

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Al Howes

INTERVIEWER: W. J. Wood

DATE: September 1984

JW: . . . interviewing Al Howes, 20th September, 1984 at Al Howes' residence in High River, Alberta. Al, I wonder if we could then just start off this morning and maybe you could talk about your family background a little bit and where and when you were born?

AH: I was born in Calgary March 10th, 1910. When I was 2 weeks old I went up to this old stump ranch up at Dovercourt and lived on the farm there, went to school. They only had school about 3 months out of the year.

JW: Where is Dovercourt?

AH: You know where Caroline is.

JW: Okay, out there.

AH: You go to Caroline and then you go west to the bridge and then you go 8 miles north again and that's Dovercourt.

JW: How come only 3 months?

AH: That's all they could afford to have school, taxes you know, they never got too much. They'd hire a teacher for about 3 months in the summertime and that was it.

JW: So you'd go in the summer.

AH: Yes, we'd go to school for about 3 months every summer.

JW: What did you do all winter then, as a kid?

AH: Feed cattle.

JW: Yes, work.

AH: Yes. Feed cattle and cut firewood.

JW: Did you have brothers and sisters out there?

AH: Yes, there was 6, there were 3 brothers and 3 sisters. Everybody had to work, milking the cows and feeding the calves.

JW: So you hung around and did that till you were about 14 and then you mentioned you headed out?

AH: Yes, went working in sawmills.

JW: Where was that, up by Rocky Mountain House?

AH: Yes.

JW: What was the attraction up in Rocky to go to work in the sawmills, just a job?

AH: Just a job, yes.

JW: How did you hear about that or what. . . ?

AH: There were lots of little sawmills there. You could get a job packing slabs or something.

JW: ???

AH: We got about 75 cents to \$1 a day. \$1 a day was pretty good money.

JW: Because what, we're talking 1924 now aren't we?

AH: Yes. Used to do that in the wintertime and then I went to work for the forestry, packing wire. They'd have their wire in rolls and you'd put one on each side of a pack saddle and then one in the middle, tied her down. They strung wire through the trees you'll remember, at that time.

#030 JW: Would that be telegraph or electrical?

AH: No, telephone lines. Strung them through the trees. Mired insulators on to the side of the jack pines and strung her through the trees.

JW: Did you have a cut line you were following or were you on road allowances?

AH: No, just all through. We'd round up the side of mountains you know, grubbed out a little path so you could take the horses through.

JW: No kidding. So where were you running these lines to?

AH: Well, up Saunders Creek and all up in what they call the green area now, north and west of Nordegg.

JW: Were they going in to ranches up there?

AH: No, forestry cabins and . . . So in case of fire they could pack stuff in there.

JW: How long would these things stay up in the trees? You probably had to go back every year.

AH: Oh yes, you had trees that would blow over and the line would come down. You'd go along, pull her out and tie her up on another tree again.

JW: How long did you do that?

AH: For about 2 years.

JW: That was kind of a good job wasn't it, for a young guy?

AH: Oh yes. We went up to the Clearwater, they could go up there with team and wagon you see, and they'd haul the wagon in there and then you'd start packing it from the Clearwater Ranger station and you'd take off north, through Swan Lake and just keep right on going over to Saunders Creek.

JW: That was pretty rugged country then, well, it still is.

AH: Oh yes, terrible. Rivers would get high, it would start raining and you couldn't ford, you'd get stuck in there and have to wait for the water to go down so you could get going again.

JW: Did you pack your own food in?

AH: Oh yes.

JW: How many guys would do this?

AH: Well, on that, you'd be all by yourself.

JW: Oh you would.

AH: You'd have about 15 horses and a saddle horse. Pack them and then you had to put hobbles on them at night or you'd lose them all. On the grass there and you'd get them all in the morning and take the hobbles off and pack them up and take off again.

JW: So you did that for a couple of years and then. . .

AH: Yes, then in March I come down here, just looking around for work and I got a job roughnecking on a diamond drill rig.

JW: How did you get that job? When you say coming down here, you mean Calgary?

