

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Polly Holden

INTERVIEWER: Nadine McKenzie

DATE: September 23, 1983

Tape 1 Side 1 – 30:00

NM: This is Nadine Mackenzie speaking. Today is Friday the 23rd of September 1983. I am at the office of Mrs. Polly Holden. Mrs. Holden, thank you for having accepted to participate in our project. Can you tell me how many years have you spent in the oil patch?

PH: Almost 40 years in the oil business.

NM: Where were you born?

PH: I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and I was educated in Edmonton.

NM: Can I ask you which year?

PH: 1926.

NM: What did your parents do?

PH: My father was dead, he died when I was 7 years old and my mother worked. She was a hairdresser. And I had one brother and she brought us up by herself.

NM: So you were educated mostly in Edmonton.

PH: Yes, in town.

NM: And then what did you do, after secondary school?

PH: Well, I graduated at a very early age in Edmonton. I think I was just a little over 15 at the time, and it was very difficult for anyone to find a job at that age, especially a girl, but they didn't let you enter University until you were 17 years old in those days. And so I had to go out and work until I reached that age and then decided that I probably would get married very young and have many children and wouldn't need an education anyway, so I had graduated from Saint Vincent's Commercial High School in Edmonton. And I had taken a business course, so I thought I would go out and be a secretary. My first job was with a sawmill company and the only reason I got that job was because the lady that owned the sawmill company lived next door to us and she was willing to give me a chance, although I was very young, at a job that became open in their office.

NM: How old were you at the time?

PH: 15.

NM: 15, ??? And how long did you stay with this company?

PH: I stayed with them for two years. And as you know what that time the war was on. And there were quite a few good paying jobs available through American companies. The company that I was working for was paying me \$55 a month. And I heard that California Standard Oil Company was hiring people to go to Norman Wells in the Northwest Territories and that they were paying in the neighborhood of a hundred and eighty dollars a month with your room and board which sounded like a fortune. That's right. So I went and had an interview and they hired me, much to my mother's dismay because I was very young but they, we were very well protected by the company. We had housemothers that took care of us and we had... everyone was very good to us there. Now Norman Wells is on the other side of the river from the CANOL project and I went to work on the CANOL project, which was at that time owned by California Standard Oil, and after the war was sold to Imperial oil.

NM: Can you tell me a bit more about the CANOL project?

PH: Well, they had a pipeline, they had several oil wells up there and the project at that time might not have been commercial had it not been that the war was on and they needed oil from wherever they could get it, and it didn't matter how much it cost to get it from one place to the other...

NM: And there was a [inaudible]

PH: That's true and they had a small oil field there and they built a pipeline from Camp CANOL to Whitehorse in the Northwest Territories. They took it from Whitehorse by train over to Skagway in Alaska and then by boat to the United States. And I didn't know anything about the oil business at that time and I went to work for the man, his name was Loyal Haskell and he was head of the CANOL project for California Standard Oil. Because I was so young, he and his wife took me in almost as a daughter. They had a little boy up there with them of their own who was five years old and I became almost part of their family. After I had been there for a year, they started closing the project down and Mr. Haskell move to Whitehorse and it was not normal for a girl of my age to be even hired for Whitehorse because there were many companies there, the Air Force was there the Army, and they were very frightened for security purposes for a girl that age to be there, but since Mr. Haskell wanted me to be transferred with him and I was almost a part of his family. I was allowed to go to Whitehorse, which was another great experience for me.

NM: What did you do with the CANOL project, were you typing letters...

PH: I was a secretary and I was taking gauges on the telephone from the oil wells, which I had no knowledge of before I went up there, and I did the same thing when I was in Whitehorse. I got to see a lot of the country because only priority people were allowed on the Alaska Highway at that time, and since Mr. Haskell was very high in the company, he was able to obtain special permits and on Sundays, he took his wife and the little boy and myself and we went to see surrounding districts that I never would have had the opportunity to see had I not been so close to his family.

NM: So that must have been very interesting.

PH: It was very interesting, it's very beautiful country. And then he was transferred back to California and they were closing our project down completely. We had a refinery in Whitehorse. And so we were being transferred if we wanted to other areas. Before, I applied to go and work then at a place called Watson Lake which is in British Columbia. No, I believe it's in the Northwest Territories also, and before I went there, I was allowed to go home for a vacation and I was one of those unfortunate people that got airsick. And in those days they didn't have those lovely little Dramamine or Gravol pills, and I was so ill coming home to Edmonton on the plane that I went and asked them if I could back out of my contract and not go back because I was very sick on the plane. So that was my first venture in the oil business and I've been in it ever since.

