

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Trajan Nitescu

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: September 19, 1982

Tapes 1 & 2 only transcribed

Tape 1 Side 1 – 30:00

AK: Today is Sunday September the 19th, 1982 and I'm Aubrey Kerr and I'm in the General Hospital visiting. Mr. Trajan Nitescu and his wife Florika, and this is an introductory interview. And the first thing that I would like you to tell us a Trajan, is where you were born and what year and a little bit about your parents and your family.

TN: Myself, Trajan Nitescu, I was born in the city of Craiova Romania in 1902. In fact, 11 October 1902. My father was a public servant. And at the very end of his career, he was a senator in Romanian Parliament. My mother was the daughter of ??? and I have ??? to this in Romania, the primary studies and different city because my father as a public servant and because it was not in the best relationship politicians, was moved from place to place many times.

AK: And Trajan, you were saying that during those days, those early days, Romania was a monarchy and your father, father's duties were in finance and was there much political unrest in those days?

TN: There was not any unrest in those days because the Romanian King at that time was very good man. Of course Charles first. After him the second king when I was student was still a very good man, was very different. But the last king of Romania was a crook, that was Charles II.

AK: Just for the record your birthplace was Craiova and that's spelled C-R-A-I-O-V-A in the province of O-L-T-A-N-I-A.

TN: As I have said before I was educated in different cities but I have finished by making the Polytechnical School of Bucharest, a very high school. In fact, when I have start the Polytechnic, and that was in 1920, ??? a very good Romanian school, ??? Polytechnic, was for 6 years, mechanic, mining metallurgy, construction and ????. I was the head of the mining and metallurgy section. In fact, as a head, I do have some special powers. To see all the students at present, to speak with ??? they come for something and if I may say, ??? when I have finished in 1924 my ??? 1924, because I was ahead of this class. I was a man that they have enter the school at a very early age. Nobody was my age when I have enter the school. I was 19, or 20, was still before ???

AK: Right. Now just to clear up a point there, just back on the tape a little ways, the year in which you graduated and the class in which you were because you were the head of the class, was known as the year of Trajan Nitescu, 1924 was that year. It was designated that year. You were saying in this course that you took at this Polytechnic Institute, is situated in Bucharest, that there were very few courses directed to petroleum. And what about courses in petroleum geology? Your first job was with the

Petrofina subsidiary known as Concordia and that was right in the Polesti Fields or near the Polesti fields? Yes. One of the key things that I would like to get from you today, Trajan, is how you first became interested in the oil industry and who, if there was anybody influenced your career.

TN: I was influenced to go in the oil industry by my wife, why as this time I was engaged. And my previous practices was in the coal mines. And the coal mines are very unsafe ????. And I realized that the be no good for my wife to stay in the coal business. And Florika say, better go, is oil business you are on the surface all the clean air.

AK: At that time then you were engaged with Florika. And Florika, could you tell me a little bit about your background, about where you were where you were born and the background of your parents and how you met Trajan.

[00:09:17] FN: I was born in Craiova the same city as my husband, which I met many years later. My father was a lawyer. My mother didn't have any career, a mother in the housewife. I was the first four years in Craiova, and then I didn't finish my high school because I was not health-wise very well, and the going to the mountains because my health, I met my husband who was visiting first cousin of his, and so I met Trajan, and we got engaged and married after four years being engaged.

AK: What year were you and Trajan married?

FN: 1929 when I met Trajan I was 16 years old.

AK: Oh, I see. Thank you very much. So... no, no, it's very it's very important because what we're trying to do is get, you know, the whole picture and so that you were a very favorable influence on try an and getting him out of the coal mines and getting him into the oil business.

FN: [inaudible]

AK: Yes, right. Yes now in those days how much difficulty, I guess that's not right, there would be no difficulty because you were head of your class. You would immediately have a pretty good selection of jobs waiting for you. Is that correct?

[00:11:32] TN: You mean after I finished school of Polytechnic, I was engaged by the department of Industry Romania. And I was over there for a year before going to Concordia. In fact, I was engaged immediately after finishing ??? also has no problem to go ??? because was a very big demand for the people preparing, prepared to work in the field and I was prepared to go to the field. And I can add the salary was tremendous.

AK: Could you tell us, in terms of Canadian dollars, what approximately it would be?

TN: In terms of dollars, was not too big, my salary have arrive, 2-3 years after working ??? at hundred thousand dollars lei, excuse me, by this time, the exchange was about twenty dollar, twenty lei for a dollar. This ??? forward, in dollar was not too much.

AK: Would be about \$5000 a year.

TN: \$5000. But this time my brother was just mechanical engineer ??? and working for the railroad in Romania. His salary was only twelve thousand lei, mind was more than that. Every worker in Romania was paid at that time an average 3,000 lei [inaudible] Hard to believe.

AK: Just to put the currency in perspective the word lei, L-E-I, I means lion in English. Lions, yes. And the difference in exchange in those days was about one [tape cuts] I wanted to make a correction here about the currency exchange. In those days, the exchange rate was 200 lei equals approximately one Canadian dollar. So in effect what you were being paid Trajan was about five hundred dollars Canadian, whereas the average laborer was getting about \$60 a month. So that was quite a spread. I think on this basis, then we will conclude our interview and will resume at a time that is convenient to you and thank you once again, and this is the end of this interview and it's now about five past 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon.

Tape 1, Side 1, Part 2

Now this is Sunday September the 26th. And once again back in Mr. Nitescu's room at the General Hospital. It's about twenty past two and we're going to resume our discussions going back to that one year that you spent with the Department of Industry. The very first year you spent out and what your duties were in that year.

TN: In this year I was in church?? operation Moldavia... in Bocovina, ceremony?? inspecting the mine over there, wash 3-inch thick, and inspect ??? particles, not activity in Bocovina this time.

AK: These were coal mines.

TN: Yeah, coal mine was very thin ???

AK: ???

