

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Frank Manyluk

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: December 9th, 1992

Tape 1 Side 1 – 44:00

AK: Today is Wednesday, December 9th, 1992 and I'm Aubrey Kerr and I'm in the home of Frank and Evelyn Manyluk, 26 Toronto Cres NW. And I'm very pleased to be here with you Frank after this long interval. I'd like to start off with you telling me where you were born, and what year and also a bit of a background on your parents.

FM: Aubrey, I was born in 1923 on the family homestead about six miles out ??? Point. I was born by a midwife. My parents both emigrated to Canada. My mother came from Poland, the name of a place, I have not got, I never did have and if I had it, I don't think I could pronounce it. My father came from a state that the last time I checked on, it was a place called Bessarabia which was the northernmost state in Romania when I checked it. I think it has changed hands many times since, at least once with every war.

AK: Well, where did your parents meet?

FM: My parents met in Vermillion Alberta, which is where we lived, and where I took my elementary and high school.

AK: Did your parents ever ask you what attracted them to Canada? Did they ever tell you?

FM: There were both very poor and I would, although we would never say so directly, my guess would be just a chance at a better life. For example, I think my mother had grade one. I don't think my dad even had grade one, eventually after I started school, I had to teach him how to sign for things.

AK: And did they, did he file on a homestead himself?

FM: No, he never filed on a homestead, when he became old enough, old enough at that time being 16, he joined the Army and then when he came back, he went to work for the Canadian National Railways and was there until he passed away in the 50s.

AK: You say he joined the Army, do you mean WWI?

FM: That's right.

AK: WWI. And was he a Canadian citizen by then?

FM: To the best of my knowledge he was a Canadian citizen.

AK: I'm sorry., they used to call them British subjects. They weren't, there is no such thing as a... did you know that?

FM: No.

AK: Yeah. So he, did he ever tell you what his experiences were in WWI?

FM: Not very much. My dad didn't talk about his past very much. I've always suspected and when I talked it over with my mother, he led somehow or other, a very unhappy childhood life, and the reasons of which I don't know.

AK: Well, that's okay. So you started school at Vermillion.

FM: That is right.

AK: And you went through the grades to?

FM: I got my senior matriculum in Vermillion.

AK: Right, it was high school. And what would that be the equivalent of grade 12.

FM: Senior matric was the name or phrase used in those days for eligibility for any University course you wanted to take, so you went through on the straight 3 hours?? plus some chemistry and biology.

AK: Did you have to take languages?

FM: You are required to take one language and in the high school at that time there was only French and Latin available. And I took French only during grade 10, 11, 12.

AK: So what impelled you to going to university? Did you have an idea that you could better yourself or did your parents encourage you or what, what was the motivation there?

FM: Aubrey, I decided, I can't remember the year or particular circumstances, but even before high school, I could see that my dad had no education, my mother had no education, life was not very good. It wasn't very... I was going to use the word pleasant but that's the wrong word. I decided then that I was going to do better and that I was going to go to university and in fact I did go right after I got my senior matric, and although my parents just didn't have enough money to assist me, I found jobs, worked 12 hours a day, 7 days a week and was able to make my way through year after year, in each case, it was ???

AK: You mean from a financial standpoint, you just managed to scabble enough money together, and... Well now tell me what some of your jobs that you did during the summer, give me some ideas of, and what kind of money you were paid.

FM: Right after I finished high school. I went out to a farm and milk cows and hayed, stooked and threshed, for enough money to go to school the first year. After taking one years University I worked an entire summer on the Alaska Highway doing survey work United States Department of Public Works or

whatever it was called at that time. Then from that point on I worked in the industry, oil industry, either roughnecking, building wooden derricks, firing steam bars, whatever was available, I was prepared to do and did. The average pay in those days was \$1 an hour. There was no such thing as effort for overtime, such a time and a half or double time and that sort of thing. Working 12 hours a day I was able to make \$12 a day above the \$8 a day. The extra 4 hours were very important to me because I needed the money.

AK: This wildcats work, was this mostly in Turner Valley?

FM: Most of it was in a place called Borradaile, a little bit in Lloydminster and a little bit of roughnecking and building one wooden at Unity, Saskatchewan.

AK: Right. Well, you, in your work around Borradaile, you would have certainly have run into Al Wright and Spy Langston? Al I think was pushing tools there on that hole that was drilled and then there was, you mentioned C.B. Barlow. Did you know a DeCooke??

FM: C.B. Barlow and DeCooke were in partnership? Roughneck ??

AK: That's right. Can you describe DeCooke? He was quite an extraordinary person.

AK: The thing. I remember most about DeCooke is he went to church daily and the second thing I remember most about DeCooke, I didn't get to know him as well as I did Barlow, you never saw him anywhere or touch anything without a pair of white gloves on.

AK: That's right.

FM: Incidentally the people that you mentioned came after I had had this experience, like I remember and he came after that. Who was the other person?

AK: Spy Langston.

FM: And Langston came after. When I first started to roughneck, and I can, when I first started to work for the Board, I started to work for the board in Turner Valley, but then I quickly got transferred to Lloydminster, there were numerous very small companies there like Charlie Withers, Shaw, I can't remember them all now, but none of them had any geologists, engineers, they had no technical staff at all because there were drilling a well, and this is how I got so much really good experience so fast. When they found out there was a Board man in the area and they wanted to do a cement job, a casing job, a logging job a well stem test job, you name it, whatever was going on a rig, they would call the Board man to go out and engineer it and supervise it. And it's just amazing how much practical experience I got so quickly being there during these times. Then people like Langston, and I can't remember, there was a geologist and an engineer came out from Saskatoon, he was in the geology department of the University of Saskatoon.

AK: Modsley?

FM: No, he was under Modsley. But they had a consulting expert, there was about three of them.

