

## PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Helen Lakusta

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: April 5, 1993

### Side 1- 40:30

AK: That's right. Well now, I'm Aubrey Kerr and today is Monday, April the 5th, 1993. And I am in the home of Mrs. Helen Lakusta. And the address here is 13408 70th Street. And this is out in the northeast part of town, and I'm looking out the window and you have a large, lovely park out there, that nobody's going to build on. And what area do you call this in?

HL: Delwood.

AK: Delwood, right. Now, may I call you Helen or would you...?

HL: Helen.

AK: All right, good. Then we won't, we'll get away from the formalities. I think what I'll do is sit here...

HL: Go ahead.

AK: And, it's a real pleasure to be here. And as I was just saying before we got started, I had the pleasure of interviewing your son, Ed, who is the oldest of your family. And after a great deal of trying to arrange the time, he was in between trips, and we finally had an excellent interview. And he told me some things about the stories that you passed on to him. But let's get your statistics. Where were you born, and what was your maiden name?

HL: At Waugh, Alberta. That's about 8 miles north of Bonaccord. And my maiden name was Helen Dohaniuk.

AK: Dohaniuk?

HL: Yes, Dohaniuk.

AK: That's D-O-W-H-A-N-I-U-K?

HL: I-U-K.

AK: Right. And what year were you born?

HL: 1908. May the 16th.

AK: Well, you're just about going to have your birthday, another month.

HL: That's [incomprehensible]

AK: That's right. And your parents were living on this...

HL: On that farm.

AK: Yeah. Now, what about your parents. Had they come from the old country and got married here, or were they married over in the old country?

HL: They were married there, they came with two children.

AK: One of them was you? No. It couldn't be, no.

HL: No.

AK: That's right, because you were born in Canada.

HL: I was the second one born in Canada.

AK: Right. And your father and mother's name was?

HL: Peter Dohaniuk and Mary Dohaniuk.

AK: Right. And they had come from Galicia? Or what part of Ukraine had they come from?

HL: Hmm. You'd think I would know.

AK: Did they ever tell you why they wanted to come to Canada? Did they ever talk to you about...?

HL: They... out there, they didn't have no land. And what the... people were going, friends like, and told them that you could get, like a farm here. So, they got lots of their own land. That's what they all were going for.

AK: Yes. And what year, did they ever tell you what year they came to Canada? Do you remember?

HL: Something, what I heard was 1903.

AK: And you were just born...?

HL: '08. Five years.

AK: Yeah, right. And how many children did your parents have altogether?

HL: There were six of us. I got the family picture. Six. There's only three living. I'm the oldest.

AK: And there's two others that...?

HL: Two younger brothers.

AK: Right. And where do they live?

HL: Both in Edmonton here.

AK: Right. And when you had this farm, was it a quarter section that you had, that your parents got?

HL: Just a quarter.

AK: Right. And did you have buildings on it, or did your father build the...?

HL: There was no building. Father was building. But then our father had an accident, he fell on a stump when he was building a granary and he hurt himself. He broke the plea (???) to the heart, and three days, he was gone. That was 1916.

AK: 1916, yeah.

HL: Father passed away at 43 years old.

AK: Terrible. Well, that's something similar to Hrynychucks.

HL: Yeah, horse kick.

AK: You know, Fred got kicked and he only lasted two hours, you know. They took him to Radway and that was the end of him.

HL: We had the doctor from Legal, horse and buggy, came to see Dad, that was all. He suffered three days.

AK: Couldn't do anything for him?

HL: No.

AK: No. That was the days.

HL: And Mom passed away at 52. Double pneumonia at the General here, in Edmonton. Because we weren't far. Those days with horse, that wasn't far to come in to the city.

AK: No. And then you were, let's see, you would be... well, had you married by the time your mother died?

HL: No, no, no. I married after, she passed away in 1925 and I got married 1927.

AK: Right. Yeah, and you would be 24 when you got married?

HL: 19.

AK: Oh 19. That's right, yeah.

HL: Coming 20. But I married a man, 27, he wasn't quite. He had a farm, he had horses. That's what you married for in those days.

AK: Yeah?

HL: Yeah. And he was a hard-working... you could tell him in the picture there. Hard worker. And he said, my kids aren't going to... See? All white shirts. They had to be in white shirts.