TN: It was about half a metre. And very poor quality.

[00:17:00] AK: Now let's move on to your association with Concordia, and you left the Department of Industry in July 1926. July the 1st. You were invited to join the Concordia firm, which is a subsidiary of the Petra Fina group. But administered within Romania.

TN: Right.

AK: Then you were supplied house and all the furnishings and servants. And what was the name of the town that you were transferred to?

TN: The name was Busdenri.

AK: And it was the first oil field in Romania?

TN: Yes. And oldest one.

AK And was this the same type of situation as you mentioned before about pits being dug and oil seeping up or was this more sophisticated over there? Was that evening? What do you see as a very big dick?

TN: No, I was there, I was learning, how do they say, has a very big depth, I bet it's a record, six hundred meters, four-hundred yards. 600 meters was ???

AK: Right. That was deep in those days.

TN: No, it was not, because I was learning, ??? with a system that was called a Canadian system.

AK: Oh, Canadian system, which was developed probably in Petrolia in Ontario, because there were a lot of, way back you see there were a lot of Ontario drillers that went all over the world. They went to Balizistan and everywhere else.

TN: This system was using a very heavy collar??? and the rods about 1 inch, 1 inch and a quarter thick ??? over there or something. Don't bend the rods when the bit hit the bottom, and then the bottom has to be valid every day.

AK: Oh, yes, yes.

TN: And then for some time the hole was not keeping in good shape. ??? guessing, we have is also kind of guessing, 6 inch, 7-inch, 8-inch, 10, 12, 14 and then everything goes up a meter, 14 inch, we saw many ??? And then are using some very thin steel ??? supports, about 1/4 inch thick that was put together by bolts.

AK: By what?

TN: They gonna bolt.

AK: Oh, bolt, yes.

TN: And those people then, to put a lot of these supports in a day, because they don't go strong. They ??? to go strong, to support the hole, because the hole always empty, empty. And the hole have start to don't to be in good shape. You put casing and those install I remember up to 10 casings.

AK: So were you, that was your first exposure to actual oil well drilling.

TN: Exactly.

AK: And did you have, what was your responsibility with the drilling? Did you have...

TN: No responsibility. I was just a young engineer learning. You know, maybe nobody can have a responsibility in the fields before two years of practice with have to pass exam, and to obtain to be, to obtain the right of controlling device???

AK: Of the what?

TN: To be in charge of ??? you have to be at least two years to practice and then pass exam, of the Department of Mine, to prove that you have learned enough.

[00:23:04] AK: Right. Now that may be a little bit like what we're doing in Alberta now, we're we're making trainees take two years of experience before they can get their P,Eng. or their PGL, and maybe this was something like that. And were these exams set by the company.

TN: These exams were set by the department ???

AK: The government?

TN: [inaudible]

AK: Oh, I see.

TN: Also was myself, a member [inaudible] was only four Representatives, one was the Director of Mines, Romanian Director of Mines, was a specialist in mines, send one was a specialist in mine, and the third one was the secondary engineer.

AK: And was this exam oral or written? Was the exam written or was it oral?

TN: It was verbal.

AK: Verbal. So you sat there and they questioned, you?

TN: No, they asked you, you are going on, that on those is shooting casing??

AK: That's what I mean. You sit there and they ask you questions.

TN: Yes, and if you pass exam, it's alright. If you don't pass the exam they have asked you to come once more in six months.

AK: Yeah right. Now, of course, you've passed your first exam.

TN: Yes.

AK: Now, in those days in this field that you were at, was it, were the wells flowing or were they pumping.

TN: Pumping and bailing.

AK: Oh, bailing? You had not obtained the sucker rods and the pumpjack yet?

TN: Wells was there but these was bailing.

AK: They bailed every day.

TN: Yes, then they, some lucky people that you have what you call a ???

AK: Beg your pardon?

TN: Some of the wells, they start to flow, very large quantities and there was a ??? that we can close the well, put ??? up.

AK: What is this due to water flooding or...

TN: Some water, was not porous.

AK: So this was a new part of the field where the wells were better.

TN: Yes. When I see Busdenri, ??? it's not just a field. They are many small fields around. In fact a particular field was by name ???. Was always a ??? and there was at one time, by drilling by percussion, the sound it make already, 600 feet was a record.

AK: 600 feet.

TN: Was a record.

AK: For drilling in one day.

TN: No, in six months.

AK: Oh, in six months. Oh boy. Were the formations hard?

TN: Formations not too hard but impact not too strong. And had to clear the bottom of the hole to take ???

AK: That's right. Yeah, so it took a long time to drill shallow holes. That's what you're saying. Well then when you got your well down to the pay zone, you set your casing just above the pay, just above the producing zone.

TN: Above the casing at this time, was not cemented ??? if you are close to the water or close to the basin and say the Conversation Board inspectors ask you to prove that sub-strata or they close it.

AK: The which?

TN: You have closed the surface waters.

AK: Oh, you closed off the surface water.

TN: ??? closing. You're dropping in the hole, is some empty, some board or very soft ??? What you call it, you make some time, vessel, is a piece of rope or some type of agile or very soft, for instance, the Greeks would transport the line ??? by clay. When that was done, was repeat ??? of clay ??? and there was enough boards, they presses the column, first we have ??? those board to make, to be more and

more compact, and you are pressing, and there was an official test to make sure that the ??? was closed. What is amazing, it was first improvement in Romania. At this time that I [inaudible]

AK: Which?

TN: [inaudible]

AK: Oh I see.

TN: Because...

AK: A little fluid in it eh?

TN: Because the casing corrupts. Instant affair, and for this one what you had to do [inaudible]

Tape 1 Side 2

TN: Some boards ??? put in the hole some round piece of, what do you call it...

AK: Clay.

TN: Clay and then push ??? to the clay and then fasten them and they press the column in this clay.