AH: Yes. I went into the Queens Hotel there in Calgary and these guys were there and I was looking for work and they said, you better come on and go to work for us.

#063 JW: Had you been exposed to a drilling rig before?

AH: No, never saw a rig, didn't even know what it looked like.

JW: Do you remember who any of these guys were?

AH: Yes, it was Chet Barteau???, he come up here later, he got killed in Sandpoint, Idaho, he got in a car accident and was killed there. Howard Yarborough and Jack Keer and Norm Olsen, he was another driller. There were 3 drillers there. The same 3 drillers went down to Flathead when I was down there. I just happened to meet them in that bar in Waldo and they knew me and they said, you better come back and go to work for us again, we're going down to Flathead, it might be a couple of months and I was there 4 years.

JW: Let's backtrack a little bit. So you met these fellows at the Queens Hotel and off you went. Where did you go?

AH: They had bunkhouses out there at De Winton and we stayed in the camp there, had a cook there and bunkhouses.

JW: Whose well was that?

AH: Lord Angussee???

JW: Lord Angussee, okay. I don't know anything about Lord Angussee.

AH: That's the last I heard of him too, because they didn't get nothing there.

JW: Was he just a promoter?

AH: Yes.

JW: Was that a no-jack well or you got paid for that?

AH: We got \$3 a day.

JW: So they had already drilled with cable tool on that?

AH: Yes. I think they drilled down to about 5,600 when we took off at the bottom of that cable tool hole and started diamond drilling.

JW: Could you just tell me a little bit about diamond drilling at that time, what was involved?

AH: Then they had a diamond setter on the rig.

JW: Okay. On the cable tool rig, you just kept that rig over the hole?

AH: Just the derrick, that's all. All the cable tool machinery was there and they just put #2 Dohinistone???, rig in there and then they just used a wooden derrick. I think, yes, we pulled doubles there, it wasn't high enough for pulling triples. They had 5" flush joint drill pipe. Every time you see, there was no collars on that for your elevators, you had to screw buttons into that and tighten them to put your elevators on because they [would pick up every stand you see]???. Going in the hole you take the buttons out and then the stand . . .

JW: So how deep then further down did you go with it?

AH: I think we got about 7,100 when they shut it down.

JW: Was that common to deepen the holes at that time?

AH: No.

JW: No, it wasn't, was it?

AH: No, that was their first try in here that way. But they had cores piled up like fence rails all

over. Every time you came out, they had 20' core barrels, they took 20' of core then you had to come out of the hole, take the core out and then go back in and go for another one.

#100 JW: So you got a core as opposed to . . . ?

AH: Oh yes, about 2½" core. The Boyles??? Brothers from Vancouver was supplying the diamonds. They'd have to set all these by hand. They had this ring, the bit like, all laid out there and everything and then you drilled little holes in there and you'd put a diamond in there. If it was a little too deep you'd put a little copper in the bottom to bring it up level, the right height. Then you'd have little punches and you'd cork all the metal around the diamonds.

JW: That was still percussion though, you'd still. . . there wasn't a rotary action or anything?

AH: Oh yes. It was a rotary. Yes, rotary rig. And they drilled. . . the table was hydraulic, you know, it had hydraulic pistons in it, 4 pistons in it. And you drilled by water pressure, you didn't use the weight indicator, only for pulling out of the hole. But you drilled on water pressure. You had a high pressure pump there to pump the table up all the time you know. You could make 5' and then you didn't have no kelly or anything like that, every single was a kelly. And you set this single, kelly, back in the derrick when you picked up a single you'd put that on and then screw the one back in again. And every time you made 5' you'd just pick up a little bit so you could get the slips out and then you'd hydraulic the table back up that 5' again you see, set your slips and then away you'd go, drill that 5' down and then pull your slips and bring the table back up and then go down again. You had gauges there, how much pressure you had on there.

JW: Was this about 1928?

AH: Yes. We had the same thing in the Flathead, we drilled there for 4 years and we had 3 ½ West stone??? pipe in there.

JW: How were these fellows to work with at De Winton? You just showed up, you were pretty green.