AK: Yeah. With ties!

HL: And ties, oh yeah.

AK: So, he said, my kids have to...

HL: Have to be white shirts. They're not going to live on a farm and work the way I do. That's what he said.

AK: Yeah, and he was the, would you say he was the driving force in making sure that they got...

[phone rings]

We'll just turn this off.

[tape cuts]

[00:08:05] AK: Now, what I wanted to get from you, Helen, was the story of where Mike was born. Now, you said that his parents had come from the old country in about 1899.

HL: Yeah. Approximately.

AK: Yeah. Well, that's all right. It doesn't have to be exact. And he, your husband Mike, was born in Canada?

HL: Yeah, but they called that a hut.

AK: Yeah. Now, had his parents been married before they came to Canada?

HL: Yes.

AK: And they, had they brought some children?

HL: They brought, I guess three or so.

AK: Mm-hmm. But Mike was born in Canada.

HL: Yeah. They called it, in a hut.

AK: Yeah. Well, now just describe that hut, would you please? It was a hole in the...?

HL: A hole in the ground. And must be some kind of walking down and covered up with sods.

AK: With sod, yeah.

HL: Sod, yeah. That's where he was born.

AK: And that was, they spent the winter in there, I guess, didn't they?

HL: Because he has a... well, yes. He has a birth certificate. 1900, he was born. January the 17th.

AK: Right in the dead of winter.

HL: Dead of winter.

AK: Boy. Isn't that remarkable? And he... now this, where this dugout was, where was it? Was it near Redwater or where was it?

HL: Star. That's...

AK: Oh, yeah. Farther east.

HL: Further east. Yeah, around there.

AK: Oh, yeah. Star. Yeah, right. And his parents, did they ultimately build a house, and have...?

HL: They did move from there to Cookville, what they call now. There was a church, but they moved the church away. That's about seven miles east, southeast of Redwater, they had a farm. They moved into different place.

AK: Yeah. Well, now what was the name of that place?

HL: Cookville.

AK: Oh, Cookville. Oh yes. That's where the Cook family got started.

HL: Cooks were neighbours, there were such a friend's boy.

AK: They were...?

HL: Mike and the Cook boys.

AK: Is that right?

HL: Yeah.

AK: Now that was... the Cook that, on which they drilled a discovery well. Southeast of 32.

HL: That's...

AK: What was his first name?

HL: I wouldn't know.

AK: Yeah. Well, I have it on the tip of my tongue. Just a minute.

[tape cuts]

[00:11:36] AK: Now, that was Hilton. H-I-L-T-O-N Cook, who ultimately moved away, up to just northeast of Redwater. And that's where they drilled the discovery well. Was it one of those that your husband was friendly with?

HL: Must be, but I wouldn't know.

AK: So, that's where they started, down at Cookville, then. Or at least they moved down there to Cookville. And then when did the family move up to section 10 -58-22? Where Ed was born?

HL: Ed was born... yes, that was section 10.

AK: Yeah. Well, what year did... well, you were married by then I guess, were you, when you went to section 10? You and Mike were married?

HL: Well, we got married 1927. And he had a section, half quarter-section there. But then he bought from his brother another quarter and he had a half a section.

AK: What was his brother's name?

HL: Jim.

AK: Jim, I see. So, he had the, I guess the south half of 10.

HL: Yeah, it was south half. By the blind line there.

[00:13:30] AK: Yeah, right. So, let's go back then to Mike and his early days. Do you know... well, I should ask you about yourself. How far did you go with your education?

HL: Sixth.

AK: Grade six, eh.

HL: I'll show you my picture, school picture.

AK: Oh, wonderful. I'd like to see...

HL: 1917 school picture. Waugh school picture.

AK: What was the name of the school?

HL: Waugh, where I was born. W-A-U-G-H.

AK: Oh, Waugh. Oh right. Okay, good. And your early years, before you got married, did you, what kind of work did you do? Did you stay on the farm and help them to farm?

HL: I was the oldest one and two boys were the younger when Mom passed away. So, we were doing everything, making hay, hauling. I was building a stack, soon as I build to the top, crawl down, the stack tip over, fall on me.

AK: Tipped over on you. That was a haystack, was it?