AK: Oh, I see, at the bottom. And you ran your last string into this clay, right, and then that would hopefully seal all the... and then you gradually bailed out the hole and made measurements. You were mentioning about inspectors coming, were they something similar to what we have in Alberta, the Conservation Board people?

TN: Same thing.

AK: Same thing. And what department were they under.

TN: Department of Mines and Minerals. Right, and they were Public Service.

TN: Public Service.

AK: Right.

TN: In every field, most important field was one or two or three inspectors.

AK: Yes, they would go around to each. How many, how many rigs were running in the field when you were there, first there?

TN: I believe y ??? probably was 100, 150.

AK: Rigs. Is that within that one field that you were...

TN: All of Romania.

AK: Oh, all of Romania. And the other thing was that, were these rigs owned privately by contractors like they are in Alberta?

TN: No. The rigs was owned by the company. This Canadian Arctic Ocean rig was owned by the company.

AK: And they were, and so the people that worked on the rigs, the roughnecks, were company employees.

TN: Right.

AK: Yes, just like it was here in the early days Imperial had its own rigs, and then they finally got out of it. But this was, this was the way it was and that each company. Now, the other thing I'm interested in is the type of mineral land tenure, in other words were the minerals owned by the Crown, the Romanian Crown or were they were there any minerals owned by freeholders like farmers.

TN: This area was a short distance from our field, from the ??? field, the land was owned by the government. But it's some radius for our field. I forget how many, say, 10 kilometres, that was honored by the landlords, is the landlords have proof, that was the intention to follow rights...

AK: Which, their intention to do what?

RN: T sell the right, to drill the right...

AK: To drill.

TN: To drill, could use the right to a company.

AK: Right. So was there a federal land titles office in which you could go and...

TN: Was a commission.

AK: Look up the records?

TN: It was a commission and first you have to ??? the commission and you had to validate your rights. So I always decide, was my intention to think about this because you see two months ago, I have wrote a letter to the company, there was a ??? to make what clear that this [inaudible]

AK: Now just to clarify this land tenure thing, Trajan, some of the surface rights owners could, by appearing before a tribunal, plead their case and obtain the minerals so that they in turn could lease them to a particular oil company, and this exercise with carried out before a government tribunal.

TN: Right.

AK: Right. Would you say that the vast majority of the minerals were held by the Romanian government?

TN: Is right.

[00:05:05] AK: Yeah. Okay. Now you mentioned an interesting thing Trajan about the possibility of the surface rights owner obtaining some royalty revenue which would be a portion of the government's royalty, and the government's royalty is in effect a sliding scale arrangement.

TN: Right.

AK: That's good. And then what regulations did the government have with respect to well spacing.

TN: ??? That's for everyone, we need so many acres. I believe was about 2 acre per well. ??? very close. And I remember a story. Some Romania property, some piece of property was ??? to the mountain.

AK: Can you say that again?

TN: In Romania if someone have a property around this, and to have five children, you don't give to one the ??? area. Those are some of the ??? they criticize us. [inaudible]

AK: Oh, I see. That's when the father bequeaths the land instead of an undivided interest it's divided and ???

TN: And something like that, just 10 metres ???

AK: Oh, 10 metres wide ???

TN: Some of them. And there was and there was a ??? And in some cases, the owner of ??? realize that, was putting all the wells, all the ??? in the field. Not in the mountains, ??? because ??? all the wells that [inaudible]

AK: In that little narrow strip...

TN: Because of space ??? he was right. [inaudible] the well must be owned by the surface.

AK: So the fellow that owned that little narrow strip, he enjoyed the royalties from those wells.

TN: Yes, because it put the well in the field. ??? the mountains, you put ???

AK: Which is what?

TN: Is mountainous area, his strip was five miles long. But he cross a field for a few more metres, and he put those wells in a production area.

AK: Well, what is such a thing as drilling offset to prevent drainage like we have here, you know, if we have a CPR lease and we have a Crown lease, you know, you had to do it when you were running Fina

here, that you would have to drill a well offsetting to prevent drainage. Was there anything like that in Romania?

TN: No.

AK: It wasn't in yet. So the spacing really was kind of chaotic so to speak.

TN: Is right.

AK: And there wasn't really too much regulation in a sense, would that be fair to say?

TN: Is right.

AK: And what about the amount of oil that was allowed to be produced from each well, was there any regulation?

TN: How much you can.

AK: How much you can, eh.

[00:09:12] Now could you explain the briefly Trajan, the next improvement in drilling. As I understand it from what you were saying that the rods were hollow and mud was pumped down through these tubings and you were still using the percussion system, and you called this the alliance system which took over from the Canadian system.

TN: Yes. For some time, bow system was in operation, and the rotary system was introduced in Romania by the Esso subsidiary. By then, ???

AK: What's that, could you repeat that.

TN: The rotary system was introduced in Romania by the Esso subsidiary Romania by Romano Americano.

AK: Romano Americano?

TN: Yes.??? by Esso.

AK: Right. In those days I think they called it Jersey. Standard Oil of New Jersey.

TN: Yes.

AK: And shortened to be Jersey. So they introduced the rotary system. And did the rotary system catch on, was it a success?

TN: Yes.

AK: And did they bring over US roughnecks and drillers to show how it was done?

TN: Exactly. Yes.

AK: That's what they did everywhere. And that's what happened here in Turner Valley.

TN: And that was...

AK: [inaudible]

TN: And that was very shortly after the alliance system. And we do, we have bought a rig operated by the company. You see a rotary system was the single biggest in our company, the balance of the rigs was ??? for the Canadian system.

AK: And this rotary rig, was it was it imported from the US or was it fabricated in Romania?

TN: I believe it was imported. The pumps was very weak. Was very little pump.

AK: Oh, very small pumps. And what did you use, did you use fish tail bits, or rotary...

TN: ??? by this time to use fish tail bit and then [inaudible]

AK: Oh, carbide ??? yes. Did you use, did you have your, like your Kelly hose and your mask and everything else?

