

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Mr. R. D. Orr

INTERVIEWER: David Finch

DATE: May 24, 2001

DF: Today is May 24, in the year 2001, and we are with Mr. R. D. Orr, Bob Orr in Calgary at his residence at 137 Sierra Morena Green S. W. My name is David Finch. Good afternoon, so wonderful to be with you.

RO: Well, I hope it's wonderful for me to be doing this, I don't know, we'll see.

DF: You'll be fine. Why don't you start out by telling us where you were born Bob?

RO: I was born in Banff, Alberta, July 17, 1932.

DF: What were your parents doing there?

RO: My home was the cement town of Exshaw, Alberta. My father, T. K. Orr was the repair foreman for the Canada Cement Company and my mother was a lab analyst for Canada Cement. Now my mother was the daughter of the lady that ran the hotel in Exshaw and my grandfather was a quarry foreman. My father came west on a harvest train and he hated the farm they took him to so he and a couple of other guys walked into Exshaw, got off the train, walked up the street, saw these three sisters, which were my mother and two others and they worked in Exshaw and they got married and that was the way I got born.

DF: Tell us about your education?

RO: I have no brothers and sisters. I attended school until Grade 9 in Exshaw. All those years I collected Cretaceous fossils from the Canada Cement shale in Seebe, the shale pit in Seebe and the Devonian and Mississippian fossils from around Exshaw.

DF: Why?

RO: Cause I just liked fossils, I really did. However I spent my summer holidays on a ranch 9 miles west of Cochrane. My mother's sister was teaching the ranch kids and she decided to get me to know them and I wound up spending all my summers and holidays on that ranch. My mom and dad mustn't have liked that much.

#024 DF: What was the name of the ranch?

RO: It's the Bar 50 Edges Ranch. They had about 4 sections of land and still have. I rode ??? steers in the Calgary Stampede until I was about 16 years old in 1948 and that little thing is my last badge. Now, fortunately things sort of changed. Grade 10 I went to Cochrane, the daughter and I drove into class every day the 9 miles and then back home at night. Then in Grade 11, I went to Crescent Heights, moved into Calgary and stayed with my grandmother who had moved into Calgary after my grandfather retired and I walked up the hill to Crescent Heights. Grade 12 they put a school bus on from Exshaw to Canmore so I went back and took first year Grade 12. Of course, it was not a full grade so I had to take that and then for the second year Grade 12, the final year Grade 12, I came into Mount Royal College and lived in the dorm in Calgary and took Grade 12. And then I did

another year of pre-university training. Then I went to the University of British Columbia to try out engineering. I wasn't too happy out there because I had met the girl that I thought I was in love with at Mount Royal College and I didn't like the engineering, the teachers out there. Our math teacher spoke in a very heavy accent and none of us could understand him, I don't know if anybody passed their math out there. Anyway I then went to the University of Alberta, transferred back. From '54 to '56, I graduated in '56, got married in '56 and ended a year of post graduate work in '57 because all of my buddies felt that we shouldn't be able to get a three year degree. They didn't have enough courses, you needed to take more courses to get the proper education. We tried to tell that to the head of the department but I'm not sure that he did anything about it. Now what did the degree prepare me for was to do surface mapping and Imperial Oil were the only company that guaranteed that I could do surface mapping. Two other companies gave me good offers but I just refused because I wanted to do surface.

#051 DF: What year was this?

RO: That would be '57. I worked for Imperial in '56. . . joined Imperial Oil permanently in 1957 after a summer in the Yukon with the GSC and a summer with Imperial in the Alberta foothills. I was an assistant to a chap from the United States who was doing a fracture porosity study, looking at all the outcrops. I spent the summer with him, got married, that would be '56 in the fall and then went back to school in '57. '57 to the spring of '60 I was a surface geologist, surface geological studies in the Alberta foothills and front ranges.

DF: What were you paid?