HL: Haystack, yeah.

AK: But you didn't have it piled up...

HL: Didn't have it the right way.

AK: No. So, that was your early lesson in farming, eh?

HL: Driving horses, that's, I was the oldest one to drive a car.

AK: Yeah right. Now, maybe we should talk about that car for a minute. Whose car was that, that Chev?

HL: Well, we had three, there were three of us kids, that was ours. Then when I got married, I leave it to the boys.

AK: Yeah. Well now, both your father and mother were dead by that time.

HL: Yes.

AK: And you had made enough money to go and buy it yourselves?

HL: Yes, because the wheat wasn't bad price then.

AK: Yeah, the wheat was a pretty good price.

HL: Hard time came when Ed was born. That's when the wheat was 19 cents.

AK: Yeah. Well now, have you any idea how much that car cost?

HL: No idea at all.

AK: No. And where did you go to buy it? Did you buy it, did you come to Edmonton to buy it?

HL: I wouldn't know where we bought it. I wouldn't remember.

AK: But that was an open touring car. It had side glasses on it. There it is. Now, I'm looking at this picture here of you, and you are a young, determined woman, and you started to learn to drive the car in, what year again?

HL: 1926, but the car was 1923 old.

AK: Right. And you were a teenager then? Kind of.

HL: Those days I was.

AK: You were a farm...

HL: I was a farm girl.

AK: You were running the farm. Now, that was a pretty fashionable dress in those days, was it? That type of dress?

HL: Yeah.

[00:17:14] AK: Okay. Now we have Mike, and he's coming along, and did he ever tell you how far he got in school?

HL: Not too far. I think three years or four, something like, that's all. But he was helping himself. He was reading paper. Journal was nothing to it, all the time. Soon as we had some... Journal was getting in, when we lived on that half section 10 back home, it used to come to Opal. Next morning, first thing he's gone to bring a paper. He has to read. And since then, I still got the paper, this morning.

AK: Yeah, that's wonderful. So, he had certainly learned to read at school then?

HL: Oh, yes. Quite a bit.

AK: And what was his early farm life like? Was he spending it with his parents, and staying there and helping them, or...?

HL: They were batching, both of them, him and his brother, on this section 10. Opal. And his parents lived in Cookville on that home place.

AK: Quite a ways away then.

HL: Yeah. And it was only a quarter of a section, but they gave their dad a help. They were four boys, they give him help.

AK: Right. So, Mike's dad was farming down around Cookville then, was he?



HL: Not too much.

AK: No, not too much.

HL: Oh, I'm sorry, I missed you. Mike's dad yes, he was farming at Cookville. Mike was farming, we should call it Opal, on Section 10.

AK: Right. Yes. And had he built a house there, or had anything to...?

HL: You mean us or Dad?

AK: No, Mike. What did Mike... did Mike build a...?

HL: No, there was an old house because they bought from somebody a big log house. But when the oil came, 1949, that's when I learned the running water and electric stove. And my deep freeze, down in the basement, still there. 1949, still works.

AK: Wonderful.

[00:20:06] Well, let's just go back. I want to find out how you and Mike met.

HL: At the dances. Opal dances.

AK: Right. And they'd be...?

HL: Oh, we knew each other for about two years. I wasn't ready to get married, from 17.

AK: No. Well, some of them did get married at 17.

HL: Yeah, they used to... 19, I was old girl already.

AK: Yeah, you were... they said that if you got to a certain age it would be, you'd never get a man to marry.

HL: There was lots of them.

AK: Yeah, right. So, that's where you and Mike met, on the dance floor.

HL: Yes.

AK: You decided you were going to get married and, as you said, he was the kind of fellow to marry because he had horses and land.

HL: And land. That's right. He was the kind, something to go for. And he was a good husband. Look at the pheasants they got.

AK: Yeah, right. Yeah, that's right. Look at them all.

HL: Him with his sons. There were no limits, those days.

AK: No, I'll say not. So, when you and Mike got married, what church did you get married in, where?

HL: Cathedral 97.

AK: Oh, at 108th Avenue and 97th.

HL: That big church.

AK: Is that the Greek Orthodox or Greek Catholic?

HL: Roman Catholic.

AK: Roman Catholic, right. And then did you go for a honeymoon?