AK: There was Sproule, not Sproule but there was Noss??

FM: No, these were from Saskatoon.

AK: So they did some consulting?

FM: And when they moved in then I backed off. I just...

AK: So this sort of hands-on experience stood you in good stead.

FM: Oh it sure did.

AK: Can you remember the year? What year was it you graduated?

FM: '45, spring of '45.

AK: Spring of '45 and you would graduated in what discipline?

FM: Mining engineer.

AK: Mining engineer. That would have meant you'd take P.S. Warren and Collins?

FM P.S. Warren was the head of the geology department when I was there, also the head of the Army unit...

AK: COTC, that's right.

FM: And the people I remember best there are Dr. Allen and Rutherford.

AK: Yeah, old... what did they call him...

FM: ??? chain, that type of man. ??? Rutherford use to quite often, if he knew I was, he was traveling around the field, if he knew I was in the area, he always made a point to come and see me. He'd get a half a dozen beer somewhere and come and see me and we'd have ??? geology chats.

AK: Is that right?

FM: He was an extremely fine person.

AK: Isn't that wonderful? Well, those are the kind of memories that were very pleasant. So when you, when you graduated mining engineering was that the code word for petroleum, or was it...

FM: Well sure, you'd know that we...

AK: Can you explain that?

[00:14:11] FM: Yeah. I'm sure you know, Aubrey, that there was no such thing as a degree in petroleum engineering in Canada in those days. I had studied university calendars for two or three years before I went to university trying to decide what to take. And for some reason or other I could distinctly remember deciding I was going to work in the oil business when I was in grade nine in the hospital, partly, I guess because there was some work going on at Wainwright and some at Borradaile, and it interested me, it sort of fascinated me. In studying the university calendars, I noticed that well, I need to go back a bit, I first decided that it was either going to be chemical engineering or mining engineering and I studied those two disciplines in detail, but I noticed in chemical there was absolutely geology, in mining engineering there were at least three or four geology courses, and also, it dawned on me that, in studying curriculum, that mining engineering had a lot of work to do with designing and building and how to operate a shaft, which is nothing but a rig except it's underground. That's what decided me and I stayed with it and I've never been sorry.

AK: But that there was, none of your courses impinged on oil and gas.

FM: No, and...

AK: ??? were geology.

FM: And the course says it's a shaft. And during the time I was taking the course, of course, I was roughnecking, and I could associate with the shafts that I was taking courses on in mining engineering. So the two seemed to ???

AK: Well this was during the war so you'd have no...

FM: No, it wasn't, I got my high school in '45, sorry, I got my degree in '45. Yes, you're right. I graduated in the, with my degree in the spring of '45, there was still time left so I did join the Army for five months. Actually what I joined, they were not taking applications for engineers anymore. So I just joined the plain old Infantry and got into what they then called the 6th Div, 6th Division of the Infantry, which was supposed to go over and help the United States fight Japan, but just as I got my basic training finished, which was in ??? or in New Brunswick, they dropped the first nuclear bomb on Japan, put a freeze on all moves, and all that sort of thing. And then they dropped the second bomb and they told us to get out before masses started to come. And I got out and that's, by then it was late September or early in October of, still '45, and I came back to Calgary and started looking around for job. And actually I had an offer from, this may surprise you, Imperial and the Board, and there was virtually no difference in salary or perks ???

AK: Is that right, no difference?

FM: And for some reason or other, I chose the Board and stayed with them...

AK: Isn't that interesting. Can you remember what your starting salary was? I

FM: I can remember exactly what it was, \$65 a month.

AK: And no expenses.

FM: No.

AK: You worked out of ??? telephone building?

FM: No, I worked out of Black Diamond, I was there...

AK: Oh, I see, you were sent out to Black Diamond.

FM: I was told to report to Black Diamond.

AK: Okay. Well now who was the person that hired you?

FM: I'd say Rick Goodall.

AK: Yeah, right. Well he was a down to Earth, a tremendous...

FM: Oh sure was, yes, very nice person.

AK: And at that time there was some very quick changes in Chairmanship, there was a fellow named Frawley I believe.

FJ: I knew Frawley but I don't think he was there when I was, had much to do with Calgary. He was representative of the Board and the Department of Mines and Minerals in Ottawa by then.

AK: Well, he has become an Alberta representative in Ottawa.

FM: Right.

AK: But that was later.

FM: Okay, it could have been later, but he wasn't, the people here, the Chairman of the Board was the head of the chemistry, either the Chemistry Department of the Chemical Engineering Department in Edmonton...

AK: Boomer passed away.

FM: Boomer.

AK: He died suddenly.

FM: Suddenly died, and...

AK: And they you got Bailey. Or was that...

FM: Bailey was acting, Bailey became acting Chairman on his death.

AK: Yeah, because Bailey was apparently in some kind of wartime initiatives, and he, he came out, how he ever got out to Calgary, I don't know. But he was the ultimate in opportunism.

FM: He didn't stay that long either, Aubrey, he was ??? man for Husky.

AK: As soon as Leduc hit...

FM: No, before that even came along, he worked for Husky. That was a long time ago, I don't know...

AK: I don't know, as soon as Leduc hit, you see he was signing the orders, the drilling, you know, the licenses up to about May or June. '47, which was just a month or so after Leduc was discovered and bingo, he was drawn.

FM: Only a month or two, well, yes and he went as the head of the Land Department for Husky.

AK: Well, wherever it was, then he got mixed up with his own company Billy Cell???

FM: Right.

AK: And from there on he never looked back. So you were working for Dick King, were you?

FM: Dick King with my immediate supervisor in, while I was in Black Diamond, which was a period of five months.

AK: And what was your first job out there?

