

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: C. Warren Hunt

INTERVIEWER: Robert Erickson

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Side 1 only – 44:30

RE: This is Robert H. Erickson. The date is December 2nd, 1991. This will be an interview with C. Warren Hunt of 1119 Sydenham Road, Calgary. I'm going to turn the microphone over to Warren now and let him tell us a bit about his life as a geologist. Warren?

CH: Thank you Bob. My interest in geology really predated my knowledge of geology. It was a quest to be outdoors. I simply liked the mountains and the outdoors, and I wanted to study something that would lead me into a life that I could do spend in that habitat. So, when I went to college, it was just the beginning of the war and we weren't at all sure we were going to be able to finish. It was 1942 and I entered Caltech. I had grown up in Marin County, California and San Francisco, California and gone to a private school there. I had a very good secondary education that made it possible for somebody of my talents to pass the entrance exam into Caltech. And once there it was such a terrible strain that I had to get out as fast as possible. And the war years caused them to double up the curriculum, there were no summer holidays, and I volunteered for the armed services, but I was rejected because of a very bad case of acne.

And so, I finished my education and graduated in two years and five months with a Bachelor's Degree and a great wish, never to be associated with an academic institution again, it was just too much of a strain. I had been in a ski race the day before I took my first job with Standard Oil Company of California and banged my head on a rock which didn't help anything and that made me fall asleep the first day on the job. So, I made a bad start there but soon was out in the field in the southern Great Valley of California.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Yeah, that was '45. I graduated in February '45 and started work just before March '45.

RE: Do you remember what your salary was?

CH: Salary was 210 dollars a month. And well, that was a big boost from what I had been doing, my first job in 1939 or '40, when I was in upper high school years, was as a cowboy, I earned 1 dollar a day. That's what all the other cowboys earned, and they were good, I wasn't particularly good. So that was the Irvine Ranch in Southern California.

So anyway, went to work for Chevron and I was chasing around the valley logging well core and that sort of thing and I felt very bored. I just didn't find I was going to fit in there at all, I'm not a corporation man, I'm an independent person and all my parents and ancestors have been independent and I just wasn't going to climb the corporate ladder, so I resigned after nine months and went to work for Independent

Exploration Company, which was quite a making quite a lot of little discoveries in that part of the country. And I worked for them for a couple of years. Things were very quiet, and I was restive again, I didn't like the hot weather down there in summer and mapped all the west side of the valley and southern end of the valley and I'd had enough. So, I took one summer and went to Alaska, and I'm passing, that was the summer of '47, I saw rigs at Leduc and Nisku and I just drove by them at that time. But after I finally got back to California, after working as a surveyor in Alaska for a few months to earn my way back, I thought, well Canada really looked like the place to be so.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Oh, I guess. Yeah, I did a job in Sicily after that, three months, and then when I got back to California everything was just very dead. I was ... I had left the Independent Exploration and I was consulting then and so I thought well I'll come to Canada. I met a guy named Ted Link on a field trip, AAPG field trip, and he said I want you to marry my daughter. So, I thought well that's a pretty good invitation and I came to Canada and I looked him up. I had 26 dollars in my pocket and I got here on a Friday, big mistake and stayed in the York Hotel and the \$26 was run out by Monday. So fortunately, Ted gave me a job and on Monday morning, even though he didn't know I was coming...

RE: Who was he working for?

CH: Well Link was alone, but he was consulting to the Bear Oil Company and they were using Spy Langston, and his company Denton Spencer, for well-sitting in that sort of thing, so he shunted me over to Denton Spencer and I went to work for them and I immediately had three wells at a time to watch and not much time for sleep. And so that's the way I got started. That was June 1949. I had been in Sicily the previous year and before that it was '47, I drove to Alaska so...

RE: [inaudible] in Sicily?

CH: That was a consulting job for the MacMillan Oil Company in Sicily. MacMillan and American Independent and Signal Oil Company. And so, I was working with Langston for a while and then went to work for Link himself. He was with Art Nause at that time, or Nause was with him, and they had a lot of consulting work, and I got married about that time, 1950.

RE: To Link's daughter?

CH: No, Link never introduced me to his daughter despite that come on. So anyway, I went to work for Link in 1950. I'd been with Langston from middle of '49 to the middle of '50 and I got married on the 6th of July 1950 to Canadian ranch girl, Patricia McCallum from north of Lloydminster on the river. Parents were English settlers of 1904 vintage. So, I stayed with Link for about eight months, and they wanted me to go out on a well and I didn't want to go out in a well because my wife was going to have a baby, so I departed and went to work for some promoters, B.O. Jones and Eddie Laborde...

