

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: John Hrynychuk

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: October 21, 1992

Side 1 – 47:00

AK: This is Aubrey Kerr. I'm in the home of John and Rose Hrynychuk. And the address is 5116 53rd Street and I have with me Jean McLaws, and both Jean and I are very pleased to have you in your home, and we wanted to get some recollections of the early days that you had out in the oil field, and also some other comments and we'd like to maybe wind up with Rose making some comments about her career and, let's start off with you John. You were you were born in what year?

JH: I was born March 28, 1930 right in the middle of the hungry 30s.

AK: Right in the middle of the hungry 30s and was that out on the home place?

JH: That was right on, yeah Section 35, yeah.

AK: Township 5070, 22, right?

JH: Right.

AK: Right. And you were the youngest of a family of six, there was five boys and one girl.

JH: Right on.

AK: And your mother and father were then still alive.

JH: Yup. I was five years old when Dad got killed.

AK: Yes. That's right, in 1935. I got that from your brother Walter. And your parents, both had been born in the old county?

JH: Right.

AK: And they come over as children.

JH: No, Dad and Mom came over... Dad came over in 1912 and Mother came over in 1914.

AK: Yeah, but they hadn't been married.

JH: No, they were married.

AK: Well, they weren't married when they come over, they'd known each other over there.

JH: Yes. Mother came over with her dad's brother because Dad's brother had come over here. He had made a trip over here and then he went back and then when Mother was coming two years later after Dad was here, Mother came with Dad's brother.

AK: And what was his name?

JH: Alec, Alec Hrynychuk.

AK: And they had come from this certain part of the Ukraine?

JH: Austria.

AK: Well, it was called Austria then, I mean it was... they must have been in the Ukrainian part of Austria.

JH: It could have been, I couldn't really say.

AK: You don't know, what city or town...

JH: I know that the village was Slywki.

AK: And can you spell that for me?

JH: S-L-Y-W-K-I.

AK: Right. Well, that sounds fairly ???

JH: It was a village in part of Austria wherever it was.

AK: Right. And Rose, what was your maiden name, Rose?

RH: My name was Rose Wispinsky. And my dad came from ???

AK: Right. And had he, had he come over from the old country or was he born here?

RH: He was born here, and Mom too.

AK: And had they homesteaded on some land?

RH: He rented a lot, I think he worked for his dad so they didn't own a homestead.

AK: Well did your.. well that would be your grandparents. Had they homesteaded?

RH: Yes, Dad's dad and mom homesteaded in Andrew?? I forget how many miles that ???

AK: Right. And what year, do you know, you have any idea when they homesteaded?

JH: It was in the 1890s.

AK: They must've been some of the very earliest arrivals. And did they, did they have minerals on their land?

RH: No.

AK: And was it an even numbered section or do you remember?

RH: I can't remember.

AK: Probably that, up there, that was maybe not surveyed out then, but it had to be surveyed for them to get a homestead. But they didn't have any minerals.

RH: No. No, just...

AK: Surface rights. And John, your family suffered a great loss when your father died so tragically in '35 and, so you were just five and you were growing up with your older brothers and sister. And did you did you continue to go to school.

JH: I went to school till 1948 and then I quit school. I was in grade 12 and I started working in the oil patch.

AK: So you'd been able to... with your brothers' support, carry on.

JH: Right. Mother and my brothers.

AK: Right. And I understand from Walter that there was, the estate was still in the hands of the trustee, up until you were 25.

JH: 21.

AK: 21, oh I thought it was 25.

JH: No, 21.

AK: And that would have occurred in 1951?

JH: Right.

AK: When did you and Rose get married?

JH: August 9th of '52.

AK: August 9, '52. Here in Redwater?

JH: In Edmonton.

AK: Oh, in Edmonton, right.

JH: I was living in Edmonton at that...

AK: Oh, you were living there.

JH: Yeah.

AK: Had you a job there?

RH: I worked for my dad, he had a couple of cafes so... like a family, we all worked together.

AK: And what were those like quick order?

RH: Like short orders, it was hamburgers and sandwiches.

AK: I see, yeah. Was that... what part of Edmonton would those be?

RH: Well, ??? Cafe was next to the W Arcade, and...

JH: ??? Just off 97th and Jasper.

RH: And the other one was by...

JH: 99th and Jasper.

RH: Yes.

AK; And were these fairly successful operations.

RH: Oh, yeah.

AK: So you must have had some good cooks there.

RH: Well, I guess we all were, like...

AK: Everybody pitched in.

RH: And Mother and Dad.

AK: Everybody pitched in. Right. So then you and John met each other here in Edmonton.

JH: In Edmonton.

AK: Oh in Edmonton, right.

AK: That was when you were going to school?

JH: No, that was in 1950.

AK: Oh, 1950, I see. And then you got married...

JH: In '52.

AK: In '52 right. And you have how many children?

RH: Three daughters and a son.

AK: Right.

RH: And we have four grandchildren.

RH: And your daughters', what are their occupations?

RH: Debbie's with EGT, she's been there for 19 years. Cindy, also, she's a medical dicta-typist, medical secretary you could say, and Judy's an x-ray technician, and Al's our baker.

AK: Oh, where does he bake?

JH: In Audrey's Bakery in Edmonton.

AK: Oh, he has a bakery?

JH: No, he doesn't want to own it, he just works there.

AK: Oh, right. So that's, what part of town of that in?

JH: Claireview area, northeast.

AK: Oh yeah, right. And he has a family?

JH: No, Al's not married, he's single.

AK: Oh, I see, he's still...

JH: Well he's going to be 25 this fall.

AK: Oh, right, well, ??? Well, that's a very interesting family you have and they look like they're all working hard. Okay. So you were on the, you lived on the farm then, on the whole quarter...

JH: All the time until I got married.

AK: Oh, is that right. You stayed there.

JH: Yeah, I stayed with Mom until I got married.

AK: Yeah. But Walter had moved down to where he is now?

JH: In 1957 Walter moved out of the home place.

AK: Oh, he was at the home place also.

JH: Until 1957.

AK: Oh, I see. Even though he was married he lived there.

JH: Yeah.

AK: I wasn't quite sure about that.

JH: Then he built his home in '57 and then he moved up to this quarter.

AK: Under the one that he's on know.

JH: Right.

AK: 25. Is it?

JH: Yes.

AK: Southeast of 25?

JH: Yeah, no, northeast.

AK: Northeast of 25, right. Okay, so then your other brothers, there was Michael but he moved away from the home...

JH: Right, he had his own quarter. I don't know the year, Walter could probably give you that information. And then he sold out and he moved on to run a hardware store.

AK: Where, in Redwater?

JH: No, in Onoway?

AK: Oh, in Onoway. Oh, I see.

JH: And Bill was a trucker and then, he was the next brother, and then he was in the hotel business at Warburg and Leduc, then he retired and moved to Kelowna to work part-time, now he's back in Edmonton.

AK: Oh, I see. Didn't like those fruit trees?

JH: I guess not. They were further away from their family too, and I think that's the reason he came back. Because their two daughters live in the city, so...

[00:11:26] AK: Yeah, right. Okay, now you were pretty young, you were, in '40, '47, you were 17. And do you remember, as a young person, do you remember any signs of activity around here like the seismic crews in the year before they drilled Redwater?

JH: '47, yeah, I think there was signs of some seismic work being done in '47 and then in '48, there's a couple schoolmates, they left and went to work for a seismic outfit.

AK: But when you were 16 and 17, what was your summer work?

JH: Just on the farm.

AK: Oh, you stayed right there helping your mother.

JH: Right.

AK: Right. So you were fully occupied. You didn't have time...

JH: Didn't have too much extra time goal.

AK: So your two buddies, they signed up with the seismic crew?

JH: I think it was Heiland Exploration if I'm right...

AK: That's H-E-I-L-A-N-D.

JH: Right.

AK: So they went to work... ??? hustlers?

JH: Right. They did the work around this area and then they did a fair amount of work in Saskatchewan that I ???

AK: So what kind of money do you think that they were making at that time?

JH: I don't know. They were making a buck an hour. I guess the opportunity was there and they up and left school and went...