NM: How were the conditions of living in Norman Wells.

PH: They were very good. We lived in what you call Quonset Huts. They are round buildings so that the snow won't settle on top of them. And they had really good furniture and everything. We each had our own room and we had wonderful meals because it's almost the same as working on a drilling rig in the far north. They have to house you and feed you very well in order to have you there because the weather conditions are so terrible, it I think the coldest I ever experienced was 72 below zero.

NM: That's quite something.

PH: So, you know, you leave the cars running 24 hours a day because if you ever turn them off, they probably wouldn't start and so on, so... PH: They did treat us very, very well. And I was able to save all the money I earned there, they never even gave it to you, they deposited it in the bank in Edmonton. And if you wanted to say take \$20 a month of your pay for incidentals that you could buy in the PX there, you did but there was nothing to spend your money on.

NM: Good way of saving money.

PH: It was marvelous.

NM: Were you kept informed of what was happening about the war?

PH: Well, the Army was right there as well. There was a big American army camp there, and we found out what was going on in the war and what, I happened to be in Whitehorse on D-Day. So, and when the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima, so we were able to find all these things out through the Armed Forces who were kept informed.

NM: I talked with many persons while working for the CANOL project and they were not informed about the war. They did not know what was happening.

PH: Well, we were informed because we had an American Army installation right there and it was an American company that I was working for. And so through the US Army we knew exactly what was happening all the time. As a matter of fact the boys that were serving there were eating in our mess hall. We were feeding them because they didn't have a big enough installation to warrant their own mess hall. So I was, I happened to be in Whitehorse when they dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and for D-Day also.

NM: Very historical. What did you do in Whitehorse?

PH: Well, I was a secretary, also.

NM: And how long did you stay there?

PH: I stayed there another six months after I had been on the CANOL project and that's where we had our refinery, and...

NM: This refinery was moved in later on.

PH: I don't know whether Imperial Oil kept it or not. They bought that whole project and as matter of fact, I think it's still there. I heard a speech given by a man from Imperial Oil few years back and it seems to me they retained that small refinery in Whitehorse.

NM: And when you left Whitehorse, what did you do?

PH: I came back home to Edmonton and I worked. I have a little lull in my career in the oil business. I worked for two years for the Canadian National Railways. And then I heard that many American companies in Calgary were hiring people. So I decided to come to Calgary and see if I could find a job with an oil company here, and I was one of the first employees with Seaboard Oil Company here in Calgary.

NM: And you were still a secretary...

PH: I was still a secretary at that time.

[00:12:00] NM: Were you learning a lot about the oil field at the time?

PH: I learned most of what I know about the oil business after I came back to Calgary. I worked here for a couple of years and I married a man from Texas here and we moved to the United States, and I lived all, in 10 of the United States, and then I divorced and came back here and I've been here for the last 24 years. Now when I came back here, I worked for a man who sent me to the University of Alberta to many courses on the oil industry so that I could learn as much about the industry as possible. And also I was the only girl in his office and when you work in a one-girl office, you learn about all phases of the oil industry, not just one particular thing that you want to learn about.

NM: ??? very good training.

PH: It was very, very good Training for me, but then I was very interested in land work and I started to do land work for him and eventually became a landman.

NM: What does a landman do?

PH: A landman takes farm-out agreements and they also take care of all the leases that you acquire and really if, in my estimation that is where the oil business starts because if you haven't got any land to drill

on then you haven't got anything. You must first acquire the land either through Crown sales or freehold leases or CPR leases in Alberta.

NM: And how did you become a landman? Well, I really taught myself a lot of things and I took courses and if you talk to landmen, most landmen learned the business themselves [skip in tape] You could have a land course at the Mount Royal College and you can take it in University at the University of Oklahoma, in Norman, as well as the University of Texas in Austin, if you wanted to be a degreed landman. But there are very few what you call Professional Landmen because it was something that you could learn yourself and through your company and I did learn a lot from my company.

NM: At the time you were a landman, were there a lot of women who were landmen?

PH: No there weren't any.

