

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Jack McCaskill

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: April 1st, 1985

Tape 1 Side 1 – 30:00

AK: I'm Aubrey Kerr and today is Monday April the 1st, 1985 and I'm in the home of Jack and Kay McCaskill, 355 Poplar Avenue, Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island. And the name McCaskill just for the record is spelled M-C-C-A-S-K-I-L-L, is that right, Jack?

JM: Yes. That's correct.

AK: Now just as an opening, some opening remarks, would you tell me where and when you were born and a little background on your parents?

JM: Yeah, I was born in Winnipeg January the 9th, 1917. My father was raised on a farm south of Winnipeg near Steinbeck and my mother is from ??? Scotland and they met in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. I took all my schooling, I have a brother Alan, year and a half younger and a younger sister. She's about four years younger than I am and my father moved to Calgary before we started school and I took all my public school and high school in Calgary.

AK: Why did your dad move to Calgary?

JM: My dad left farming and became a Veterinary and works the federal government and was transferred to Calgary and spent nearly all his working career working out of Calgary and Red Deer south to the border.

AK: Did he take his training at Guelph?

JM: Yes, he graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College in Guelph.

AK: What part of town did you live in in Calgary?

JS: We lived in in the west end in lower Sunalta, the first house, actually, the first toast we lived in was on 9th Street and 12th Avenue. Big old framed brown house, and then we moved into, had two other houses in the lower Sunalta district. They've both been abandoned, they both have been abandoned since them.

AK: Yeah. That was not quite into Scarborough.

JS: Just lower Scarborough. The second one was 1608 12th Avenue West which was more Sunalta.

AK: That would be close to that tennis club.

JM: Yeah. I used to play tennis with the Calgary Lawn Tennis Club.

AK: And the first school that you went to?

JM: I started out at Sunalta Cottage, which is now closed and then I went to Connaught for grade 6 and then I had to repeat grade 6 which had, and my family had moved in the meantime, so I went to Sunalta and I finished, went to grade 8 at Sunalta and then I went to King Edward?? or south Calgary at that time for grade 9 and then I was at Central Collegiate for 10, 11 and 12.

AK: And that was the old location on 8th Street and...

JM: 8th Street and 12th Avenue.

AK: Now the Sunalta School, was that the one up in the Scarborough?

JM: Yes.

AK: The sandstone building up there, right across from Bert Corey's house,.

JM: Right.

AK: Okay and during the summer did you have any jobs during the summer? In high school?

JM: No, I didn't, no. Jobs were hard to come by in those days.

AK: Right, did you take summer holidays, go to camps?

JM: What we, the family, my two uncle my two uncles both were farming at Steinbeck and what, several summers we would go down there in the old star car and spend my father's holidays at the farms.

AK: And you'd drive all the way.

JM: Yup. From the old...

AK: In the old four-cylinder star, was that a touring car.

JM: Yes, right.

AK: With side curtains?

JM: With the side curtains and with the baggage on the running boards you had...

AK: You had one of those collapsible?

JM: Yeah those accordion type, luggage...

AK: And how many days would it take you to get there?

JM: Normally about, it would take about three to four days. I remember one time we were on new grade going out of Piapot, Saskatchewan and the car was in low gear for the whole day, and we were averaging about ten miles an hour and trying to keep from going into the ditch on the muddy roads.

AK: It would probably make the radiator boil.

JM: Oh, yeah. Well, that's right.

AK: Yeah, those were the days of pretty tough motoring and yet your dad obviously must have preferred to do that rather than take the train.

JM: Yes. We never used to take the train. I guess it was cheaper to take a family of five in the car than on the train.

AK: That's right. And what would you do at night? Did you camp or?

JM: We used to camp yes, we had a tent, and that was a normal tent and bedding and so on and cook our meals out...

AK: Real pioneers. Okay. So when you completed your high school training at Central, what was the next step in your academic career?

[00:06:12] JM: While I was job hunting, I went to Commercial in Calgary and took a business course, typing and shorthand and accounting, and finally after finishing, I, after a lot of looking I finally got a job as an office boy at the Great West Saddlery, and that was a job where I rode my bike down to the main post office and picked up the mail and put it on everybody's desk by 8:00 o'clock, and then was at their beck and call all day long, and then I had to collect up to mail all the parcels and take them back down to the post office and I'd usually get home about six o'clock at night.

AK: What year was that? Do you recall?

JM: 1, that'd be 1936, 37, yes.

AK: And where was the post office then?

JM: Let's see it was on 8th Avenue and about 3rd Street East.

AK: Where the, that public building?

JM: Public building, yes.

AK: Public building. Yeah. I see, it was there then.

JM: Yes, right.

AK: That that may have been one of Bennett's, or somebody else's buildings during the Depression.

JM: Could be, I don't know. Actually R.B. Bennett, I remember him coming to our classroom when I was in grade 8 at Sunalta to talk to our class, the only impression I have of him is a very big man, and, but he gives a good old pep talk.

AK: Right. Well then what about your next step then, were you marking time before you got into University?

JM: Yeah, after, my Sunday School teacher at that time, we needed a new secretary and he asked me if I'd come to work for him, and I was making \$32.50 a month at the Great West Saddlery, and he said, well I'll pay you \$35 a month, so I figured that was a step up, and I went and worked for C.J. ??? who had his own insurance business and I stayed there for the year and I was living at home and able to save a little money. And the year working in the auto insurance office was the catalyst I needed to make up my mind that I didn't want to work in an office and served me on to go to university, try something different.

AK: So, but could you have gone to University sooner if you, were the finances...

JM: I needed to raise some money. My parents helped me but they couldn't send me on their own.

AK: No, I see, so there was a combination of, but then you got, you saw the light and you said to yourself... well, then what, how did you choose the courses you took?

JM: Well, actually I was interested in dentistry, but I couldn't see financing it and I guess by default I chose engineering, and I took the mining engineering option, but the graduates at that time, the only jobs they could get was underground and if, I wore glasses and I didn't want to work underground anyway. And so after two years there, Turner Valley was starting to perk up in the oilfield there, and I wrote to the University of Texas, the University of Oklahoma and Texas A&M about their petroleum engineering courses and the upshot of it was that I enrolled in the University of Oklahoma to take petroleum engineering. [inaudible]

AK: Oh I see, you had taken two years.

JM: At U of A.

AK: So you had the credits.

[tape becomes very muffled at this point]

JM: I had to credits to go to third year...

AK: And that was at, Norman.

JM: Norman, Oklahoma.

AK: Right. ??? Was there anyone in your class that you recall that's still in the oil patch?

JM: Yeah, well actually down there, ??? Heller, he was a year ahead of me and John McKay was in some of my classes. And well then the group I was with the included Jack Storey and Derek Coleman and Scotty, I can't remember his last name. And of course there was also Jim Langevin and Doug Knowles.

AK: Bur you were ahead of Maurice Paulson

JM: And also Maurice Paulson. Actually. I first met Maurice on the bus going down to O.U., I think he was going for the first time as I was, and we rode the same bus into Oklahoma City and, we stayed in different boarding houses but we kept in touch.

AK: Well, whether any other aside from the fact of Turner Valley out there, were there any individuals in Calgary that started saying, Jack, you ought to be getting in the oil patch, was there any external assistance, like somebody encouraging you.

JM: Not really, no. I just thought there was an opportunity there and I didn't know anybody who had ever been to O.U. or Texas so it was, I ??? down on what they told me about in the calendars. I didn't know anybody when I got there and, but, I had written the Registrar about accommodation and I got into a co-op house for some of the Canadians. And this worked out very well for me, had good accommodation and it wasn't expensive and we were able to work off some of our board by doing, working in the kitchen or making beds or whatever.