AH: Oh yes, they were all good, they just took after you like fathers, you know. Oh yes, treat you real good.

JW: What was your job out there?

AH: Roughnecking. When you went in down the hole you handled the tongs, racked the pipe back.

JW: What kind of shift were you on, was that 12 hours then at that time?

AH: Yes, 12 hours.

JW: And you had a cook in the bunkhouse?

AH: Oh yes. It was good. They'd treat you real good. Had the same thing at the Flathead, Frank McMahon had a big camp in there. There was about, I think they had around 25 men in there because they fired with wood up there. Had loggers hauling wood and guys cutting it and splitting it and 3 boilers.

#139 JW: So that's where you went after this first job?

AH: Yes.

JW: So they shut her down and . . .

AH: And then I went down the Crowsnest and went to work in the mill there for about 3 months and it burned up so then I went into Waldo to see if I could find something else and these guys were in there so I went to work for them again. It was lucky.

JW: That's the way it is sometimes. So Frank McMahon had a pretty big operation going out there?

AH: Yes. It was all money that he collected in, it was all a promotion deal you know. And you know, they never did get any oil in that Flathead, never. No gas either. They drilled in there and they put big rigs in there after we left, they didn't get anything either. And then we were in there for Shell and didn't get anything. We got some helium gas in there, not much. And they've drilled back up in there. . . well, Shell still drills back up in there every once in awhile but they never get anything.

JW: So you were diamond drilling again at that time in there?

AH: Yes.

JW: Just to get greater depth?

AH: Yes. Cable tools in there, holes were all around 3,000' but crooked as hell. Terrible. And then would just flush ??? drill pipe, can you imagine how crooked that would go. At the last there it was so crooked they couldn't even get the survey barrel down. They tried to survey the hole in the open hole and they couldn't even get the barrel down.

JW: Was that using the acid and so forth at that time?

AH: No. Sparry ??? Son had. . . The ones we took in Turner Valley, those in there, they were the old acid bottles. You put them in there and then they were set for awhile and make a mark on the. . . Then Sparry Son come in in about . . . I think Eastman come in in around '42 when Eastman first come in here. Then I was up working for Shell at Jumping Pound then and that was their first job in there. Old Eastman himself was running it then.

JW: Did you encounter Frank McMahon at all at that time, when you were down in the Flathead?

AH: Oh yes, he was in there a lot.

JW: He was? What kind of fellow was he?

AH: Hell of a nice guy. Frank and George both. Yes, they'd come in there and stay a couple of weeks sometimes, at a time. Then go back to Vancouver and promote some more money.

JW: So how long were you down there, you were a couple of years you mentioned?

AH: I was 4 years in the Flathead.

JW: And living in a camp the whole time?

AH: Yes.

JW: No holidays?

AH: No. You could go to Kalispell, that was the town, Kalispell, Montana. That's the only way you could get out of there, you had to go down through Belton, Montana, or else come out at Columbia Falls, either one. There was a road each way, and then into Kalispell. But now, well, it isn't a good road but you can take off this side of Natell there, at Michelle, and go up through Corben and across there. Then the border was Flathead, that was the border.

#187 JW: How many rigs were down there, did he have operating at that time then?

