten his name now, but he ran a sort of communal affair, everybody shared. Because there were a lot of old people there who were sick you see, and they couldn't go out trapping muskrats. So when we arrived an Indian boy came down with a big salmon, that was our share, so we gave him all our stuff. Then we went to the Mounties, we had a walkie-talkie to try to get back to the boat. This was quite an expensive affair, this walkie-talkie, but we couldn't get in touch with it. The boat was down at Fort McPherson

you see. So the Mountie, he had a radio, he had built a radio so he got in touch with the boat and they came in a plane and picked us up and we went back to the boat. Then we came up to the Mackenzie and when you get to the rapids on the Mackenzie, the river had fallen when the ice went out and it leaves about a six foot drop. Well, the Hudson Bay boat came along and we asked if . . . we couldn't get up there you see, with out boat, but the Hudson Bay lay a steel cable down from the trees and they hook on and winch their way up. So in case the rope broke, he said, I'll tow you up there and if the rope breaks you must go back to Fort Norman and bring us a new rope. So we agreed to this, so we were towed up there and as we went up, the water on the boat, on our boat, which was tied to the side of the Hudson Bay boat, was so heavy that we stood on deck and it looked as if the ropes would break. We got ready to jump aboard the Hudson Bay boat and in the midst of all this excitement the worthy cook came up with a tray and said, does anybody want coffee. Well, they got us up the Mackenzie River and we came back down the Mackenzie River and then when we got down to Fort Nelson. . . we left the boat at Norman Wells and the plane flew us out to Fort Nelson, where we were picked up by another plane and brought down to Calgary by another plane. So we left behind the flying Red Horse, the Flying Horsemen, the Flyboys and the flies, all at Norman Wells. So when we got back to Calgary, I just worked on. . . we did trips in the foothills up to Halfway River, up the Peace River and Mackenzie and then I did a trip up . . . I can't remember the name of the place we went to. And we did one or two foothills surveys and then I worked at Mobil Oil, making thin sections and examining them. Then I left Mobil Oil, about 1965 and retired and I went back to England and then I came back here and I've been here ever since.

- #177 JP: Oh, in retirement. What a remarkable life story. Can we go back now and pick out some little details from this.
- JG: I can't remember any more details.
- JP: I was just wondering about Turner Valley.
- JG: Turner Valley, in the old days, they were drilling wells in Turner Valley.
- JP: Cable tool.
- JG: Ted Link was in . . . he was with Imperial Oil and they were using rotary. A lot of them were cable tool but rotaries. And I was with an outfit for a time that had its location in . . . there were some people from Winnipeg that ran this. . . before I joined the Conservation Board, for a time I was working with this, checking the samples and this. And they were a rough looking outfit, the man, I forget his name, he was a lawyer in Winnipeg and he confiscated the Church of England funds and got seven years in prison for it.
- JP: I can remember that, there was a great scandal with the Church of England funds. Posters were put out with a great gap in the wall.
- JG: That's right. And then when I left them, that's when I went back to England to do research.
- JP: What was the. . . do you remember how they felt about Turner Valley in those days, was it the centre of the universe type of thing?
- JG: Well, it was not exactly the centre of the universe but it was the only oil field in Canada.

JP: I was wondering about the big jump you made from Britain right to Turner Valley, what brought you that far at that time that you came out all that distance?

JG: I had this word from Madgewick, this professor.

JP: That this was the place to come.

JG: Yes, that's where he brought me back to Canada you see. And there I met. . I forget the man's name, he was one of these entrepreneurs and he met me in the York Hotel and he'd got a wonderful spiel, he'd got a lot of samples which he broke open and there was oil in them. He knew I came from the Anglo-Persian and he thought the Anglo-Persian would subsidize him you see.

#207 JP: You looked like a good catch to him.

JG: Yes.

JP: this was geological work you were doing all along.

JG: Geological work, yes.

JP: Did you and your crew discover anything that, in later years, has proven to be very valuable?

JG: I mean everybody finds something out. I happened to, just by luck, was put on the well in Persia that really was one of the biggest wells, a 3,000' oil column. In Canada I contributed several papers on the foothills, I was interested in structural geology. I wrote some papers on structural geology. I can't remember . . . they were published in the AAPG, and the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists, they were published in those and I gave several papers there.

JP: Would this be back in the 1930's or 20's?

JG: Yes, in the 1930's. No, later, after I left Mobil. . when I was with Mobil Oil.