AK: You didn't join a fraternity.

JM: No. No, I didn't have that kind of money.

AK: No. Well, I guess the Canadian, did the Canadian boys stay by themselves then...

JM: Not really no, we mixed...

AK: You mixed together.

JM: We all, actually we were all, our classes were all different, particularly with the courses, well we were all taking engineering but different classes and we'd get together in the evenings sometimes because we were in the same house. No we mixed, in the house we had about 7 Canadians and about 15 Americans and we mixed very well.

AK: Any Mexicans or Venezuelans?

JM: There was a chap from Venezuela, and I think there was one from Mexico.

AK: So during those years when you' were at University both in Alberta and Norman did you, what kind of summer work did you do?

[00:14:29] JM: The first summer after I went to O.U. I got a job in Turner Valley with Royalite Oil Company, and I worked on the bottom hole truck doing bottom hole pressure surveys and de-waxing the tubing. And I was working with John McKay who later went to a service company, Dowell and Wellex?? and worked for Jim Landon, who was on the bottom hole truck.

AK: What were you getting, a month?

JM: I can't remember but it was about, I think about a\$125 a month, I'm a little vague on that right now.

AK: Well that would be about right. So, to whom did you report, King Houston, or ??? Trammell?

JM: Actually when I got the job I went to see James McLeod who was the president of Royalite in Calgary and, to see if he could offer a summer job and he said that I should go out and see King Houston, K.H. Houston at Turner Valley. He was a field superintendent. And so I borrowed my dad's car and drove up the 40-odd miles to Turner Valley and was shown in to Mr. Houston's office and he sat like a bump on a log and didn't say anything for it seemed like about five minutes and finally, I told him that I was looking for summer work and he looked at me and he grunted, and he said, told me to report to I think it was Mr. Vern Taylor in the engineering department, and from there I went to work for the summer.

AK: So then the next summer, where did you live?

JM: After I got, well the next summer after I graduated I went back to Royalite, and they took me on staff, as a junior petroleum engineer and I...

AK: What year was that?

JM: That would be after summer school, I had to go to summer school in 1941 in order to pick up a couple of courses, so I joined Royalite, Aubrey, in about September of '41. I was working in Turner Valley as a junior engineer and one of the first jobs I can recall was in the completion of one of the Turner Valley wells, in which I was Don Mackenzie's right-hand man, that's, in those days the drilling crew after the well was drilled left, and Don and I went to gasify the well, so it would kick off, and it was just Don and I wrestling with the well to open and close and get the thing going because the drilling crew, this was beneath their dignity to have to deal with production.

AK: I'm just going to check... [tape pauses] There were some other characters around the field there, there was Jonesy, and of course there was Bill Gallup, and Ted Link, do you recall any of those three people?

JM: Yes. Ted Link was the first person in Royalite that I went to see about a summer job and when I went into Royalite's office, I asked the secretary for Mr. Link, and she said well, he's upstairs at the far end of the building. So I went upstairs and there was the place was just one empty, but there was a gentleman sitting in the corner office with his feet up on the desk. And so I walked down and said I was looking for Mr. Link and he said, well, that's me and I said, well, I'm looking for a summer job and he said, oh that's interesting, he said, what do you know, and I, and that really put me on the spot. I didn't know what, just how to start off the conversation. That was my introduction to Ted Link who was quite a character and I just, he created lots of problems for lots of people.

AKK: Did he play any practical jokes on you? I guess you weren't, new enough to...

JM: No, that was the only time he put me on the spot.

AK: And what year was that?

JM: That would be, I think when I was, I think that was probably the summer of 1937.

AK: Oh, I see that's before you went to...

JM: Before I went to O.U. I was looking for a summer job.

AK: Well that was before you went in to see J.H. McLeod.

JM: Yeah, I think it was the next year I went in to see J.H. McLeod, after...

AK: Now that building is where the Bay Parkade is now.

JM: Yeah.

AK: 606 2nd Street.

JM: That's right, yup.

AK: There was that brick building and underneath was a service station.

JM: I don't recall a service station.

AK: No, it was kind of built in.

JM: Could be, yeah.

AK: At the north end.

[00:20:25] Okay, so then you said you got permanent work at Royalite, how long did that permanent...

JM: Well, you see the war was on and I was back on the bottom hole cut with Royalite, Dr. G.S. Hume, who was with the Geological Survey of Canada, and I was on as a student assistant for him after second year university, and he knew that I had graduated petroleum engineering and he approached me to see if I was interested in going up to Lloydminster to look after the drilling of a couple wells that a Toronto group were promoting. And I decided that I might as well try something, try it out and so I took the job on and went up to Lloydminster. The consulting firm was James and Buffan.

AK: Yeah, that's B-U-F-F-A-N.

JM: I think it's two 'f's'.

AK: Yeah, B-U double F. So these wells were named Dyna weren't they?

JM: Dyna Omega Number One and Number Two, there were on the Battle River about 25 miles south of Lloyd.

AK: And you were saying that Charlie Mills...

JM: Charlie Mills got a rig together and Paul Guthrie came up from Calgary to the rotary rig, and Charlie Mills was really a cable tool driller, so he hired Paul Guthrie to come up and run the rotary rig. And I met Paul in Calgary, I lived in Calgary and Paul didn't have a car. So I arranged to pick he and his wife and their baggage up in my Chevrolet Reaction, 1935 model, and the three of us drove up to Lloydminster and then down to the drill site where we lived in a tarpaper shack.

AK: Right. And were you paid by the day or by the month?

JM: I was paid by the month.

AK: And you were paid by James and Buffan were you?

JM: Yes, I think, I was paid by James and Buffan. And I had to send in weekly reports on activities, back to them.

AK: Well then, once those wells were completed, what then did you do?

JM: After those were completed, the syndicate indicated they weren't going to do any more drilling, and I found out that Conversation Board's man in Vermillion, Burt Corey, was planning to leave, and the upshot of it was that I was hired by the Conservation Board to take over from Burt.

AK: Yeah, who hired you there?

JM: Pardon me?

AK: Who hired you at the Board?

JM: I think it was probably D.C. Goodall out of the Calgary office, I reported to ??? anyway, and I think he was....

AK: Right. And at that time the offices were in the telephone building on 6th Avenue.

JM: Yes, ???

AK: [inaudible]

JM: Yeah, right.

AK: Do you remember Floyd Beach very well.

JM: Yeah, I...

AK: Did you have much to do with him?

JM: Not really, but we knew Floyd and ??? socially because we played bridge at the Engineer's Bridge Club in Calgary and they were active members at that time. Then another person I knew was Goldie Leithmuir??.

AK: Yes, Goldie has died several years ago. Then there was another person, Grace Colkey, her name was Grace Winter.

JM: No.

AK: She was doing clerical work ???

JM: Yeah, I don't recall.

AK: What about Doug Lair? Was he around then?

JM: Could be yeah, I think Doug was, but I knew Doug better at Imperial Oil.

AK: And what about Dave Penner?

JM: Dave Penner was with the Board, I know him quite well, as a matter of fact, we visited Dave and his wife, Eva in London, they had a couple of us out for dinner, much later when we were, when I was in Libya and had gone to London for a holiday.

AK: Well Dave started off, I believe in the Calgary office, but then he went out and worked in the Valley under Dick King.

JM: Oh, I didn't realize that, I know Dick King.

AK: Yeah, there was Maury Paulson days, Dave Penner, Charlie Dunkley, and somebody else, there were four of them and they worked for Dick. Dick would go home, up to his ranch, and they'd be in the office there, ???

JM: No kidding.

AK: Yeah, that was way back in the 40s. But you have much to do with Dick when you were with the Board.

JM: Not a great deal because I didn't work for the Board in Turner Valley, but I was doing jobs similar to Dick up in the Vermillion area.