RO: That's a good question. It seems to me I was offered \$365 when I started and I got \$450 when I started. They made me the offer but I got \$450 to start and things went up from there. In the spring of '60 to '61 I was a well site geologist in central Alberta. We finished our program which was mapping from quite a ways north of Jasper down to Coalman, all of the front range of the foothills, with helicopters. And now I had two little children and I was missing home a lot. Anyway back we came and they said I needed some well site training so from the spring of '60 to the spring of '61 I was a well site geologist in central Alberta. I had some good experiences. I was working in Judy Creek and Judy Creek west and I was in training with the geologists and they cut a core, anyway, they had this reef and they cut the core and he asked me to log it. He had looked at I guess. When I got there I looked at it and it had all kinds of sloping core and what not and I said to him, look I think we're right on the edge of the reef, I don't think we hit the reef I think we hit the downslope. He says I agree Bob, 100%, so we got the seismologist out there and sure enough, the reef was off to the west of there and that was Judy Creek. Spring of '61 to September '68 I was sub surface geologist working on various projects, which included the Paleozoic unconformity studies, overcrop and subcrop in central Alberta, area geologist for central Alberta, project leader, basic pay??? resort, clastic??? study group, this included the Gilwood and the Keg River Sands, area geologist northeastern Alberta, emphasis on the Keg River carbonate play. September '68 to September '69 I was in the

regional economics and statistics section as an economic analyst in Calgary, I came down from Edmonton. September '69 to '70 I was in the planning section of Imperial's economic group. What did I do after '70? Actually I got transferred back to Edmonton. Now, I'd been down there for management training and it was not my turn to be promoted. They were giving an area geologist to a geophysicist and they said, it's a geophysicists turn. So I said, okay, I'm not going back to be a 4th geologist in the Beaufort area when there's three wells and there's already three geologists there, I don't want that. So I was looking and. . .oh, I should mention company training courses, back up to that. I was on a sandstone training school in Tulsa in 1963, logging school in Calgary in '64, fluid geology in Calgary in '65, geo-chemistry '66, carbonate facies school 1967 and exploration school, 1968. This was all with Imperial. So it was very good training, I don't regret going to Imperial right out of university. They had a years training program, they just set you up and taught you. But then they didn't realize what I could do. So I said, okay, I'm not going back as a senior geologist to the Beaufort area and in 1970 to '71 I went to Husky Oil as a staff geologist. Now, a big part of me getting that job was the training I had in economics. Economic evaluation of exploration plays etc., etc. Husky had just formed a drilling fund and they needed someone that could coordinate and evaluate the economic values of their prospects, so I would up doing that, which was fine. Then the end of '71 I got thinking, I'm not keen for this. So I had actually a geophysical friend who was the one who had made the contact with Husky and told me to go there and he had a company that was doing consulting, doing projects that was called Jordan, Lewis and Jose and they were three geophysicists, they needed a geologist. So they said Bob, you come and help generate the geological aspect of our prospects and I said, okay. So I go over there and I'm sitting at my drafting table and I'm looking out the window and I'm looking right at a big brick wall and I'm calculating the potential of logs, tra da da and then I put it together geologically, they do geophysics with it and then we present it to some guy who takes it, drills the well and has all the fun. So I only spent 9 months doing that. The President of Husky had kept in contact with me and he said, Bob we need you back, we want you to come back as Chief Geologist, significant benefits and what not. So in '73 I went back to Husky Oil in a progression from Chief Geologist to Manager of Exploration to Explorations Vice-President at Husky Oil Operations and in June of 1988 I early retired. This is sort of a sad story but one of the reasons I retired was business was changing. 1986 I had approval for a staff of about 120 people and '86, the edict came down, cut your staff 20% and I had to cut some pretty good people. In fact just the fall before I had cut two geologists because they weren't cutting their weight. The department downstairs, production etc., they had dead weight all over the place, they could handle that but I couldn't. I had a very trim ship of real capable people. So we had to cut them and what a sad time in my life. Actually I had four weeks holidays and what we'd do, my wife and I, we had bought a place in Arizona, we'd take 3 weeks in February and then I would fly home and go back down. Well, in this February 3 week stint I'm down there the word comes down from the guy I had running the ship for me, he was our frontier exploration manager, Bob, we've got to cut our staff. So he put together a list and gave it to me and I said, not him, okay we'll go with that one. I get back, he's going on holidays