FM: I only had one job in Black Diamond and that was working on West Flank 2. It was a well that was selected to try and increase the permeability of the limestone pay sections to try and release more, I'm sure they had in mind crude oil, because natural gas was not very economical or in surplus supply. And we designed a system whereby we obtained fifty 100 quarts of pure nitroglycerin and I think it was surplus war material from some place just stay outside of Winnipeg. And we displaced it into the formation and just as it was going into the formation, but I don't know which formation, I'm sure was the limestone but I don't know whether it was the upper or lower limestone, or two. Just as it was leaving, we detonated it. It was a ??? complicated process that I don't think we need to discuss here.

AK: No, but it was, there was a tremendous amount of publicity with respect to this.

FM Oh yes. AK: And then, well this truck coming all the way from Winnipeg...

FM: Not just one truck, there were several.

AK: Yeah, but all this...

FM: They weren't allowed to use highways, they had to use backroads.

AK: Is that right. Well, at least they got it there. But now, weren't [pause in tape] Zanmar that were in on this well?

FM: Zanmar was sort of what I would call the promoter, and there was a Czechoslovakian who eventually bought a ski hill in Banff. They were just putting up the money, he came from Czechoslovakia, and I think he got his money out of Czechoslovakia just before the war hit. And I think they owned factories that produced gloves and hats and things like that. Wish I could think of his name.

AK: But what was the name of the well again, I didn't catch that.

FM: West Flank Number 2.

AK: West Flank. Right. Well, I remember the publicity very well.

FM: Well, I think, I think it was on February the 3rd or 5th that we fired, might be '46.

AK: '46 that's right. And that was, that didn't do a damn bit of good.

FM: We set up monitors on surrounding walls, about 20 surrounding walls, there were [pause in tape] about four or five of them that lasted about an hour. We kept monitoring, and you're right, it didn't do any good. I think I would call the shooting a technical success but in total a failure as to the reason for doing it. But in the end, I always thought it was a blessing that it was a failure because I don't think that was the way to fracture wells on a regular basis, and fracture ???

AK: Well, did this fellow from Cutbank come up and help detonate it, or did... it was all, you know who I mean...

FM: I guess he used to drop nitro down wells...

AK: Yeah, right.

FM: I know exactly who you mean but this name...

AK: His name, it's in my book. I got a picture of him... Okay, so when you're 5 months were up then...

[00:26:06] FM: actually the way it was fired, it was displaced down tubing through a pipe into the formation and then to, with a cap down below the, a detonating cap down below the packer, that would withstand, would not go off with the weight of water. And then to get enough weight to trip a detonating mechanism, we kept adding salt to the water till we got enough weight and kicked it off.

AK: Oh, so there was kind of a hydrostatic?

FM: Right.

[pause in tape]

[00:27:39] AK: When you finished up at Black Diamond then what was your next assignment?

FM: As soon as I finished at Black Diamond they announced a big oil well just inside of Saskatchewan about six miles south of Lloydminster, it was owned by Lloyd Clinch. I can still remember the name of

the well, it was SAC 4, and it was producing, according to their measurements, we couldn't get all the details on it because, first of all was in Saskatchewan, 400 barrels a day. I had the feeling it just produced that for one or two days. And then, because when I got there it was being pumped.

AK: Well Clinch was a big promoter. He was a landman.

FM: There was a lot of promoters there. Shaw was a promoter, Williams was a promoter, Wilson was a promoter. I'm sure there were five or six others whose names...

AK: Well then you got transferred to Lloyd.

FM: Right.

AK: But there was a boom on in Lloyd...

FM: The SAC 4 well started the boom.

AK: Yeah, right. Well, that's interesting to know. The, there was some other people that were there at the time. Do you remember Edgar Burt there?

FM: Edgar was the first Schlumberger logging man, to my knowledge, the first one to enter Alberta and came up to Lloydminster. And after, I've forgotten the names of, whoever ??? [pause in tape] I was trying to think of the man that became, who was Edgar's driver and then got his own cement company.

AK: Thorson?

FM: Yeah, he became Edgar Burt's driver on the logging.

AK: Is that right. [pause] had some rapport with Edgar.

FM: Oh sure. Who had actually, I think many many years later, he became a logging teacher or whatever the right word is and I took a course from him. ???

AK: That's true. And then it seems to me that around that time there were some other Board people up there and was it Bert Corey that was at Vermillion?

FM: For two or three [pause in tape] before I went up there the Board had what they called a summer office, now, I don't know whether, how long each summer there were there but there was people like Burt Corey and Murray...

AK: Was there Jack McCaskill?

FM: Yes, and there was a third one. Can't think of the name now, I know him so well...

AK: Did he stay with the Board?

FM: No, he went with... there was Murray, Gray...

AK: Oh, Scotty Murray!

FM: Scotty.

AK: Murray, Mitchell and Gray. That's right, kind of a short...

FM: Yes.

AK: Quite entertaining. Yeah, he was supposed to out at Brentwood Bay.

FM: Yup. But when I went up there and opened an office, it was a, it was a permanent full year-round office.

AK: And it was where...

FM: Vermillion. It was later moved to Edmonton.

AK: Right, well I was in Vermillion in ???

FM: Well that would be before I graduated so that would be roughly...

AK: That's right, and...

FM: You mentioned Imperial doing some drilling, they did some towards the end of my stint at Lloydminster, just a little bit west and maybe a tiny bit north of Lloydminster. I don't think very much came out of it. I remember in those days we had a lot of trouble getting cement, and I think we would up getting a lot of old cement. I can remember one well, Imperial was always very careful about their cement ??? There wasn't much you can do about it because actually the Board representative allocated the cement, he got allocated, a certain number of sacks per month then he reallocated it to wells. And, never took samples when they did a cement job, they did it here but a week after the cement was still not set up, till about ten days later after they ran it, they pumped it out again and about two or three days after that their sample took a set.

AK: Well, Nate Goodman was with the Board in... that would have been '44.