NM: So [inaudible]

PH: Well there were several around Calgary, and as a matter of fact, I can remember the first time I negotiated a farm-out agreement with landmen. They happened to work for Pan-Canadian Petroleum here in Calgary, and they phoned my boss and said they wanted to discuss this agreement and he said when you come to the company you ask to see Mrs. Holden. And they told him that they really needed to know a lot of things that they figured I probably wouldn't know about, and he said if there's anything that she doesn't know about then I don't know about it, and I can't do you any good either, so you must visit with this lady. And they were very young landmen at the time and they're both very very successful men in the oil business now. And we did have a lot of laughs, they were very nervous to be, trying to negotiate this deal with a woman but they found out that I probably knew a little bit more about the oil business than they did and they always used to say that I taught them everything they know about the oil business.

[00:15:59] NM: That's good, eh? So then you said two years with the Board and then you went to the States?

PH: Yes, I got married, and I moved to the States. I continued working in the oil business there, but I was still a secretary at that time. It was not until I came back to Calgary, it was 24 years ago that I came back to Calgary, that I worked into the landman's field.

NM: For which company did you work when you came back to Calgary?

PH: I worked for Apache Corporation. It was another American company. And the man I worked for there was the man that would let a woman do just whatever she was capable of doing, and he helped me very much. And then he went to work for Brinkerhoff Drilling Company that formed their own oil company and I went with him and I was head of his land department there. And then it was sold to a company called Sunray DX Corporation and they didn't have a land... I shouldn't say they didn't have a land department that they had no place for a woman in their land department. And so I then worked just a couple of months for them, for the president of the company and I was very bored. And all of my records and everything were sent to Tulsa and they were administered from that office.

So that's when I went to work for Mr. Wall, the man I'm working for now and I've been working for him 16 years. I started working for him when he formed his first company. He came to Canada with James A. Lewis Engineering and he was president of that company for many years and then he decided he would form his own oil company. And somebody told him that if he wanted somebody to open his office for him that I was the woman that he should hire to do it. So I did and I worked for him as, not only as his secretary, but I was manager of the title records department, and we had a private company for three years, which he sold to Great Basins in 1970, Great Basins Petroleum Company. And I was manager of the title records department. I handled all of the leases and records for that company until he was made Chairman of the Board and he was over four companies then, and I was made his Executive Assistant.

NM: Did you have to travel a lot during this time, or did you stay mainly in Calgary?

PH: Mainly in Calgary for a while and then when he moved to the United States, I traveled quite a bit then for the company. And the year that I was president of the Association of Desk and Derrick Clubs, I traveled constantly either for the company or for Desk and Derrick. I was trying to figure out the other day how many trips I made that year and I think it was 21. It seems like I lived in a suitcase at that time.

NM: So then you became Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Board and a Director of the company too?

PH: Yes.

NM: In '75.

PH: Yes, of the Canadian company.

NM: And you remained with Great Basins in that position until it was sold to United Canso. Why was it sold? What happened?

PH: Well, the Board of Directors decided that they should sell it and this is a decision that management makes because it's a public owned company and it was for the benefit of shareholders that they sell the company. And so when they did sell it, Mr. Wall was the top shareholder of that company, and he came into quite a fortune and he decided that he would form these other three companies and he lives in Bermuda and I managed those companies out of his office for him.

[00:20:36] NM: You have been involved with the Desk and Derrick Club of Calgary since '72, were you also involved with the Desk and Derrick Club when you were in the States, working there?

PH: No, as a matter of fact, I knew of Desk and Derrick but when I first came back to Canada I was alone and I had two small sons that I had to bring up myself and educate, and I was very devoted to them as well as my own job and there are only so many hours in a day. I did not have time for Desk and Derrick. I had many very good friends that had been in Desk and Derrick for many years and they kept asking me if I wouldn't please join. So when I did join it was when I felt I could have an evening away from my sons. I was one of those mothers that felt that every evening I had to go home to them, from the office and our, we do have dinner meetings and if I joined I knew I wanted to be involved. And so when I felt I could give up some of my life to this. I did join and I did everything in a 10-year period that it's possible to do in Desk and Derrick. I moved quickly and the only way I could have done that was the fact that I

had so much experience in the oil industry, but I felt it was a marvelous way for a young woman to learn about our industry and I wanted to help educate those women. I really learned about the industry in the School of Hard Knocks, you might say and I thought if there was an easier way of a woman learning about the industry then this was it and it is certainly a very educational Club, it is not a social club at all, and girls who are interested in joining should not join with any other reason than to learn more about the industry...