RE: [inaudible]

CH: And, yeah, I think we all met about that time.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Which one?

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Yeah Edder, that was Pan Western up in Atchison area. And so they wanted me to find oil and so I, that's what I wanted to do, that's what amused me. And they had some holdings which I thought had potential, at one out at a place called Baxter Lake near Wainwright and another one in the Armena area. And I worked out the prospects there and recommended drilling and we got discoveries in both cases.

And then I created one of my own down east of Coronation, which discovered the Hamilton Lake Field on the first well.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: And yeah, they were all stratigraphic. Although there, you know there was, there were wells around, so you had pretty good control, it wasn't completely in the dark. Although there wasn't any production of significance before our drilling. There were showings though. So, I stayed with them for a few years until it became apparent that they weren't going to abide by giving me an interest in the plays that they ... as they had intended, so, I left them after the ... we drilled a well called Panther River, which I located on the basis of weekend reconnaissance of surface geology and so that was '57.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Yeah, I published a few papers all along in that period, just with a thought to career development and trying to keep in the forefront of things. And then in '57 I left them, and I got started with a geophysicist named McDougall, Bruce McDougall. And we had a good-sized client that said that they would follow our ideas but turned out very quickly that they weren't going to follow our ideas and I don't like working for just presenting ideas and handing them out. So, we terminated that at the end of '59, that went for two years. And from there I went ... oh, I was doing a little mineral exploration as well as working up oil prospects and it was at that point that I got the first mineral prospect that turned into a mine, that was the silicone project over at Golden BC, And that's a producing mine at this point, and yeah, produces metallurgical silica, which is not processed in this area, but it's going down to Washington, they make elemental silicon out of it. A very pure material...

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Its Mount Wilson quartzite, and there's a picture of it up there, on the above the ... look up above the mantle see, I just took that few months ago. That's in the mine itself. At any rate, I stayed independent after that right up to the present, in fact, I was I was consulting pretty much all the time from 1947 on. I did take a salary for a short period with Jones and Laborde and I accepted a salary while maintaining consulting office in the mid-60s. I did a job for Western Cooperative Fertilizers and they wanted me to take a staff position, which I didn't particularly want, but I took that because, just to accommodate them. And I've been doing both the combination of mining and oil and gas work pretty much since 1960. I had quite a lot of work in the north in the uranium boom and a lot of field work in the Rockies, all the way, much of the Rockies outside the parks from pretty much Waterton all the way north to Peace River.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: No, that would be consulting work for either oil companies or work that I projected and did myself and then sold to companies. But I mapped a great deal of the Foothills and main ranges. And then all the time I was playing polo and doing other interesting things that keep one from amassing much wealth or doing a lot of things that don't pay. And in 1973, I had an unfortunate accident when I was teaching my young son to ski, and it was just a fluke accident, but it nearly ended my life and he saved it and I have recovered substantially. And it was at that point that I decided to get into the gold business, because I could see the gold was coming off the gold standard in the US, the US was going off the gold standard, and the oil business wasn't very good. And I had been offered a project that I really didn't particularly want to do because it was in Nevada, quite far from here, and partly because I didn't really know that much about gold mining and however, with the accident I thought well, I haven't got anything else to do so I better do that. There wasn't any good way to feed the family, so I thought well, I can promote that project.

[00:17:06] Well in short, I've worked at gold now down there from 1974 to about 1984 very actively, about just ten years, and developed three mines, of which the first, the original one I went down there for, has turned into the biggest gold mine in North America, the Gold Strike Mine, today. And I could tell a very long story about that, but I don't think it's practical in this context. And I developed another mine near it, which produced until the people that took it over didn't explore and ran out of ore, and that property is ongoing although I've sold my interest in it, so I don't have any more.

And then I've got one in California that I've still got and I'm intending to put it into production. Interesting thing about gold mining is the quality of the crooks that are in, it is very much higher than in the oil business. They are crude and aggressive and do incredible things. And all three of those mines were stolen, and so, anybody should be very wary of the gold business, I'm just recovering the last one. And the first one, the main people who lost in the theft were the shareholders of the little company that owned it, who got nothing out of it and it's the biggest mine in North America today, and it was simply stolen from them, as far as I can tell. So, these are long stories and they ... with 10 years.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Well, I think that it's not appropriate to just sort of put it out casually. I think I've got, if I'm going to write about such things I want to think it out carefully, what's said and try to couch it in the best terms, but it really is an eye-opener. The oil business is a very gentlemanly business and we try to keep it that way. But in the gold business anything can go. So anyway, I have had a lot of fun at that and I've had a go at Platinum Exploration without doing much good, partly because I didn't find anything, but partly because the clients ran out of money before the prospects were finished and no one will ever know whether there's anything there or not. So those are some of the things that I've done. And I quit playing polo with the accident in '73 and I've had to, while I did some umpiring after that, but I just didn't have the stamina or will to try to do it again, or ability anymore, so I've worked at more academic things since that time.