- AH: Frank. Just the one. We was on about 5 or 6 different cable tool holes then. Went and drilled one, couldn't get anything, try out another one.
- JW: What was the rationale for drilling down there, what was the geological rationale, what made the McMahan's think they were going to get oil in that area, or did you know?
- AH: You know, you could go down, there were lots of beavers on that Sage Creek and in those beaver dams you could sit out there on the bank and watch and every once in awhile there would be a bubble come up and break and it was oil. Say a bubble was coming up in about 2' of water, you could take a 45 gallon drum, cut the bottom out of it and set it over that bubble and you could go down there every day and skim off a couple of gallons of oil. And burn it right in the engine. That's why they drilled there, they . . .
- JW: These seeps, and they figured it's in there somewhere.
- AH: Yes, in that seepage. But now they figure that oil come from Waterton.
- JW: Just migrated?
- AH: Yes. That's where they figure because you get a lot of condensate in them Waterton wells. So that's what they figure now, that that just . . . you know, the pressure just went through the rocks. And up at Kinta??? Lake it was the same way, they had those little star rigs in there years ago because they had seepage there. But there's nothing there. They've drilled and there's not a thing there. But those bubbles are still there.
- JW: You were down there 4 years, living in a camp, what did you do for recreation? Can you talk a little bit about living in a camp at that time, that's pretty remote down there?
- AH: Oh yes. You'd be stuck in there. The only way you could get out was walk out, snowshoe it or ski out. We'd have little trap lines, which was illegal you know, but there was no rangers or anything ever got in there and we'd trap martin and mink and rats and beaver. Then we'd play poker with those hides at night, play poker for the hides.
- JW: Did anybody go a little bit bushy?
- AH: No.
- JW: How many guys were in there then, working?
- AH: There was about, with the woodcutters and everything, about 25 I guess.
- JW: And how were you supplied then?
- AH: They had a big warehouse there and they brought everything in in the fall. They had well stocked enough for the winter. Of course, they killed quite a few moose and elk.
- #232 JW: That was a pretty big operation for that time.
- AH: Yes. Which they wasn't allowed to use, but they did all the time and nobody ever said anything. But they had lots of quarters of beef in there and everything. Oh yes, nothing wrong with it. I used to . . .down to Trail Creek, Montana, it was 21 miles from the rig and lots of times I went down and back in the same day.
- JW: Walking?
- AH: Yes, snowshoed down and back in the same day. And the bits they used then, they were making a 6" holes and sometimes they would drill with bits for awhile, if it was in the shale and it didn't core very good then they'd go and drill for awhile. But they were what they called Simplex??? bits, used bits. They were made in 2 halves, you bolted them altogether. The shanks were about 2' long and then 2 halves and they were 2 coned you

see. You'd bolt them together and the pins were there, you'd put the cones on the pins and put Allen screws in to hold them all. Then they had a lubricator on the top, I think it would be about 10' long and you'd fill that full of that old crater oil you know. And then it had a plunger in there and your pump pressure would force the oil out you see, into the bit and lubricate it. Every time you come out of the hole you'd fill the lubricator and screw her back on again.

JW: So they finally gave up after 4 years down there?

AH: Yes.

JW: How many holes did they end up drilling?

AH: I think we ended up by drilling about 5 different wells. Got the same thing out of all of them, never got gas or nothing.

JW: So you'd start out on cable tool, just percussion. . . ?

AH: They were already all drilled when we come there, those old cable tools.

JW: Oh, all of them?

AH: All of them, they were. . .

JW: And then you spent 4 years just going. . .

AH: From hole to hole, drilling in the bottom of those old wells. There must have been about 10 or 12 holes drilled there altogether. They went through Corben and over that hump, and hauled all that equipment in there with teams and wagons, years ago, those old cable toolers.

#277 JW: One of those rigs was still down there not too long ago, wasn't it, back in the bush somewhere?

AH: Oh yes. Last time I was in there, that was about 7 or 8 years ago, those cable tool rigs were all still there.

JW: What kind of shape were they in, pretty bad?

AH: Oh no, they're still all in buildings yet. The buildings are still over there, if they haven't burned up, I don't know. But there was, I guess maybe a good 12 holes still there, all had wooden derricks on them and belt hauls. It's all in there yet.

JW: So you packed up that after 4 years and . . . ?

AH: And came back up here to Turner Valley in '35. I think it was about June of '35 I came back up here and then went back to work. I think when I first came back up here I went to work for old Boulder again.

JW: You said again, had you worked for him before then?

AH: Yes, in '28 for a little while. Then I went back to work for him again. Then he kind of shut her down for a little bit so then I went to work for Head and Snyder. Then I worked for Ralph Will and then went from there to Commonwealth. They bought a brand new rig and I went to work for them.

JW: So through that period of the 30's then, or '35 in there, you were living in Turner Valley?

AH: Yes.

JW: Where were you living?

AH: Living in, it was Little Chicago then, which is Royalties now. And then Little New York is Longview.