HL: No.

AK: You went right to work.

HL: The next day, we went to haul hay.

AK: To...?

HL: The next day. To stack the hay.

AK: Yeah, that's right. It must have been in the summertime then?

HL: July 14th.

AK: Oh, that's when you got married. So, you didn't waste any time, you just got right out there?

HL: Well, there were no... everything has to be done just so.

AK: That's right. Yeah. There was a time for everything.

HL: Yeah.

AK: And then did you improve the house when you moved onto the property? Did you have the house changed or did you...?

HL: No. The house was, it was nothing much to change because you had to clay, and use the clay, plaster it, white-wash with lime inside. It was an old house, but it was, I don't know why we haven't got a picture. We got so many pictures at our new house and they didn't snap one out at the old house.

AK: Right. And then what about, you left this Chevy behind with your brothers?

HL: Yes.

AK: Well then did Mike have a car at that time?

HL: No. We bought the car, I don't know what year. A Chev too, from a neighbour from Hornigold he bought. But I wouldn't know what year.

AK: No. But when you were married, you didn't have any car?

HL: No.

AK: No. And out there, that was in the '20s, well, you wouldn't have telephones, would you?

HL: No.

AK: No electricity.

HL: Nothing.

AK: So, what did you use, the Coleman lamps, or oil lamps or what?

HL: Oil.

AK: Yeah, oil lamps.

HL: Coal oil.

AK: Coal oil, yeah. With the wicks.

HL: Yeah.

AK: Then you'd have to... did somebody in the family have the job of cleaning the chimneys?

HL: Yeah. Turn it to hide smoke, full of smoke...

AK: Yeah, then it'd blacken the chimney up.

HL: Not what you ??? because it's too dark in the house.

AK: That's right. So...

HL: I went through the hard way, because we were orphans, we called ourselves.

AK: Yeah. Well, that's right, you were.

HL: And the neighbours were good to us, because we were good kids. We had no choice, the three of us. Wherever we go, anybody, you want to eat, give us something to eat, they call it, keep us like orphans. The three of us.

[00:25:20] AK: Yeah. That's right. So, your first child, Ed, arrived in 1930, and by that time the prices had dropped...

HL: Right down.

AK: Yeah. And you still had the horses though, and you had...

HL: Everything we had, but it was so hard to... 17 dollars he used to get for a full triple box of wheat. 17 dollars.

AK: Yeah. And he'd haul it to where, Opal?

HL: Opal Elevator.

AK: Yeah. And that would be how many bushels in a...?

HL: Oh, I wouldn't know.

AK: Yeah. It'd be at least a hundred. Be a hundred bushels, wouldn't it?

HL: Yeah. It was a triple box. And there were no elevators that you loaded on, you have to shovel with the shovel.

AK: You had to shovel it off the...?

HL: Oh...

AK: Well did he have a truck, or did he horse and buggy...?

HL: Horses.

AK: And that would take a couple hours to go over there?

HL: Yeah, terrible.

AK: Yeah. And in those days, if you wanted to go to Edmonton, would you get on the train at Opal and go in on the train?

HL: No, we used to go always with horses.

AK: Yeah. Right into town.

HL: Right in. I was 12 years old, I had my tonsils out. I don't know what building that would be. In winter, horses. My brother, older brother took me to have my tonsils and adenoids out. In an office, no big old, the hospital...

AK: Right. Well, I had mine out in my home.

HL: In your home?

AK: Yeah. On the kitchen table. So, it shows you how we've developed.

HL: Uh-huh.

AK: So, then you had Ed, and then you had three other children.

HL: Yeah. Daughter.

AK: And what was her first name?

HL: Mary.

AK: Mary? And she was born...?

HL: '30, she was born '32.

AK: Right. And then?

HL: Russell '33. And then this one '38.

AK: Vic.

HL: Vic. That's the baby.

AK: Right. And they're... now Mary is, what is her profession? What did she...?

HL: Education. She graduate here. Also Major from Home Ec and Education. Four years. She's a retired teacher now. She's retired now.

AK: Yeah. Where does she live, in Edmonton here?

HL: No. Calgary. In the middle, right in the middle there.

AK: Oh. Did she marry? What's her married name?

HL: Craig. Robert Craig. I'll show you the pictures.