#044 and I had to tell all the people we were letting go. And I remember one little girl, she was a technician and I went in to tell her that I'm really sorry and she said, Mr. Orr you look awfully sad and I said, I am awfully sad, I have to tell you that we've got to let you go. And she said, don't feel sorry, I just accepted a job two days ago and we're going to give her two months salary, she's happy as hell. So that sort of made my day but that was the only positive one. Anyway, that's '86. We get to '88 and again, I get the word, cut 20% of your staff and in addition to that, they're going to reorganize. They're going to reorganize the company into segments, I forget what they even called them but most of the exploration management people were going to wind up working for accountants or lawyers or whatever. It didn't make sense, they don't know how to run an exploration program etc. So I said, work up something for me, put me on the list. My boss said, Bob you're kidding, I said, no I'm not. I was playing on a company share for golf out at Canyon Meadows and I said, I'd like that company share, I could get it, they told me all I had to do was pay the transfer fee. Okay, well, he was in the same boat, my boss, he's a group Vice-President, an EMP???, so he fought for me to get the share. And we did the calculations, went through it - and my salary had been frozen for two years, I had two managers working for me who were making about \$15,000 a year more than I was and that bugged me. Because I'd fight for them but my boss wasn't fighting for me I guess. Anyway they did the calculation, what you could do is they did a fit thing where they take you to the age of 65, when you would be getting CPP and Old Age Security and what not and they added that in prior to coming up to that age. They added 5 years of seniority, they gave me 5 extra years, so they did the calculation and it turns out if I'd have stayed on frozen salary from that age of 55 and worked til I was 65 and gotten my pension, my pensions would have been \$65 more a month. And I'd have worked for 10 years of hell because they were really changing what responsibilities your exploration people had. So those were sad days. And the saddest part of that of course, was sort of leaving behind my managers and chief geophysicists and people like that. I didn't like it but that was my choice.

#178 DF: So those were pretty tough times, those 80's weren't they?

RO: They really were. 1988. I turned 55. I always said, 55 is a good age to retire if you can afford it and when they enhanced the pension and did all those things, it said to me, get the hell out because you're only going to get worse and worse and worse every day. The stress was unbelievable, lots of stress.

DF: How did you handle the stress?

RO: Not well at times. In '83 I had to take 6 months off, that's when we bought our place in Arizona. I thought I was going to have to retire for health reasons then. I had stomach problems and you know, just stress problems. And that's what it was, by the time I got down to Arizona and we bought this place, it was better and I came back and then worked from '83, five more years as Vice-President. But I suppose one of the stressing times was when I was President of the CSPG. I was also made a Vice-President in 1980, I changed bosses. My boss who was fully supportive of me working for the CSPG, he said, Bob, you've got to do it, Husky needs to be involved, he got transferred to Cody, Wyoming

and I wind up working for the guy that was Vice-President of Engineering, who became Vice-President of Exploration. And he was kind of a hard nose and a couple of times we'd have meetings going and I'd say, I have to Chair a meeting for the CSPG and he'd say, Bob you can't go. Thank the Lord, I had Fred Calverly, who was on that Board, he was the Treasurer and I'd phone Fred and say, Fred can you fill in for me and he'd say, sure I can Bob. You know, he was going to the meeting anyway and I'd tell him what was going to happen and he would do it. And twice I got that embarrassment and then I think I told you I had the embarrassment of not having a Vice-President on my board who ever attended one meeting. And Fred Calverly became the President, I just said, that's it, Fred will you accept it and he said, I will Bob. And he did an excellent job. That sort of was that.

#207 DF: Go ahead and talk about the CSPG, I mean, if this is a good time.