JP: And your job with Mobil took you to these many places in the north particularly. What was there at Norman Wells, or your work that took you all the way to Norman Wells and beyond? Was this all geological surveying?

JG: All geological survey work, yes.

JP: Were they drilling any wildcats, any step out wells at that time?

JG: Yes, that's right.

JP: How did you find the north, did it to you, appear to hold great promise?

JG: We went down the Eagle Plains. We thought that there was probably some very good things in the Delta, because there's a fault which brings up evaporite???, which is always an indication of basin conditions, reef conditions you see. And this fault brought it up and we recommended Mobil to drill, but these things have to go through the head office and they decided not to drill. And in the Eagle Plains we suggested that there was a possibility there. They put a well down and they got a small showing but not much.

JP: Did you find this rather distressing that you would go ahead, put all this time in and by the time it had gone through the mill of bureaucracy. . .?

JG: No, you take that in your stride. You know that you do it. . . I mean, there are all sorts of . . . geophysicist come in now and they've sort of superceded the geologists and they do a lot of good work detecting structures, especially under the sea of course.

JP: Yes. Now did you find other minerals besides petroleum in your travels?

JG: No, the only minerals we found was calamine??? in the drill samples, in drilling in the foothills, where we got the samples. But we didn't discover it, but there were samples. . tin and lead and zinc, up on the Great Slave Lake. We didn't discover that, that was other people.

#255 JP: What about the Tarsands, did you get anywhere near. . .?

JG: Oh yes, we visited the Tarsands.

JP: Did you do any work there?

JG: We didn't do any work there, no. We took samples and looked at it and brought samples back and so on.

JP: What was your impression of the Tarsands, do you remember?

JG: Well, it looked to me, almost impossible, at that time, to get oil out of that in competition with ordinary oil. It would look to be impossible to do it. But them of course, the financial situation has changed entirely now.

JP: This was all company financed, the work that you were doing. Company financed, each of these expeditions that you took.

JG: Oh yes, Mobil Oil.

JP: Now, to go back a bit to the Conservation Board as it was in those days, that was strictly federal government?

JG: Federal government, yes.

JP: And did they, before the thing was broken up by Bennett, what sort of work did you do for the industry as a whole?

JG: I was doing thin sections you see. All the people that were drilling wells wanted geological information. Grant Spratt and Bob ??? were in the office there and Charlie Dingman, he worked on the gas, Charlie Dingman did. And there was a man named Elliott, who also used to go around the wells and check them and then I would go around and collect any samples. They were drilling all over the place, ridiculous sort of wells they were really, and we had to collect the samples and these samples were turned in and reports made. I don't know where the reports went to. But they were drilling wells down in Sage Creek, the McMahon's were drilling two wells down in Sage Creek. We went there and got samples from them and that's about all I can. . .

#287 JP This was really scatter gun drilling then, they were just all over the place.

JG: Yes, that's right. [seems like that tape was turned off for a bit, in mid sentence]. . . it put me in wrong with Imperial Oil, but anyway I was in Imperial Oil and I did a cross section of Turner Valley and the Imperial Oil geologists were all opposed to this. Anyway I published it and that's when I went back to England.

JP: You were a very independent person I gather from this, because when things were not as you thought they should be, you moved away. Why did they not approve of what you did, was it because . . .?

JG: I don't know. You see, Bill Gallop did a very good section of Turner Valley at that time, and there was a certain amount of. . not ill feeling, but . . . all geolgoists compete with one another. And if we don't agree, well, we accept it and we listen to what they've got to

say and we accept what they have to say and that's it.
End of tape.

Side 2

JP: Jack, in looking back over this, would you go into the same line of work again?

JG: Well, I'm too old now, I'm 85.

JP: No, I mean if you had it to do again.

JG: Oh yes, I would, I enjoyed it.

JP: What was the great part about it, that you remember, the competition.

JG: No, it's just work you enjoy, that's all. And you're always looking for something new, there's always something new to do.

JP: What were some of the big things that you remember as highlights of discovery?

JG: Well, the discovery was the big well in Persia, Agajari??? well. I can't claim any discovery in Canada because. . .and I was in Trinidad of course. We drilled a well in Trinidad but we didn't. . .it showed a little oil, but in Canada I just contributed like everybody else. Ernie Shaw and everybody else contributed. Well, we drilled wells at Pembina and there, I didn't have much to do with Pembina, Arnie Nielsen was in Pembina. Arnie was a good geologist.