AK: Well that was a lot of those lot of money wasn't it, a dollar a hour.

JH: I started for 99 cents an hour, the old Angle Canadian in 1948.

AK: Yeah, right. Okay, when the well hit what was the general reaction in the community here?

JH: Well there was a lot of excitement in and around own town and all that. That was a lot of strange people coming in, traffic of all kinds and so forth.

AK: Did the strangers start coming right away?

JH: Not that many because there was only the one rig at the time when the discovery well came in. But there were some optimistic people around, especially in town, businesses, places started looking forward to ??? we knew that well now, it really was quite a strike.

AK: So the general switch, it was a very sudden switch.

JH: Yes it was.

AK: It was a sleepy town, and of course there was no houses here at all.

JH: No, there wasn't anything. This was all farmland the time.

AK: Yeah. Incidentally, before I forget it, are your, is this house and the others, are they part of the old Imperial Oil Redwater?

JH: No, ours, we built ours in '67. The houses on each side of us were built in '49.

AK: So yours is an infill.

JH: Yeah.

AK: Well that was the way they designed it, deliberately, right? They designed it, well you, were you ever involved in the construction of these houses.

JH: No, I never, I wasn't in that at all. We bought this lot from Imperial Oil.

AK: Oh, did you.

JH: Paid a total of eight hundred dollars.

AK: For the lot.

JH: That's right.

AK: And that's what, a 50-foot...

JH: 50 x 150.

AK: Right. And with the utilities.

AK: Well that, the utilities were hooked up by the contractor and that...

AK: So you were fully serviced.

JH: Right? What size, I didn't notice, I should have noticed the size of these houses, the inside.

JH: 600 square feet.

AK: Yeah. 22 by 24?

JH: Something like that, I think they'd be about 20 by 32, maybe 640.

AK: Yeah, but there were some there are only about 500...

JH: Well, yes, and no basements in them either.

AK: 22 x 24, how did they ???

JH: I don't know.

RH: You manage.

AK: You manage, well you had to, there was no options.

[00:16:10] So you're settling, I'm jumping ahead a little because I have to go back but you've been here now since 1967.

JH: Right.

AK: Right. And this is it, is it?

JH: You betcha this is it.

RH: Well you never know.

AK: Well, you never know, gee Rose, have you got some ideas of where you're headed?

JH: We're happy with the home. And also, you got a place...

AK: And did you make additions since you moved in?

JH: No, no.

AK: So it's just about the way you...

JH: All we did is finished the basement.

AK: Oh, I see, you had to... a full basement?

JH: Yeah, full basement.

AK: Yeah, right.

JH: So we're content with the size of the house and all, just the two of us, so if our health stays with us we're good.

[00:17:05] AK: Well, let's go back to 1948 and, the other companies that were moving in they were, a few of them were moving in very quickly. And one of them was Anglo Canadian and Home Oil. And there were some others, there was Pacific Petroleum. Now did these, when these companies come in, what did they, were they, did they send out word that they wanted people to come to work for them or how did it, how did that job market work out?

JH: What happened there was, my brother Walter and I we drove up to where Anglo Canadian and Home Oil were starting up...

AK: And that was in the east half of 36.

JH: That's right. Yes. And we drove up there and must have been maybe middle of, first part of December because I started on December 10th with Anglo Canadian. And we just walked up and asked for the foreman. We didn't know whether it was drilling involved or whether it was, we didn't have a clue of what this construction was all about. So what I did, we talked to the foreman and then he says, took our names down and he asked, he says, will you, wonder if we can get a job but we didn't know what the job consists of, so we thought, whether it's drilling or whether it's construction of a tank farm, we were clueless. So anyway, then the neighbor, as it ended up the fellows from Turner Valley stayed in this old farmhouse, which you probably saw, my brother Walter, that old broken-down farmhouse...

AK: You mean the one across from...

JH: From ??? yes.

AK: Which is all caved in and...

JH: That's right. And so...

AK: They used that as a bunkhouse?

JH: That's right, they used that old farmhouse as a bunkhouse. And it was, the fellow's name was Alec Trenchie and he, his wife's dad owned that places formerly. So what he did, he, this foreman told Alec, he said, you better tell them Hrynchuk boys to come to work tomorrow.

AK: All right, now Trenchie, how do you spell that?

JH: T-R-E-N-C-H-I-E.

AK: Trenchie. And they were of Ukrainian extraction too?

JH: Yes.

AK: Right. So the house was just sitting there and so they, the Anglo Canadian fellows moved in there.

JH: Right.

AK: And then the word got back through Trenchie that...

JH: He stepped in because he was going home, past our place, past our old home place and he said, he says, hey that fell out there, I don't know the guy's name, but he said, he says he wants both of you to come to work. But it turned out next morning, it was 40 below, and Walter says, hey it's nice and warm in the house, he says, I'm not going no place. So I went to a friend's place, and I said, hey, Walter doesn't want to come, so do you want to come with me and go to work and try it and see maybe they'll take you instead. And he says to me, he says, hey it's warm in my house too, heck if I'm going. So anyways, it turned out, I don't know how I got to work, whether her brother drove me there or what. But anyway, it was 40 below when I went, started my first day of work out there picking dirt with a pick in 40 below weather.

AK: Now what was...

JH: That was the start of the tank farm.

AK: Yeah. What was the name of the fellow that hired you, actually hired you?

JH: The foreman was George Thurber.

AK: And he was from Turner Valley.

JH: Right.

AK: And he was what a kind of a production hand or?

JH: No, he was just out here to build a tank farm.

AK: Yeah, but I mean he had, he must have had experience.

JH: Oh, yes. He did have experience.

AK: He knew what he want, did he?

JH: Right. He built it in the fashion of the way the tank farms were built in Turner Valley, similar to...

AK: Yeah. Well, that's the only thing they knew.

JH: That's right.

AK: All right. And what did he say to you, I'll hire you for what? How much an hour?

JH: I was at 99 cents an hour, and he says you want to work or you want a job? I says I'll work.

AK: Yeah.

JH: And so I worked for one month on the construction of the tank farm, all the pipe hookups, boiler hookups and so forth. There was a contractor that built the boiler house. And a tank company set up the tanks and so forth. And then in January, I'd say about the 8th or 9th of January, our first well came in and that's when I started shift work as a battery operator.

[00:22:16] AK: All right, let's go back to the tanks. What was the name of the tank outfit that come in and built your tanks?

JH: Black, Sivalls & Bryson built them.

AK: Right. Would it have been a fella named Al Smith?

JH: I couldn't recall who the people were involved with Black, Sivalls & Bryson.

AK: I think he was he was one of the... of course there were others like Sparling and Davis.

JH: No, no, it wasn't them, it was BS&B.

AK: Well, you'd remember that. And what size were the tanks?

JH: We had two 500 barrels and four 1000-barrel tanks at the tank farm...

AK: And they were all set up so that you could...

JH: Right.

AK: Run them and then split them and you had the valving, who put the valving all in:

JH: We did. The bull gang.

AK: Yeah, and of course you'd brought all those valves in and...

JH: Right. I'll never forget when the foreman sent me for a two-inch railroad union, and I looked at him and I thought what kind of a union is he talking about? So I went looking all over the walls in the boiler house and he finally came by and he said you know what you're looking for. I said, I don't have a clue. So then he starts showing me fittings. He says, okay, that's a 2-inch by 2-inch fitting, that's a 3 by 4 and so forth, and what type of valves and he says and that thing is a railroad union.

AK: And did he tell you what a nipple was?

JH: Yes he did.

AK: Well there you are, eh. You became a nipple chaser probably.

JH: It was fun.

AK: So the tanks were designed so that they would handle all 8 wells.

JH: Right, that's what the original setup was.

AK: So it was well planned. Well now, did Herb Bagnall come out very much?

JH: Oh yes, Herb was out and, especially when they hit the first well, there was quite a few dignitaries along the... ??? was out, and whomever else was VP, I think Harry Massey was our secretary-treasurer.

AK: Oh, yeah, Massey right.

JH: He's gone now. And so there must have been four or five. I know they had a celebration but I was only 18 years old, I wasn't involved in it.