JW: Were you in a boarding house there?

AH: Yes.

JW: Do you remember whose it was?

AH: Yes, Mrs. Barber.

JW: That wasn't the Barber that became Barber Machine, any relation?

AH: No. Earl Griffiths, he started up that big shop down in Longview. Then when it went dead there he moved into Calgary. They've still got a shop. But it was nice working down there.

JW: That was like coming to the city for you after being out . . . ?

AH: Yes. You know, I went to that Calgary Stampede there for about 4 years straight and never seen the stampede. Never got out of the Noble Hotel. I never got to see the stampede until I got married.

JW: Maybe we won't talk about that. I'm going to turn the tape over.

Side 2

JW: Maybe you could just describe Turner Valley and that area, Longview, well, in your case, Little Chicago and Little New York, as you recall. Just a mental picture.

AH: When I first come back there, there was Little Chicago Board and Rooms running there and there was, what they called Ma's Place and there was the place that I stayed there, Mrs. Barber owned it. She had about 70 men there. Little Chicago Board and Rooms, I guess they must have had 40 or 50, Ma's Place must have had about the same. There was a lot of guys there. And down in Little New York, which was Longview, there was about 3 boarding places there too.

JW: Were the streets dirt?

AH: Oh yes, all dirt and when it rained you were just up to your arse in mud all over there. Then Lloyd Kidd had a grocery store there and that guy that run the Hudson Bay store there, Ralph Smith. There was about 3 grocery stores there.

JW: Did they have banks?

AH: No banks, no.

JW: So what did you do with your money?

AH: Sent it into Calgary.

JW: Oh you did. How did you get up to Calgary, was there not a bus or anything, you'd just hitch a ride?

AH: Oh yes, there was a bus run out of Black Diamond, there was a bus came in there. Then you went by car but the road from Longview down to Black Diamond, sometimes when it was raining was real bad, pretty hard to get over. From there on in it was pretty good going.

JW: Who were your friends at that time, did you have some people you hung around with?

AH: Pretty near everybody mixed together down there then.

JW: You knew everybody?

AH: Yes. So they had dances and parties. You had a good time down there.

JW: How about unions, was there ever. . . ?

AH: No, no unions.

JW: Nothing like that at all.

AH: No, they tried to start unions about 3 or 4 times but they run them out of there.

JW: Do you recall who tried to start that?

AH: Guys came out from Calgary a few times and tried to start unions but they never got no place, no.

JW: And they never have either.

AH: No. Run them out of there right now.

JW: So nobody was . . .

AH: No, they wouldn't even allow them to talk about it around the rigs either. They'd run them off if they got too union, talking about it. But there was organizers come in there and tried to do it.

#035 JW: Did anybody have any sympathy for them?

AH: No.

JW: Nobody did?

AH: Hell, no. You talked union and you were gone.

JW: I understand that Royalite sort of was the main operator down then?

AH: Yes.

JW: And they were a pretty good company and sort of set the standard.

AH: Oh yes.

JW: So the conditions weren't such that you would want to . . .

AH: No, they treated all their people good. They were the head in the valley, Royalite were.

JW: You worked for Bowler, was that Bowler, Sherman and Bowler or just Bowler?

AH: No, just Bowler. He had 2 boys, ??? and Glen. But Bowler, he lived in Hartel.

JW: Were there differences in working for one person or one company and another?

AH: Some of them had better rigs, kept better rigs. Bowler was a little bit haywire on his rigs. Head and Snyder was pretty good to work for. And then in '36 Newell and Chandler came in then. There was Newell and Chandler and Bowler and Head and Snyder, Drilling Contractors, which was Anglo Canadian at that time.

JW: A lot of these people were Americans and I understand . . .

AH: In '28, '29, it was pretty well all Oklahomans up here drilling. For Calmont and all in there, they was a big go then, Calmont had quite a lot of stuff going. But they lost a lot of wells, you know, they went crooked and they got stuck in them and that was the end of it.

JW: Yes, that's what I understand, is that the Americans and American drillers weren't too successful in Turner Valley.