AK: What area, how big was your area?

JM: Well, basically at that time the war was on and the activity was, it became quite active there because the CNR needed the crude for their locomotives and they had put a lot of capital into a stepped up drilling program in order to get enough crude for their locomotives.

AK: Right. Well then we were talking last night about me being there in '42, but it appears that you didn't come until '43.

JM: I came, I went in '43, yeah.

AK: I don't remember Burt being up there in '42 but...

JM: No, could have been...

AK: Because we drilled Borradaile, which is west of Vermillion.

JM: Yeah.

AK: And I think that's where Spy Langston was, with a rig with Al Wright.

JM: Yeah. I remember...

AK: Which was a forerunner of General Petroleums.

JM: Yes, I remember, I know Spy quite well.

AK: Now when you were with the Board, you'd really had not that much training and you were recalling this instance of this one well that was, you figured it was being drilled pretty crooked.

JM: Right.

AK: Can you give me a little story on that?

JM: Well, actually the Vermillion wells, they were there about 1,500 feet was to the, to the sand, and the sand was usually present, not always oil bearing, sometimes it was salt water. But this particular well, they had gone down about 300 feet further and had not come to encounter the sand and it was, and the wells were drilled in ten-acre spacing, so it was a little hard to understand why we didn't intersect the sand. So I went out to the well there and the only thing I could think of was that the well must be, wasn't plumbed. So I asked them to give us a, to take a straight whole test. And the only equipment available for that was owned by Halliburton and they had the bottle and muriatic acid.

AK: I think it was hydrofluoric...

JM: Hydrofluoric, pardon me, hydrofluoric acid, and we ran the ran instrument in.

AK: All right, we'll just turn the tape over.

Tape 1 Side 2 – 29:00

AK: This is side two of tape one, and would you continue with your story about the well that was drilled crooked?

JM: Yeah, so we ran...

AK: Lloyd Clinch drilled the well?

JM: Yeah, I think it was Ben ??? or Lloyd Clinch, so we ran the instrument in and when it came out the bottle was ??? about an angle of 26 degrees and Whitey Wilson says, impossible so he ran several more checks up the hole and they all showed that there was a gradual deviation from under surface plate to 26 degrees at the bottom. So Whitey said, well, what do we do now? And I said, well, I knew what you'd have to do, but I thought I better check with Calgary. So I phoned Ray Goodall and told him what had happened and he said well, we'll have to rebuild the well, so I went out and told Whitey that they'd have to put it back to surface pipe and rebuild it and of course this took all the profit out of the operation for him, he was very unhappy, but he did what we asked him to do.

AK: Right. So your job as Conservation Board Officer covered all the Lloydminster area. How far west did your area go, do you recall?

JM: Well basically at that time there was a few wild cats but it was principally Vermilion at that time and Lloydminster didn't really start getting active until later on.

AK: Yeah. Well, do you have anything to do with Nate Goodman in Medicine Hat?

JM: Yeah. I knew Nate when he was with the Conservation Board and I first ran into him when he came, when I was with Imperial and he came up to Redwater Number One to see what we were up to...

AK: Yeah, at that time he was working out of Devon.

JM: Yes, I believe that's correct.

AK: Okay. Well, how long did you stay with the Board?

JM: Well, I'd had my name in to go into the Engineers and they called me up in February, January, '43 and so I left the Board and joined the Engineers.

AK: As what?

JM: Well I went in as a Second Lieutenant in the engineering, Royal Canadian Engineers, and I was in the Engineers until '46 I guess it was, after the war until the war ended.

AK: And did you see active service?

JM: I was active but I never left Canada, I was on overseas posting but never got posted. I got down to the Burton and that was my last, the Burton Halifax, our group never left Canada.

AK: And you were demobilized at what rank?

JM: Lieutenant.

AK: Yeah, right. So here you were on civvy street, but I seem to recall that somewhere in there when you were in Ottawa that you met Kay.

JM: Yes. Well after I got out of the army, Dr. Hume, who I wrote to about getting a job suggested I come to Ottawa and work for the Department of Mines and Minerals on the wartime project which they were finishing up. What they had done is drilled core holes to make tonnage estimates on the richer sections of the tar sands and I think it was Mildred Lake and Ruth, and Mildred Lake, I'm a little foggy on that. So I joined the Department in Ottawa and the cores were brought in from the field and they were courted longitudinally and the lab in Ottawa extracted all the crude out of the samples and reported to us and we made up the tonnage maps ISO packs and made and reported on what was...

AK: And this was in 1946 was it?

JM: This would be in '46, yeah after I got out of the army.

AK: Yeah, and you were mentioning Sidney Ciels.

JM: Yeah, Ciels was, he had been employed by the government and because of his background in the tar sands, he was, he had been, he was retired at that time but had come back to, as a consultant to the government. And he was in the office from time to time helping out but he wasn't that active in actual work at that time.

AK: And you mentioned also Mr. Timm.

JM: Yeah, actually the director of the department who I worked for directly was W.B. Timm who was a ??? engineer...

AK: Is that T-I-M-M?

JM: Yes, right.

AK: No "s".

JM: No I don't think so.

AK: Timm. And he, this was separate, this was the mines branch not the Geological Survey of Canada.

JM: Right this was mines.

AK: And now you were in what building?

JM: I can't remember the address but it was on Sparks Street.

AK: Oh you weren't you weren't over at the Museum.

JM: No.

AK: And you weren't on Booth Street.

JM: No.

AK: The old mine...

JM: No, it was on Sparks, I can't remember, it was...

AK: Well, that's all right. That's okay. But, so your, that would probably be that, there was an old Federal Building on Sparks Street. Okay, well then, how did you meet Kay then?

[00:06:27] JM: Well, that's, we met in Ottawa. I went down to the Presbyterian Church to join the badminton club, and Kay was playing at the same badminton club, and we met and she was still in the Air Force, but she got demobbed later on and we got married, and...

AK: The rest is history, eh? Now that was the Presbyterian Church on Wellington Street was it?

JM: It's the biggest...

AK: The old big one.

JM: Yeah, right downtown.

AK: I remember attending that church shortly after I arrived in Ottawa and that was quite a quite a...

JM: Was Mr. Johnson the minister then?

AK: I don't know, I don't know...

JM: His daughter also played badminton and was a good, very good friend of ours, Kay and myself.

AK: Okay had Kay served overseas when she was...

JM: No, she wasn't, she was in Newfoundland for period but she had joined up in '42 I think it was, before I knew her and she was, when I met her she was working for the Intelligence Branch in the Air Force. She was a graduate librarian and that was sort of the background for her type of work.

AK: And her parents came from Vancouver.

JM: She was a Vancouver girl, yes. Her father was City Paymaster for Vancouver.

AK: Right. Okay. So you met and then did you live in Ottawa for a short time after you're married or did you...

JM: No, when I was in Ottawa and we were examining the cores, Shell sent a man by the name of Currie out, and he and I and Win Irish went, we were at the Museum opening all these wooden boxes to describe the cores and I asked, I knew that the job was running out in Ottawa so I asked Currie if there were any jobs with Shell in Calgary and he said he didn't know but he told me who to write, and I wrote to Shell in Calgary and the upshot of it was that I was offered a job. And so we, I was married in Vancouver and we set up housekeeping in Calgary and I started this job for Shell.

AK: And you were just there a few weeks when you got sent out to...