AK: So they, where did they have the party, right...

JH: I don't know whether it was in Redwater someplace or whatever.

AK: Maybe they had had it in the Mac, or in Edmonton.

JH: It could have been I really couldn't say. But they were quite content.

AK: Yeah. Well, that was the first one and it commanded... And so you were saying last night that you don't recall a Gordon Webster.

JH: I, somehow or other I think the name rings a bell but really I couldn't say for sure.

AK: He had his car rigged up, so, that was before they had... as soon as they got automatic transmissions, he had one of those but he, he still drives, you know, and he uses automatic transmission, but he would get around on his own in his own car.

JH: I know there was a big car that came in, like Herb Bagnell, he drove a '47 Ford two-door, a beige two-door.

AK: Well, cars were very scarce then, even then, I mean there were... he'd have to have his own car. So did you get involved at all in the, running the casing or...

JH: No, no.

AK: You just saw what was going on?

JH: Right.

[00:25:59] AK: Do you remember outfits like Halliburton or Dow coming in?

JH: Oh, yes. Halliburton, in fact, they, during, there was a bitter winter that '48, '49 and Halliburton had their cement trucks in our boilerhouse. And we used to do the paperwork inside the boiler house and we parked those diesel trucks inside and those, you know, the motor cooling off and the fumes from the diesel, you went home and one around awful headache after eight hours in there.

AK: Yeah, I'll say you would. So your job was putting the tank farm together, is that right?

JH: That's right, yeah. And then I got to be a battery operator after that.

AK: Well now when you got the tank farm finished, did you build a dike around it?

JH: No, not that, not that year because all the oil that... from the time of the discovery with Anglo everything was trucked out of there. So the first winter we didn't build it, like till sometime in the summer of '49.

AK: Yeah but you're aware that you should have had a dike.

JH: Oh yes, we had spills.

AK: Yeah, but you weren't recording...

JH: No. And at the time we were able to, well as many trucks as you can get to hook up and we had 2, 4, 6 lines coming off the tanks, like 3 lines coming off but 2 hookups on each line for trucks to pick up.

AK: You mean you could, you could service six trucks at a time?

JH: That's right. As long as the tank was ??? by Imperial Pipeline, then hey, it was up to the truckers to haul it out. And then...

AK: But they'd have to come around and gauge it.

JH: Yes, Imperial Pipelines was...

AK: And then leave a ticket for you.

JH: Yes.

AK: And that's when you got involved in the shift operator work?

JH: Right. Yeah, I worked shifts for nine months. And then I got to be a foreman, and we set up the other tank farm after that.

AK: Well, were the, the tanks that you originally put up weren't enough?

JH: Well, no when we, Anglo and Home had bought another mineral rights on another section, that's section 10.

AK: Oh, up in 58 ??? Right, yeah. So you went up there and set up...

JH: Yeah.

AK: It would be a smaller...

JH: That was a, 400, 500-barrel tanks, but what happened there was, because the Number One and Number Two wells, lines had waxed off, and we had set up tank farms, I think I mentioned that in my resume?? that I've given you and we moved those four tanks afterwards and set up the one in section 10.

AK: Now were any of these tanks that BS&B had constructed, they were bolted tanks?

JH: All bolted.

AK: Right, and they were they were new tanks?

JH: Brand new, spanking.

AK: Yeah. Well that was a job getting tanks in those days.

JH: Yeah, I guess there were a lot required all of a sudden.

AK: Yeah. Well then you are saying that the full?? lines were from the Valley, about the...

JH: Right there was, for the four wells in the north quarter those lines were installed with old pipe from the Valley.

AK: And you were saying, tubing, water tubing...

JH: That was for the four south wells, whether it was Home Oil that supplied the boiler tube or what it was, I'm not sure, but the four wells to the south were 3 1/2 boiler tube.

AK: Yeah, you were operating them over their rated...

JH: Oh, yes, we did.

AK: And did you have, did you have those meters, flow charts?

JH: Yes, we did, we had them on their separators. We had...

AK: They would measure the gas?

JH: Right, then we would figure out the gas/oil ratio.

AK: And they had a... what did they run, 24 hours?

JH: Yeah, there were 24-hour charts, have to be changed every morning.

AK: And you'd look after that?

JH: Yes, we looked after that as well, and we had 4 separators at that tank farm of peat tanks, and I think it was 2 meters on each or a meter on each separator.

AK: Well, how much, do you actually, know what your max production out there, do you remember?

JH: On the closest well there, she kicked out at 110, 115 per hour. The other ones, Number one and Two would kick out, oh, any place around 100, 105.

AK: And there were still flowing.

JH: Oh, yeah, they flowed till, oh, I think it was late in '49 before we put them up again.

AK: Well you got about almost a year's flowing production then. And so what, what were you getting total from the whole 8 wells then, what were you producing on a daily basis, approximately?

JH: I'd have to figure that out. It all depended on what the amount was shipped. Like we were, we had trucks lined up there, we'd have 25,30 trucks and say 6 were loading and by the time, so they were going steady, the only thing was from the time of our wells came in in January, Number Two came in first then Number One, then Number Three. From those three wells, and there was no allowables then so you could take all, as long as you get tankers to haul it away and tank trucks to take it off your tank farm, you could produce all you wanted, and the cutback wasn't made till about... finally the Conservation Board came in here, I think it was in March, or first part of April and that's when we went to allowables, probably, I can't really say, maybe 300 barrels per well a day or something like that.

AK: So you were, say at a modest amount, you'd be producing maybe four or five thousand barrels a day from the lease.

JH: Right.

AK: So, let's see four thousand barrels a day at two dollars a barrel...

JH: \$2 or \$2.10, it was I think.

AK: Well let's say for easy figuring, 4000 times 250, that would be \$10,000 a day. So, you see they paid a bonus of about four or five hundred thousand dollars to the government for those leases and then the cost of drilling them. So they'd probably get their money back in maybe about seven or eight months.

JH: From what I understood, now this could be, may not be true. But it seems to me that I heard from one of them. now I don't know which one it was, that they figured by the time the government had cut back or the Conservation Board had come in and said, hey, we're drawing it at full tilt. I think you were going to say the allowable was so much per day, per well. But from what I heard, I think some official from Anglo had said that the wells were all paid for, the drilling the land and everything, something like the first three or four months.

AK: Well, that's quite possible.

JH: That's... I'm pretty sure that I heard that.

AK: Yeah, well now in the first, in these first four or five months, were these wells, had they started to show any water at all?

JH: The Number 5, well after we drew it at over thirty-five barrels an hour, they had to choke it down. If they do it any harder than 35, you start making water.

AK: Yeah, because it was down on the edge...

JH: It was getting towards the edge. The Number 8 hole which was in the southwest corner of section 36, that one, they drilled it and it never did flow. So that was...

AK: So you put it on a pump right away...

JH: Well, they swabbed it for a while to try and get some oil with a swab, and just leave the rig on there and swab it and they did get some oil out of it. But it wasn't, we have to bring it back, haul it from there. We had a tank there at that Number 8 well, and so we used to truck it to the main battery and then heat it with steam, and water would drop out.

AK Oh, I see kind of a primitive knockout...

JH: Yeah, well that was the only way we ??? steam ??? in the tanks...

AK: But you didn't have a treater.

JH: No, no.

AK: So when was it time for you fellas to install a treater then, about a year later or so?

JH: About a year, I'd say about a year, year and a half later is when we first put in one treater for that particular well.

AK: Well I meant for the whole battery.

JH: For the whole battery, no, this this was only to accommodate the one well.

AK: Oh, I see.

JH: Yeah, because the other wells were okay and...

AK: They weren't cutting water.

JH: There was, Number 5 started to cut some water if we floated over 35, but once we had put it, a pumping unit on we didn't have any problems with that well whatsoever for years. I couldn't, I think I was away from Shell Oil when it started on one after as far as I know.

AK: You mean before you, before they put a big treater in?

KH: We put a big treater in, that would have to be in about '54 I think it was. We put an 8-foot Maloney Crawford and we had a 4-foot Maloney Crawford for testing wells ??? if we had or else we ??? but the clean wells we'd float them right straight into the tanks or pumped them straight into the tanks.