TN: Everything [inaudible] The derrick was made by wood.

AK: Oh, yes, the wooden derricks. And did they bring over the fellows to put the derricks together?

TN: Derricks was built by ??? experts. They were ready to put the rig ???

AK: Right. And in those days when you were drilling either with the cable tool or the rotary, did you have any blowout prevention equipment?

TN: Yes, ??? some blowout preventer. When I was drilling with the Canadian system, was no blowout preventer. What was a very big ???

AK: A big which?

TN: Hat?? Some say a hat, made by iron about four or five meters. I don't know how big it was. [inaudible]

AK: And that was the only thing, didn't have any didn't have any valves or rams???

TN: No valves.

AK: No, nothing like that. It was just simply putting a lid on it.

TN: [inaudible]

AK: Did you have any blowouts?

TN: Yes.

AK: How severe were they?

TN: Some was very severe because it was very big danger, many people was not able to stop the engines, ??? as put out the fire.

AK: Were your, your rig your rig were all fired by steam, steam engines where they or had you started to use internal combustion engine.

TN: Steam. [inaudible] we start to use on a large scale, these rigs, ??? only electricity, because Concordia was a very large producer of electricity in Romania and ??? for that for two reason, in fact, [inaudible] and for business with our Romanian production, the Department ??? of Concordia, about half of the remaining electricity was ???

AK: So this was a private electric system something like Calgary Power.

AK: ??? the Department of Concordia.

AK: Yeah. I see, so it was natural that you would want to buy your electricity from them and use the electric motors, and the electric motors would still be a safety hazard because of the sparks.

TN: Yes, ??? to sell electricity to other people to show how good it is.

AK: Oh yes right. And did you use, for any of the wells that were pumping, you were saying earlier that the wells were bailed, but did you, did you start to develop the pumpjack system?

TN: Yes.

AK: And was that imported from the US, that idea.

TN: I don't know. I don't know.

AK: Well that would be an ideal place to use electricity because we use a lot of electric power right here in Alberta for???

TN: What happened, at this time, the political Department of Concordia was not enough developed and you are using Hughes engines was the leader.

AK: Hughes what?

TN: Engines [inaudible] one-cylinder only.

AK: Oh, one-cylinder engines.

TN: [inaudible] 100 horsepower.

AK: And that was a steam engine.

TN: That was explosion.

AK: Oh, ??? I see, and they burned some kind of gas or gasoline or...

TN: Yes, gas.

AK: Oh, I see it was a big ???

TN: It was a monster and the power is very, very minimal.

AK: Yeah, very slow RPM.

TN: Yes, [inaudible]

[00:17:49] Okay. Let's get into reservoir engineering which I think is your, is your real specialty? Is that right, reservoir engineering?

TN: I'm engineer or petroleum engineer ???

AK: Sure, you've done everything. Well now were there any, back in those early days when you were just starting, was there any idea at all about trying to maximize the recovery of oil from a reservoir, had they ever started to make studies about that?

TN: Was not. The fact that they used ??? to flare the gas ???

AK: Oh flare, yes. So there was a wastage of natural gas.

TN: Exactly.

AK: And was there any attempt made the strip the liquids out of the natural gas?

TN: Yes.

AK: Try to take the liquids out?

TN: Yes. Take the liquids out, [inaudible] because of...

AK: ???

TN: ??? from propane down.

AK: Propane down, yes.

TN: It is a ??? value in Romania because for heating the homes, we don't need as is in the States, [inaudible] propane. We are using a mixture of the States, 50/50, 50 propane and 50 butane ???

AK: And was this kept under compression so it would stay...

TN: Compression.

AK: It was kept under compression and shipped by tanks to distribution places or how was it...

TN: [inaudible] where shipping in a small ???

AK: Oh, a small box.

TN: [inaudible]

AK: Yes. Well then getting back to the reservoir itself, there was really no, was there really any attention paid to try to say, well now if we produce this field this way, we're going to get more oil or we flood the, we put in a water plug we're going to get more oil, was there anything like that?

TN: No it was ??? before your neighbors are digging.

AK: Yeah. Yeah. So it's a lot of capture.

TN: Yes, lot of capture.

AK: So there was no real, shall we say, engineering applied to that sort of thing.

TN: No. Was ??? within Romania. For some categories, gathering plants...

AK: For what kind of ???

TN: To take, assist them to take the gasoline out, is to pass the gas [inaudible]

AK: Oh, yeah like a bubble tower.

TN: Yea. And then [inaudible] and then use steam to operate it, and then use also gas to drive all three towers, different phases because the gas is coming, very warm for this one.

AK: Very which?

TN: Very warm.

AK: Oh, very warm. Oh yeah.

TN: Yeah, for this system. [inaudible] Factory was making this type of plants.

AK: Yeah. Now they were manufacturing gasoline out of coal.

TN: Exactly. This was ??? manufacturing, this is like produce from the gas...

AK: Oh, I see, kind of a purification system.

TN: Exactly to ??? of the gas. ??? The gas is very warm. And they come to the compression station to ??? because I believe [inaudible] And it was compressing, the compressor, this very hot gas with a rotor ??? As in fact you're compressing twice as much and the gas is very corrosive, making [inaudible] And it was my idea to cool those gas.

AK: Your idea?

TN: My idea.

AK: To cool the gas before it comes to the compressor.

TN: Exactly.

AK: Right.

TN: [inaudible] make a big power and flies the gas from up, down [inaudible] And there's ??? forget something else, you do have gas, ??? absolutely. If you need progressive ??? already in ten ??? of gas is 50% of energy in ??? atmosphere gas, you are putting [inaudible] because ??? the gas is no good anymore because ??? What I have done myself, I have just used the gas [inaudible] take it and then complete to the little ???

AK: ???

TN: And then compress the gas ??? Romania, this was for hitting the core of the gas, [inaudible]

AK: A lot of energy...