NM: They are all working women.

PH: They are all working women.

NM: In '72 you were on the nominating committee.

PH: Yes.

NM: And what is this committee?

PH: Well, this committee selects people to run on the Board of Directors of your local club. And as I say, I joined in January and in the fall, they asked me if I would be on their nominating committee...

NM: That's a ???

PH: And also run for a Director the next year...

NM: ??? in '73.

PH: Yes. So I started to move very quickly on the local club Board. And in '74 I became first Vice President of the Calgary club and in '75 President of the Calgary club. In 1976 I was still on the Board because I was the immediate Past President. In 1977, I didn't do as much for Desk and Derrick because I was then very involved with the Landman's Association. The Landman's Association had asked a number of women in the oil business who they considered landwomen or whatever to join their organization for the first time in its history.

NM: Is this association in Calgary?

PH: It's in Calgary, and it has a membership of I think about 800 men and probably 30 women. And they had, the first year that they accepted women in the Association, they requested that certain women join because they didn't want just one woman to belong, they thought that several women should join. And so I did join that year and the first year that they had them, and I think that was in, if I remember correctly, 1975. And then I was asked to, the next year to be on their Speaker's Bureau. And I did speak in several cities on the oil industry for their Speaker's Bureau. They had never had a woman on the Speaker's Bureau before and this is one of my pet enterprises, is speaking on the industry.

NM: That must have been quite a change for them. Yes. It was and I was very pleased to think that they would ask a woman to be on that committee. Trevor Williams, who spent many years with Texaco here, was at that time Chairman of the Speaker's Bureau for them, and then the next year, they asked me to chair that committee for them, which was also another challenge, so I didn't do that much for Desk and

Derrick that year because I was working on this project for the Landman's Association. But I found that the Landman's Association was a good organization to belong to, but I didn't really learn anything about the oil industry belonging to it.

NM: You learned more from the Desk and...

PH: I learned more from the Desk and Derrick and I was able to teach other people more about our industry by being a member of Desk and Derrick because the landmen use their Association to contact other landmen that they do business with, and this is a very good thing also because then you learn to know people that you're talking to on a daily basis on the telephone. But I didn't think that my services were needed as much in that organization as they were in Desk and Derrick. I think I was helping more people in Desk and Derrick.

NM: When you give lectures for the Landman's Association, what were your topics?

PH: Well, you usually spoke on a topic that related to it, for instance. I went to Winnipeg and spoke to the Rotary Club one time and I was trying to think of something in the oil industry that they would be interested in because they have very little oil industry in the City of Winnipeg, and the Rotary Club as you know is made up of lawyers and doctors and that type of people. And so I had heard talk several times by a man here in Calgary about the trade agreement we had with Russia on the rotary tool. Now, I knew that Winnipeg was selling a lot of wheat to Russia, so I thought this was a topic they would probably be interested in hearing about, they probably didn't think that we did anything with Russia as far as oil business was concerned.

So I got in touch with Mr. Leaper who happened to be the man that was very, very well-versed in working with Russia. And he provided me with a lot of material that I could build this speech out of, and also these speeches are approved by Ottawa because when you speak about another country, they need, you need to give the true facts. And his speeches were all approved by Ottawa and all of his material. So I built my speech, send it to him for his approval and he got approval for me to speak on this subject in Winnipeg. And these men in Winnipeg were absolutely amazed to think that a woman would speak on this subject.

Tape 1 Side 2 – 29:00

NM: So you gave your speech about Russia in Winnipeg, and how...

PH: About the rotary tool. And it was the time that the Rotary Club contacted the Landman's Association asking for a speaker for this particular meeting. They told them they had two people that were available to come, there was a man from Dome Petroleum that was able to speak on a certain subject, I can't remember exactly what his speech was about and also they had a woman that would speak to them about this rotary tool and our trade agreement with Russia. Well the man, the president of the Rotary Club said, we want the woman to come. And apparently no one had addressed their organization, no woman had addressed their organization before I went...

NM: So you were the first one.