AK: [00:36:46] All right. Now did you have any, or this probably wouldn't be of concern to you, but did you have any idea where the trucks, hauled this oil in the very beginning?

JH: At the very beginning, they hauled it, first of all, oh no, just a minute, they trucked it to Korinsky.

AK: Yeah. Well that was where the initial loading siding was.

JH: Right. They trucked it to Korinsky. And then afterwards in, it was summer of '49 or spring of '49 Imperial Pipelines had put their line across, so, and then the fall of '49 is when we had the other tank farm going already, and BA Pipeline came in here, and BA Pipeline was paying ten cents a barrel more, so they switched and start selling to BA Pipeline.

AK: And where did BA Pipeline haul theirs to?

JH: It was transported by truck, I really couldn't say.

AK: Well, did they have their own tank somewheres else, when they started or what?

JH: BA came in and I don't know whether they trucked it to Korinsky as well with their own tankers or was it right here in Redwater. Because I know BA used GTX tank cars and Imperial Pipeline used Proco cars which were...

AK: Well, they had their own cars....

JH: Yes.

AK: But at that point, there was no thought of a pipeline.

JH: No, BA constructed the pipeline in the fall of '49.

AK: But that was within the field. You see, I'd just come away from Victor's Place there and his dad and he sold that 50-acre fraction to Imperial Pipeline to put a big loading rack in there.

JH: Right, that's right.

AK: Now the oil would be what, piped in there or hauled in there?

JH: It was piped to that terminal, and from there Interprovincial pumped to Edmonton.

AK: Right. But yeah, that was when the oil production was getting so big you never had enough trucks.

JH: That's right. That's when...

AK: They had to lay some pipelines down.

JH: Imperial laid the first lines, and then BA came in the fall of '49, but in the spring of 49, I remember Ken Lloyd from BA Pipeline, he was in charge here and they started trucking for a while and then they laid their own lines as well.

AK: But this, this price advantage didn't last forever.

JH: I really couldn't say.

AK: No. But there was a very great need by British American to buy as much crude as they could, even if they didn't have their own wells. Of course, they did have some wells right kitty corner to section 30 across the road. And that was where the town was. BA and Hudson's Bay. Do you remember any of those wells at all or is that...

JH: I'm not that familiar with the BA wells, no. We had one just west of us that was right on the borderline.

AK: Yeah, and it was it wasn't much of a...

JH: No, that never was much of a well from what I gather.

AK: I think there was another one drilled too, but that didn't, wasn't even...

JH: That was just south of Pacific tank farm there, about section 36.

[00:40:46] AK: Well now continuing with the story of your life, and you said that sometime later in '49 you were elevated to Foreman?

JH: Yes, and that's when I, they took me off battery operator and then we constructed the tank farm on Section 10 there.

AK: Right, we've looked at that there, and the northeast of 10.

JH: Right. Northeast of 10, 58-22, and it was offset by Texaco and Pacific...

JH: And BA to the north.

AK: Well, there was one... and Bailey. Bailey Salford.

JH: Somehow I don't recall.

AK: Well that was immediately north. BA was just a little offset to the northwest. And then on your east was your Imperial Oil wells. And did, where did you work out of then, were you working out of...

JH: I was working, still single at the time. I was living on the farm with Mother and Walter and his wife, and we worked between Battery One which we called this on 36, and the other tank farm Battery Two in section 10, and so pretty well doing maintenance work and so forth and supervising the, what we called the bull gang and there afterwards I started working in the office with my supervisor, which was Bob Lord because he had taken over from the former superintendent, which was Ollie Edmondson, and Ollie Edmondson had left and started up the Beta Well Servicing Company.

AK: Now, what about Ollie Nevra??, did he, did you ever hear of ...

JH: No, I've never recalled the name, he had that...

AK: Well he was with Home Oil.

JH: No, I didn't have any run-ins with him.

AK: No. Well, I think, what I'd heard from was that Anglo pretty well handled Redwater, whereas Home, I think we talked about that, that Home handled Woodbend and Leduc, but in both places, there was Northwell Operators.

JH: Right, that's right, Northwell Operators was the operating company.

AK: And Northwell was a combination of Anglo and Home Oil.

JH: That's right.

AK: But I think Northwell changed a bit in character in about '51 or '52 because in that year Bobby Brown took control of Home Oil.

JH: That's right.

AK: And I think Northwell started to change and I don't know whether, I don't think Jimmy Stafford lasted, he left, he got thrown out. And then there was another fella named Jack Hamilton, does that name ring a bell?

JH: No, it doesn't ring a bell for me.

AK: Jack Hamilton was, became the, kind of the chief push on Northwell Operators, and it was still joint, you know, Home and Anglo, but the whole thing changed. Now, at that time was Jimmy Brinker working for Northwell?

JH: I believe Jimmy was a Northwell, on the Northwell payroll.

AK: I think he was, yeah. I think I might have hired him over. He worked for Imperial when I was there.

JH: Jimmy started this, because we had a Jack Irvin, and Larry King...

AK: Was Larry fairly reliable in those days?

JH: He wasn't, he was quite consistent.

AK: Yeah, because he developed a very serious drinking...

JH: Yes, he did run into that problem for sure. I don't know anything...

AK: That was in Drayton Valley, or...

JH: I really couldn't say, I think it was while he was stationed in Calgary at that time.

AK: Yeah. But you were telling the story about Jimmy Brinker, tell us that story.

JH: Well, Jimmy, as far as I gathered, I think it was Bob Lord that told me, my supervisor, or superintendent at... or was it Don Storey that was in charge at Devon, that was, it would have been. It possibly was Don Storey then who said that Jimmy barely made it to his wedding, to be on time for his wedding in Edmonton, so...

AK: Is that right?

JH: Yeah. I think Jimmy's wife is Elsie.

AK: That's right. That's Elsie and they live in Calgary.

JH: Right. I talked to my former supervisor ??? last summer and I asked about all the old personnel and all that.

AK: You asked who?

JH: My former supervisor, Bob Lord.

AK: Oh. Did he stay with Shell?

JH: Yes, he stayed with Shell, he just retired here about a year or two years ago.

AK: So he was one of the survivors along with Herb.

JH: Right. From Northwell.

AK: There weren't very many.

JH: No, there sure weren't.

AK: So this sort of work, then you were off shift work.

JH: Yes, I was off shift completely.

AK: And then you were working in the office.

JH: I worked for Bob Lord in the office and then along with supervising the work crews and so forth. And then Bob went to Camrose...

AK: We'll turn the tape over.

JH: It was Anglo and Home involved also at ??? and Bob went up there in spring of '51, so then I was in charge of the setup here in Redwater.

AK: And did that include the shift operators.

JH: We didn't, we went off shift work, I'd say in about 1950.

Side 2 – 46:00

AK: This is Side 2 of a tape interviewing John Hrynychuk, and you were saying on the other side that you had been promoted to, what would you call your new title when Lord went to Camrose.

JH: I [tape cuts] we had your and I was in charge of the operators and whatever work had to be performed whether it was contractors or our own people.

AK: Now was that Northwell, where you get your paycheck?

JH: That was Northwell at the time.

AK: Well, then who was your boss? Who did you report to?

JH: I reported to Bob Lord at Camrose, and also Don Storey at Woodbend.

AK: I see. So you were kind of a satellite.

JH: Right.

AK: And then they in turn I suppose reported to somebody in Calgary.

JH: That's right.

AK: And at that time, were you a salaried person?

JH: No, I was by the hour, paid by...

AK: Oh, by the hour.

JH: Yeah. I was getting a buck and a half an hour in 1951 when Bob Lord left to Camrose, and I think...

AK: That's not much from 99 cents.

JH: Well, we got it, could get up, I think the next raise from a 99 was a dollar three and a half, and then it was a dollar eight...

AK: Oh. Real big... oh yeah.