AK: Right, okay. And then Russell?

HL: Russell married a local girl, Redwater girl. And Victor got married with the girl from, in Calgary. They were both at... NAIT? No.

AK: SAIT.

HL: No, not SAIT. Something different, what there was. It wasn't...

AK: Mount Royal College.

HL: Mount Royal College, see. That's where Victor found his girl, they both got married.

AK: He was going to school there, was he?

HL: Yes. Oh, he's a petroleum engineer too, graduated.

AK: Oh, is he? Who does he work for?

HL: On his own.

AK: Oh, he's an independent.

HL: He went on his own, Eddy worked for the people, Vic went on his own. Two years ago, a buyer came from the States, bought him out, so he's got nothing now. But the interest is at 3 cents now, that's what bothers him.

AK: What's that?

HL: Interest is only, on the money is only three percent.

AK: Oh. Three percent, yeah, that's all it is.

HL: That's what bothers him. He sold it millions, 11 million, his business.

AK: Oh boy. So, he's not starting up again?

HL: No. But he works some place there. That's the boy. He's 55 years old now. He went on his own. Make it or break it. And he made it. He had 22 employees when he sold the business.

AK: What was the name of his outfit?

HL: Ingersoll Rand.

AK: Oh Ingersoll Rand. Oh. Well he was in the, that was the machinery part of it.

HL: Yes.

AK: Yeah right.

HL: He had a big business, 22 employees.

AK: That's a big... I'll say. There's nothing small about that.

HL: Well he graduate, they both graduated in Norman, Oklahoma, the boys. Both of them did.

AK: Oh, is that right? Ed and...

HL: But they had to go in through the companies. And he went on his own. Younger guys, they took a chance.

AK: Yeah.

[00:31:49] Well, now one of the things, I'm not sure we got this on the tape or not but...

HL: I hope not.

AK: Well sure, it's all on there. Was... your husband Mike said, in so many words, that I want them all to be wearing white shirts and ties. Is that what he said?

HL: Yeah.

AK: And the meaning behind that was, that they were all to have educations.

HL: That's right, all to get education.

AK: Now how much push did he give to the kids to get educated?

HL: I would say 100%, because he used to hire men to work, and the boys are gone. Of course, they were good helpers when they come on a weekend or so, they gave help.

AK: Yes. That's what Ed was saying, he'd work...

HL: Ed took two years off to work, to make some money for university.

AK: That's right, he did. And he was saying that when he was going to school in Edmonton, he would, you would pack him a lot of food and he'd go on the train.

HL: Food for three days.

AK: For three days, because it wouldn't keep any longer, because he had, his refrigerator was his window, in the basement. Is that right?

HL: And that's homemade bread and I don't know how he stood three days. You know, it dries. There was no wax paper to wrap them.

AK: No, nothing like that. So, you could see that your husband was... well you must have exerted some pressure too, didn't you make, show them that you've got to get out there, and you've got to get your education?

HL: You've got to get out there and help him in the field.

AK: Yeah, right.

[00:34:08] Okay. Now we're approaching 1947, and that was the year that Leduc was discovered. Now, when that happened what... did you people out in Redwater talk very much about the oil business or...? This is before the well was drilled on the first property.

HL: Leduc first one. I don't think so, that we expected.

AK: No. Well, what did Mike think about it? Did he...?

HL: Mike bought, he bought two farms. I think he was, I would say he was thinking something, because we had half a section, but he still bought two other quarters.

AK: Oh, did he. Two other quarters. Was that good land that he bought, or was it...? There's not very much land in Redwater that's very good.

HL: Not too good. Our land where we lived, it wasn't much of a land. But when you're tied on it, that's it for you.

AK: 'When you're tied on it'. That's a good expression. So, he went and bought two more quarters, did he?

HL: Yeah.

AK: Were they down farther south, or...?

HL: It was right on a coulee where... right below, one was two miles south, and another one two miles west. Right on that runaway.

AK: Right on where the river was running.?

HL: Yeah. Both quarters were rivers on.

AK: Yeah, rivers.

HL: That's what he was looking for.

AK: He wanted water.

HL: I don't know why...



AK: Did he rent those quarters out to somebody? Did he sharecrop or did he...?

HL: We farmed everything.