And I've got into writing a book on catastrophic processes that I was always interested in and thought the geological profession was not appraising adequately or giving due thought to and I finished that and published it, and it came out in December 1990. And it led to a second book, which is just finished and manuscript sitting up there, first draft.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: It's a follow-up to the first book to show the evidences for the carbide hydride transformation of rock and shifting of mass and energy from deep in the earth to crustal levels, and they're very widespread. And the second book is going to be half again as thick as the first and it's, as far as I'm concerned, it's going to revolutionize geological thinking, it's not anything less than that. And I'm going to get busy very soon and I'm back in the oil business, I've got some production at Pembina and some prospects away from there. And one of these prospects is going to discover the biggest oil field that has ever been found in Canada, if my theory is right. And it's going to be in the granite, Cambrian surface. So yeah, although I've gone a step beyond Thomas Gold, he correctly I think, identified the fact that petroleum does come up from depth, not necessarily all of it, but originally, that's a source for it in any case. And what I [tape cuts out] coming up and the mechanism that has the effect of bringing it up. So that's my current activity and there are naturally lots of side things if you've got things you'd like to talk about and ask about.

RE: [inaudible]

[00:25:34] CH: Well, you've asked me to discuss my book and the things that concern me there and the impressions I get of the profession and the reception I've been getting, well ... the answer is that having taken the route that I've taken, which is independent publication, and I've taken this consciously because I wanted to produce a coherent book that covered the field, and not produce a bunch of little spotty articles that could be published in the journals. But as it turns out the book apparently is such a hot potato that editors of the technical journals don't give it reviews. I haven't had a single review, it came out in December 1990, here it is December 1991, well, it's just a year, and there's not a review in any technical journal to my knowledge so far.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Well, it might be worth asking the editors, but I don't really, you know, most of them are far away and I sent one of the ideas that's coming out in my second book, the second book is going to be, I think it's going to be called, Expanding Geospheres, and I can read you the technical subtitles if you want. I'll have to get them up on the computer here. But it's going to revolutionize the entire field of geology in my opinion because it's providing a source of energy and of silicon from deep in the earth which then produces the hydrocarbons, and the continents, the one being a by-product of the other.

And no one's ever come along with any theory of the energy of the inner earth except the idea, the discredited idea, that radioactivity could be causing the hot spots on the Earth's surface. And this is completely discredited now, and we're thrown back to where the profession ... the consensus is that only the dispersal of primordial heat is involved and indeed there may very well be or have been plenty of primordial heat, but to get it dispersed unevenly, the way it's found, where some parts of ... ten times are giving off ten times as much heat as other parts. This is an impossibility with dispersal from a primordial heat source. I'll just read you my subtitles on this. It starts out expanding geospheres, energy, and mass transfers from Earth's interior. It's going to have another subtitle, EV2 for environmental violence to sequel to environmental violence, the carbide hydride origins of endogeny [gap in tape], authors C. Warren Hunt, Lawrence G. Collins and E.A. Scobelen. And Collins is a professor in California, a Petrologist basically. Scobelen is the second in charge of the USSR Siberian exploration for minerals and oil and you may know that there's a ... they have, I think more than one, but certainly one oil field, The Mirror Oil Field, which has a kimberlite pipe producing diamonds in the middle of the oil field at the

surface and they're producing oil, from what I take to be granite wash or equivalent, at the top of the Precambrian.

So, and he has a lot of very radical ideas including a new theory of the origin of diamonds and the origin of the great flood basalts of the Earth, the Siberian flood basalts being the Siberian traps, which are so well known but not well understood. And well, that summarizes part of it. But I'm going to propose a lot of new things, including such things as the endogenic source of pure quartz sands, such as the Mount Wilson that we produce at the mine I developed over in Golden B.C, where the sandstone is so massive, you can't take a strike and dip within the body at all. You can near the top of the body, it's been resorted by fluvial means and you can get strikes and dips but you can't get them down in it. And it's a product of endogeny in my opinion, and there are many others like the Saint Peter and the Oriskany and others, and the Winterburn if you wish, very same, similar sources. I'm proposing a new origin for coal, you name it, I've got a theory on almost ... carbide hydride endogeny that solves many of the great problems of geology that have been simply enigmas up to now.