FM: He spent a couple months in '44 in Vermillion, as summer work.

AK: Yeah, you see he was, where I first met him was at Taber, because he was working out of the Hat.

FM: This is how he came to be at the Hat. The Board always had a summer office at Medicine Hat too, whether Nate's work involved the Hat or not, but after I finished at Lloydminster, after they discovered Redwater, I got transferred to Redwater. And Nate sort of took care of Southern Alberta, sort of everything south of Red Deer, but worked out of Medicine Hat. I took care of everything for the Board. It was it just the two of us and I worked out of either Lloydminster or Redwater. That's how he spent most of the time around ??? from there north to Red Deer. And I spent, I was responsible for everything north of Red Deer ???

AK: Well, then then as soon as Leduc hit, everything changed.

FM: Right. we thought that once it became evident that it was going to be as large as it was. Made with ??? to look after it and he moved out but it's ???

AK: Yeah, right. How was it that you didn't get moved to Leduc? Wherever they just tossed a coin...

FM: Nate joined the Board a year before I did.

AK: I see, so seniority. And then you stayed on with Vermillion?

FM: I stayed on at Vermillion, but I was covering stuff as far away as at Athabasca and all up in that country as well as, there was quite a bit of activity going on around Vermillion, there was Wainwright there was Shaunavon?? there was Provost, as a matter of fact, the first of well that Imperial drilled at Provost discovered flowing medium gravity crude oil. My recollection is that that same rig was a discovery was a discovery rig at Leduc.

AK: That's right, Vern Hunter. Do you have any Recollections of Provost to tell?

FM: I spent a lot of time at Provost, witnessing the production tests on the well that did discover medium gravity oil.

AK: But then it turned to gas.

FM: Yes, and of course this is the history of Provost, spots of, well it's essentially a gas field.

AK: Well, do you remember Gibby being up there.

FM: Oh sure, and...

AK: Jack Fulton.

FM: Somebody came up, Campbell Aird.

AK: Yeah Campbell Aird, yeah. And this was still before the Leduc was discovered, it was in '46 that they made these tests.

FM: Yes. Because it's my recollection that the rig that drilled the discovery well at Provost went on and discovered Leduc.

AK: That's right.

FM: That would have to be before.

AK: Yeah, they drilled another hole alongside of that, it was a deep test.

FM: And found nothing.

AK: Found nothing, it was October it finished up and then it moved over and ??? Leduc in November, and from there on... So where did you go after you were in Vermillion then?

FM: As soon as the Redwater was discovered, I was transferred immediately to Redwater.

AK: I see, but you, up to that time you had been in Vermillion.

FM: I was covering quite a...

AK: Yeah, large area.

FM: As a matter of fact, the last two jobs I had before I got to, even got back to Vermillion, I immediately went to open the Redwater office, was 2 wild wells up at Lac LaBiche. The first one was a wild well by Stanlin, it doesn't exist anymore. I don't know what they call it now.

AK: Well it's Amoco. Yeah, Stanlin...

FM: The second one was Central-Del Rio, only 6 miles from the first one.

AK: Central-Del Rio. Did you...

FM: As soon as we killed Stanlin's well, the same day after we killed Stanlin's well, the Central-Del Rio well blew out, 6 miles away.

AK: Well, in those days did you, were you able to take control, did you to do exercise any Board authority to say, hey, you guys are not doing a very good job, we're going to take it away from you? Or did you ever get...

FM: We ??? involved. Red?? and I discussed it on the phone and I thought well, I would just keep an eye on it for 24 hours a day, keep him informed daily. And if during our discussions, during those discussions we decided that they weren't doing either a good job or doing it fast enough or anything of that sort, we would first of all caution them to correct whatever it is we didn't think they were doing and if they wouldn't, then we would take it over. And there were one or two cases where we had to take it over.

AK: Yeah. I just thinking in terms of Atlantic, you see, Atlantic had to be taken over.

FM: Yes, he got a drill man to ???

AK: Yeah, well, Tip Maroney did the job, he was the hero. Okay, so when you hit Redwater, had you already been married.

FM: Oh, yes. I got married in December '46.

AK: Oh, yeah, right.

FM: To a girl from Turner Valley.

AK: Oh, so Evelyn's from Turner Valley. You going to come in or you just eavesdropping? And that little giggle... when you first moved to Redwater, you said you started off in Fort Saskatchewan, you lived in...

FM: Well there was no place to live in Redwater, so in scouting the area we had to choose, the two nearest places seemed to be Fort Saskatchewan and Edmonton, and for no good reason we chose Fort Saskatchewan. It was a little closer, I was a small town boy and Fort Saskatchewan was a small town, so..

AK: That's right.

FM: Suited me fine. Along with that we had some friends that I'd gone to school with, to university with that were from Fort Saskatchewan...

AK: Well yeah, why not. And Edmonton is a big city and spread all over but it's surprising how many people, the roughnecks and some of the drillers commuted from Edmonton every day because they couldn't find any place to...

FM: I would say for the first year everybody had to.

AK: Is that right?

FM: Oh yes. To the best of my knowledge, there were two three elevators there, one service station and one little country grocery store. That was it and they had their own ??? and there was no other house.

AK: Well it was the Boston Store, run by people named Boston.

FM: Yes, I think I remember...

AK: And they there was the Maloney...

FM: Who ran the service station.

AK: That's right, and I've got the information on those people. But that's an interesting comment that you figured they weren't, it was mostly commuting.

FM: I would say a minimum of 99% ???

AK: Is that right? Well, it was some of them move shacks in.

FM: That could be but they'd be off in the bush somewhere because that's all there was, either grain fields or well, I'd say bush, there was nothing much to...

AK: What about you Evelyn? But how did you fare in the first few years there up in...