AH: No, they were used to drilling down there where they could just let her go but you couldn't do that up here because it just went crooked. As soon as you've got enough kinks in there, you couldn't pull the pipe so you were stuck, you'd had her. Calmont they planted a lot of iron up there.

JW: Still in there probably.

AH: Oh yes.

JW: Was there a Canadian reaction to these Americans, was there any conflict at all?

AH: Oh yes, they weren't well liked at all.

JW: They weren't? How come?

AH: All they do is brag you know.

JW: But were they ever soon humbled, I mean, when they kept getting stuck and had to abandon . . .

AH: Oh yes, they finally. . .run them all out of here and then they started using Canadians. Made rotary men out of a lot of old cable tool drillers and started that way. Then they got some place.

JW: So they were bringing in rotary rigs then at that time, weren't they or were they already there?

AH: Oh yes. They all come up then and they come all shipped in to Okotoks. They hauled them out from there with those old 60 cats, the ??? wagons. That old docket was there in Okotoks, just on the west side as you went in on the road there. Yes, they just went in there with the ??? wagons and cats and loaded the draw works on it and take off. One cat couldn't pull it they'd add another one.

#078 JW: I'm going to jump ahead just a little bit then I want to get back into Turner Valley but I just was wondering, was there a difficulty in making the transition for a lot of guys from cable tool rigs to rotary rigs?

AH: No, they just went about it slow and they all made pretty good drillers. Lloyd Stafford, Lloyd McCallum, a whole lot of them. But they didn't start having much luck until they trained their own men. Imperial went for that too, they trained their own men, and Royalite. Pretty soon it was all Canadians, there were no Americans up here at all. When I first went to work for Frank McMahan, when I come from the Flathead, Frank McMahan, he had about a couple or three sections there I think, West Turner they called it. He brought a Dohinistone #3 rig up here and then he brought all Californians up to run it. Well, they didn't last long. We didn't get much over about 4,000' when old McMahan sent them all back to California and then Imperial finished that hole, or Royalite. Then Head and Snyder drilled all the rest of them. They took his rig over and then they drilled all the rest of them.

JW: What was the problem with these California drillers?

AH: Same as the Oklahomans. Just pour it on and tear everything all to hell.

JW: Were there many rig accidents at that time?

AH: Not too many. It was either quick or dead, one of the two.

JW: Well, dead is an accident. You mentioned different outfits would maintain their rigs differently, some were in better repair and so forth. Were there outfits that you wouldn't want to work for at that time?

AH: There were some that were pretty haywire, yes.

JW: Are we far enough in the future that we could find out who those were now, or maybe not?

AH: Well, old Pat Adams, he run a bunch of junk.

JW: You worked for him?

AH: Yes, but he was a nice guy to work for but he never had no good rigs. When Ralph Will

came up here he ran good rigs and he kind of set an example and everybody started running better iron. You know, look after it.

JW: Well, it pays doesn't it? That was largely the driller too, on those rigs, if you had a good driller you had a safe rig I guess.

AH: Oh yes. Then it started, this compensation and all that, when it started up and everything, then everything kind of changed over pretty fast you know.

JW: How do you mean?

AH: Well, when you started getting compensation and the Compensation Board started up, then accidents started costing money. So everybody started looking around to see what the hell they could do about it.

#120 JW: Now you have the Petroleum Training Institute and those kinds of things, when did safety become a real overt kind of factor?

AH: Late in the 50's. It got so it was, everybody had to sit up and take notice pretty well. Not it's getting worse all the time you know. As far as that goes, they've really got safety programs on everything.

JW: But to people such as yourself. . .well of course, the cable tool rigs, everything was a little bit slower and you had time to think and there wasn't that. . .