JH: And then I think it was a dollar sixteen, a dollar twenty-three, and I think the next boost was, oh, 10 cents, it was a dollar thirty three, and then I think it was a dollar forty-one and then it was a buck and a half, but from the buck and a half, I think it was about '52, I went on a salary, monthly salary, and I could really couldn't say what month in '52...

AK: Yeah right. So they, the rates for hourly wage earners wasn't all that...

JH: No, it wasn't but in '51, at a buck and a half an hour ??? 50, and I was living at home.

AK: Well, that's right, a lot of take home.

JH: So I saved a little bit of money.

AK: Yeah, sure you would. And you didn't have that much in taxes, or...

JH: No, I didn't have any taxes, just...

AK: What about the pension plan, had they started...

JH: No, there was no, nothing in the wind for pension plan at the time at all.

AK: You just took your money...

JH: That's right. And run.

AK: So there was no indication of employee benefits then.

JH: No there wasn't, there was no Medicare at the time or anything like that.

AK: Right. But you'd have, well you'd have Workman's Compensation.

JH: Yeah. That was the only thing we had.

AK: Right.

JH: In case you had an injury. I never did collect unemployment insurance or Workman's Compensation.

AK: I hate to hell to think how much you put into those. Okay, so 1952. Did you notice any change then when Bobby Braun took over the...

JH: No it didn't affect us at all.

AK: It probably didn't filter down to you...

JH: No, it didn't, not to the people in the field. anyway.

AK: Alright, but did, was there any move at all, and that move should have taken place earlier, to look after these parcels down here, that were bought by Home, actually, there were bought by a trust company and they became, there's a Home parcel there, and I think a couple of others.

JH: There was some talk about it at the time just before Federated Petroleums came in there.

AK: Yeah, well Federated was kind of running that, and that was a, that was a kind of an affiliate of Home then, you see.

JH: That's right, yeah. But something, there was some rumblings, whether it was out of our Calgary office, that possibly they were thinking of asking us people from here to run that portion of the tank farms out there and everywhere else, but that never went through.

AK: That's the Home Oil parcel are. But you see it really wasn't Home anymore, it was it was Federated with money from New York they borrowed. They borrowed an enormous amount of money to buy this, and then they had to pay it off every month, every month, they had to send a big... and there's another quarter there.

JH: Yeah, there was... they had 12 wells as well.

AK: Yeah, and they had drilled this, apparently they had drilled those wells, they had the, they had the contractor all lined up before they bought the land and they got the farmer all lined up for easement, you know right of entry, and I think it was the next morning, they had a well spotted, you know, they were really, they knew time was of the essence because you get those wells down, and get that straw in a bottle. Well, that's interesting. I would have thought that there might have been something like...

JH: Yeah, there was rumblings about Shell because I knew the people, the person that was running this tank farm anyway, and I had mentioned to him and he was working for Home at the time and I said, I heard rumblings that they're thinking of having us look after those wells as well. Which didn't go over very good.

AK: Well, they did their own thing. So you carried on with Northwell as the area superintendent till when?

JH: Till such time that Shell Oil bought us.

AK: And that was '62. So it was another 10 years that you carried on with the same job.

JH: That's right.

AK: And by that time you said you were salaried? '

JH: Yes. I was salaried all the way through, until such time that, well even with Shell I was on salary as well.

AK: Right.

JH: So then Shell bought us in '62, they didn't do any employee maneuvering till '63, and that's when I get transferred to Edmonton with Shell.

AK: Right, now in '62 when you had the switch over, by that time Anglo and Home or Northwell had instituted some kind of a profit, or at least an employee plan...

JH: Yes, they did. We had a...

AK: When does that start, what year?

JH: Northwell's plan probably never started till about '53, someplace in there, and then we were Northwell until such time as Whiterose bought Anglo, and that's when the Northwell plan ceased and the money was left in there. And Whiterose didn't have a plan for us, the only thing is that we were able to buy their stock at cost, and...

AK: Well that was publicly traded on the market.

JH: Right. So then Shell Oil, they didn't have much to offer us really, all we could do is start into their savings plan and that was about all.

AK: So you, the money that you had accumulated, we were trying to get that straightened out last night, I'd like to get it on the tape because I think it's important, why they wouldn't, the money that you had accumulated both in your plan with Northwell, did you withdraw that money?

JH: I withdrew it when I left Shell Oil.

AK: No, but I mean when you, when you were, when Shell took over, did that money continue into the Shell pension?

JH: No, no, it didn't, we couldn't start into the Shell plan at all, until such time that we had one-year service. That's right.

AK; Yeah, I remember you saying that. Well, what happened, what I'd like to know is what happened to the money that you'd accumulated with Northwell. Did they pay you out?

JH: I think we were paid out, it was a cash settlement.

AK: Yeah. And of course by that time, that was long before...

JH: Canada Pension.

AK: No, I was thinking of, yeah before that but it was also long before the, what do they call it, registered retirement, RRSP.

JH: Oh, yeah, it was a long time before that.

AK: There was none of that stuff .

JH: No, there was nothing like that, no.

AK: So, okay well then a year later when you were with Shell, then you were permitted to contribute...

JH: To their savings plan.

AK: And I think you said 3% and 3%?

JH: That's right, 3% each.

AK: And was there any stock involved with Shell?

JH: Not with Shell, no.

AK: It was cash.

JH: Yeah, it was cash.

AK: Okay. And they had their pension plan working.

JH: Yeah.

[00:10:09] AK: Well, what about the job at Redwater in '62.

JH: At Redwater? There was one other fellow, well, was operating the wells, and we both took turns at it and he got left behind in Redwater looking after the Redwater wells, and I was transferred to Edmonton, with Shell, as an engineer's assistant in October of '63.

AK: Now, were you given any choice?

JH: I didn't have much choice, it was either take it or leave it.

AK: I see. But they were willing to give you this job.

JH: Yes.

AK: Okay, but what did that job entail?

JH: When I got transferred, it entailed dynamometer work on pumping wells, fluid levels on flowing wells or pumping wells, and also meter calibrations. I had a meter approver in the panel and I'd go out and approve some meters in the field that were sales meters.

AK: Yeah, the meter running.

JH: That's right. Yeah, and I used to come out, you have to have a pipe approver to approve your meter up against, I used to come out to Imperial Pipeline here at the terminal and get the...

AK: ??? like a calibration.

JH: That's right, yeah, calibrations.

[00:11:46] AK: There was one thing that we left behind here, John, and that was that you were saying some time in around '56 was it that Triad showed up?

JH: That's right.

AK: One, January 1?

JH: That's right. It was either '50, I think it was '57.

AK: Yeah, but it was certainly before you left.

JH: That's right.

AK: Yeah. Well now how did this, how did this switch over affect Shell, it wouldn't have really...

JH: It wasn't, it was before the Shell time.

AK: Oh, yeah that's right.

JH: When Triad bought out Home Oil in Redwater.

AK: Yeah. So tell us a little bit about this incident, the first, you didn't have any forewarning of...

JH: No, I didn't have, no forewarning whatsoever. All of a sudden there was two individuals from Triad showed up on the 31st of December and they said we're coming tomorrow morning at eight o'clock.

AK: And this was January the first they were coming.

JH: They were coming on January the first to do the cut-off on...

AK: And you said, hey, I'm going to a party tonight?

JH: Yes. I said I'm going to a party. So I left the wife and I think we had the one daughter, I'm not sure, and she was at her folks' place in the city and I went out till 3:00 in the morning, and I was, came out

here about quarter after eight or something like that in the morning and these guys were here already. So they said I looked pretty rough, but I says hey, I was out for the evening. Anyway, they came in they took stock of the oil in the tanks and all the equipment, type of wellheads, type of pumping units and so forth. So then...

AK: Did they take serial numbers and all that crap?

JH: It was just the type of pumping unit and the make of it.

AK: How old were these, were these production hands? These weren't executives from Calgary.

JH: I think there was one that was an executive of some sort or other...

AK: He had a suit on?

JH: Oh, yeah, they both had suits on, and you know...

AK: Well you could always tell when you had a tie on you looked pretty ???