EM: Well, I can remember that Redwater was dusty and windy in the summertime and it was mud, after we moved.

FM: Well first year...

EV: And then it was muddy in the summer.

AK: What about when you moved into Redwater, you moved into a house that the Department of Public Works has built, was it a birdhouse?

EM: Yeah. Well, yes, but the birdhouse was the Public Works house.

FM: Perhaps... Aubrey, I should tell you something right off the bat. In those days and I think it was still true when I retired, the Board was not allowed by its own act to own any land or property.

AK: Oh, I see. So you used the Department of Public Works as the...

FM: Build something and then we'd ???

AK: Yeah. So that was why the department came in on that and you paid rent to the government or was that built into your salary?

FM: We paid, we as a married couple paid rent to the Board, now how they reimbursed the Department of Public Works or whatever it was called at that time, that was done through head office, and I'm not aware of...

AK: Yeah, right. So I think what we'll do is turn this tape over.

Side 2 – 43:00

AK: You're in Redwater. And what were your other fellow workers up there?

FM: Well, I moved in there, I was assigned an assistant, his name was Doug Craig and there was just the two of us there until I left two years later, and I think shortly after the staff was expanded and a new office was built and...

AK: Well you were saying Frank, that the old shack that old Nate and Ted had occupied in Leduc town was moved out to Devon and used there and then it was moved on up to Redwater.

FM: That is correct.

AK: So this is Board property, I guess, that was a case of having...

FM: That's a case where we may have gone against the act.

AK: Without getting too out of line...

FM: I don't think we paid more than a couple hundred dollars for it.

AK: Not, and those things were knocked together, we used to build them out there on the leases, build a shack you know. Get some, one of the roughnecks, and he'd moonlight, put it together. Then you had our friend, Paul Greenwood, and there was another name here was Ron Kinsley.

FM: Right?

AK: And he went on to greater things with what was it, Mobil?

FM: I think he eventually wound up with Mobil in Africa. I don't think he immediately went after he left us and went to Mobil but he eventually wound up in African and what's happened to him since I don't know.

AK: No. And we were talking about Paul Greenwood, he showed up as a summer student...

FM: He eventually would up at Redwater permanently, and there was also Al Casey. He was our bottom hole man, at that time the Board ran most of the bottom hole pressure tests around the field and Al Casey was our bottom hole operator.

AK: He was the counterpart to Bill Kinghorn at Leduc.

FM: Right. Bill Kinghorn was the bottom hole operator at...

AK: Well the stories that Bill Kinghorn tells, you wonder... ??? around Atlantic 3 but not point of that. So Casey was doing the bottom holes. How often would you go out and do those?

FM: The regularity of doing them Aubrey depended on advice from our Reserve Department in Calgary. We more or less followed their instructions as to how often they wanted pressure jets on wells or...

AK: Well were they looking for sinks, you think?

FM: No I think it was just the reservoir data that they wanted to make the calculations in the head office.

AK: So there wasn't anything, it was just a kind of a routine thing then.

FM: Well, certainly routine to our men in the field, I'm sure they kept track of how fast the pressures were going down or not going down. Redwater was going down reasonably fast, surprisingly, my recollection. Is that Excelsior never did go down very much.

AK: That's quite possible. I know nothing at all about Excelsior, but Redwater started off with enormous flush production from a few wells. Had you arrived by that time when the Anglo Home half section, was they were producing like crazy out of that half section up there just north of the town, east half of 36.

FM: Doesn't ring a bell with me right now off. Aubrey. The only place it rings a bell with me was what was called the Pacific Corner. Are we talking about same thing?

AK: Over about the same corner yeah, because Pacific had a couple of parcels up there too, that was the very first, before they ever got down to the south end.

FM: But my recollection is that the normal production of oil wells, so somewhere between 460, 600 barrels a day.

AK: Now was that the allowable?

FM: It wasn't called allowables in those days. It was sort of the... I better not name the term, I don't remember what the term was but we didn't get into allowables till many years later. We actually held hearings to determine what they should be.

AK: But gradually...

FM: This was the amount you were allowed to produce, do not ruin the well by dragging in water coning in the gas or whatever.

AK: Yeah, right. But the, over the months that say for the next year the, I use the word allowable, if I may, kept dropping until it got down to about a hundred and something, because of the number of new wells coming on and then the inability of the facilities to haul the oil. Now I think that was the big ???

FM: That had more to do with it, Imperial had a gathering system and so did British America. And it eventually got to the stage where, I don't remember which, but one of the two gathering systems could accept more oil, crude oil than the other and this caused a lot of consternation between the companies depending on which ones they were selling to, and eventually this wound up in the first allowable hearing and the second allowables.

AK: Oh, is that so yeah.

FM: Well if you had somebody offsetting you, that was producing much more than you, you would be quite concerned because in effect you would be being part, partially drained.

AK: Oh, yeah, there's no questioning that, that there was a lot of, you see that was one of the things that come up a little later was the law of equity is against the law of capture. And it was an awful lot of oil. You see what I'm saying is that that Anglo Home half section probably produced a lot of Eric Harvey's oil which is just across the...

FM: Yes, and it may well, the reason for it may well be, all I'm doing is guessing, is that they were connected to the right gathering system.

[00:08:02] AK: Right? All right, now you mentioned a minute ago about the Pacific corner, was there something special about it?

FM: It was where you turned to go to, when you are going to Redwater, you turn just a little bit past where you turn to go up to Egremont.

AK: Egremont, yeah. But was there anything special about that like old Scotty Tosh and some of those characters?

FM: Not particularly, they all lived and worked and had their offices, none of them in Redwater.

AK: I see, so they were they were decentralized in the sort of way.

FM: Right.

AK: Okay. Do you remember the sale of, the first sale of the two big sections that is, Royalite bought one on February the 15th and so did B.A. Hudson's Bay. Do remember those at all?