RO: Well, professional affiliations and activities. Registered professional geologists, APEGGA and I was on the Honours and Awards Committee, 1980-82 and then I was a council member from '88 to '90. In fact I decided to retire and I phoned them and said, look I'm retired I don't think you want me on that agenda and they said, sure we do Bob, sure we do. So I wound up serving three years, after I left, but I spent my time in Arizona too. And with the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists, actually I was President of the Edmonton Geological Society in 1965 and then Vice-President of the CSPG in '79, President '80, and past President '81. And Canadian Geological Foundation, I was a Director from 1986 to '89 and the Independent Industry Advisory Committee on Earth Sciences I was a member from 1985 to '90 and those were things I had to go to Ottawa on and that carried on after I retired, so I was flying out of Arizona on occasion to go to a meeting in Ottawa and that sort of thing. But it was good I guess.

DF: So what did you enjoy about your career, what were the highlights?

RO: I'd say highlights of my career, well, the middle of the night one night I get a phone call from the east coast, I think it would have been '85, the well sitter on the White Rose well said, Bob, the logs are not showing good resistivities, I suspect we've got a problem with the well. I said, all right, test the well, we're not walking away from it because it had thick sands and we knew it was a major big play so they tested it and they got oil, they got good oil, out of a sand that looked like it could very well be wet. That was great. They're now drilled one or two more wells and are talking about how great a find this could be but it sat in the bush for a long, long time. And had I not told that guy to test the well, that would have been it. ???, it's wet, why would we run casing and do a test and I said, do it. So that was one of the highlights I guess. Lloydminster was a major project of Husky's. When I first got going as the Chief Geologist we had a chap who had been working for years and he had picked all the logs and he knew all the production, he was in the production department and I said, look you know what I want to do, we've got a geologist in the U.S. who is a computer oriented geologist. He can do mapping and things with the computer so I want to get him up here and get your data in to him and we'll see what we get. Actually Husky had a huge, I can't remember how many townships of land but many, many townships of land, they had from the CPR and they had half of the sections in each

township, they were Husky's. So we put together this study and that's it. . but anyway, the then President, who was the son of Glen Nielsen said, I think we should farm out our acreage at Lloydminster and put together packages. So what we did, we went through and we'd have an A township, a B township and a C township. I don't know, we probably had 20 packages like that, the A's would be what we ranked higher and B and C. Okay, so Glen Nielsen, the father came up from Cody, Wyoming, and he's going to sit in on this presentation and I'm making the presentation of, these are the packages, and this is how many wells we would want drilled etc. etc. He said to me, Bob you don't want to farm this out do you and I said, Mr. Nielsen, I do not want to farm this out. And he said, we aren't going to and that was it. And thank god, because they would have been in trouble, they really have good reserves over there, good production, it's just super. So that was amazing.

#272 DF: So why would you have wanted to, like, under what conditions would you have farmed it out?

RO: If he'd have said, farm it out.

DF: No, no, but what would have been the economic reason for it?

RO: They would require three wells to be drilled on each package and then they would earn certain interest and they'd have to complete the wells etc. So it was monetary, it was dollars but hell, the National Energy Program was going then and we're getting 80 cents on the dollar back on our frontier stuff because we had the Canadian content. I think it was 37 1/2 cents on the dollar we got back for provincial. So you know, you still had a break there. So all in all it didn't make sense to go looking for money from somebody else to do the looking. And they've done well with their heavy oil and that kind of stuff.

DF: And the reason you didn't want to farm it out was why, you thought it was a good field?

RO: Hell, I thought it had tremendous potential. We felt, in our Lloydminster area that there was 16 billion barrels of oil. I think that's the number we came up with.

DF: That's a lot of oil.

RO: Yes, about 16. And that's it by gravity, greater than 17 we'd have 1 billion barrels and then 13-17 we'd have 5.4 billion barrels, less than 13, 5.2 billion and in uncertain gravity, 4.6. That's the guys that worked on it with me. We were really into it.

DF: Well, that's a good one. Any other ones that stand out in your mind?