JH: Yes, they did and then afterwards I phoned my, I'm not sure whether I phoned Don Storey at Woodbend or Bob Lord at Camrose, I think it was Don Storey, and he said, John, he said, why the hell did you let them in? I said, well, what could I say? He said you could have chased them out. He said, they have no rights, they have no clearance with the Calgary office whatsoever to go out there and do this. So I said...

AK: They were jumping the gun.

JH: Yeah, so I said, what can I say? I said, they came they said they were coming. So this is it, and that was when they took stock and said hey, we bought Home Oil, up in the Redwater ???

AK: Well now, do you know if these parcels went with the package.

JH: As far as I know they did. They did. Because the fellow that was operating one of the tank farms there, is when afterwards, after that he was on Triad payroll and he was asked to transfer, so they did get the other parcels as well.

AK: Well Triad bought those.

JH: It was 100% Home.

AK: Yeah, that was 100%, and that was all production.

JH: Right.

AK: Well, you see by that time I guess old Bobby, he was getting short of money. So I guess that's what he did. He went and sold that... I wonder, do you know if he sold the... no, he wouldn't have sold the new production.

JH: No, not to Woodbend either.

AK: No, they kept that because, when they unitized in 1960 at Woodbend, at least Leduc Woodbend, Gordon Webster was very much in the picture at Home Oil. So there was this business of getting the royalty owners to sign. Okay, it's important to get the kind of the timing of these things, you see, what happened. And the other thing was maybe before I go any farther, back there when you were working on these, you said you got the dikes built shortly in that next summer, when the ground had thawed out...

JH: Yeah, once the ground was workable.

AK: Well, then what about these water spills?

JH: Oh you mean the salt water? Well they had to get rid of it someplace and the company owned the land. So even the Conservation Board used to come in and ask us., hey, what are you doing with the saltwater? We said, right there's a pond, whatever seeps in, fine, and I says as long as it doesn't overflow and then afterwards it did overflow at times, and we said, hey the company owns the land and the Conservation Board says well, this is a case, a different case.

AK: Yeah. Well they got tougher later.

JH: Yes they did.

AK: A lot tougher. Were they getting pretty tough by the time you'd left to go to Edmonton?

JH: Oh, no the Board... they didn't bother us at all while we were dumping the water on there because we didn't have, that there wasn't that many wells that were producing saltwater in the field, not on a low allowable...

AK: Yeah, and you were up where it wasn't producing as much.

JH: That's right.

AK: Down in here it was bad.

JH: Well anyway, yeah that was...

AK: But Frank what about Frank Manyluk? Do you have anything...

JH: Yeah, he used to come around, Frank did come in and, in fact, he used to pick up some figures from us as to what we produced per day, and I think it was on a daily basis there for a while.

AK: What about Rod Edgecomb, do you remember him?

JH: The name I remember.

AK: Yeah, well he was it was a Board first.

JH: Yeah. He was important. I didn't have too much to do with Rod. There was an Allan Casey after that.

AK: They lived, they probably had a house here somewhere.

JH: Oh, yeah, there was...

[tape cuts]

[00:18:10] AK: So from your standpoint, it wasn't that much of a hassle.

JH: No, it wasn't because we owned the land and shortly after that Redwater Water Disposal started laying their lines in and they didn't lay in to our battery because we did, we were producing saltwater on a daily basis and then we had the treaters already. So...

AK: Well up to that time you hadn't been operating a treater, until Redwater...

JH: Redwater Water Disposal came in, that's right.

AK: That was '52 or '53 wasn't it?

JH: Someplace in there...

AK: Yeah, because that's when they...

JH: In '53 already the water disposal was in in '53.

AK: Yeah, and they were starting to gather...

JH: Right.

AK: Did you ever have much to do with the Redwater Water Disposal?

JH: I knew all the people and meters would get stuck or broken or something like that. If you ever get a shot of gas go through the meters would flip a disk and break.

AK: Oh, is that right.

JH: Yeah, and we did have quite a bit of problems with the type of equipment that we had, those horizontal ??? Crawford heaters and you get a gas lock or something like that and they... had good communication with Redwater Water Disposal... late, Howard Devitt?? In fact, his wife still lives over here right across the alley.

AK: Is that right. Well was he before John Shecardy??

JH: Oh yeah Howard Devitt was the first one.

AK: He was the first one, and then...

JH: ??? I can't think of the other. Benny Hochhausen.

AK: Yeah, well Benny, he's retired now. He set the whole thing up and...

JH: Right.

AK: He was the brains.

JH: Yeah, he was nice.

[00:19:59] AK: Well now the other thing that happened in the 50s was the Board forcing Imperial Oil and others to gather gas.

JH: That's right.

AK: Now, what do you recall of those days when they were, put their ???

JH: Well, we had to tie in at bow tank farms, into their gas gathering as well. And there was no difficulties in that, the odd time you did have a little bit of back pressure on your lines, which was a little, you know, your vessels could only carry 15 pounds on it. So you did have a little problem getting gas...

AK: What vessels?

JH: Well, like the treaters, eh, you normally carried 15 pounds of pressure...

AK: Oh, 15 pounds working pressure.

JH: That's right. So...

AK: Wasn't very much...

JH: No, not much of a leeway when your relief valves were popping at 20.

AK: So the gas was of course rich and loaded with all these liquids and everything else...

JH: The odd time they'd get a shot of crude oil too.

AK: Would they, they didn't mean to.

JH: No, they weren't supposed to.

AK: And did you meter that gas?

JH: No, it wasn't metered.

AK: It wasn't metered?

JH: No, it wasn't metered. Whatever came off, otherwise it went to the first ??? so they took it at, they must have had somewhere, I don't know what the agreements were with Imperial for that.

AK: Well, all I know is that Imperial was forced to build that gas plant and Imperial were told, okay, if you don't build the gas plant we're going to shut the whole thing down.

JH: I see.

AK: And I think that brought everybody to their senses. There was no... it was just a matter of course, you either build or you don't produce.

JH: I see.

AK: And that was, I think in around '55, '54 or '55, and then they built the gas plant over here somewhere.

JH: That's right.

AK: Okay. So, let's see now. We're at '63 and you've taken this job and where was the Shell offices in Edmonton at that time in '53?

JH: The Miller Building at 105 Street south of Jasper. So it would have been what, 100 or 99...

AK: You mean Jasper Avenue.

JH: South of Jasper Avenue.

AK: That was where the Seven Seas was? Right next to the Corona?

JH: It was south of the Corona.

AK: Oh, not on Jasper.

JH: No, it was about...

AK: 100 Avenue was it?

JH: Must have been 100 Avenue, and 105 Street... no it wasn't, it was just north of the Beaker Clinic.

AK: Well then was there a big staff in there?

JH: Well that building was eight floors and the Exploration Department was there, Producing Department, and I guess they must have had the Gas Department already because, no, the gas department was in Calgary, because Roach was in charge in Calgary.

AK: Oh, and Herb and...

JH: Yeah, worked in Calgary.

AK: Well of course it was just a transfer. Right. And you were saying, and I think we both agreed that when the big takeover took place, a lot of the Anglo people were shoved to one side...

JH: They sure were.

AK: Or made to feel that they weren't needed anymore.

JH: A desk with no paper on it.

AK: Yeah, that was Turk Terlecki ?? was one of them.

JH: Turk was one of them...

AK: Turk is spelled T-E-R-L-E-C-K-I and his nickname was T-U-R-K.

JH: That's right. His regular name was Henry.

AK: Yeah, right, and nobody knew that. And who was the other fellow? Well there was, Baker got the heave-ho too.

JH: Yeah, there was quite a few of them.

AK: Yeah, and a couple of other fellows that I knew that were pushed out into the...

JH: Well, I phoned Turk specifically when they asked me to go ??? and I said hey, do I have any choice on that? He said, John if I didn't have any choice and I went all the way to Calgary to see the big wheel and he said I didn't have any choice. I still got a desk with no paper out it, he says, John you're just a smaller wheel, he said, you haven't got a choice either.

AK: Well, right. And I guess it was shortly after that Turk got the... bonus???

JH: Yeah, he up and left.

AK: And then he went int to drilling, didn't he.

JH: I forget who he went with in Calgary.

AK: So after you got the move to Edmonton, what was your next adventure?