FM: I certainly remember all the fantastic Crown sales, as a matter of fact Aubrey, we used to have pools as to...

AK: How much was going to...

FM: What the bidding would be and the person that bid the highest always won.

AK: The person that bid the highest always won the pool, yeah. At any time during those years, did you have any consultations with the Board and or with the department as to the Department of Lands and Mines or Mines and Minerals, as to the amount that should be accepted on those bids?

FM: It wasn't a regular thing. But when a Crown sale was coming up, we were asked to be available in case they did have any questions, and occasionally they did have questions and on two occasions, I can't remember the precise locations of the areas., we thought all the bids were too low so advised the appropriate Department in Edmonton, and all the bids were turned down and much to our - looking for the right word -

AK: Chagrin?

FM: No, the opposite.

AK: Oh, much to your...

FM: They were sold less than a year later for at least double what ??? had been before.

AK: Oh, so the refusal was a, was a good thing.

FM: Maybe a little luck attached to it.

AK: Yeah. Well that wasn't always the case, but that's interesting because there were some indications that you know, the Board was in on some of the ??? to make sure that... But that was when McKinnon was Chairman.

FM: Right.

AK: And George Govier was Deputy and... was he spending, that something else though.

FM: Even when he became Chairman and for several months, or maybe even up to a year, he still commuted back and forth from Edmonton and ended up with two jobs: Chairman of the Board and he was also still head of the Chemical Engineering Department.

[00:11:46] AK: Yeah, right. Okay, so you remember any of the first moves made to try to get this unitization going. Did you have any part to play in that?

FM: I remember you mentioning this on the phone before we had met and I have thought and thought about it and I just do not recall any talk about utilization in Redwater, keep in mind though that I was a field man and not in head office. The first recollection I have about unitization, Aubrey, is that after much discussion we decided to put, this is many years later, we decided that we should have a section in the Act and it was put in, that the Board could force unitization and the conditions under which they could use it. There's one little tricky thing about it. The Board sincerely hoped that it would never have to use it and to make sure that it was given further consideration, that portion of the Act was never proclaimed to my knowledge, although I've been retired for 13 years, it has yet to be It is yet to be ??? I could be wrong.

AK: No, I think you're right about that.

FM: So it was more of a bluffing tool.

AK: Well, that may be a bluffing tool, yeah, but you see as it turned out, despite all the work that was done, there was tremendous detailed work done on the field. They had, remember a fellow named Shatford, Reg Shatford?

FM: The name rings a bell.

FM: Yeah, he worked out of the chicken coop too.

FM: Oh, right, right.

AK: And he and I think Gunner Hadrid and somebody else worked as a kind of a committee, you know, an Imperial Oil committee, to develop pore space parameters. Did you ever see any of that work?

FM: No, I'm sorry Aubrey, I didn't. I was too busy running around, by this time other pools or fields if you wan to call them were being discovered and 99.9 percent of my time was spent on probability procedure for production procedures ,proper saltwater disposal, you name it. ???

AK: Well, you see that was the other thing that had to be developed was the water disposal system.

FM: Oh and I had a lot to do with it, I'm very familiar with it.

AK: Now tell me how you, how much you worked with, like you worked with Ben Hochhausen.

FM: Oh yes, and in fact we lived quite close together...

AK: In Edmonton. Tell us, tell me about the water disposal system that you, your input into it.

FM: To start with, it didn't take long for particularly, I've forgotten whether it was east side of the west side started to produce a lot of water, there was a good geological region for it. And having in mind that I'd been in Lloydminster and fought water problems there we quickly arranged, or asked the appropriate

companies to do a ??? or if it was an old well about to be abandoned to make it into a saltwater disposal well, and any saltwater wasn't allowed to be dumped or stored other than in tanks to put on the saltwater disposal well. There was just a few of them scattered around the field but as the field got more and more developed and as there got to be more and more salt water production, it was decided by the right parties whoever they were that it would be more advantageous to have a saltwater disposal company who would build, spring our lines all up and down the field connecting to all the batteries and it developed into what I think was one of the biggest saltwater disposal companies in the world. A very efficient company, well-run and perhaps in my, I'm not a reservoir engineer, I think in the end wound up in the recovery of more oil and might have been part of keeping the pressure in the pool up.

AK: Would you say that Ben Hochhausen was the one of the real reasons for the success of it?

FM: Oh, yeah. Yes. He was a very...

AK: How would you describe him?

FM: He was extremely interested in the work. If you needed knowledge, he went out and got it, he got along with people well, I just think he was one of the best men that could have got the job and he did an excellent job.

AK: Well, his company has become very successful too.

FM: I'm sorry. I didn't realize it was his company.

AK: Well, he was, it became a part of him, you see there was Rice Engineering, you see, but I have all that on tape so I won't take up your time with that. But there was another thing here was going out and taking, going out and getting the production records that Greenwood had quite a bit to say about in here. Maybe I'll just turn this off for a second.

[00:18:48] Tell us about this wild well in Imperial oil drill down at Simmons.

FM: There drilling, starting in a well and were drilling surface hole, at that time you were required to go to a minimum of 600 feet, but at about 300 feet the well blew out with natural gas. We left it for, I'm guessing now, 10 to 15 hours, we were sure. It would bleed off and die and we would just continue on and set the surface casing but it showed no signs of bleeding off. So we moved the rig back about I would guess 140, 200 feet, set it at an angle by laying some timbers across the front of it and drilling down and intercepting the other well and filling it. And after that dead, that they just continued on down set of casing and away it went.

AK: Was there conductor pipe in the hole?

FM: No those no conductor pipe set in those days.

AK: Oh, they didn't use that.

FM: No.

AK: Just bare hole.

FM: That's right.

AK: Isn't that interesting. And do you remember whose rig it was?

FM: It was Imperial's well.