RO: I think the one in that gulf up north, in the Beaufort Sea. . .Amauligak. That's that little thing you're looking at that we sold to Mobil, our interest we sold to Mobil for \$146 million and our net cost in it, after the 80% incentives was less than \$50 million. So it was a hell of a deal. And my staff, we had a real good exploration staff, they were very involved in the technical aspects of that, of everything, east coast, and provincial. They were good years but they were coming to an end with that cutting of staff and changing of the working system to where you had pods, they called them pods. And you'd have a manager of the pod and I wouldn't have been a Vice-President anymore, I don't know what I'd have been. And I didn't stick around to find out.

#316 DF: Tell me about how the NEP affected you when you were at Husky?

RO: It affected us in a very positive manner. Because I think Husky was 70 or 80% Canadian owned, therefore they got full incentives on frontiers and the provinces and it kicked a lot of money into the. . . . Now, Husky paid a lot of money in royalties though and that was the side of it that we didn't like. Nobody liked the fact that eastern people were gobbling up money from tax on the hydrocarbon. And then they were spending it to sort of promote this exploration and so on. They were traumatic times. It had its good and bad points. I'm sure somebody that didn't have the 80% rebate would say it was a terrible program.

DF: But it helped you a lot.

RO: Yes, it did. I wound up, I think for 3 years I had \$200 million exploration budgets for Canada. Which was pretty nice. That's not net, that's the total cost. Your net would have been significantly less. I don't want to see this in the newspaper because somebody from Husky would come and kill me.

DF: No, that's fine. What other things stand out in your career, what did you enjoy most of what you did?

RO: I really enjoyed the mapping of the foothills and the front ranges, from way north of Jasper down to Coalman. With a helicopter, we had myself and the Party Chief, he was a Swiss structural geologist, a really sharp cookie. And we had . . .

#346 DF: Can you explain to us exactly what you did on that. . . ?

RO: Well, we had aerial photographs, Geophoto had done aerial photography and what not. So we had big mosaics of that but we had aerial photographs. I would fly one day, like we'd pick an area, he would say, I'll do from here to here to here to here, you do from there to there to there to there. I would fly one day and just sketch the contacts on the air photo and then the next day I would transpose that on to a base map. And we flew alternate days. But at the same time we had four people, we had one boy that was heading the stratigraphic group and what we would do is we would say, we need to check that section, we need the thicknesses of the formations and the amount of sand in it, amount of carbonate reef, whatever. And we would put, there was an assistant. . no, our assistant was sort of heading it and then he'd have a worker and then they had another assistant and worker with him so there was two strat crews that we would fly them out to measure section. Maybe all of them on one or one over here and then the pilot would come back in, pick up myself and I would fly and sketch the geology on and if I saw a section that I was a little confused about I'd put those stratigraphy guys on it and they would have to measure it and say exactly what it was, what was thrust on to what or whatever. That was just great. We'd come in, in the fall, we'd get in and it would take us maybe two months, three months, even longer, four months to compile it all and get it worked out. You've got . . what are those bifocal things. .

DF: Stereo.

RO: Stereo, you had to be able to do that and map everything and . . .well, I've got all the maps we did, I've got them in the thing in there and a lot of people would give their eye teeth to ever have them, they really would. But when I quit Imperial it was either garbage them or take them home and I took them home, kept them at home.

DF: Good for you.

RO: And they're beautiful, they're beautiful reports. This is geology of the Bow Valley, Banff to Calgary. We put that together for a conference. But I've got maps that cover all the way from, well north of Jasper down to Coalman.

#395 DF: Great. So how did your duties change over the years? Obviously you went from being in the field to being a top level manager.

RO: Right. Well, when we finished doing the surface the decision was made that I needed some time on well site, needed to learn about well site. So okay, I came in and I was on well site for a year but I don't know, do you remember Rollie Prather, the football player. Rollie was a subsurface group leader. They were mapping the Paleozoic unconformity all through Alberta for Imperial. He and a geophysicist were doing this, Art Menzies, and Art was the geophysicist. Now Rollie needed help and he asked for somebody that could help with mapping and so on. So I went and helped this one time and Rollie just said okay, and he'd phone down to the well site supervisor and he'd say, I need some help but I want Bob Orr, that's it, I want Bob Orr. So I wound up, although I was on well site and I sat a couple of wells, maybe three in total in the whole year, I spent most of my time working on this subsurface play with Rollie and Art. Again, it was a very lucrative study, it highlighted a lot of good plays, so that was excellent training for me. Where did I go from there?