TN: [inaudible] And they are interested and there was more compressors, ???10 atmospheres to the needed pressure, 70, 80 ???

AK: No, that's alright. Now, did I hear you say that when you when you purified the gas, was there still quite a bit of water vapor in it?

TN: Of course because the gas is very hot. [inaudible]

AK: Yeah. Well then, did you say you used it for gas lift for the wells.

TN: Exactly.

AK: Now that was an innovation.

TN: It was. First in Romania.

AK: Did you, were involved in gas lifts? Were you the one that that thought of the gas lift?

TN: In Romania the gas lift was the ??? system, ???

FN: [inaudible] I mean you have been the first one to see...

TN: [inaudible]

AK: I see. Now you and somebody had the idea of gas lift.

TN: This was ??? in the States.

AK: Oh yes, well there was, there would be people coming from the States from time to time with ideas would there?

TN: [inaudible]

AK: Oh, manipulating the gas.

FN & TN: [inaudible]

AK: You wanted a higher pressure gap?

TN: Yes we did.

AK: Yeah and you had to cool it before you could compress it some more.

TN: First you have to cool it to decrease the volume and ??? the water up and these [inaudible]

AK: Now as to the marketing of natural gas, your recollection is that the first gas was shipped in 1940 in a 10-inch line to the town of Brasov, and regarding oil pipelines, what was the evolution?

TN: It was the first oil pipeline was made more or less when I have joined Concordia, one year after, or before. And also funded by the Romanian ??? was a pipeline that ??? in Constanza, which is a...

AK: That was a seaport.

TN: A seaport.

AK: How big a line was that?

TN:[inaudible]

AK: Yeah right. Well, I think this is enough for today. Thanks Trajan, and we'll stop the tape, we're just about out of tape anyways, and we'll continue again after, at a time when it's convenient to you. So thanks once again.

Tape 2 Side 1

AK: Today is Sunday October the 3rd. And once again, we're back in the, Mr. Nitescu's hospital room at the General Hospital with his wife Florika. And we're going to, this will be session number three. And now we're going to talk a little bit about your career after you've got working with Concordia for a few years and what your increasing responsibilities were and when you made your first trip to Brussels.

TN: My first trip to Brussels was in 1936. At that time, a colleague of mine, in fact my boss, and me were sent to United States to learn what is the status of American oil interest. But I was very well-known by the people in Brussels because ??? be quite often in Romania. I meet the top people from Petrofina in Brussels many times before Romania because he was coming for visit every three months.

AK: Would you say that Romania was one of the chief assets of Petrofina at that time?

TN: At this thing was the only world producing country, Petrofina. And that part of Petrofina, ???of oil, part of ??? drilling, but Petrofina was only ??? finally in France which was bombardment during the war. And a lot of filling station in Europe in different countries, and the bottom too, just sunk, what the core data tankers.

AK: The which?

FN: Tankers.

AK: Oh, tankers. Oh, yeah.

TN: Tankers was put on the bottom of the sea, all of the reservoir. It was the very end of the war, what was ??? Petrofina, was filling station. And Concordia were positioned in ???

AK: Would you say that the Fina parent depended mostly on Romania for its supply of crude or did it go to South America or Saudi Arabia?

TN: At this time Saudi Arabia remember was practically no producer, but ??? they make an office in America. First year, Houston used to buy oil from America. At that time ??? remember that the prices around the world were set in Houston, Houston Texas.

AK: Yeah it was very cheap in the US, and before World War II you see the US was a net exporter.

TN: Sure, very big exporter.

AK: Yes, right. So you went to Brussels to confer with your colleagues and then then then you went to the United States.

TN: [inaudible] Petrofina, ??? Petrofina Brussels. They have seen ??? in the States doing ??? status of the American oil industry.

AK: But at that time you didn't have a land position or you didn't have any production in the US.

TN: No. Absolutely ???

AK: But you looked around, you...

TN: I was not interested in the producer, and producer are always interested ????. I was not over there to buy oil, I was over there to learn the technique. And to see if I learn something new.

AK: Right.

TN: [inaudible] something new, back to Romania, ??? oil production, our practice is so more usable. [inaudible] In the matter of production and drilling.

FN: In the matter of production and drilling, Romania was superior.

TN: In some line. In some line was above them. [inaudible].

AK: So were saying, Florika was saying that you spent about three months your first visit, traveling around and then you brought back these ideas and then...

TN: In fact those, a lot of idea already originated in Romania?

AK: Yes, like you were saying in the previous session.

TN: ??? many owes us. For instance, ??? operations was energy gas, was Fina, Petrofina, mine, invention. Although there's one matter that's very important. It was the start during the ??? that they start to make ??? of salt in the tubing.

AK: Salt would precipitate out in the tubing.

TN: And make clump, what you can do, try to ??? was very...

AK: Plug the tubing.

TN: Was very hot, but they're find something ??? Myself, I think why, because the amount of water coming through the ??? was practically saturated with salt. And there is a travel of the oil and gas through the tubing, that the temperature of the gas ??? Why? Because a lot of expansion of gas ??? and the water become over saturated, deposit of crystals, which is very difficult to ??? And they found out, I add a little bit of water in the ejecting ??? make a tube, a 12-inch tube, ??? say 10 yards and dropping water slowly use injecting gas. In 24 hours I ??? with explosion. This will ??? should only. Then ??? of oil and in two days start to produce ??? because the tubing was clean, no salt. And ???

AK: So this was a well in which you had been using gas injection, and you introduced water into the injected gas and it dissolve the salt out.

TN: The salt, shallow water. Mix it with the water from. was making the water, not saturated, you don't put it on gas, salt and ??? you have a saturated solution. Now If you ??? the water the salt it is over, opposite ??? crystals.

AK: Yeah, right.

TN: [inaudible]

AK: Well simple but effective.

TN: Oh very effective in many ways, I was very able to make some device to capture all the energy in gas, apart from ??? many things but...