AK: You farmed it yourself.

HL: It wasn't too much of a land.

[00:36:37] AK: No. All right. Now, in '47 there was the big boom in Leduc, and then, around at the end of that year and the beginning of '48, there were a lot of seismic parties going around shooting dynamite off. Do you remember that?

HL: Yes.

AK: And do you remember if they were... would they come and ask permission to shoot on your land or how did they do it? Or did they go down the road allowance?

HL: They were doing on the road allowance. I don't think they were going any land there.

AK: No. Well do you remember if they damaged any of the water wells with their shooting? You know, they'd shoot dynamite down, and it would go shooting up. Did it affect your water wells?

HL: I don't... not that I have an idea that it would affect ours.

AK: And did you have an idea of really what they were doing? What they were doing out there on the road allowance?

HL: Just let me think what they called them. What they were doing.

AK: Well it was seismic work.

HL: Seismic.

AK: And they called themselves...

HL: Something different word...

AK: Geophysical.

HL: Oh. No...

AK: Anyways, this was a prelude to the drilling of the well on Hilton Cook's property. So, was there much of a stir when everybody knew that there was all this machinery going into Hilton Cook's farm? Was there any talk about that?

HL: Yes, because it was straight that way, and the coulee was running that way, so, many times we heard, maybe you'll come this way, but that's maybe.

AK: Yeah, maybe.

HL: Yeah.

AK: So, when the well actually blew in, what was the reaction? When the oil shot up?

HL: Oh, yeah. It was an idea that it's coming.

AK: Yeah. So, what did Mike think? Did he have any idea what it might mean?

HL: I still remember when they were drilling because out on ours, this half a section on this quarter, they build first. You should see the cars and people who were waiting if there's oil.

AK: Oh, waiting?

HL: Waiting because they were drilling. And it did come out. What excitement it was.

AK: Yeah, there were a lot of cars out there on Hilton Cook's property.

HL: But that's quite a ways from Cook's up to ours. And but it still was there.

AK: All right. Now, when the oil came, did you or Mike investigate your title to your land, to see whether you had any oil and...

[tape cuts]

## **Side 2- 20:38**

[00:00:03] AK: Okay, we're on side two with Helen Lakusta, and we were just talking about the financial arrangements for leasing. And do you remember whether there was any water spills, salt water spills on your land? Do you remember any of them?

HL: Damages you mean.

AK: Damages, yeah.

HL: No, I don't. Not on Section 10, we didn't get any damages that I would know. But I think the boys got it. Especially Russell on the, where Elks are. I think he had some damages.

AK: Yeah, there was something in the paper about it.

HL: Yeah. There were lots of damage. Russel had problem and I don't know about Ed.

AK: No. Well, where the Hrynychucks lived, you know, that was on Section 35, south of you, there was Section 36 and there was some water spills in there. That was on the Anglo home half section, but they had pieced it out to them. I just wondered whether there were any, if you remember any of that problem?

HL: No.

AK: No. Okay, that's, just turn it...

[tape cuts]

HL: Well, I don't think we had nothing to do with that, because they came, and they made the lease, and they're on their own.

AK: Yeah, that's right.

HL: They never came into the house or bothering anybody. That's what I say. Never been, kids were never been bothered.

AK: No. Well they, down in the town, there was some tension up between the, you know, the farmers and the roughnecks. I don't know whether you'd ever had any experience with that.

HL: Never heard about it. No.

AK: So, they just moved in and drilled the holes and...

HL: Because they make a lease and then they are on their own, driving.

AK: Yeah, right. They have the right to come in there.

HL: They got the rights to go. Close the gates for you.

AK: Right. And by that time, you had, had you gotten electricity then?

HL: '49.

AK: You got electricity in '49?

HL: Yes. We got it from the well.

AK: Oh. Not from the Alberta Power?

HL: No, we got it from the well.

AK: So, there was a little generating plant there, was there?

HL: Yeah.

AK: Yeah.

HL: I think later on it came, but at first, from the well back of the house.

AK: Yeah. Well, that would be very convenient. So, then you went right away and got the house wired up and...?

HL: Right away, soon as it came in. And running water.

AK: And running water. So, you had a pump put in the basement, did you? Or outside, for pumping the water?