PH: I was the first woman to address their club there. And they invited the Chamber of Commerce to be there. They invited the head of Imperial Oil, the gentleman who was head of the Imperial Oil there, to be a guest. They learned that I had an uncle living there who was very high in Mutual Life Insurance and they invited him as a special guest to hear my speech. So I went, and all the time I was having lunch with the president, he was asking me questions about the oil business. His questions were not too technical because he didn't know anything about the oil business, but I was very proud to say that after my speech all these men gave me a standing ovation and he said that he was amazed to have been able to have lunch with me and talk to me because I was so well-versed in the industry I represented.

NM: That was a very...

PH: That was a very great honour for a woman to be given, I think, in those days particularly, women are gradually getting more and more honour each year, but at that time we were pretty well unknowns in the industry, you might say.

NM: That's right. So going back to the Desk and Derrick Club, then you became Co-chairman of the first ??? oil spills and environmental control. What was that?

PH: It wasn't the first seminar the Calgary Club had but every second year, as you see when I was President, I was Chairman of what we call the North Sea Seminar. What we do in our club is we try to have a seminar every second year and this seminar is open to anyone in the industry, men, women, anybody and is quite a big project because you have several speakers and it's a day-long seminar. We usually have it at the Westin and we have several topics on the agenda for the day and you have to get in touch with people and ask them if they will give these speeches and so on...

NM: It's a lot of organization.

PH: It's a lot of organizing. And then they talked me into running for Regional Director of the Desk and Derrick Club. Now that, you then move on to the Association Board of Directors and you represent the region that you're in and we happen here in Calgary to be in Region 7. And so I really hadn't planned to do that. Somebody is always saying to me, at that time they were saying to me we have only had one Canadian girl that has ever been president of the Association of Desk and Derrick Clubs in 30 years.

NM: And who was it?

PH: It was Marguerite Flood Moser and she was President I believe in 1964. And they wanted another Canadian girl to move on that Board and see if they couldn't have another Canadian president. Well, that seemed a little far-fetched and I said, well, I would let them put my name forward for Regional Director. And so I ran for that office and I won and I became Regional Director that year. And of course, they wouldn't let go, they wanted me to then move forward. Well, I, when I do this type of thing, I like to move down the line in the correct order and so I let them submit my name to run for Second Vice President. But you are given a second option at that time in case there is a reason that you can't fulfill that position or if they have too many people running, then they ask you to take a second option and the only other second option was First Vice President. Well, they had eight girls run for Second Vice President and no one run for First Vice President and I was the only person who put their name in for First Vice President as second choice. So the nominating committee from the large Association asked me

if I would allow my name to stand for that position and there would maybe be girls nominated from the floor for that position to run against me.

Well, I let them talk me into that, and I ran and I ran on a single slate and nobody was nominated from the floor. So I was elected for that position and really when you run for that position you make a commitment. You make a three-year commitment that you will be running for president the year after and then if you do get to be president, then you're naturally immediate Past President.

NM: What do you do with for the Desk and Derrick Club as a First Vice President?

PH: Well you're head of their rules committee, and there's many committees in the association. It's almost like a small Corporation and you have to be the Board contact for three or four of these committees, and you go to meetings for the Board. It's just, as I say almost like running a small Corporation. When I was First Vice President, there was over 11,000 girls in the Association. And when I was President, I believe there was over 12,000. And you are ex-officio member of all committees and you are in charge of the entire organization.

NM: So you have to spend a lot of time...

PH: You spend a lot of time. The year I was President. I was very busy on my own job and I was able through the kindness of my company to take all of the phone calls involved and then I worked every night from 4:30 until 7:00 and every weekend on Desk and Derrick work for the entire year. It was a tremendous amount of work. We have an office in Tulsa, Oklahoma and one employee and you have to coordinate the whole club and there are about 123 clubs belong to the Association.

NM: Are the meeting in the evening or during the day?

PH: No, the meetings, no, they're on your own time during the evenings, yes.

NM:: And it's weekend also, on Saturday, or?

PH: Each club runs their club a little bit different than the next one, but they all have to abide by the bylaws of the large Association. Now the president is then in charge of the annual convention and we were hosting the one here in Calgary this year. But when I was President, my convention was in Los Angeles, which happens to be a good deal of miles from here. I had to make many phone calls to coordinate this convention. I was fortunate in the fact that Los Angeles is where our head office for my company was and when I had to go there during the year for business, I also took care of my Desk and Derrick commitments with them and coordinated what was going to happen in September for my convention there. So I was lucky that way.

NM: How do you foresee the future of the Desk and Derrick?