JM: Right, well not with Shell, I was with Shell for a year, and this is how I found out how big business worked. The manager when I went to Shell was an exploitation engineer and at that time Shell was developing the Jumping Pound field, and I was working for a Bernard Perry and between the two of us as we sat on these Jumping Pound wells to pick out casing points and log the cores and samples and so on, and that's, that was my first job with Shell. And then the next summer, they, the word was getting around that they were going to pull out and the manager was replaced by another manager whose expertise was in the land department, and his job was to consolidate Shell's land position and he was there, only there about four months and they brought in another manager and his job was to dismantle the organization and pat everybody on the back and send them on their way.

AK: Who was that gentleman?

JM: His name was Shepherd, I believe. And within three months he'd reduced the staff from about a hundred down to one Geologist, a chap by the name of Ian Crawford who was still with Shell or was at that time...

AK: Yeah, he was a survivor.

JM: The only survivor. At that time. I was offered a job in South America, but I've been in the Army and I'd been riding around quite a bit and I decided I'd like to stay put for a while, and just at that time Imperial made the discovery at Leduc and I eventually wound up working for Imperial.

AK: And who interviewed you at Imperial for your job?

JM: Vern Taylor.

AK: So did he remember having you on board before?

JM: I don't know but I think possibly he did. I yes, I think... there was Vern Taylor and actually Ernie Shaw and Stan Harding were, they were, Vern was the manager and Stan and Ernie Shaw were in the, I guess the geological department, they didn't have an engineering department as such...

AK: But Maurice Paulson was there, he started in '46.

JM: Maurice Paulson, what '46? Yeah. I didn't...

AK: See Maurice left Neal McQueen's outfit because Neal was folding up and Morris got a job with Imperial in '46 and Jack Harvey, I think was also on board in '46.

JM: Yes. I didn't know Jack until later, and of course I knew Maurice at University, but I believe I didn't really run into Maurice at that time, I'm not sure where he was. But Jack Fulton was another one who was also with Imperial.

AK: He'd been in the Valley.

JM: Jack, could, I don't know.

AK: Yeah, he had some kind of a shack out there at the north end and...

JM: Was he working for Imperial then?

AK: I'm not sure but he moved in and so he was with Imperial and then there was another one. Bob Pott.

JM: Yes, I know Bob, Bob's a pressure engineer basically.

AK: Yeah, and then McDaniel, Rod McDaniel. He come up a little later, he'd been in South America.

JM: Don't... Betty???

AK: Yeah. Anyways, when did J.D. Gustafsson come up?

JM: He came in shortly after the Leduc Discovery to set up the engineering department and I eventually got transferred to Calgary from Redwater and I worked for Gustafsson and, and E.D. Don Wilson, who is his assistant.

[00:14:16] AK: But let's go back a little bit, when you first joined up with Imperial, did you not go to Lloydminster?

JM: Right. When I went to Imperial I told them that I was, I'd like to be left in Calgary for a while because I'd been married for about a year then and I, we my wife and I hadn't really lived together more than few weeks, it seemed, and we had a new baby and rented a house from actually a chap by the name of Bernard Perry, who was a geologist with Shell who had been transferred to the States, and Vern Taylor assured me that they could leave me alone for a while. But two weeks after I got to Imperial, they were, needed a man up in Lloydminster, and I got the call and so I left home once more, and my wife went back to Vancouver and I went up there to look after a couple wells that were being drilled with George DeMille.

AK: Right. Now in there, in the interim there, I seem to remember you saying that you went on a field trip with Con Hague, was that when you were with Shell?

JM: That's right. Yes. Just before we, before I left Shell for the summer, Con Hague was taking a party up to the Peace River, ??? Lake, Hudson Hope area on pack horses and I was asked if I'd like to go along as his assistant, and I was quite happy to do so. And so I spent the summer with Con up at, we started out from East Pine and worked our way up the east side of ??? Lake to Hudson Hope and then back down the west side for, we were gone about three or four months.

AK: This was surface geology.

JM: Surface geology, mapping, yes.

AK: Was there any talk at that time about the Commotion Creek well having been drilled?

JM: I think it been drilled prior to that...

AK: In '38...

JM: '38. Yeah, right. I knew of it but it was drilled by the B.C. government wasn't it?

AK: Yeah. Well, what about the well that Imperial had drilled there that blew wild, the Imperial...

JM: Oh at ???, I had heard about it, but it was before my time.

AK: Right. So this was, who is on the party beside you and Con???

JM: No, there was just Con and I and we had two packers and the cook and when we got to Hudson Hope the cook went across to, got a boat ride across to the other side to Hudson Hope and got in the Beer Parlor, and we never saw him again.

AK: That's the way he cooks are. Okay. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt there. But let's go back now and you went up to Lloyd and was Imperial drilling very many wells at Lloyd?

JM: Yeah, they, well they drilled, actually Harry Webster was the tool push and he had a Franks 2 rig and we drilled a couple of wells there and actually the drilling department, they usually were, their practice was to drill dry holes so didn't need any completion people and it turned out that this one well had to be completed and George DeMille was the wellsite geologist and when I arrived in Lloyd, I said, you know, what do we, what do we do now? And he said well, he said, you don't need to worry, he said, the drilling people will be able to do all the completion and everything, and George left and I was left, and the drilling rig eventually moved off and I stayed there and looked after the service rate work connection with it for a period.

AK: I think that Franks 2 was the one that we drilled Imperial Leduc Number Two with.

JM: I'm not sure, it could be. Yes, I think it probably could have been.

AK: It was a fairly light...

JM: They had a Franks 1 and a Franks 2.

AK: There was one that was truck-mounted.

JM: Yeah, this one wasn't truck-mounted but it was quite portable as I recall.

AK: Yeah, the Franks, maybe it was the Franks 3, I've forgotten, they were the rigs I worked with in Southern Alberta. I just wondered who were some of the drillers, do you recall any of them?

JM: I can't remember now, actually, Harry Webster was a very fine chap...

AK: Very fine, yeah,

JM: He was the push, and I can picture one of the other drillers but I can't put a name to him right now.

AK: Jim Grasse?

JM: No, he...

AK: Bishop? Jimmy Larmor?

JM: No...

AK: Well, that's okay.

JM: Mel Pope.

AK: Oh, yeah sure, Mel and Mary, they're retired in Vancouver.

JM: Oh, are they?

[00:19:34] AK: Yeah. Okay, so when this drilling, what caused the stop of operations in Lloyd then?

JM: Well, actually while I was still in Lloyd looking after these wells, I got a call from Calgary to go up to Camrose to do completion work on a well that had been drilled by Imperial and actually the well was about a mile away from the ??? camp field, and they had some oil shows there and I spent about six weeks up there acidizing and doing completion work and trying to make something out of it, but in the end, I believe it was abandoned because they were just shows of oil but nothing beyond that. And then I went back to Lloyd, my wife was beginning to wonder what, whether I was a vagabond or not, I think because I spent so little time at home. And shortly after that I got a call from Calgary to go up to Redwater where they'd made the discovery. So once more my wife had to find her way back to Vancouver or, while I went up to Redwater and I worked on Redwater Number One, which was the Discovery Well. And my wife was getting a little upset with all my roaming and she announced that she was coming to Redwater and I better find a place to live. So I had to scramble around and found a skid shack in Radway where we made our home ???

AK: Well, just getting back to Lloyd for a minute, it's worthwhile mentioning Ed Byrd?? and I guess it was another fellow that we talked about last night, Norms Sewell, but Ed was with Schlumberger then, and Norm...

JM: Schlumberger had a truck, there was enough activity and Lloyd at the time that Schlumberger put a service truck in there for logging and Ed was in charge of the operations.

AK: Well he'd been down in Wyoming I believe.

JM: Yes, I think he worked in Trinidad to before...

AK: Oh, yes he worked in Trinidad the during the War. Now, Norm Sewell was he with McCall Frontenac?

JM: Yes, he was McCall Frontenac and I think he was in Vermillion, I'm a little vague, and I don't know why...