AK: Yes, but that's lime??

TN: ??? Petrofina have a good impression on me, and for this one on my return from the United States, they have promote me as a future president.

AK: Right. Now that gave you jurisdiction over several fields?

TN: Several fields.

AK: And you were in charge of the drilling production?

TN: Everything.

AK: Everything. And you reported directly to Brussels then.

TN: Yes.

AK: I mean, sorry, through your Concordia company.

TN: Concordia company, right. I reported to ??? [inaudible] in Brussels.

[00:10:39] AK: Okay. So then you continued to work with the company and when was your next important trip, to the United States or to some other part of the world. Did you have a trip somewhere else?

TN: [inaudible] Because it was the impression that perhaps I would be more effective than/with?? the other fellows. And at this time I was able to meet Mr. Hughes, you know, this man?

AK: Oh Howard Hughes of the Hughes tool?

TN: Exactly.

AK: Oh, and what was your impression of him?

TN: ??? I was saying a part of investigating through industry to try to make a deal to offer to the Hughes, to build tool [inaudible] in Romania. And I contact Zalman. Zalman said to me there is a rumour started, [inaudible]

AK: Oh, yes the original.

TN: And I remember, was very pleasant man. He's tell me frankly, I know that we are making tool joints that we are making badly. I know that you are making joints becoming a ????. If you are following ??? we don't make a good, we are following as a standard more stringent ??? and they respect your proposal to make an argument to Petrofina for building this in Romania, you see. [inaudible] This Factory produces a steel only loosely ??? very pleased up to make [inaudible] but that was this question only [inaudible] when I he returned to Romania everything was good. And Mr. Hughes, ??? he offered for me to lunch in a company cafeteria. ??? And ??? he offered me some beer. Was Hughes beer. ??? of course is very good, it was a sour beer. [inaudible] Of course. It's very good. ??? to see after lunch. Why not? And those beer factory is in Houston, Texas. Was a beer brewery ???

AK: A brewery, yes.

TN: [inaudible] I don't even know anymore.

AK: So it was a poor product.

TN: [inaudible] It seems you're very busy of course the bits is a total ???

AK: Now, when you went to United States for the second time, you were still on a learning expedition, you weren't there to acquire acreage or production or anything, and then of course the war came in September '39 and you had just barely returned to Romania when the war broke out.

TN: I still remember, before returning to Romania, my boss was ???

AK: Of the which?

TN: My boss in Romania was a Belgium man, his position in Romania was managing director ??? in English, don't hurry to come back. Stay there as long as you want because the war was ??? to come home. ??? 2 weeks before September 1 when the war have start.

AK: And you stayed on in Romania, working for the company.

TN: But then my position, as ?? promote me as a higher position, as a general inspector, oil fields. And shortly thereafter they promote me as ??? director. And then shortly thereafter they promote me as ??? of the oil department in charge of everything, exploration, production, refining ???

AK: Well in the early stages of the war as I understand it, Romania was not an ally of the Western powers.

TN: Not at all.

AK: No, it was, they were kind of enemies and how did you rationalize the fact that your company was owned by now an unfriendly country, Belgium, and how did the control, how did you handle that?

TN: [inaudible] They come in, they get put in charge. Dutchman with Hitler his friends, Nazi men. [inaudible]

AK: The which.

TN: [inaudible]

FN: ??? the amount of casing...

AK: Oh, casing, sorry, yes. You'd kept it...

TN: ??? was some Nazi trying to make ??? and they ??? this casing [inaudible]

AK: Oh so you had it put away.

TN: Yes, put away. That's was our intention to cut?? with the Germans ??? because of people of Romania was [inaudible].

AK: But they didn't really want to, the people didn't really want to do, is that what you're saying?

FN: The people didn't know ???

AK: So during the war, the recollection in Life Magazine as a younger person around 1940, was that the US bombed Ploesti.

TN: ??? And the city, now the Germans were beaten and [inaudible] liberators.

AK: Liberators. Yes, right. I remember the pictures. Well during the war did you have to keep on producing oil or did you try to slow down.

TN: We had tried to ??? because of the generals around back.

AK: And they'd go around and inspect the wells and try to make you produce.

TN: [inaudible]

AK: Yes, and then when the Romanian posture turned over to be on the Allied side with the Russians, then that was different then.

TN: [inaudible]

AK: You had the Russians then.

TN: [inaudible]

AK: No, that was just as bad or worse.

TN: Because Romania don't have any power. ???

AK: The which?

TN: Being around France, America, they make a joint commission for our ??? Romania resolutions ??? they don't have any power ??? And then by this time I had become, what you call here the president of the department of ??? of Concordia, and [inaudible]. And because the company was not told that who the percent by friendly nation, by friendly nation I mean America War or England. The Russians say they had to protect the minority interest.

AK: They had to protect?

TN: The minority interest as a ??? Board of Directors Russia ??? [inaudible] By this time I had finished working in the field, I like to be a professor. As this work had brought to me some material when I was carried out for the professor with those??? not very progressive ??? And shortly thereafter ??

AK: Which?

TN: ??? Romano Americana?? which was 100% owned by Jersey.

AK: Jersey, yeah, Exxon.

TN: And they offered me a position as a moderator>>

AK: What year was this Trajan?

TN: That was '45.

AK: And had the war, was the war over then?

TN: It was ??? the war was finished in Romania in '44, the war in other parts of the world was finished in '45.

AK: That's right, May of '45.

TN: In May it was finished.

AK: So how come the Exxon subsidiary escaped the Russians. Why didn't the Russians put some members on the Romano Americana company?

TN: When I have left Concordia, ??? Romano Americana, Romano Americana was 100% Jersey owned. But then I was involved with, in some with the government, not to kill the Communists but to be ready to have some Americans if they will come in Romania. At this time was very optimism in Romania, but of course the Americana [inaudible] It was a matter of, what you call, the flight to... barely remember.