DF: The questions was just how you saw your work changed over the years?

RO: Yes, okay, I'm trying to think just what. . . '61 to '68 I was subsurface geologist working on varied projects, which was the Paleozoic unconforming study, over crop and sub crop in central Alberta. Then I was aerial geologist for central Alberta and project leader for the basal Paleozoic clastic study group, which included the Gilwood and the Keg River. That's where I went on that sandstone school. It was run out of Tucson but we went down to the Gulf Coast and then up to the Four Corners area looking at outcrop and so on. And the Gilwood was the highlight and we did a lot of drilling, the Gilwood sands and the Gilwood play and I was involved in that very much. Then I was area geologist for northeastern Alberta but it was when they found the Keg River, Rainbow Lake. One of the geophysicists that I went consulting with and I, did a study of all of northeastern Alberta for the Keg River, looking for other prospects, other than Rainbow. And we [were on our own]??? to Dawson Creek but we only flew up there every Thursday. We would fly in on Thursday morning, tell them what we had accomplished during the week and then we would fly back that evening on the company aircraft and then work for another week and then go up and tell them what we were doing. It was great. It gave us some excellent connections. One of the happiest things that happened as a result of that, I'm on loan working out of Dawson Creek and Esso had a sell Esso program, which was if you could get a friend or somebody to use a credit card, you got credit and you get a ticket in a draw. Well, I had my uncle, my father, my mother, all kinds of people would use credit cards from Imperial Oil and I got my name in the draw. I shouldn't be telling this, it's not going anywhere.

DF: Go ahead.

RO: So I'm in Edmonton, but I'm officially being paid out of the Dawson Creek office. So

they draw the provinces, 10 companies are drawn for a trip to Spain and Portugal. I guess I get told you're drawn, somebody told me on the QT, you know what happened Bob, the Dawson Creek office said, Bob Orr should not be in our draw, he's in Edmonton. So they sent all of my tickets down to the Edmonton draw and they got thrown in the draw, probably just laying on top and I got picked out. So my wife and I got to go to Spain and Portugal in 1967, which there was a big thing in Montreal then, was that. . .

#490 DF: Expo, yes.

RO: Yes, we stopped on the way back in Expo. All expenses paid, we had a bus trip and go to see a bullfight. So geology pays off if you do it right.

DF: That's great. So tell us how you came to be associated with the CSPG?

RO: I had been President of the Edmonton Geological Society and I knew what was going on. And the ASPG, I think while I was in Edmonton I was a member of the ASPG and then I got transferred to Calgary and that was about the time that it got changed to the CSPG, wasn't it. . . '73. Well, I was transferred to Calgary in '68 with Imperial but by '73 I was with Husky and I was a member of the ASPG so I became automatically a CSPG member. And I'm not dead sure, I think somebody asked me if I would consider running. Of course, I had. . .

DF: Did you work on any committees before you got on the executive.

RO: Yes. I think I worked on some field trips and things, just general. . like I say, I'm getting old and I don't recall exactly how it happened but I'm pretty sure I got asked, would I stand. Well, I'd been making presentations to various associations and things, about the east coast and about Lloydminster and so on and I was pretty well known. I know I was elected by a sweeping majority because, well, if you don't know the other names you say, I know him and if he's a half decent guy, bingo, that's who you vote for. So that was it, I was in.

End of tape.

Side 2

DF: So why don't you turn to your notes there on the, I sent you out a copy of your President's Annual Report for the year you were President of the CSPG, sounds like it was a busy year.

RO: Yes it was.

DF: Tell us about this National Energy Program Committee.

RO: I'm just wondering who I put on that committee. . And it's not in here?