JP: Where were you by that time?

JG: I was in Calgary, here with Mobil.

JP: Were these multinational groups that you were with, multi-nation groups I mean, were they predominantly Englishmen or Canadians or Americans?

JG: No, in Mobil Oil, Americans and Canadians.

JP: No, I was thinking in your geological parties?

JG: You mean in Persia?

JP: Anywhere.

JG: Yes, there was the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

JP: Yes, when you went off, for example, would you be with other Canadians or other Englishmen or who were. . made up your party?

JG: Canadians and Englishmen, a lot of Englishmen came out here you know. Des Oswald and a lot of Englishmen. . . and Canadians.

JP: Now, what about their abilities, this is what I'm getting at, your training sounded so thorough?

JG: Yes, well I'm not as good as a lot of them. There are a lot of people on the Geological survey that are far better than I am and know more about the theoretical side of geology than I do. And the geophysicists of course know. . .I don't know much about geophysical work. . .well, I know about the Schlumberger???, putting down the hole. . .gives a curve, which you can estimate the porosity, we did that.

JP: What did you use by way of the tools of the trade in those days?

JG: Petrological microscope and mapping with a plane table. As you come down the stick, you measure dips and take samples and draw cross sections and plans and map it all and put it on paper.

- #060 JP: Now, you were talking about the long journey down the Athabasca River and the Mackenzie, you used a boat, now what did you do, picking up all these samples along the way, who carried them or what carried them when you were making one of these long journeys?
- JG: Well, we carried them in a rock sack. Not a lot, we couldn't carry much back, we made notes you see. Oh, Joe Spivak, I'll tell you a little tale about Joe Spivak. He was Exploration Manager for Mobil Oil, but he died a short time ago. Well, Joe was with us up in the Mackenzie and he had a trip up the Arctic Red River and before he started, at the mouth of the Arctic Red River was an old Yukon boat cook, who was running a trading post, trading furs. He insisted on making Joe Spivak a batch of bread. Well, like most men of the north, washing was only an occasional necessity, so he made this bread and Joe took it up the river and around the first turn he threw it overboard and said, I cast your bread upon the waters and may it return to you after many days.
- JP: That's great. I am interested in finding out about the vehicles you used. Did you do a lot this on foot, or did you have vehicles or horses. . ?
- JG: We went on foot in the Mackenzie and we had the airplane to take us up to the heads of the river. And in the foothills we had horses. Later they used helicopters of course, but we used horses. Helicopters came in just as I was put back into the office in Calgary to work on . . . all the stuff that used to come in. We put great big maps, we made sections and as the geologists came we plotted all these things on the sections and on the maps and conferred with the geophysicists and just did that sort of work.
- JP: Have you any stories about the use of horses on some of these treks that you made?
- JG: Well, no. We just used the pack stream, we took a tent with us of course, and some food. We had. . . once on Halfway River we had a cook, Bobby Beatty from up the Peace River. He brought the packs in down to the Halfway River. Well, this cook we had was most inefficient cook and we'd tolerate him for a time. We had a lovely lot of beef we took out with us and he ruined it and then we used to go out from camp. Of course, we always knew our way about, but we always said that if you wanted to find out where you were, all you had to do was find a tree and look round and if there was a big column of black smoke, you knew the cook was burning hotcake. And so it went. He poisoned his thumb and I treated him, we had first aid thing and he, like a fool, went and made a bread poultice and put on and we had to send him out, he had poisoned his thumb and he had to have his thumb off. And then he was going to sue Mobil Oil. Well, I said, If he sues you just tell me and I'll appear in court. Now, I don't know whether all this is going to be against me but. . .
- JP: No, that's fine. One more thing, when you were using horses, did you become a good horseman?
- JG: Oh, moderately so. Not a very good horseman. I've got a camera film of all that but I don't know where it is now. It's probably ruined.
- #102 JP: Earlier years than that, much earlier than that, did you use camels when you were out in the. . . ?

JG: I used them once, but they're the craziest animals, they run all over the countryside and butt the packs up. I don't think the Persians understood camels, it's the Arabs who do and the Persian. I don't know why he had these two camels, but Saya Aboub???. .he was an Arab, yes, but for some reason or other, these crazy animals ran all over the countryside and tipped their packs out. I think that's about all I can tell you.

End of tape.