HL: Down the basement. The well was outside, and it pumped it.

AK: And did you say that at the same time you bought a freezer?

HL: '49, down the basement there.

AK: You still have it?

HL: Yeah.

AK: It's still running?

HL: Yes.

AK: Isn't that something, eh? So, then you were living a different life then instead of having to put it down in a... trying to keep the food from going bad.

HL: In the well.

AK: In the well, that's where you kept it, didn't you?

HL: Yeah. In the well.

AK: How deep was the well where you put it?

HL: Some were 12 feet to the water. Because you have to put it right on the water, so it stays cold.

AK: Yeah, so you had something to pull it up with?

HL: Yeah, the wheel, pull it with the rope.

AK: And what would... even then, you couldn't keep everything? Like, butter wouldn't keep would it?

HL: No. That's why you build right away. Soon as we got the power, that was it.

AK: Well, did Pacific offer you the power or how did you...? Must have made a deal.

HL: Oh, I wouldn't know. Must be a deal.

AK: Yeah, must have been. Well, that was awfully good of them to let you have power. So, up until that time, you just were living with coal oil lamps and battery radio?

HL: And wooden stoves.

AK: Battery radio?

HL: Mm-hmm.

AK: Yeah. So, you got an electric stove too, did you?

HL: Right away.

AK: Oh good. Yeah. Well, it's interesting because the Mahroons (???) who lived farther east from you, they didn't get power till about '54. Because they had to wait for the, you know, the high-tension lines to come in.

HL: I don't know how long it took us to have the lines in too.

AK: Well, that was wonderful. So, you benefited greatly from...?

HL: And there were no phones. That's what kept us moving to Edmonton. Because he wasn't feeling good, so that was it.

AK: So, you... well, there was only one phone in Redwater, my understanding. There was hardly any phones at all in the area.

HL: Well, no.

AK: No. Now when you were... all this time, did you look to Radway for your health needs, like the Radway Hospital or... if you had to have hospital attention, did you go to...?

HL: I broke this hand of mine, and he took me to Redwater, Dr. Krantz. He pulled it up, put the brace on or whatever or, not the cast, that was tape and some kind of ??? in there. And he sent me home. He said, you're going to have a dreadful night. And I did.

AK: Did he give you any pills?

HL: No, nothing.

AK: He just sent you home, eh?

HL: And I said, what's going to happen when I'll be old? He said, you're going to get arthritis and rheumatism. And he was right.

AK: Yeah. Isn't that awful? So, then when the drilling all stopped...

[tape cuts]

[00:08:29] AK: Now, with no telephone but with electric power you felt that you were isolated a little too much?

HL: Living just the two of us, and him with heart trouble, the doctor said, don't touch nothing. And no telephone, I didn't want to stay there.

AK: No.

HL: And he lived only five years here. That was all.

AK: In this house? What year do you remember you moved into this house?

HL: '65.

AK: 1965, right. And by that time of course, your boys and your girl were all well established.

HL: They were all on their own, all married.

AK: Right. Well, going back to Ed a little bit. It seemed to me that Ed was very determined, you know, to make a success of his life.

HL: Mm-hmm.

AK: A lot of that was the determination of his father and you? I mean, was that the determination that you kind of transmitted to him?

HL: Well, I wouldn't say that we were, you said determination or pushing him. You know, when... the kids wouldn't want that, they wouldn't do it. Look at this one, Russell. He went for car sales, for sales. And nobody stopped him. He had the good schooling, he had good report, but he liked sales and he still likes sales.

AK: Yeah. He's with the Elks.

HL: Yeah. And he's happy.

AK: Well sure. That's the main thing.

HL: Mm-hmm.

AK: That's the main thing. Right.

[00:11:07] Okay. I'm just trying to think if there's anything else that I should be asking you as... things like your brothers and sisters. You said there were two brothers still alive here?

HL: One is retired here in a senior's home. And one is in nursing home already. He's got, let me see, I know. Hmm... I can't think of it, what he has, but he's pretty... but he's over 80. He's pretty old.

AK: Yeah, right.

HL: Alzheimer's.

AK: Yes, well, it's attacking a lot of people.

HL: Alzheimer's.

AK: I think it's because, I think the lifespan of people is longer now, so therefore they're more apt to get into this sort of thing.