JH: From October till March of '65, October of '63 till March of '65, I was doing dynamometer work, calibrations and fluid levels, and that involved the fields from Joffrey all the way up to Worsley, and that's Slave Lake, Drayton Valley.

AK: Yeah. Tell me, you told me a little story about Worsley last night, about the marvelous division between the...

JH: Gas department and the producing department, yeah the gas department at Worsley, they had 5 or 6 gas wells there, and was one stinking oil well up there and they didn't want to look after it at all. But they tried to get the gas department gas plant to look, or the gas plant to look after that one well. And the guys, I guess they, the pumping unit there or the well, had a high oil/gas oil ratio. So the guys were drawing their own charts for... and I guess they got caught and then the well was shut down for so many months because of the penalty, shut down...

AK: Well it never did produce.

JH: Well I guess it did produce but once the penalty was, or whatever, ??? they took for production...

AK: Well they must have caught them then.

JH: Lost production, yeah they got caught, they were cooking the gas charts. Nice little board and a circle.

AK: Yeah, but I don't know how you'd get all those jiggles in there...

JH: Well someone maybe had a shaky hand from the night before...

AK: But those wells were run by, the gas flows were run by...

JH: The gas department.

AK: The gas department seemed to be, probably the largest department, would you say in Shell?

JH: It was run by either different people or different type of people than what the production department was.

AK: Well, you can look at Shell's gas, I mean Waterton was the best example, you know, '57 when they opened that up. Now, did you ever get a chance to go to Waterton?

JH: We were there but I never saw the gas plants or anything. One of the buddies that was with me, he got transferred up there. In fact, the fellow that took my engineer's assistant job, he got, after I left he took the job and he was down at Waterton after that, so...

AK: Right. But do you, you can see why Shell had such a large gas department, would you not say? Is that a fair statement?

JH: Yes it is.

AK: Yeah. Well, I just wanted to kind of clear that because their oil production wasn't all that great.

JH: No, it wasn't.

AK: It was stuff they acquired.

JH: That's right.

AK: Not stuff they discovered

[00:27:47] Okay, so then in '65 what happened?

JH: In March of '65 they asked me to be the maintenance, congratulations, the manager said, he said, he says you're the new Maintenance Foreman for House Mountain??, I said, why me, I said I never had no drilling experience or completion, drilling experience at completions or workovers or anything. He says, time you had some. He said... that's when I phoned Terlecki and asked him if I have any choice, he says, no forget it. So anyway went up to House Mountain and I stayed there from March to July the 6th.

JH: Did you take Rose with you?

JH: No, I didn't, she was in the city with three little girls.

AK: Raising a family.

JH: Raising a family and they asked me to move to Swan Hills and I said, well, I'll see what things do, what I'm going to do. So what I did, we sold our house in Edmonton, moved into an apartment, and I knew I was going to quit. So anyway, they moved, paid for the move and that's how I broke even.

AK: Where did they move you to?

JH: They moved me from the house that we sold to an apartment in the meantime.

AK: Well when... within town?

JH: Within the city, yes.

AK: Well I didn't think they'd pay for that.

JH: They did. But anyway, I was one jump ahead of them.

AK: How did you manage that?

JH: Then they asked me to move to Swan Hills and I said forget it. So after...

AK: Well they'd have paid for your move out there.

JH: They paid for my move back to Redwater.

AK: Oh they did?

JH: Yes, the girl in the HR department said, John, where were you hired? I says in Redwater, and she said, she said don't tell anybody but you know what? Your move is paid if you, where are you moving to? I said Redwater. She says they got to pay your move from Edmonton to Redwater to the original

point of hire. And she says but don't tell or say anything. So I walked up to the HR man, and I said, hey you gonna pay for my move to Redwater? He looked at me, he says, what do you mean. I says, your policy is you pay to the point of hire. He says, oh we'd love to but he said, that's not our policy. Two months later, I sent my bill in, they paid it.

AK: Yeah, right. So they moved you from Edmonton to Redwater.

JH: That's right.

AK: You didn't have to go via Swan Hills?

JH: No I didn't go via Swan Hills.

AK: But then tell us a little bit about this marvelous job you had up at House Mountain.

[00:30:13] JH: Oh, it was beautiful.

AK: Well now were these all oil wells?

JH: Yeah. There was a hundred and five producing wells, we had six rigs drilling.

AK: And were this, with Chevron?

JH: No, it was, Cal Stan was the operator...

AK: Oh, Cal Stan, that's ...

JH: They were the operator there and Shell was going to show them how to do it, so...

AK: Oh, they were going to show them how...

JH: Yeah??? sitting around and save money and drill through breakup and all that. We'd build roads and then we'd have to move a rig in the process coming out, and you'd have to doze the road out of the way to move the rig and all that, it was unreal. But one time I remember coming off an asset job or something and I was up for 54 hours. I went to bed at around 3:00 in the morning and this other Maintenance Foreman walked in. He said, John you better sleep fast because you got an asset job at 7:00. I said, the heck with you boy. They tried to wake me up, I couldn't, there's no way I could go. I finally got up at around 9:00, somebody woke me up. I went till 3:00 in the afternoon, and I said that's it. I went back to the sleeping bag and stayed there.

AK: Well you'd wonder why they wouldn't be better staffed up there.

JH: Well, our manager old McLachlin that was the head of the Edmonton division of the production department, he turned around, he told us we were 8 to 5 people.

AK: Now was this Allen McLachlin.

JH: Mac McLachlin.

AK: Was he the one that had a heart attack and died early? Yes.

AK: I always thought he was a pretty good guy. I knew him!

JH: You did?

AK: Yeah, there's another side eh?

JH: And the other guy was the field...

AK: There was a dark side to McLachlin.

JH: Yeah, and...

AK: Incidentally, McLachlin is spelled M-C-L-A-C-H-L-I-N, McLachlin. It wasn't...

JH: The next guy under him was Cliff Watts, big tall...

AK: What about Dave Henfeld?? did you ever run into him?

JH: No, I didn't run into him. There was a Don Anderson also, he was the guy he and Terlecki were supposed to be in the same position, and Don Anderson said, he says, he's the guy that really got Turk out of there. But anyway, after all that, I quit.

AK: So House Mountain was just 8 to 5 depending what, how you set your clock.

JH: That's right. That's what he told us. We were 8 to 5 people, and I said, man, I never saw a sleeping bag for 54 hours.

AK: Well when you got back, did you, did you go and see him.

JH: There was no use talking to that man. When I quit and the HR department phoned up or told him that I was leaving, I brought in my briefcase and the keys to the company truck and all that, left the truck in the parking lot and McLachlin wanted to see me. So he says, will you reconsider? And I says, such as what? And he said, well more money. I said, hey, you raised \$11 to go into the bush and you told me I was overpaid, and I said don't talk money to me now. I said, my family's more important, so...

AK: So he gave you \$11 an hour?

JH: Over and above my salary, what I was getting as an Engineer's Assistant, I got \$11 to go into the bush, well...

AK: Oh, like a...

JH: That a raise.

AK: A bonus.

JH: Well this one engineer, he laughed so hard, right across the whole mechanical engineering section, and I said, Roger, quiet.

AK: So then you left your car in the, your truck in the parking lot, and then what did you do next?

JH: From there? I just went home, and then we decided okay, we're moving to Redwater, we moved into, right on section 36 that was, Walter and I had bought the land then.

AK: Oh, you'd bought the land from...

JH: Shell, we bought that from Shell.

AK: And who had it before, you were saying last night. There was a farmer had it...

JH: Oh, the first farmer that owned it was Pete Boston, and then the next guy that owned it was Anton ??? and Anton was the fellow that sold it to Anglo and Home.

AK: And what did he get for it?

JH: He got 27 or 28,000 is what Walter said.

AK: For each quarter?

JH: No, for both quarters.

AK: Oh, and then what kind of a price did you have to pay to get that quarter?

JH: Walter and I, I think we paid, I think it was nine-thousand dollars for the two quarters.

AK: OH, that's all eh?

JH: Yeah, from Shel. We could, we had to bid on it. But because I was an employee, I could meet, or I could meet the bid.