DF: Yes, on page 148. There's a paragraph right here talks about it. Gordon Williams.

RO: Gordie, sure it was. I involved Gordon Williams in a lot of things. The National Energy Program was one, yes. I got him involved in something else too. But I asked him if he would consider. It was relationship to other societies I think, APEGGA and the provinces. He got involved on a national basis eventually and I asked Gordie to get on with that and he was happy to do it. And in fact, you'll notice he was involved in quite a few things.

Well, he became President after a bit. . . and Klován was a Class A. . so was Gordie. Gordie did not graduate with me but he did come to do a PhD and he was at U. of A. for a couple of years while I was there and we became pretty good friends. Over the years we've sort of interfaced.

DF: Do you remember anything about this NEP committee?

RO: No I don't.

DF: It says it was struck with the intent of being made available to our membership governments and the general public the observed affect of this federal program on the employment of Canadian petroleum geologist. So you don't remember what happened with that.

RO: I don't recall, no.

DF: No, okay. Why don't you read that last paragraph out loud and comment on it.

RO: Many will say that these are political matters and not the concern of technical society. To the contrary I feel that we petroleum geologists must be concerned with professional standards and political programs that will affect our profession at the educational and employment levels. And we do need to be involved. Ongoing. Because the politicians can do things that are just contrary to ongoing exploration etc. I'm sure, you'll be talking to Gord, have you done him yet.

DF: Not yet.

RO: You will be so he'll be able to tell you all about that, that's for sure.

DF: What are some of the other highlights from the year you were President of the CSPG?

RO: I think we went to Denver and got the AAPG meeting to come here as opposed to going to New Orleans. ??? and I went down and made a presentation of why Calgary was better and they came here in 1982. I read that somewhere in here, that I had forgotten about, but that would be a highlight to go down there and try to convince the AAPG that they should come to Calgary and not go to New Orleans.

#045 DF: Yes, that's a big one.

RO: Yes. I think the biggest thing about being that involved in the CSPG was the people I got to know. The very competent committee leaders, people on the executive. You had the odd one that was a failure but most of them were hard workers and very interested in going forward with the Society as a mentor and trainer and supporter of technical people. It's very important. And it always will be I think. Especially if the accountants and lawyers get to be the managers, it gets to be a little tough.

DF: Now, you attend these past Presidents dinners I suppose.

RO: Yes, I do.

DF: What are the discussions that come up there about the Society?

RO: Basically what's gone on over the past year. We come up with the odd controversial thing that should be done or shouldn't be done but it's great to just sort of hear. . well, the current President does give a review of what's gone on and of course, me being retired since 1988 and going to Arizona for the winter, I haven't been to a CSPG meeting for years, '88 probably. So it's nice to get to those past Presidents meeting and see the people and see how they're changing and ongoing and maintaining the capital. They're still

having good gatherings at the conferences and things like that, which is good to hear, I'm glad of that. Because the whole industry needs it, they need the support.

#070 DF: As the CSPG comes up on its 75th Anniversary, what do you think it should be concerned about in the future?

RO: You know, I'm going to say, lawyers and accountants. Things have become very computerized and one of my concerns has been that there's no substitute for being able to look at the rock and see the pores, see the environment of deposition. You can look at logs and you can't tell, you've got to get down and look at the core, to see what really is in there. And the more that computers take over the less geologists are looking at rocks. And I think that is a mistake. I had a lot of training on how to identify foreshore, backshore, dunes etc. and hopefully that part of the knowledge will not disappear. Hopefully people will continue to cut cores and questions whether that's what that really is rather than an image from outer space or whatever. That's the one thing that frightens me about the technology now, is the real computerization of everything. It bothered me then, even as I was coming to the peak of my years. I would say, look you get out there and cut a core, we need to see a core on that thing. And I think we still need to do that for the final technical answer to what you're dealing with.

DF: What did that foothills geology teach you?