AK: Yeah, right. Well they had all kinds of...

FM: There were so many different...

AK: Now this other thing, talking about production, Frank remembers, sorry, Paul remembers, Paul Greenwood remembers going out, as he said, chasing daily production figures from all the individual operators. And in the main, actually quite meaningless, as every well seem to make its 250 barrels per day quota. You got any comments on that?

FM: I, this was after I had left. My biggest problem was during the two years that I was in Redwater was getting the drilling companies to fill out the tally?? reports. I always remember the drilling companies and it included most of them use the tally reports as a timesheet and there was nothing on them about depth, surveys all the things that were supposed to be on it were not. They were developed into the two or three cases and once they got settled, or we'd shut it right down for not having to keeping proper tally reports, it got around to the others and they start to keep proper tally reports.

AK: That's very interesting and yet... I'll just turn that off for a minute.

[00:21:46] Okay, we just had a very enjoyable cup of tea here and we'll get back to the business at hand. So tell us about the underground fires in the muskeg. And what did the Board have any responsibility towards them?

FM: No, Aubrey, the Board didn't have any responsibility. Redwater essentially, except for very small areas was essentially overlain by muskeg and with all the activity, the drilling, the fire pits and all this sort, little fires would start in the muskeg then go underground and travel underground for at least a half a mile and then pop out again, then go back under again. And there were numerous fires of that sort right from Simmons right up to Opal, there were some very serious ones at Opal that pretty near ??? some farmhouses. The best thing you could do is guess how far the fire had gone and ask the drilling company or the company that was drilling the well to take a Cat in and dig down and try and backfire, or at least not let it spread past that point.

AK: Right, kind of like a fire prevent...

FM: Yes.

AK: And an underground fire break.

FM: Right. And eventually they burned themselves out and then after a period of years with all the roads that had to be built to the various wells and batteries and ??? the ditches from the roads dried out the

muskeg and solved the problem. And I have a feeling that the same thing happened, what's the biggest deal...

AK: Aerial.

FM: ??? There was a bunch of [inaudible]

AK: Is that right. Okay. Let's move on now to, you got the water disposal system in place, and you said that you didn't have that much to do with the moves towards unitization, but was there, was there, do you remember if there was some talk about unitization before you left Redwater?

FM: Not to my knowledge, not that I was involved or even heard about.

AK: Right. Well, then where was your next assignment after Redwater?

[00:24:32] FM: After I left Redwater, it was February 1951, I was appointed Northern District Engineer, which meant I had to supervise all field operations for the Board north of Red Deer. And we then started to build more and more field offices. For example at Camrose, Drayton Valley, there was a couple of other places and I was responsible for all those to report on their behalf to Calgary.

AK: Now, where did you headquarter, in Edmonton?

FM: In Edmonton.

AK: Where was your offices in Edmonton?

FM: I had the upstairs of a really old house right across Ninth Street from the administration building.

AK: Oh yeah, over on the, near the tracks.

FM: Right and eventually I got an office in the administration building and finished there.

AK: Now was that in with the Department of Mines and Minerals, in with Hubert and that gang?

FM: I hate to say it was in with them, I was close to them. I'll remind you that the board was a body politic and corporate, we ran ourselves.

AK: Oh, yeah, I know, I didn't imply that you were...

FM: I was on the same floor.

AK: Yeah. Alright. Well, that's fine. So it was just a matter of space. So how long did that job go on for?

FM: That lasted until July of '56 then at that time the Board created a new position called the Chief Development Engineer and I was appointed as its first head, and the Chief Development Engineer was responsible for all field operations in the entire province in and also the development departments that existed in the Calgary main office.

AK: Now, didn't Dick King have a job similar to that.

FM: He actually worked under me at the time.

AK: Oh, did he. He was also...

FM: He was head of the development department which was part of the Chief Development Engineer's department.

AK: And he would handle the licenses wouldn't he?

FM: Yes, yeah.

AK: And was he still the assessor?

FM: Yes.

AK: He used to post them up on the door didn't they, in the... I remember seeing those notices up on the door.

FM: All I can recall, Aubrey, is that they had to post them in either one or more places, I can't remember exactly where.

AK: That was a legal requirement, for all and sundry to read. Well by 1956, would your job have gone back into Redwater when they were talking about the, forcing, the Board forcing Imperial Oil to gather gas? Did that run across your desk?

FM: Aubrey, I did go back to all field offices on a regular basis, but mostly to see how the field offices were operating whether I could get some good ideas and pass them along to another office and whether they were sending appropriate information into our various Calgary departments such as the gas department, the oil department, that sort of thing. And I'm sort of coordinator in that sense and never got involved in this, which I think would probably be done by Board members themselves trying unitization, but I do remember getting involved in discussions about unitizations in general and our final decision to put something in the Act of not having proclaimed and use it as a tool to put pressure on.

AK: But you see the only thing I can find in the Board records, it was a hearing number 50 which dealt with the building at the plant, and there's nothing, they can't find anything in the rules about the, you know, the transcript or anything else.

FM: If I was to go back to the Board to look for it, I'd look at the gas department.

AK: Yeah, maybe.

FM: They did the calculations. We did regular calculations. I wasn't involved, but I know they were being done to see if it was economic under the Board's philosophy of whether it should be done because it varied from the company's ???

AK: Oh, very much so.

FM: And when we reached the point that in, according to our studies, we thought it was time we started to gather the gas and conserve it, we would so notify the companies, we wouldn't immediately issue an order, we would call a hearing and have our staff present their studies and findings, let them be questioned by the operators, let them present their own studies as a regular hearing, and depending on which one would convince the Board the right way, we either let it go for another year or issued an order requiring that the gas be gathered and processed, and conserved by such and such a time, or we would close the field down.