So, that's where I stand and I'm going to drill what I think should be a major oil field, probably the biggest ever found in Canada, in the granite as soon as I can get things organized, I'm working on it hard right now. And this book should be out in the spring and give the gory details of how it all should happen. Maybe turn that off now if you want to talk a little more...

[00:34:04] You've asked me a question about what my philosophy is, and I have said that I ... my intention from earliest days was to do things that were interesting, not to work for material ends or power over other people or anything like that, I just wanted to do things that amused me. And when I was younger, I liked sport very much, I liked skiing and polo and devoted a lot of attention to them. And I was amused at having a family and seeing them grow and I was amused at doing interesting things in the technical field.

And well, also I worked at music quite a bit, I'm interested in classical music and I sang in choirs and festival chorus and things like that, and.... lessons in composition and I've written some fairly extensive music for orchestra, which has never been heard. But then I went on to technical things, my work in minerals was directed toward things that piqued my curiosity and that's what I'm doing now. I had no economic ideas with respect to doing this book. I was just hoping to make it break even and it hasn't done that yet, but I think it will in time. And the fact that some economic value is coming out of it is quite surprising to me, I wasn't expecting it at all. So that's...

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Finding an oil, yeah finding an oil field, but I never suspected when I started working ... one thing leading to another following through logically and trying to rationalize how you explain all these things and moving from one step to the next. I started with the knowledge in my own mind that there had to be some rather recent catastrophic floods in the Calgary area. And I expanded from there ... phenomenon all over the American northwest and Canadian southwest and from that time frame and working and necessarily working back into earlier time frames, the idea of endogeny impressed itself upon me as one of the great [gap in tape] on and is very much being underplayed by the geological profession and I showed it in my book, right on the front cover is an artist's drawing of Gross Brukkaros, an enormous volcano without any volcanics, there's no volcanic rock anywhere around. So, it was blown open by gas and kept open and it's three kilometers in diameter [gap] gas blow. If you've watched

anybody who knows something about gas wells, you can imagine you couldn't ... it would totally toxify the atmosphere if it were to blow and you would have a mass extinction right away.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Yes. That's the other kind of mass extinction. This is an endogenic mass extinction and that idea needs to be expounded to balance the overwhelming concept that's been over-promoted of exogenic mass extinctions. That one has been run into the ground. You can probably find a hundred papers on that or maybe a thousand for everyone on the possibility of endogenic mass extinction. So, I'm bringing that out in my book, the new book. I brought it out in the original one, but it's going to come out much more strongly and more fully because there are many different aspects of it, there's the idea of combustible gases consuming the oxygen, and removing that from the atmosphere, there's also the idea of non-combustible gases, carbon dioxide being heavy, and carpeting the Earth even just briefly and exterminating larger life forms, animal life forms.

And then there are the perceptions of physical violence caused by endogeny, earthquakes and tsunamis and so forth are all in that category. So, there are just a lot of things to balance off and I've tried to give perspective to that and the first book. Now the second book is just on the endogenic, which is the underplayed factor in the general geological thinking. I think there's a lot of interest in this kind of thing in the public too but it's very hard for us to explain it to them because deep geological concepts, the second book is going to have a lot of petrology in it, and formulas for transformation of rock and I can't get away from them ... laying it all in a way that a layman can understand, but I'm I know I'm not going to do more than just penetrate enough so they know what I'm trying to say without understanding...

RE: [inaudible]

CH: Well, no, chemists don't know much about rock chemistry [gap] on things you get in laboratories and bottles.

RE: [inaudible]

CH: That's right. There's a lot of that and we're deeply into that, this Collins [gap] roughly speaking every day, I got three of them today because this is the end of a weekend, I got a hard time keeping up he's so excited about our theories ... and nobody ever came along and showed him where the silicon could come from and the heat. Though all the things that he was showing, where happening in petrologic conversions of mafic rock to granitic rock [gap] that causes everything. When the when the mafics are attacked by silanes, the ??? bowls go into solution and are taken away in hydrous fluids and the silicon combinations, silicon combinations, quartz and other things are lighter than the rocks were before. This causes the rocks to rise diaphorically and makes the mountains rise. And they also build down into the mantle. It's all a very interesting thing and it all has to hang together. And so it makes quite a challenge to turning it out and not leaving oneself open to a lot of criticism. So, anyway, these are the things I've been working on.

Interview ends here