AH: Oh yes. But those steam rigs were plenty fast, when they start in. There was no faster rig than those steam rigs. They were nice to work on. And pretty cheap to run too. You take a steam rig, you had a big, hell, they were about 15 gallons of oil, you had that on your steam line you see. Kind of a dropper on it, and the oil went in with the steam you see. You had to fill that up about every 24 hours. You bought that oil for maybe 50 cents a gallon. And then outside of your chain oil that you had to put on your chains, that was it. Then the gas was cheap then. The old Jew there, he had a line running the full length of Turner Valley and a water line running right alongside of it. Whenever you got a location you just dug a ditch from the main line over to where your well site, that was all buried. Then when you got there you just had to turn the water and gas on and you was in business.

JW: Who was that, that had that line, those gas and water lines?

AH: Hector, Sammy Hector. He had a machine shop there in Royalties too. He actually, he started up that Russell Steel. It wasn't Russell Steel then, it is now. Right down there but the bridge there in Calgary, what the hell, it used to be Hector's and then it sold out and they call it Russell Steel.

JW: You were in the valley sort of at the tail end of the Depression, or was it still pretty much in full swing for the most part?

AH: I was there from '35 till '45. Then everything went pretty dead in Turner Valley then, ??? rig running. Then I went down to Taber. Commonwealth bought a new National 50 and I went down pushing tools on that new rig they got.

#164 JW: Getting back into the time you were in Turner Valley, maybe you could just recollect some of the people, like Ralph Will, you mentioned Lloyd Stafford and some of these people?

AH: You see, Ralph Will, he was running Drilling Contractors, Anglo Canadian at that time. Then Woodrow Wilson, he was running Head and Snyder and then Bowler, he run his own outfit. Ross and Shorty Chandler run Newell and Chandler. That's about the only ones that were in there were Newell and Chandler, Drilling Contractors and Head and Snyder. Then Commonwealth, they just had the one rig. Ducky Welsh was looking after that. Then there were a few one rig operators there, ??? Adams, he run his own outfit.

JW: Who was hiring these drilling companies at that time, were they oil companies or again, like promoters or both?

AH: Yes. Different people that had land in there. Like Ralph Will, he drilled a few holes for Commonwealth, before they got their own rig. He drilled about 4 holes for Commonwealth in there. Head and Snyder drilled the discovery well there, for Commonwealth.

JW: Were you working for them at that time, you weren't on there?

AH: No, I was working for Head and Snyder at that time. That was Commonwealth #1, Head and Snyder drilled that. After that come in, then he had about 3 more holes drilled by Ralph Will, Drilling Contractors, then he bought his own rig.

JW: In any of the jobs, you were progressing, advancing in terms of your responsibilities weren't you, through that time?

AH: Oh yes. I only roughnecked for Commonwealth for about 6 months and then I went drilling. Then '45 they bought this other rig, this new National '50 and then I went to Taber and I was pushing on that one.

#200 JW: Did you ever have any, in those years in Turner Valley, any problems, or did you ever get production, any good successes?

AH: In Turner Valley, we drilled all producers there. Then we went up and drilled Ace 1, that was just west of Millarville there, north of Turner Valley. That was a good well but they only had enough acreage there for one well so that's all we drilled. Then they went from there up to what they called Crawling Valley, that was west of Priddis. They drilled one up there and it was dry, we went over 10,000' and it was dry. Then we come back and drilled just there on Fisher's Ranch there, they call that Colin Valley and we drilled over 10,000' and that was dry. So then we didn't drill anymore, that was the last work we done for Commonwealth with that rig. Then they started drilling for Ocalta there in war time. We drilled about 4 holes for Ocalta. Then they shut that rig down and bought this National 50 and I went to Taber and I was down and drilled 4 or 5 holes there, it used to California Standard then, now it's Chevron. We drilled about 5 holes for them, then we went to Princess and drilled about another 5 or 6 and then brought it back to Turner Valley and serviced a bunch of wells there for them, with that rig and went up to Home and serviced a bunch of them, then went back wildcatting again down in Taber and Princess and Grassy Lake and all down there.

JW: During the war were you deferred because of your drilling business?

AH: Yes. I had to stay in Turner Valley too. I wasn't conscripted so I had to stay there.

JW: You had to.

AH: Yes.

JW: So you either stay in Turner Valley or you were drafted.

AH: I was in the Calgary Tanks. I got rheumatic fever and they sent me back to Turner Valley and I had to stay there till after the war.