HL: See all the pills I got? That's what keep me going.

AK: Is that right? One a day?

HL: One!

AK: More than one a day. You take them mostly for arthritis, do you?

HL: That's right. This and high blood. 13 years already with high blood.

AK: Have you got, your arteries okay? Your cholesterol?

HL: Probably... I don't know about cholesterol, but I'm not bad yet. But arthritis is very bad. I'm taking pills for arthritis.

AK: Yeah. Do you go for therapy at all?

HL: I was going for about two years steady, and then I quit. The doctor said, I got Dr. Harvey now for arthritis, bone specialist, I should say, Dr. Harvey. And he's the one that he doesn't recommend the surgery for me because he said I'll lose so much blood, 50% out of my legs and I'll get the disease that they will put me to... phlebitis.

AK: Yeah, well, that's it. You start... you know, when you have that sort of condition, it's better to live with what you've got. And during your day, do you go out to seniors' groups, or do you... what's your social life like?

HL: Playing bingo.

AK: Oh, you go to bingo, eh? Does somebody drive you there or do you...?

HL: I got a friend, that I told her I got the man in interviewing.

AK: Oh, so you're going to go to bingo tonight?

HL: No. But I play lots of bingo. I played all my life.

AK: Well sure. Well, that's fun. And it's a form of recreation, all right. And do you play bridge or any other card games?

HL: We used to play, long ago on the farm, card games in the evening. But since my husband passed away, I don't play anymore. We used to.

AK: So, you know we're... I guess as we get older... you see, I'm going to be 78 myself in November.

HL: Well! 78. But that's, I'm coming up '85.

AK: I know it is. That's wonderful. You look so well. You got a good complexion and... well tell me, to try to wrap this thing up... well, first of all, I should ask, is anything else that you think I'd be interested in talking to you about? The farm life or...?

HL: No, I don't think so.

AK: Well then, would you like to wrap this up by telling me what your philosophy is? I mean, you're looking back over 85 years, you've seen a lot of things happen, you've seen the downs and the ups, and you've seen an awful lot of the world's history, you know. What is your philosophy? How would you like to express it?

HL: I don't know how to express that. I would think... I think they're just giving too much money needlessly away. That's what I think.

AK: Yeah, right. When you had, what was it, 17 cent wheat?

HL: And we used to buy 10 cents socks for my husband.

AK: Yeah, 10 cents for a pair of socks.

HL: And now they buy 14 dollars.

HL: Oh, yeah. Easy. You can pay more if you want. At those expensive places. Yeah, the values have all changed.

HL: Yeah. And, I don't know. I'm old, I'm getting my old age pension, but I still say they're throwing away too much money. They should tighten lots on everything.

AK: Right. Do you feel that you're entitled to your old age cheque?

HL: I'm just getting my old age cheque, so... but some of them getting this false, and all those cheques. And you know what they do, they play bingo every night.

AK: Yeah, and some of them go over and get a case of beer and...



HL: Or drink and kill each other.

AK: Yeah and 649.

HL: I never bought a ticket, but I play bingo.

AK: At least you see what's happening. I mean, the bingo game is right there in front of you. And there's the odds. How many cards do you play?

HL: 6.

AK: Yeah, you do, eh? Great.

HL: I used to play 12, 9. Now I'm cut down to six. I like to laugh.

AK: Yeah, right. You like to laugh.

HL: Yes.

AK: Isn't that wonderful.

HL: Yeah. I don't get mad that I can't win, but I like to laugh. And I got a good friend that she's not blowing too much money. We could get by with nine or ten dollars a night when we go.

AK: Yeah. And you're able to handle six cards?

HL: Oh, that's lots of time to talk.

AK: Is that right? Isn't that wonderful? Well, I really appreciate your time, Helen. It's been a marvelous interview because, you know, your son, Ed, told me about...

HL: And you want this picture?

AK: Yeah.

HL: But please... you will. Because... and I'll pass, you said you would like Eddie and yourself. Or Eddie and his dad. I think, if I haven't got, Ed has.

AK: Yeah. Well...

HL: Mike holding Eddie.

HL: Yeah. All right. Well, I think we'll sign off here. And thanks very much for your time. And it's now 10 minutes to 4. Over and out.

End of Interview