AK: Oh, I see. So you bought it before this House Mountain incident?

JH: Yes. That was the original plan, that's why I went to Edmonton.

AK: Oh, your timing was good.

JH: My timing was certainly good, yeah.

AK: Yeah, so the, then what was the purpose of buying that?

JH: Well Walter wanted some more land and I was, after I quit Shell, I knew I was going to quit Shell anyway, because I wasn't going to stay in Edmonton, we didn't like Edmonton, so I figured for, get, have some land and Walter and I were into cattle as well. So then we needed it for pasture. So while I was working in the oil field I was also farming and...

AK: Well now, you and Walter still own that half section?

JH: Walter owns the south border or...

AK: Southeast corner.

JH: Yeah the southeast, and I sold the other one and, I sold the other quarter.

AK: So you don't have any acreage outside of this, this is your only...

JH: No, I've still got 78 acres right here, just as you're going out of town.

AK: Oh, right by the hospital?

JH: Yeah, just next to the hospital, next quarter over.

AK: Oh, I see. Kind of a fraction isn't it?

JH: Yeah, it's a half a quarter. I get the south half...

AK: Oh, the southwest.

JH: Southwest, about 25.

AK: Oh, I see, 25, way out, right, there it is there. So you're not far from Walter's then.

JH: No.

[00:36:28] AK: So then what kind of a job, I don't want to be holding up here...

RH: [inaudible]

JH: Yeah, go ahead.

AK: So you, what kind of a job then did you have?

JH: Well, I worked in town for Redwater concrete, I worked for my brother in the small dairy that he had here in town. And...

AK: Which brother was that?

JH: For Pete. And then I did the was farming as well. And then in '69 I got on with Esso Chemical at the fertilizer plant and I worked there as a trainee shipper for four months. I was off for three months with a bad back. And spent a month in the hospital during that three-month stint, and an Imperial guy phoned me and he said just because you were out of a job with us, and I had my medical because I had back surgery in '59, and had no problems after that, and in '69, I wore another disc out. So he told me, he said take your case to Toronto and back, John, but he says I don't know where you get to pull, and he said, you know what you're only entitled to two weeks full pay. I will pay you half pay even if it takes you a year to get back to work. I will have a job for you. I said thank you. I said my next call is to my wife.

AK: Oh, they carried you, did they?

JH: Yeah, they carried me and I was, I went back to work at light duty and then they needed someone in the shipping office. And that's where I stayed till I retired.

AK: Shipping phosphate?

JH: Shipping phosphate nitrate and all that. ???

AK: Do they make nitrates there too?

JH: Yes, they do.

AK: And when you signed off with Shell, did you have some kind of a pension there too?

JH: No, all I did was have one-year savings, no, about two years' savings.

AK: But you cashed out?

JH: I out, I could only withdraw my own money, I couldn't draw any out of theirs.

AK: You couldn't get the other...

JH: No, you couldn't get the other half.

AK: So then you worked, worked out here, and so that was a kind of a more relaxed job, was it? Was that day work?

JH: Day work only, yeah.

AK: Aid you have to supply your own transportation?

JH: Yes, our own transportation. Well, it was only eight miles to the fertilizer plant from here.

AK: Yeah, and then what did you have, pools.

JH: Yeah, we did have, there was a couple ladies and a couple other fellows, we pooled, and the ladies said we don't want to drive. So what the heck, they give us a dollar each a day...

AK: Oh, well that's...

JH: That was ??? we created some costs.

AK: And now it looks like the plant is that another stage in its career, it's being put up for sale.

JH: That's right.

AK: And you were saying last night they could really run it a lot more economically if there was...

JH: Oh, I'd say anybody else could run it more economically, but don't you ever publish that.

AK: No. But you, why don't you and a bunch of your buddies get together and buy it.

JH: I don't need that pity.

AK: So since what, what year was it you packed it in?

JH: I retired December 31st, officially of 1990.

AK: Oh, did you. Right. And since then you've been taking it easy.

JH: Yeah, I've been, I've been taking it...

AK: Building fences, and...

JH: Oh, yeah, helping the grandchildren with ???

RH: [inaudible]

AK: He gets the crossword puzzle, does he? Well, that's good, that improves your language skills.

JH: Do you want some more there?

AK: No, thanks, no.

RH: I should maybe make some tea for you guys.

AK: Well, I'm just going to wind up. I want to get, I want to get, John, I'd just like you and Rose to, John first, just kind of sum up what you think about your life here in Redwater and all the things that happened to you right from your early days here to, and kind of a philosophy, a comment on your philosophy.

JH: I think overall from the growing up on the farm and all that with no university education or anything like that, I think I've done pretty well along with getting married to Rose and raising a family of four and working, and that takes the support of the family to make a livelihood, and I think we worked it out well enough together and we've got a nice family.

RH: When you were away, I took over.

JH: Yeah,

AK: That's right.

JH: Well, they say behind the success of every man there was a woman.

RH: It wasn't easy...

JH: I think we've done well for ourselves.

AK: And you, you've got lots of years ahead of you there, and...

JH: Oh, we're still both in good health, so far, we've enjoyed it and we have no second thoughts about me retiring at age 60, which was just right for me.

AK: You retired at age sixty?

JH: Yeah, Imperial had the package which it would have been silly if I wouldn't have taken it.

AK: Oh, they handed you a package?

JH: Oh, yes. There was a package in there.

AK: Oh. And what was that? Assuming you were age 65.

JH: Yeah. See, I was a little over 60, 60 and nine months. So they gave me another 40, four and a half years seniority, which brought my pension up by 8% and then they gave me \$400 dollars a month. It's a bridge till age 65, until I receive my old age pension.

AK: Oh, so you mean, so you got the pension plus \$400...

JH: I got the company pensioner plus 400.

AK: And that carries into CPP.

JH: Yeah.

AK: And then that 400 drops off...

JH: Yeah, the 400...

AK: And becomes CPP.

JH: That's right. And the company pension will drop somewhat too.

AK: Oh, well that's very good.

JH: So the package was just right, and I was the right age because...

AK: Well your timing was perfect, like Victor there, his timing wasn't very good, he missed the incentive program by one year with Imperial.

JH Yeah, there's some fellows that missed it by six months at the plant.

AK: Yeah. I bet.

AK: So, you've got to say that Imperial with all of its weirdo operations, was...

JH: They were good.

AK: Good to you.

JH: The people were good. I couldn't complain any.

AK: Alright, just one last little thing, and I asked this of Victor, the next morning after the day that you left, you come home one night, after work and the next morning you weren't going to go to work. Now, what did that feel like, that...

JH: It felt terrific, I could sleep in.

AK: Oh, yeah.

RH: There was a storm the storm next day, remember?

JH: Yeah, there was a storm the next day...

AK: January the 1st?

JH: No, I, actually, my last day of work because I had some holidays yet was December 17th of '90, and on the 18th there was a storm. and I drove down because they had a Christmas luncheon, so I drove down in the afternoon, the guys said well how does it feel ??? home. I said, hey, I didn't have to get up and drive in this storm.

RH: Crazy.

AK: That's right, well now the cut-off...

JH: Didn't bother me a bit.

AK: Well, that's good.

JH: I miss ???

AK: Well, yeah, you would.

JH: Yeah, but not the job.

RH: But I can't do things that I used to do when he wasn't here. I went for coffee and I could go here and there and now I'm usually around home.

AK: You kind of have to babysit him eh?

RH: [inaudible]

AK: All right, how did you feel the day after? Say it.

RH: It didn't bother me, because usually if he goes his way, I go my way and then we meet together and go out together. So it's no problem.

AK: No, well that's fine.

RH: We babysit once in a while, help the kids out, enjoy it. While we still can handle it.

AK: Right. Yeah. Well, it's been awfully good of you to...we're encroaching on your meal hour...

JH: Don't worry about it.

AK: We have to go over to another... we have to go to the Ewasiw's so I'll sign off here and thanks very much for entertaining us here.

JH: You're welcome.

RH: Yeah, thanks, your interview method is great.

AK: Well, thank you for saying that.

End of Interview