AK: Or Wainwright, he might have been in Wainwright...

JM: Might, have been out of Wainwright. Anyway, I got to know Norm at that time, I think it was when I was in Vermillion I got to know Norm, and Jim Shelton.

AK: Shelton, Jim's in Victoria.

JM: As a matter of fact, I went I down to the Canadian Club here, about last year and Jim was that sitting at the table next to me. So we had a little get-together.

AK: Yes. I have been trying to get a hold of Jim. Okay, so who else was there around there that you recall that went on to greater things, wasn't there, no Hod Meech was in your first time there.

JM: Hod Meech was, yeah, he was looking after a Western Leasehold interest in Vermillion.

AK: Yeah, but when you went to Lloyd was I guess Clinch was still pretty active there in '46, '47.

JM: Yes, another chap that was there at that time was, well Murray Mitchell and Gray were in there...

AK: Dave Gray?

JM: Dave Gray who was a university in O.U. when I was there and another chap that I didn't know that well was Ken Matheson who was at that time working for a professor at the University of Saskatchewan...

AK: Edmonds.

JM: Edmonds, doing I think well site work or surface geology, I'm not sure which.

AK: I think Lloyd Flood worked for Edmonds too.

JM: Yeah that name doesn't ring a bell.

AK: No, but Lloyd I think graduated from Saskatchewan. But at that time, you didn't venture, none of your holes were drilled in Saskatchewan, they were all on the Alberta side, were they?

JM: Yeah, right.

AK: That Imperial drilled.

JM: Yeah. That's right.

[00:24:28] AK: Okay. So then you were on the Discovery Well at Redwater and you were saying that you were doing the drill stem testing and Rod Morris was doing the geology, right and Pin Lynam?? was pushing tools?

JM: Yeah. Yes.

AK: And that was the Wilson rig I think from Leduc...

JM: Yes, I think so.

AK: With the derrick, the derrick that was built, it wasn't a ???

JM: No, it was a regular derrick I think...

AK: Yeah, a C derrick...

JM: Actually the rig was in place when I got there. So yes...

AK: So are there any special anecdotes about that first well, a lot of scouts around?

JM: I didn't, I think actually the first test was run by Doug Knowles and then I took over from, for the rest of them and there, one thing I remember is that record and tested every ten feet, and the reef was a over a hundred feet thick so that we had at least ten and perhaps more drill stem tests, and they used to test the daylight so that every day at daylight we had one, ran another test and it, well flowed, I forget the rates now, but it was very, it was a prolific discovery...

AK: Yeah, right.

JM: We had, these people came out from Devon and put in a couple of 500-barrel tanks and a separator and we flowed the well into these tanks on a temporary basis and they were always trucked I think to the Edmonton refinery while they, and this was the start of production from Redwater.

AK: Then did you establish a more permanent residence in Redwater?

JM: No, there was nothing to be, no accommodation in Redwater and I rented a skid shack in Radway, and my wife and daughter came out from Vancouver and it was a 10 by 40 skid shack and the pump was outside and the biffy was outside, and Norm Wright who was, who came over as a production foreman help me convert the old wooden stove to burn oil, put in a clean oil burner and that was at one end of the skid shack and it was a main source of heat both for cooking and for our space heat. And that winter was very cold and I bought an electrical heater and it cost, for the bedroom, and my electrical bill and oil bill were much in excess of the rent I was paying for the skid shack.

AK: I'm sure it was. Now you mentioned Norm Wright, was that Al Wright's brother?

JM: No, I don't think so, different Norm. He, Norman originally came from Turner Valley, I believe and he was in Devon as production foreman, actually his son was in the oil business. He was with BP I believe, I don't, can't remember his initials.

AK: Well, what about George Wright, did you have anything to do with George?

JM: Yeah, George was with Imperial and George was equipment engineer in Calgary and, oh, yes, George was in Devon. I didn't really have much to do with George originally, but eventually he was in Calgary working as an equipment engineer and then he left to take on something else or left the company, I'm not sure which, I think he left the company.

AK: He went with Bass or Canfor??

JM: Yeah, right, and I was transferred from Redwater to Calgary as equipment engineer.

AK: Right, and then you worked for Charlie Visser?

JM: Well, I'd worked for Charlie Visser, I'm getting mixed up here. I'd worked for Charlie Visser earlier on, I think it was, and Maroney.

AK: Okay, I think we'll stop the tape there.

Tape 2 Side 1 – 29:00

AK: Side one continuing with Jack McCaskill's interview, April 1, '85 and Jack, once you'd had your pioneering in Radway, you were transferred back to Calgary as equipment engineer, you were saying you were reporting to Gustafsson?

JM: Gustafsson and well Dingle was in the office then too, I think they were both in the department at that time.

AK: Do you recall when Gustafsson went back to the States?

JM: Not really, no.

AK: I don't remember either but...

JM: Actually later on, I think it was we were upstairs in that same building I was working for Gustafsson and he at that time was chief engineer and certainly gave all his engineers a free hand to perform or hang themselves.

AK: You were saying he had a clean desk and Don Wilson's was piled up.

JM: Right. Gustafsson used to operate with his feet on the desk and a clean desk, and Don Wilson who was very meticulous and liked detail work always had about a dozen reports on his desk, and a different style of engineering. Don was very methodical and very good but seemed to me was pretty hard on himself by not using his staff more effectively.

AK: No. Well Paulson was still around.

JM: Yeah Maurice, he was after, maybe it was after Gustafsson left that Paulson went to Calgary and he and Walt Dingle were in adjacent offices and I'm not quite sure who reported to who, I think maybe Walt was the senior man I'm not sure.

AK: Right, and at no time did you ever, were you ever transferred into Leduc at Devon?

JM: No, I was supposed to go to Leduc from Redwater and had signed up for a house in Devon. And then this, and then just about the day I was going to move, I phoned Devon and they said, well we hear you're not coming here. You're going to Calgary so I phoned Calgary and found out that's where I really was going.

AK: Well, you have to find out from somebody else don't you.

JM: Yes.

AK: And at no time did you get any assignments to Norman Wells?

JM: I was, not at that time, but the first wells, when I was in Calgary as equipment engineer, we, I think it was when I was equipment engineer, we drilled the directional holes, Normal Wells under the McKenzie, we drilled about five or six wells using one of the company rigs and Charlie Visser was in charge of it, I was looking after it from the Calgary and I ordered all the old equipment and, Otis equipment, so on, for these, for this operation...

AK: What would that be, packers or?

JM: Fail safe equipment or disaster valves so that if the if the ice?? took out the wellheads, then the well would shut off automatically, downhole equipment, basically and packers, Model D packers.

AK: So you did some of the, the company did some of the pioneering that is now being done with those islands.

JM: Exactly. Exactly. We at that time we were able to, I think we were directionally drilling about, I've forgotten now, about 25 degrees was about the maximum deviation we could get, and the wells were drilled right up against the bank, so we were under the, now they have the islands to protect them.

AK: But they were, on the bank they would be quite vulnerable, ??? up high, they'd take out the wellhead...

JM: Right, that's why we put in the Otis?? disaster ???

[00:04:59] AK: Okay, so during your time in, when you got finally moved back to Calgary, where did you live in Calgary?

JM: The first time we went back we had a, lived at 132, no, 870 19th Avenue, we had a 40-year-old house at that time and...

AK: Lower Mount Royal.

JM: Lower Mount Royal, and then we lived at in 2507 22nd Street in Richmond, Knob Hill. And those were the first two houses we lived in in Calgary.

AK: Right. And then you, you were raising your family, your family was coming along and...

JM: Right, yeah, we had, when I went to Redwater we just had Marlene and Bob and then in Calgary we had Anne and Brian came along so we had the four kids in Calgary. But really I should be checking with my wife on this because ???