PH: OH, the future of Desk and Derrick is just absolutely fantastic. They're moving ahead so fast, they've been able to keep up with the times. We've had a small drop in membership because of the recession but it is building up and I believe is over 9800 girls in North America right now.

NM: Do you have more and more female geologists joining Desk and Derrick?

PH: We have, as a matter of fact, during the year I was President, we took a survey and only 33% of the girls in Desk and Derrick were secretaries. The other girls were accountants, geologists, engineers, landmen, accountants, girls that owned their own companies, accounting companies. We have several women that own their own drilling companies, and small oil companies. So you see it was started many years ago by secretaries but has developed into a club for women that are in any phase of the oil industry. And they must work in the industry in order to belong.

NM: In 1982 you were on the International Exchange Potential Committee. What is it?

PH: Several years ago the name of our club was changed from the Association of Desk and Derrick Clubs of North America to the Association of Desk and Derrick Clubs, because we then became International. When it was of North America, the clubs had to be in North America and we felt that there were so many women in other countries that might be interested in joining our association, we formed this International Exchange Committee. Now this job is always taken over by the immediate Past President of the Association because she is the most knowledgeable of what's going on in the association at that time. We've had inquiries from Australia and from England and from Norway, and also from South America and Mexico. And we have worked quite hard in the last number of years to try to form a club in one of these countries. So far, we haven't been successful, but we are still hoping that we may be.

NM: Why, what are the problems?

PH: In Norway, the government did not really approve of the structure of our association because it was for women only. In England, they tried several times to form a club and many of the girls from British Petroleum were interested in doing this and because it was so far away, we just, we even made trips over there to try to get things started and we never could really find a woman that was motivated I think, enough to be the first president and start the club off. We do have a contact in Australia right now that we have been working very hard with to try to form a club there and we do believe that in the future, we will have a club in Australia, and we do have a very good contact in Scotland at this time, and we're hoping that we can form a club there as well.

NM: Do you think the reason is because North American women have more of a pioneer spirit to start things?

PH: I don't know whether that is the case or whether it's just finding the right person to do this. Now the girl that we are dealing with presently in Scotland did belong to a club in North America, and we feel that this club might be formed because she knows what it's all about. She knows the educational value of the club and will probably be able to pass this on to other women. But unless you have had somebody to form the club that has been involved with it, it's pretty hard to take a new person and say, we think you should form this club because it's going to help you with your job and so on. It's much easier to deal with somebody who knows what we have done and our history. We have it all on paper and we can show them but it's a little bit different when you try to do it that way. This year we have a hundred and twenty-eight clubs in North America. So even though the membership of some of them has been reduced through the recession, we have formed more clubs in North America.

NM: Also the fees are very low.

PH: Yes, they are very low...

NM: Compared to ???

PH: That's right. To belong to the Calgary Club, its \$25 a year and of that you used to have to send six dollars to the association to belong to the association, but that has been increased to a great big eight dollars this year.

NM: The recession. And this year you also Special Advisor to the Desk and Derrick Convention General Arrangements Committee?

PH: Yes, as you know, Helen Turgeon and Fay Mortimer were the General Arrangement Chairman and Co-chairman for this convention. The President who is in McAllen, Texas is very far away from this club and she had a difficult time communicating back and forth with the Calgary club, and she asked me if I would be a special adviser to this committee that has been working for two years to have this convention because I could answer many questions about what needed to be done that would prevent many long-distance calls to her and so on and as she said, she wanted me for her eyes. And the girls were very easy to work with and they did an absolutely marvelous job. I'm very proud of them.

NM: And this year you have been named the first Canadian Oil Woman of the Year. How do you feel about that?

[00:16:32] PH: Well, I think you were present when that happened and I was very excited. The adrenaline was really flowing at the time. I wanted to win that award for several reasons. I'm very motivated as you can probably tell, and I wanted to be the first Canadian Oil Woman selected. I wanted this award to be given to oil women so that they would start to be recognized more in the industry, and I wanted to be to win the award because of my boss who has been very good to me and has stood by me all these years in all of my endeavors both in business and in Desk and Derrick. And I just think it was a wonderful award. The Canadian Petroleum magazine started to work on this insert for their magazine and Lonnie Gabinette, the reporter who did all of this work, became so enthusiastic about all the work that had been done by Desk and Derrick over the years that it was her dream that this award be given. When they suggested that they would like to give the Canadian Oil Woman of the Year award at our convention our association said that the only way it could be given at our convention would be if be the judges use it as part of the reason why you were going to win the award. So that meant they were they were judging you on the work you have done in the industry, as well as the work you did for Desk and Derrick. And it was, there were some very qualified girls that were nominated for this award.