AK: The which?

TN: Airlift to Romania...

AK: To Berlin. Oh, yes.

TN: And everything now is ???

AK: Oh.

TN: But we was wrong, listening to the radio station is two o'clock in the morning ??? they had discovered our group of people and that was it in the ??? But for this eight to have escaped. ??? was the son of first prime minister, which is ??? now in France ???. ??? was put in the jail ???

AK: Owned by the what?

FN: [inaudible]

AK: Oh minus one.

FN: And back in jail.

AK: Oh I see.

TN: He's a ??? condition.

AK: Oh, yes. Well, and they do and Florika escape then?

TN: [inaudible]

FN: We escaped swimming the Danube to Yugoslavia [inaudible]

AK: Oh, yeah that's right.

FN: [inaudible]

AK: Yeah. Sure. Did you, one thing I didn't ask you, did you have any children?

FN: No.

AK: You never had children. So there were just the two of you and you, and with this in the middle of the night that you...

TN: Yes. Not in the middle of the night but ??? four is the morning? It was about 3, on the Danube. ??? speedboat, light ???

AK: Oh, the search lights looking for people like you.

TN: Exactly.

AK: Well that was a very timely escape and then you, were you given asylum in Yugoslavia, where they were they friendly to you there?

TN: Oh, very friendly, when we was there, for about a year or so I think, free boards and ??? people, is the ???

AK; I beg your pardon?

FN: He said ??? we have free board and meals.

AK: Oh meals, that's what I thought you said.

TN: Was lucky that there was over ??? in Yugoslavia [inaudible]

AK: Did you get into the oil business at all in Yugoslavia?

TN: Yes. ??? They sent me to the oil field to help them. However, ??? I cannot help to them because I'm just a clerk to the company.

AK: A which?

TN: I'm a clerk.

AK: Oh, a clerk. Oh I see to keep...

TN: I was clerk, ??? engineer. I was not in the field. I was ??? I don't remember too well.

AK: Well, that was interesting, but you did do some work for Tito then.

TN: Yes, I had done some work...

Tape 2 Side 2

TN: Associations at the what they call ??? [inaudible]

AK: Yes, so you planted the idea in her minds.

TN: [inaudible] awful barracks.

AK: Awful which?

TN: Barracks.

AK: Oh, barracks, yes. army barracks I suppose.

FN & TN: [inaudible]

TN: And American type of army barracks. [inaudible] And for the stove, was gas heated. And the gas was coming from a line, [inaudible]

AK: Into a stove?

TN: Yes. Oh, far too much.

TN: I know. I ??? idea to have reduce the regulator...

AK: Oh yes a regulator.

TN: And I made a switch for them to ??? because of my skin tone??

AK: Yes, you didn't want to get blown up. Just one final thing and then we'll stop for the day. How long did you stay in Yugoslavia?

TN: We stayed in Yugoslavia from September '48 to January '50. September '48.

AK: Yes, but what about the period from '45 when you swam the Danube, '45 to '48?

TN: Well I don't swim the Danube in '45. I swim the Danube after a few years with ??? friends. I had ??? the Danube when I was worried Romano Americana...

AK: Oh, 1948 you swam the Danube. Oh, I see but you lived in Romania up to '48.

TN: Right.

AK: Under the Shadow and...

TN: We were hiding.

AK: Oh, you were hiding. Well, I think will conclude this session and thanks very much.

[00:03:04] This is session number 4. I'm Aubrey Kerr. I am back with Mr. and Mrs. Nitescu, in their apartment and it is very good to see you here in your apartment, Trajan, in Number 409 Wetland House. And today is Saturday October the 23rd and we have, you have guests here. And your name is?

Andrew: Andrew Kiss.

AK. And how do you spell that?

Andrew: K-I-S-S.

AK: Oh very good, and your son?

Andrew: John.

AK: And who are you with Andrew?

Andrew: I am ??? with Home Oil.

AK: You're with Home Oil, yes. I used to work for Home Oil, back until 1956. Oh, yes, you'd be working with Umberto Alfaro, right? Yes. Well, that's very interesting. And we finished up rather hurriedly last time because you had Mr. ??? and you also had the doctor come in, and what was his name, the doctor's name?

TN: Logan.

AK: Logan. Yes, and so we finished up rather hurriedly, and we'll have to get back to some of those points, but you have done quite bit of homework in the three weeks since we last saw one another and I wondered if Trajan, if you could just very briefly outline some of the innovations that you have developed, or you were responsible for.

TN: I was ??? two books, medical reports was just published in Romania. One was published in 1936 by a magazine of the Romanian Petroleum and Mining Engineers. The name of this magazine is ??? di Romania, ??? mines of Romania. This publication was made in 1936. And also I was able to obtain from a company, namely Romania Star Romina??? Which in effect was a Romanian subsidiary of the company Francis ??? Looking at these books, I have found a lot of very important material including some miters, ??? you shall not known and used it in ??? Our maker is with me?? only of four or five of these items, together there about 10. The first item is a regiment image ??? to keep the flatter gas in Romania to zero. That was made in 1930. This result was obtained just by making automatic the pressure in different lines and as the exhausts of the compressor.

Second items is the way to empty a well not by swabbing, not by ??? but by using a small pump and as one compressor. About hundred horsepower is, and the system is very very simple. Just pump in the casing, gas, and keep the gas the casing pressure constant ??? users that in Romania 40 kilograms per centimeter constant, by pumping from time to time a little bit of oil. If you have put the pump in the casing, a very bit of oil, the press ??? the pressure in the casing is dropping down. Then, we don't pump slowly slowly, pressure going up, in this way, [tape pauses] to empty a well by ??? just look at the parameter in eight hours. Even if the ??? not the whole pressure ??? was just a very minor fraction of hydrostatic pressure ??? which is very expensive, and it's surprising that this system was not [inaudible].