JW: Did you have to check in periodically?

AH: No.

JW: They didn't monitor, you just did it?

AH: No.

JW: Were you ever involved with Wartime Oils?

AH: Yes, that was what we were drilling for Ocalta, Wartime Oils. They had some acreage so we were drilling on these wartime wells.

#243 JW: What do you think of that program, or what did you think of it then?

AH: You made good money drilling on it, drilling these holes for them, they paid you good money. We all drilled by the foot.

JW: But you never got much from that?

AH: No. We drilled 4 wells for Ocalta, 4 dry ones. Then we packed her up and put her in mothballs till Leduc came in. Then they took that steam rig up to Leduc.

JW: Was there a labour shortage during the war at all, in the valley?

AH: There was plenty of men to go around. You had a lot of old guys working though, but it wasn't no hardship. Then I was up in Lloydminster drilling those shallow holes there, for about 3 years.

JW: When was that then?

AH: That was in '46 and part of '47, then they brought all those little rigs up to Redwater in the winter of '47.

JW: That was prior to Leduc, or after Leduc?

AH: Leduc and Redwater came in about the same time.

JW: That's right. So they moved them in after.

AH: Yes. We had 5 rigs in Redwater and we had 1 in Leduc.

JW: You mentioned that period, '45, well until actually, probably, Leduc came in, that was pretty slim pickings then?

AH: Yes. But as soon as they started around Taber and drilling in there, Newell and Chandler were down there, there were lots of contractors, Cantex, that's another drilling outfit, Cantex. There were lots of rigs working around Taber and Princess and Grassy Lakes and Bow Island.

JW: Gas down there.

AH: Yes. And got quite a lot of black oil. Burned up a few rigs. We were fortunate, we never burned up any but there were a few rigs burned up. That was before blow out preventors at that time you know. They had those old Hosmer heads and all. If you got the button in it was okay but if you didn't, she was gone.

JW: Were there a lot of. . . well, Princess, there was a big one down there.

AH: Yes, burned up a few rigs. But then they got these high drills and shapers??? and the double gates. For awhile there in the winter time, they just put them on but they never kept them thawed out and they wasn't any good anyway, if they was froze. Then the

Conservation Board got in there and made them put heaters on all their BOP's??? and things like that.

#294 JW: How was the new technology introduced to you? You were out in the rig, did it just come with the rig one day or did they have a guy come out and say, here's how you work this thing, one of the representatives from the company? How was this new technology introduced, actually, out on the. . .

AH: It come in so gradually you know, that it wasn't no problem. Like, your BOP's, when they would come in with those double gates and high drills and shapers, they were pretty simple. At that time they run them on diesel fuel but that didn't last long, it bugged up the rubber so you had to go to hydraulic oil you know. As long as you kept them free of water there was no problem, they always worked good. For awhile, the first ones, they never had no accumulators on or all this stuff, you had to pump them out by hand. You see, you had a hand pump there, you had to close them with hand pumps. Then you had a nitrogen bottle on there so if you got in a hurry you'd use the nitrogen. But hell, in the cold weather, if you turned the nitrogen on too fast you just blew a hole in the rubber. You know, it didn't give it a chance to expand. If you just clicked her wide open, just bang, then you blew a hole in the son-of-a-bitch.

JW: What was the impact when the Conservation Board. . .well, I guess they first came into the valley, when, about '38 or so?

AH: Yes. Everybody used to smoke, you used to have even wood fires in the doghouse. Hell, they used to have, you take an old gas drum and had a hose on the gas line you know, and run it up the doghouse and they had a flare right behind you when you was on the brake. Sure. Used to run a gas line up the leg of the derrick and have a heater up on the derrick.

JW: Just a flare?

AH: No. A little stove. Oh yes.

JW: Then they came in and decided that wasn't a good idea.

AH: Oh no, you couldn't do that no more. So then they all went to steam coils.

JW: What other changes did they bring in, the Board?

AH: Smoking and all that stuff. No more riding up and down on the blocks. They made you walk.

End of tape.