AK: Well that's okay. And they went to school in that in that area?

JM: Yeah, actually Bob and Marlene took most of their schooling in Dawson Creek, they were pre-school, no, Bob actually, pardon me, Bob & Marlene started school in Calgary, Bob took grade one there and Marlene took grade one and two and then it was about that time that we got moved to Dawson Creek.

AK: What year was that?

JM: Oh boy, I can't help you on that.

AK: About '56, '57?

JM: Yeah, I guess so. Yes. I'd have to go back through the records.

AK: Well approximately, I mean it was before...

JM: Yeah, right. Bob's 35 now and he started school when he was 6 so, say 30 years ago.

AK: That would '55 then.

JM: '55, yeah, about then.

AK: And what position did you have at Dawson Creek?

JM: I went up there originally, it was an exploration operation and Gordon Darling was the exploration manager and, but they needed some engineering talent for well completions. And so I went up there as a one-man operation really and we had one very good gas well there, Parkland Number One, which I did the completion tests on and then Imperial was pretty active drilling up in the Fort Nelson area, and wildcats in that area and I was looking after them and also at that time we, they'd made a discovery at Boundary Lake, and with that then we started to expand and build up the department in Dawson Creek. And we had a full-fledged engineering department up there. We had quite a few bright young engineers and quite a few of them have gone to the top in Imperial too.

AK: And George Schultiss was the manager...

JM: George Schultiss was the manager overall, and Jim Wood, an Englishman was exploration manager, and I was a production superintendent.

AK: Jim Wood took over from Gordon Darling.

JM: Oh, pardon me. Yeah, Gordon had left by that time. Yeah, Gordon, I forget, Gordon got transferred somewhere and Jim Wood came...

AK: So, how long did you stay in Dawson? We were there about nine years. I was there, actually I was there for, the first year my family stayed in Calgary because it was only a temporary transfer and I worked in Dawson Creek and I used to commute back and forth to Calgary almost every weekend, usually on an Otter, the Otter was, we had two or three Otters up there at the time and they seemed to be flying back to Edmonton every weekend and I always made a point of getting on the Otter and coming home for the weekends.

AK: Why not? So what caused the demise of the Dawson Creek office, was it...

JM: Well actually, the exploration, oh, I know what happened, after the, Imperial went through a period of consolidation and cutback and they closed down the exploration office and moved the staff back to Edmonton and Calgary I believe.

AK: Well, that was, there was a period of expansion when they, when they set these district offices up in Regina and Edmonton and Dawson Creek, and wasn't there another one up there at Grand Prairie?

JM: No, I don't think so. Now they, the office was originally in Peace River and they moved it over to Dawson Creek, it was more central to the operation there.

AK: So this this collapse and took place about '63 or so, '64?

JM: yeah, I'm a little hazy on dates, but it would be about that time, and it was it was simply a company decision to consolidate and cut back and field up in operations.

AK: I remember vaguely visiting the Dawson Creek office back in the 60s when I was with the Board. I'm not sure I didn't contact you...

JM: I think you were up at the house that time, I think so.

AK: Yeah, right.

JM: Yeah, I remember now. Yes, that's right.

AK: And then didn't Mobil have an office...

JM: Mobil had an office there too, they did, their operation wasn't as big as ours but Dick Slaven and...

AK: That's right. I think I called on them too.

JM: Right. And good friends of ours were the Campbells, Mary and Alan Campbell.

AK: Oh, yeah, Alan. I wonder where he is now.

JM: He's retired now from Mobil I believe.

AK: Yeah, he lived in Mayfair. I used to see him on the bus.

JM: Right.

[00:12:07] AK: Okay. So then when the thing collapsed there, you'd had a, what kind of a house did you have there, was that a company house?

JM: When we first went up we were living in a company apartment, but we had the four kids then and it wasn't big enough and we arranged to have a house built. We built a two-story, four-bedroom, two-bathroom house with a full basement and it was, we were very comfortable there in the time we were in Dawson Creek...

AK: What happened to the house.

JM: Well first when they closed down the operation the house, housing market collapsed and really the upshot of it was that we basically have to give it back the company for, there was no profit in the operation at the time.

AK: But you didn't lose.

JM: I guess, you'd have to ask my wife, I think she'd probably say we did.

AK: Yeah, probably...

JM: We didn't make any money on it, put it that way.

AK: No, I mean you weren't wiped out.

JM: We weren't wiped out.

AK: No. Okay...

JM: Actually what we did is we turned the house back to the company and, and I didn't agree with the settlement I got...

AK: Devon Estates, eh?

JM: Devon Estates, but...

AK: Was George Powell running it then?

JM: George was in Devon Estates but I don't think he was looking after that end of the business.

AK: Okay, so then...

JM: Actually it was, the fellow that was looking after it was...

AK: Bob Armstrong?

JM: No, Bob Little, do you remember Bob Little?

AK: No, I don't know him. Anyways, then you, when that collapsed then you were moved back to Calgary. Is that right?

JM: No, I was moved to Edmonton, I became part of the Edmonton operation.

AK: Who was the manager there.

JM: That was Labby Laberge, he was production manager and the exploration manager was Ed Cutland, who had worked for me as a junior engineer in Redwater, but a bright, real bright engineer. Actually I like Cutland, he got wiped out by Imperial too, he stood up to Imperial on some policy decision, and so they...

AK: So then where did you live in Edmonton?

JM: We bought a house 11619 73rd Avenue in Edmonton.

AK: ON the south side.

JM: South side not too far from the University, very comfortable house, very nice house.

AK: And then how long were you in Edmonton?

JM: I was in Edmonton, originally, I was in the engineering department, and then eventually they were consolidating and they wanted me to move back to look after the Redwater, Joarcam, Joffre area and Ed Cutland was, I'd already had an understanding with Don Lougheed who was originally in Edmonton, that I would, I was interested in the job, but I didn't want to relocate my family again because I hadn't been in the Edmonton house that long and this was agreeable to Don, he didn't care where I lived as long as I was able to look at the operation. And so this is the way it was for a while and then Don went to Calgary I think it was, and Ed Cutland recognized that, how I wanted to do the operation and that suited him but I think there was somebody up the line that wasn't happy about this and I'm not sure who it was, I have my own suspicions. And the upshot was that we agreed to disagree and I left the company.

AK: Oh, that was around '71 or '72?

JM: Yeah. Actually it didn't happen directly. The, I was production superintendent in the Redwater office looking after Joarcam and Joffre and they transferred back to the engineering department in Edmonton as production coordinator, but I knew that the handwriting was on the wall and I stayed there for a while and eventually they forced my hand and, the point of the point of the story is that the arrangement you have with one, with one person doesn't stand up to the next person unless you get it written in stone.

AK: You bet you life, if it isn't in ink... I know that but, if I hadn't had a letter with ink on it, which the people that wrote it denied that it ever even existed. But that's another story. I know what you mean. So here you were kind of out on the street then and...

JM: Right. Yeah, so I was, I was job hunting and...

AK: Job hunting out of Edmonton.

JM: Out of Edmonton and I was hired by the Indian Northern Affairs to look after the Calgary office for, because the drilling activity in the Arctic Island was very active. So I worked, I moved my family to Calgary and work out of the Calgary office and I had another engineer with me and our job was really to, we approved all drilling licenses and casing programs and really we looked after that, and the operation, and also we used to fly up to Resolute and rent a plane and fly over the Arctic Islands checking out all these rigs to see they were doing things properly.

AK: Now was Bernhard Thoms in charge of the Calgary office.

JM: He had left before I arrived but he had been in charge of the Calgary office.

AK: He had an office out at the ISPG on 33rd Street.