NM: How many of them?

PH: I think this year they asked for three from each city. They asked for three from Calgary, and three from Edmonton, three from Regina and three from Winnipeg and three from Grand Prairie.

NM: That is quite a competition.

PH: But I think that there were only seven names submitted. And the girls themselves said that now they had me out of the way, they felt they had a chance and I really feel that the reason that they said this was because of my qualifications and Desk and Derrick. I was the only woman nominated for this award

who had ever been the Association President, so they couldn't possibly beat my qualifications as far as Desk and Derrick were concerned. And some of my other qualifications were pretty hard to beat as well, but they have very good qualifications themselves and I want to see all of those names put on this award following mine, they will be on there and I was the first and I was very happy. My family was very proud of me as well as the people I work with.

NM: When Great Basins was sold to United Canso, why you didn't go to United Canso?

PH: Well, the company had been up for sale for about a year and my boss, I had worked for him for many years and he did not plan to retire completely from the oil business and he wanted to continue with privately owned companies. So he asked me if I would go to work for him with all of the benefits that I had had Great Basins and more. And I had agreed to work for him once the company was sold. So when they tried to sell the Canadian company they had to sell it to another Canadian company, this as you know, is the Canadian government regulations now, and they wanted to sell to a company that would take all of the employees because they didn't want all these people to be out of jobs. So United Canso wanted to expand their operation and they were willing to take all of the employees of the company, but they were told that the only employee that was not going to go with them was myself because I did have plans to work for Mr. Wall on a continuing basis. And the offer he made me was one that I couldn't refuse.

[00:21:41] NM: So that's why. Mrs. Holden, you are presently General Manager, Corporate Secretary Treasurer and a Director of Brigade Enterprises Limited. What is Brigade Enterprises Limited?

PH: Brigade Enterprises is a small privately-owned oil and gas company and we have production in Southern Alberta and it is the Canadian company that Mr. Wall owns, invests his money in in Canada. He also owns two other companies, Deep Rock Exploration Incorporated and Quadrant Exploration Incorporated in the United States. These are both oil and gas companies and I operate those companies out of this office and they have people in the United States working for the companies.

NM: As a general manager, what do you do?

PH: Everything. I, well I supervise all of the operations of this company. We haven't been very active in Canada the last year or so because of the recession, but we hope to do more in the near future and as a matter of fact we are hoping to eventually have more employees in this company, and I will be the direct contact between Mr. Wall and the employees of this company. He is not actively engaged in the business any longer. He is retired and lives in Bermuda.

NM: How big is the staff?

PH: We only have four people. One person in the field and three in the office

NM: And you're also Corporate Secretary and Treasurer.

PH: Yes.

NM: And a Director. You also serve on the Board of Directors of Colombian Northern Exploration, Vancouver Mining Company, what is this company?

PH: This is a small mining company and its interests are mostly in gold mines and it's a publicly owned company and I'm on the Board of Directors with a Mr. John Poyan and a Mr. Ed Galvan and Mr. Brody Hicks.

NM: So do you often go to Vancouver?

PH: This Corporation was just started a year and a half ago, and we went there for the first time this week for an Audit Committee meeting. Usually the Board of Directors hold their meetings in Calgary because it is an Alberta Corporation and you have to hold your meetings in the province that you are Incorporated. It is the desire of the Board to eventually go to view one of the mines we have a big interest in which is the Carolyn Mine at Hope B.C. and they are producing gold.

NM: Is it producing a lot of gold in there?

PH: They have commercial production.

NM: Mrs. Holden, who was the most influential person in your career?

PH: I think the two most influential people that I worked for in my career were Jim Atkinson, who is President of Atkinson Petroleum Limited now, and Jack Wall who I work for now. I think Mr. Wall did more for my career than any other one person but Mr. Atkinson started me out learning as much as I could about the industry. He encouraged me to take as many courses at University about the oil industry. Most of them were attended by men at the industry at that time, but he felt if I took courses on well completions and learned what all these terms meant that we were working with everyday in our careers, that I would further my knowledge of the industry. And he gave me nothing but encouragement and allowed me to do everything that I was capable of doing in my job.