AK: Right, well that was the, that's when it came to that level. Okay. So after this this job as Chief Development Engineers, then when did you become a Board member?

[00:31:46] FM: I became a Board member in September '59, and it was still a three-man Board. And had always been and continued to be until 1971.

AK: Right. Now that move in September '59 was probably the result of McKinnon having gone to Ottawa and Govier moving up and then and...

FM: And Red getting ill. Everything happened at once and all of a sudden we needed a whole bunch of Board members. Vern got appointed quick, within days.

AK: Vern Mollard??

FM: Yes.

AK: Right, yeah. So that was kind of a sudden need for more Board members. Was Govier still coming up to Edmonton?

FM: He was still coming up from Edmonton to Calgary for one or two days a week and then going back. He was head of the chemical engineering department at the University at the same time.

AK: Yeah, and then later on he...

FM: And later he was also involved in...

AK: He was Chief Deputy Minister.

FM: No, I was going to say he had a lot to do with setting up the chemical engineering department in the University of Calgary.

AK: Oh, did he. Oh I see.

FM: So he was a busy man.

AK: Oh, well he always was a busy man. So, yeah, that would happen and during your period as a member, did you was there any other matters dealing with Redwater that you recall or came across your desk?

[00:33:46] FM: I don't think so. I think we had already put in the the order if that sulphur be recovered, but I'm not sure.

AK: Yeah, well you see there is a certain amount of SO₂ being vented to the atmosphere.

FM: Well, my recollection is that the natural gas, solution natural gas, which was all being produced in Redwater contained somewhere between one and two percent hydrogen sulfide, and I know this quite well because I had a pumping jack in my backyard when I lived in Redwater, all the time I was there. We still weren't requiring that natural gas be gathered [inaudible]. So, but amazingly you get used to it, you get so don't notice it's there. The only time you notice it's there if you go away and come back.

AK: Right, yeah, just like Turner Valley. Just a minute, I'll just...

[00:34:57] You were going to make some comments about the undersaturation in the secondary gas cap.

FM: When the Redwater filled was first discovered, and maybe for a year or two later, I think almost everyone realized that it was an undersaturated oil field, which meant no gas cap. All the gas production would be solution gas, but with production, by production, I mean a large amount of it, the pressure drops quite erratically across the field and that in turn across the bubble point and these pockets of secondary gas cap around the entire Redwater field, at least that's my recollection.

AK: Right. You're having a look at that hearing. Incidentally that one in 1955, there were no interveners either. So I guess they'd all agreed it would just be Imperial Oil. And the Board ??? each other pretty well.

FM: There would be no official interveners, there could have been observers.

AK: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, there's always possibilities of people sitting in.

FM: If they don't register we don't know that they're there and they're not recorded.

AK: No, that's right. I got to know all about that. See, I worked at the National Energy Board.

FM: You'd have gone all through that stuff.

AK: Well, I learned in an awful hurry, but it was a different ball game back then.

FM: You must be aware that Jack Semak?? was our chief ???

AK: That's right, yeah.

FM: Well, he left shortly after, and he took ??? with him and a couple others [inaudible]

AK: That's right, yes.

FM: [inaudible]

AK: That's right. Now we didn't get that business... you resigned from the Board as a member in 1971.

FM: Right.

AK: And then you stayed on as an Advisor.

FM: Until 1980.

AK: Right. By that time you'd moved into the big black building at 5th Avenue, and...

FM: Same old story, Aubrey. The day I retired in they moved into the black building.

AK: Is that right? 1980. That's when they moved in. And you were at 6th Avenue and 5th Street.

FM: The only two offices I was ever in, that I worked in was one on 514 11th Avenue Southwest and the one on 6th Avenue. When they designed it, they arranged and kept it empty, an office for me, somehow somebody had just [inaudible] but it was about a year old.

AK: Well, there seemed to be some big difference when they were building the one on 6th Avenue, as to how big they would build that building. Didn't they add a floor onto it? Do you remember any of that?

FM: The story on that, Aubrey, is that we had to try and guess how big the Board would eventually get, we knew how big we would like to expand. So we built the sub-structure, if that's what you want to call it, the footings and all that sort of thing so that we could add two stories to it, and I can't remember the we had a two stories or one story. I think just one story. But then it became obvious because in 1971 the government decided that we should take over all forms of energy. We realized that one story wouldn't be enough and that's why we left that building.

AK: Well, we're getting near the end of this tape. And what I usually do is ask my interviewees for their philosophy of life, how they've seen the vista, started off as a lowly job working up and just some of your philosophy of your life career. And if Evelyn would like to chime in I'd like to hear from her too.

FM: Aubrey, if I had to live my life over, I don't think despite all the trials and tribulations that I would change one thing. I really enjoyed the type of work I did, the variety of work I loved to do, seems like there was very little repetition, things were always booming, I enjoyed it, didn't always enjoyed moving, moved a lot, but on hindsight, I'm glad I did, I have friends all over the province. I can go back to many places and I know somebody. If I had to do, if I had to go to work today, I'm not sure, I'd have to reconsider. I emphasize today and the only reason I say so, this may sound inappropriate, but the reason I would give it some reconsideration today is the talk right here about the majority of the Board work now being, involving environmental matters rather than drilling problems and reservoir problems, and although I realize it has to be done, it just doesn't happen to be my cup of tea. But if I had to do this, live my life over during the same period of time I wouldn't change anything.

AK: Right. How about you Evelyn, would you like to wrap up this?

EM: Well, I've enjoyed our life in the oil business. I think it's been good to us. We certainly made a lot of friends over the years and you're always running into them and it's been good. I wouldn't change it.

AK: Well, I want to thank both of you very much for letting me into your home and it's very interesting for me because you always learn something every time you interview somebody. That's invariably the case. So it's now 3:40 p.m. Sophie, and that's the end of our interview and over and out.

End of interview