JM: Oh, did he?

AK: Yes. After when, before?

AK: Well, I don't know when but I'd go out there and see him and he'd have all the blinds closed.

JM: Why?

AK: Well, it was something to do with his eyes, eye trouble and then of course later he died, but Bernard was quite a character.

JM: Was he, I never met him.

AK: You never met him. Well who hired you, who interviewed you?

JM: I was interviewed by Holland Barry right, I think he was the one that hired me. I had, I went to Ottawa for an interview and...

AK: Holland was in charge down there.

JM: Right, and actually you mentioned a name the other day, the geologist...

AK: Woodward.

JM: Woodward yeah, I met him at the same time.

AK: What about Dafari?

JM: Who?

AK: Dafari, he was an Arab? He'd been with Bawden, Peter Bawden Drilling.

JM: Oh, that's how he got on...

AK: Yeah. Well, I mean he was there. I think he's still there.

JM: Could be. He was in he was in the Ottawa office and, but I was able to, with the government because there was only two people in the Calgary office, I had a lot of freedom and took a lot of freedom to run the thing the way I thought it should be run. And this worked fine for the first year or so, but I could see how they were closing in on me and putting restrictions on my decision-making.

AK: Who was the other fella with you, the engineer?

JM: He was a young engineer, went to Saskatchewan government. Can't think of his name right now.

AK: He would have stayed with...

JM: No, he left about the same time I did.

AK: This, was Tom Stilinski there yet?

JM: Yeah Tom was there, yes.

AK: What was he doing?

JM: Well, he worked for Ed Moore I think and, he didn't work for me directly. Yeah, he didn't work for me. He was in an adjoining office, but, maybe he didn't work for, maybe he worked directly for Woodward...

AK: I don't think he ever worked for Moore.

JM: No, he didn't as a matter of fact, you're right. He worked for the chap that was one of the people who was thinking of coming to take Moore's job in Calgary. Kanak?

AK: Stan Kanak, yeah.

JM: He worked for Stan Kanak.

AK: Yeah, and Stan decided not to take that job.

JM: Right, he's still in Ottawa I suppose.

[00:21:37] AK: Yeah. So here, now were you there when the first well blew out?

JM: No, now Dick King was there working for Ed Moore at the time and Dick did a report on that blowout.

AK: That was the King Christian, that was the second one.

JM: The King Christian, right.

AK: That was in 1970.

JM: Yes. Yes.

AK: But there was one that blew out in '69 and it formed a cone, but you hadn't been there.

JM: I wasn't there. There was no blowouts while I was there.

AK: Good.

JM: So I'll take the credit for it.

AK: So who is who is doing the squeeze play, was it...?

JM: Well, I think it just, just the way government operates, the one drilling license that that was quite controversial was when Pan Artic wanted to drill from the ice.

AK: Oh, yeah, using an ice platform.

JM: Using an ice platform, and they'd done a lot of work on it. And Holland Barry, the people in Ottawa were just a little concerned, whether this was practical or not, and they were more concerned that if anything blew out or anything like that, there would be an awful commotion, and I was getting all sorts of advice on whether to decide to do this or not, and finally decided on my own that they had taken all the necessary precautions, and I signed the license, as I had signed all other licenses, and Ottawa chose to go along with the, but I could see if anything went wrong, I'd be out on the street by myself.

AK: Yeah. Was that fellow from TransCanada, had he started to work for Northern Affairs, Thomas, ???

JM: Oh, Lindy Thomas, he was, actually he became my boss, he was in the Calgary office, let's see, he had been with the department longer than I had, and he went to Yellowknife, that's right, he went to Yellowknife to look after that operation, and I stayed in Calgary but I was reporting back to Ottawa, and then they changed their organization so then I was reporting to Thomas in Yellowknife, and they wanted me to move to Yellowknife, and I decided at that stage of the game that I wasn't about to move to Yellowknife, so I resigned.

AK: What year was that, do you recall?

JM: Oh, there you got me again. That was 19...70... let's see...

AK: Well I saw you in that office shortly after I'd come to Calgary in '75, I saw you in there, and you were in one of those back offices.

JM: Yeah, right.

AL: 112 11 Avenue SE.

JM: That's right, yes, and that was in '75 was it?

AK: Well that was '75, now whether you were still there or not, but it seemed to me you were.

JM: Yeah, so I left there in, must have been '76.

AK: Well you weren't in those offices very long...

JM: No, for about a year...

AK: Yeah, but when I was there I meant.

JM: Oh, I see, yeah, right.

AK: Well why didn't you come over to work for Ed Moore? Ed Moore was looking for someone, because Dick King...

JM: Yeah, right...

AK: I took Dick's job, you see.

JM: Yes. Well Dick was still there when I was working at, Dick hadn't retired at that point.

AK: No, but he was getting to retirement age, and he had to retire.

JM: Yeah, right. I don't know, maybe I didn't pursue that, that much...

AK: But the pay was rotten, so...

JM: Well, anyway, for whatever reason I didn't pursue that, and actually then I got a job with the Alberta Marketing, Petroleum Marketing Commission, which was just being set up.

AK: Oh, with Minion.

JM: With Wayne Minion, yeah, in Calgary.

AK: Did you have anything to do with Bev Paminter?

JM: No, uh, he was the... wasn't he an editor for a trade journal, or wasn't he...

AK: Well, he'd been writing for Ottawa, but he was a geologist and he came to work for APMC.

JM: Oh. I think that's the chap that was in one of the offices. The organization had just been put together, and they had hired a couple of people from Shell, because...

AK: Wally Luthy.

JM: Yeah. He's probably...

AK: Oh, he's retired now. And then there was Dougall McLaughlin...

JM: And a guy named McKenzie, he was there through our purchasing, and...

AK: They knew their way around, Wally was an old, a real old veteran of crude oil...

JM: This is why there were hired.

AK: Yeah, they needed him. He'd been with Canadian oil companies. Well then there was Doug Hall, do you remember Doug Hall coming from the National Energy Board in Ottawa?

JM: No, I don't remember him.

AK: Oh, well you couldn't have stayed there very long.

JM: No, I was only there about 9 months, and we were still living in Calgary and our kids had all left home by then and Kay figured [pause in tape] and she wanted to travel, so she persuaded me to answer an ad for ??? Oil Company of Libya, and the upshot of that was that they came west and I was interviewed and offered a job, and I sat on it for about 6 months and finally I had to make a decision and I decided I'd give it a whirl, so I left the, I was quite happy at the Marketing Commission and left to my own devices, I could probably have stayed there until I retired, but there was some fascination in trying foreign operations, and...

AK: Well when you were with the Petroleum Marketing Commission, what were your responsibilities there?

JM: Well, it was just getting organized and really it was an area that I hadn't worked before, there was no drilling or development or anything like that, it was more to do with the royalty aspects and they were changing the regulations in Alberta and there was quite a massive administration thing there, and...

AK: Well, we'll turn the tape over here.

Tape 2 Side 2 – 14:00

AK: Okay, this is side two, tape two. Now could you give me some background on what the arrangement was with Oasis and explain Oasis, the composition place?

JM: Right. Well, I was interviewed by the gentleman from the Personnel department for Oasis Oil Company in the New York office and the interview, my wife was present at the interview and he told us about Libya and actually his background in Libya was very limited. But anyway, it was a start and he told us the, about both housing and remuneration and the type of work I'd be doing and so I was left with this information and there was no commitment on either side. And then I received later a firm job offer and I wasn't sure that I wanted to go and I sat on it for about four months, and finally I had to make a decision one way or the other and our family had all left home and my wife was interested in traveling some more. So we decided to, I made the decision to take the job on, my wife was very happy about this. And so we, that's how we got... now Oasis Oil Company is, after Colonel Gaddafi in '69 took over the country, he nationalized all the oil companies and made sure that Oasis had controlling interest of them all and with Oasis Oil Company the three American companies had less than 50% of the of the ownership so that the Board was had a predominant Libyan consortium...