[00:10:43] Next I can see the system of authentic that this differential pressure between two pressures, for instance if we don't have ??? is meters, ??? If you are keeping constant which regulators, the ??? and to have some way, very simple way to have this differential pressure across the valve, and keep this pressure constant, you have a focus, and this of course can be used in any installation where you need to have a custom flow. In Romania it was used, starting in the sea ??? And he's not yet in this country. However, I thought perhaps this the proper way to do the challenge of jobs.

AK: Do the which?

TN: The ??? jobs in the casing, when cementing a casing.

AK: Oh, yes. Oh, cementing, okay.

TN: Basically there is, to do the proper job at the beginning, if we don't do it for the beginning they are very, very more ??? preserved, but do it from the beginning, and Romania was done from the beginning, starting in the year, let's see, 1930. And used here in Canada, it was my arrival in 1951. [inaudible] Is there a simpler to do it by taking so specific steps. But if you use this one who have dropped in a good ??? by not using the basic, or the basic of this system is to have first very nice cleaned ??? and cleaning ??? the hole and then then you are starting the cementing job, pump with the full speed and in the meantime pull the casing to the very top of the valve and let it down full speed. And do all the time whether cement is preset for the casing behind the casing.

AK: So you work the casing while you, first of all while you're pumping the mud down and then when you start your cement you still work the casing.

TN: Oh yes.

AK: I see.

TN: ??? As a matter of fact, forget about researching, you see here, did you have ??? but you don't have a proper???

AK: Oh, you mean up in the top of the casing, the cement head. Yeah, well did the other the other operators in Alberta follow your lead or did they...

TN: In 1970, don't have seen, not this. What happened in 1970 I don't know. But I know the steel. There are a lot of repair jobs for the casing, spending a lot of money, this is not ???

AK: That's right. Yes.

TN: And perhaps I can, get order, ????. This is the lighter, filtering my piece of, what is it? [inaudible] working with gas, ??? kerosene. ??? saltwater went in against the wind.

AK: Against the wind?

TN: Against.

AK: Against the wind.

TN: Open it, yeah against the wind.

AK: Yeah, and that was the trade name.

TN: Yes. The trade name remains controversial ???

AK: Okay.

TN: ??? and use this very simple system as ingenious as they make this, for the ??? of the gas. As a result, use the wind ??? to be stronger is no more frame of ??? because it's too much for the gas. But it still inside flare in some holes around the ???. So we need stronger ??? on this hose is too much air

compressor ??? ??? and this way even 50 miles per hour or more with the flame was not extinguished and ??? But here was a prop made from very antiporous material.

[00:19:44] AK: Right. I want to mention a device that a safety device that would vacuum off the dangerous hydrogen sulfide fumes from tanks. Could you just give us a very brief outline of that?

TN: This one was used in Romania starting in the year 1934 ??? The oil tanks in Romania was not leaking sulfur gas, what was leaking was ??? very heavy volatile gas. And I have us with a system, which in fact ??? by pumping the water all the time with a very small pump, 1-2 horsepower and aspiring the guess for the tank, and placing this gas, in a gas pipeline ??? emitting which is operating at the very small pressure, is to say, was not anymore. Gas was that over the tanks, and also I was interested to recover this very ??? gas, was a volatile gas. Here it is more important because those gases is in the tanks is ???

AK: That's right. There was a case in Erskine back in '52, '53 where Home Oil lost a couple of fellas. That's when Bart Gillespie was running the production operations. So I remember it very vividly. So would that, was there another one that you wanted to mention?

TN: [inaudible] For instance, this automatic knife for ???

AK: [inaudible]

TN: The Improvement that was made in this thing, the closure of the water on ??? was about 10 12 12 weeks to open ??? the oil because was the wrong idea if you happen too fast, is ??? effect because the people who were ??? from the school was ??? the numbing effect or instantaneous effect. Basis for these results, ??? is the gas is slowly slowly, today 20 meters tomorrow 20 meters, and engineer on was followed by the man in chief. So how much today, ??? say 40 meters and that was then 12 weeks. And I realize that this is not any, is something less effect in some time now is what is something instantaneous. ??? to open the casing to the bottom, was a shock. The casing will collapse. [inaudible]. Now, if I chance, ??? for the reason the casing was collapsing, I will not anymore doing this because [inaudible].

AK: Right. So this speeded up the operations enormously.

TN: [inaudible]

[00:25:26] AK: Yeah. right. Just before we go on any farther. There were some points that weren't clear to me in our last interview and we had to hurry up the conclusion of it. And one of them was the period of time from 1945 to 1948, was the Belgian parent still, did it have any control over your operations in Romania at that time?

TN: Before the war I was what they call it here Deputy Minister of the department of Industry in Romania. Because was a revolution ??? the fear, which was killed by ??? as a monument before the war. Was made only by the military people and therefore requested by the Minister of Industry, John ??? to be his helper to help him. I was not able to resist too much. ??? the mission because at this time the Germans was present, was pressing to take over all the ??? in Romania. And I have resigned 3 times. First resignation was as a ??? General, General ???, she was ahead of me. A Romanian will raise that is rich country, nobody can do what he want ??? To stay in position until my disposition. I have the ??? I

repeat my resignation, ??? simple result. But at the end, I was accepted because my ??? of the panel was sent to the war. The Russian killed my Romania before the war, just ??? Romania from 19..., excuse me, the Germans. It was going to be Romania approximately connecting...

FN: 1940 ???

TN: 1940. And all this time I was still at Concordia ????. Thereafter, the Board of Directors of Petrofina subsidiary ??? Concordia was made by the Russians in uniform.

AK: Into which?

TN: Uniforms. The Board of Directors of my company Concordia was made by the Russians in uniform.

AK: Oh, in uniform. Military, right?

TN: After the war in Romania, ???

AK: Yeah after the war in Romania, but the war still went on until May '45 in France and other parts of Europe. We'll go to the next tape now.

TN: At this time, to leave from Korea...