NM: And nobody else?

PH: I could say that I received a lot of encouragement from my two sons who are now 24 and 25.

NM: Are they in the oil patch too?

PH: No they're not, but they were always very proud of everything I did and they did encourage me to move ahead and they tried to help me as much as they could.

NM: What was the most exciting experiences in the oil patch for you?

PH: Well, I think that probably one of the most exciting things I ever did of course was go to the Arctic and work when I was a very young woman. And I suppose that actually visiting a working drilling rig was also a very exciting experience for me. Some of the highlights of my career were, I was very excited the first time I was asked to serve on the Board of Directors of Great Basins Petroleum Limited. I was very elated to be elected as the second Canadian President of the Association of Desk and Derrick Clubs, and I guess the latest highlight of my career has been to be awarded the award for being the first Canadian Oil Woman of the Year.

NM: You have seen the ups and down of the oil industry here in Calgary. What do you think about it?

PH: Well, this is the second time in my career. I've seen it happen. It is rather a frightening experience and, but it is something that we must all be prepared for.

Tape 2 Side 1 – 06:00

PH: I've also always had a lot of confidence in our business and I really feel that we are now beginning to work our way out of this terrible recession we've been in, and I can see from small things that are happening that maybe we are on the road to recovery. But the last time this happened to our industry it took about five years for it to recover and I think it will take all of that, if not more this time.

NM: Where do you think we are now, at the bottom of the barrel, or are we...?

PH: I think we're moving up the barrel, at least I hope so and I think that we must all have a lot of courage and just work as hard as we can and if we do a lot to try to improve the image of our industry I think that people will understand that we have not had all of these funds to use for good times. They have been reinvested in our own industry and it takes millions for us to do these things.

NM: What do you think of the place of women in the oil patch?

PH: I think that women are now coming into their own in every industry and especially in the oil industry. And I think that if you are capable and you work hard for your company that you have every chance of moving as far ahead as any man.

NM: Do you think men's attitude has changed towards women in the oil patch?

PH: I don't really think that men had a poor image of women in the industry at any time. I just really feel that women did not do enough to push themselves ahead in our particular industry, and I, any men that I am associated with treat me on the same level as they treat a man.

NM: What do you feel about the Petroleum Club not accepting women in Calgary in 1983?

PH: It really doesn't matter to me that they don't allow women to join their club. I have the feeling that if women want to have a club of their own, they should be allowed to have one and if men want to have a club of their own, they should be entitled to have this club. I have never been one that has wanted to enter the world of anyone that did not want you there. I think that probably as many organizations or clubs that have in the past, that eventually the Petroleum Club will allow women to join. I know the Duquesne Club in Pittsburgh was a club that had never allowed women from, many many years to belong and they have now opened their doors...

NM: What are the reasons for not accepting women?

PH: I don't believe it has anything to do with the fact that you're a woman. I think it's just been a men's club for years and they feel comfortable with it being that way and they haven't probably been approached by a woman to join their club.

NM: But do you think if they were approached that they would refuse or would they accept?

PH: I really don't know whether there's any woman that would be interested in joining a club where they're not wanted. When you do something like that, I find that your life isn't very happy at that point. You are in a club that really didn't ask you to be there in the first place.

NM: So yeah, that's quite common...

PH: I think it was the same way with the Landman's Association for many years. They didn't have women in that association and when they decided that they should have women in the association because there were so many women in that field at that time, they asked women that they wanted to have join in the first place. And then they processed the applications as they came in and if the girls were qualified they were allowed to join and I really feel that this will probably happen eventually in the Petroleum Club. But...

NM: Do you foresee ???

PH: I don't... myself see any reason why I should belong to the Petroleum Club. I can join many other clubs if I want to join a club and it's basically a club where you entertain people and where you have your lunch and so on and there's many places to go besides that. If they ever decide they want women and if they asked me if I would like to join I would think about it at that time, right now I don't think about it at all.

NM: Looking back at your career. Mrs. Holden, is there anything you would do differently nowadays?

PH: I don't think so. I think I've been really fortunate. One of the reasons that I have been fortunate is because I have worked very, very hard for people who appreciate and have repaid me for my hard work, and I think that if other women keep this in mind that they can see succeed also.

NM: Thank you very much for this very interesting interview.

End of Interview