AK: And those U.S. companies were Conoco, Shell and...

JM: Conoco, Shell and City Services I think it was. Actually those three companies supplied most of the management and engineering people and, but there was people like myself who were hired independently and we worked directly for Oasis Oil Company. The others were working for Oasis through their own parent affiliate.

[pause in tape]

[00:02:55] AK: Well, I guess we missed a fair amount of there, but maybe we could summarize.

JM: Oh, yeah, that's right we got onto the...

AK: We were talking about completion practices and rights, and all that sort of thing, 6,000 feet Paleozoics and carbonates and not too many waxing problems, but...

JM: Lots of corrosion...

AK: Yeah, corrosion and safety wasn't, was not a real priority.

JM: No not a real priority, that's right.

AK: Well then the from a sociological standpoint, it was obvious Gaddafi needed the funds and you think in retrospect with the way the prices have dropped and the fact that he's, he hasn't, you know, he's been a kind of a maverick. Do you think he's been outsmarting himself in the World Market or would you...?

JM: I... pretty hard to answer that. I think he's been doing pretty well, actually.

AK: Yeah, I mean they could get down to \$10 a barrel and still make money.

JM: That's right. Oh yeah.

AK: And you were explaining the benefits, you were on a payroll and you got X number of dollars a month and then you'd, after three years you'd get a cash bonus...

JM: Right, you build up credits and...

AK: I see, now what was that paid out when you left the company?

JM: Yes.

AK: They hold that in escrow. Was it bearing interest or...

JM: I'm not sure about that. It was building up anyway.

AK: Yeah, right. Yeah, and then when you...

JM: They contributed to it as well as the employee, like...

AK: Oh, did they?

JM: Oh, yes. See it was, I'm a little fuzzy on, I've forgotten the details, but they. we put in, the employee put in so many dollars and they matched, or there was an arrangement that they contributed also to build it up, and yeah. Actually they had to make it attractive in order to get people over there, and also because the other companies over there were doing it too and, like Mobil and...

AK: I hear they were competing and...

JM: Competing for the employees and there was a certain amount of, not a great deal, but there was some movement of employees from say, Oasis to Mobil or Esso but the only problem there was that they had to get a new work permit and the government controlled us...

AK: And they could seize...

JM: And they could not refuse to give you work even if you changed jobs, ??? they controlled the thing.

AK: That's right. And you had medical services too, there was a clinic there, you said?

JM: Yeah, there was an oil field clinic which was supported by all the oil companies, and it was staffed by some good doctors, some not so good and a good nursing team...

AK: National or U.S.?

JM: Mostly British nurses and quite a few British doctors, and then from you know, from other countries too.

AK: Yeah, right. So in any place you get your incompetent doctors ??? And sociologically too, Libya being a Muslim country, there were alcohol problems was there? Restrictions?

JM: Well it's a dry country. You're not allowed to have any alcohol and the only people that had it basically were some of the Americans and English people and Canadians, and some of them used to make wine and beer and the only hard liquor that people had was what's called , they call it flash which was really just straight alcohol, and there was the odd bottle of Scotch could be had but it was very expensive and it was smuggled into the country and so...

AK: But you weren't living in a compound.

JM: No, we lived in in a flat in an apartment complex, there was six units in the complex and we were up on the second floor and had a, our flat was about 1,600 square feet, it was a three-bedroom flat. It was quite spacious, high ceilings and very comfortable.

AK: Were there other you North Americans in...

JM: The flat below us, was there were some pilots living, British pilots and actually some foreign pilots and across the hall from us was a Libyan family. Actually it was a Libyan married to a Yugoslav girl who was a dentist, and below them was a French family. He was from Air France and he was working with Libyan Arab Airlines. Actually I said six, I meant four.

AK: Well that's a pretty good mixture.

JM: Right, and all our neighbors were, well across the street from us was an English family and but all the others around were Libyans.

AK: Well did you, was there a good rapport among the people?

JM: Well the language barrier, but we would, we were friendly to each other but we couldn't really converse.

AK: Well, I meant with the North Americans and Brits.

JM: Oh yeah, we got along fine.

AK: Yeah. I can see what's happening, this wheel is jamming a bit.

[00:09:13] Okay. So you chose at the end of the five years to pack it in and return to Canada, right?

AK: Right, yeah, and that's...

AK: And that was, what year did you come back? 1980?

JM: We came back in, yeah 1980.

AK: And had you bought this place.

JM: Yeah, we bought the place the previous year when we were home...

AK: When you were on leave.

JM: On leave and rented it out for the year and moved in and started renovating it after I got here.

AK: Oh, that's right. And then I, you did a little work for Indian Minerals.

JM: Right, yeah, right.

AK: Have you done any other work since?

JM: No not really, no.

AK: Well, you certainly have a lovely place here and I can see where your life is, you know, after having all that experience and your house is full of so many mementos, beautiful, is this something from...?

JM: No we picked that up in Fuji I think it was.

AK Oh, one of your most recent trips. That's right, you went on that trip. Is there anything else that you'd like to say on the tape, for your children or anything that you'd like to say, or no famous last words or philosophical comments or?

JM: I think our kids made it possible to go off because they all struck out on their own after high school basically and have never really come home to live again. And so it was very easy to take on a foreign assignment. I'm not worried about them.

AK: And I think basically that the the foreign assignment is what gave you the equivalent of a pension.

JM: Oh, yeah, right.

AK: Without that you'd have...

JM: I'd have had to keep plugging away in Calgary.

AK: Yeah. Well, that's right and I think in a sense Kay and you making that decision to take that assignment was...

JM: Basically it was a good decision. But, you know when you go foreign like that, we had lots of friends over there and it just didn't pan out at all for whatever reason, they got on and so you sort of come back home and have to start all over again.

AK: Well that's why Kay was at the interview.

JM: Yes, right.

AK: And with the ones with Aramco, they usually fly the wife and the family down to Houston for the final interview, you know, they do a pre-interview in Calgary and then they really take them through the

hurdles, over the hurdles to... now are you sure you want to go into a compound? Are you sure you want to live in this style?

JM: Yeah, right.

AK: And as you say there's some of them just wouldn't go live and work.

JM: No, there's no doubt about it that, like going to Tripoli, their, our lifestyle was different than in North America and we had to put up with inconveniences, which didn't really bother us that much.

AK: But you had you had sanitary facilities.

JM: Oh, yeah, we had running water.

AK: Yeah, and you had toilets, and...

JM: Yeah.

AK: What about food, like?

JM: The food was good. We had lots of vegetables and fruit was cheap, and lots of fruit. Yeah. The oranges over there were fantastic.

AK: What about seafood.

JM: I'm not really a real fan of seafood, but it was available, yeah.

AK: Well, I think that probably does it, Jack, I sure appreciate the opportunity, I might just wind up by saying, kind of for the record saying that... [tape cuts] With Atlantic Three, your recollection was seeing the black pall of smoke as you were driving over to Redwater, so you had no direct contact or ...

JM: No, I didn't work, have anything to do with it.

AK: No, right, but I'm going to try to get some more on that, but nevertheless, I think there's a good opportunity to have this on tape. And so the next time you come back, or I can even give you a copy of this if you like.

JM: Oh, well, maybe my kids might like to have it.

AK: Well, that's right. I think you know, it's something and these will be filed with Glenbow.

JM: Oh, will they? Oh good.

AK: Yeah, so I think I'll just say over and out here. And once again, thanks Jack, for your time and we'll be talking to you later.

End of interview