RO: Basically structural geology. How the mountains were built. Mind you, that's the structural aspect of it, but also, we were very much involved in the stratigraphy. And I was quite involved in the Devonian. One year, I measured Devonian sections and you'd go out and you'd sample, three samples per 10', put them in a bag, and by the end of the day you both had a sack full of rocks, you really did. And that was the microscope work when you got into the office and so on, but you knew exactly where it came from. That field training was great and I don't know if companies train people that way anymore. Probably not. And I think it's too bad.

#102 DF: Any comments on working for a large company?

RO: What is a large company? For example when I first started I worked for a large company, Imperial Oil. And it gave me the best training I could have got. And they were the only ones that would guarantee me that I could go and do what I wanted to do. Which was to look at rocks and go and map the foothills. Smaller companies, I don't think get to do that. They might be able to get you to go to a core lab and log some cores or something but they sure as hell wouldn't get out and gather samples.

DF: What kind of chopper were you using, do you remember. . . a Bell, Sikorsky?

RO: Bell. At most three passengers. That was something. In those days with your helicopter, in the mountains, you had to be very careful, about landing and taking off. And our pilots would, if they were taking off they'd try to find an escarpment and then go up the back and then over the escarpment and away they'd go. Because they needed the wind to help them pick up speed. They didn't have the power to power up. Now they just go straight up and it doesn't matter what the wind is doing. But in those days it was pretty dangerous. I remember we had a pilot for two years and then we lost him, and we got a new pilot

come in who was an ex RAF pilot. He was damn cautious because he hadn't flown our mountains. He was out there and he wouldn't take off unless he had a sure get off. My Party Chief, my boss said, Bob I think we should get rid of him, he's not going to get us anywhere in these mountains. I said, Walter, let's wait a couple of days, let's give him a little while. By gosh, within a couple of days, he'd become confident and he took us places where the other pilot would never have taken us and had I agreed we'd have let him go and what we'd have wound up with I don't know. But we had him and we had a helicopter engineer, they were part of our camp, so there were what, 8 of us. And we spent a lot of time in tents, we surely did.

#135 DF: Any stories?

RO: I better not tell them.

DF: Oh, come on, tell one or two anyhow.

RO: Oh, I don't know, I can't think of one.

DF: Any bears?

RO: Oh yes. We were camped by the Ranger Station, just east of the airport at Jasper. We were there for almost a whole summer, oh yes, we had a cook too, 9. You dug a pit for putting your garbage and you also had a, we called a Johnson bar, that's where you went to sit to do your business. This pit was not that far from the cook tent, a ways away. The Ranger Station was maybe 300 yards away from us. Anyway the cook went out to the garbage, he was taking some garbage out one morning and there was a bear there. He looked at the bear and he said, go, go and the bear went woof, and he started pounding on the edges of the garbage and the cook just took a shot out, he went straight through the tent, out the back, he was scared poopless, he really was. We got the Ranger to come and tranquilize the bear and get him the hell out of there because they would have caused trouble. You can't blame them, the garbage is there, but we had to get the Ranger to get him out.

DF: How about up north, any stories up north with bears?

RO: When I was up in the Yukon with the Geological Survey? Oh yes, that was quite an experience really. We were a horse party, I think we had 16 head of horses, there was a student from. .

157 DF: This was when you were young?

RO: Yes. This was 1956, no, '55. Yes, I wasn't married yet, yes, the summer of '55. We flew in and there was a packer, he had the horses, a packer and then there was a student assistant from Victoria and a Party Chief from Ottawa and me. And the Party Chief had been out mapping around and the packer had been there out around, and sort of knew what he was doing but I was just an apprentice. However I knew more about horses than any of them did, because of this ranch time. This is a funny story. We had all these horses but we had one pack horse and he was a great big rascal and they used to load him heavily. They'd load the stove on him, like the stove that you'd set up and put wood in and cook your cooking, have to bake bread, that was part of my job. Some days I wouldn't go out, I'd be baking some break and cooking, doing this, doing that. Anyway

this big old horse, he was a bad guy. You'd get the horses packed and then you'd move out and he would go and he'd hit a tree and he'd run the stoves and the stoves would come off and you'd have to unpack him and repack him. And the packer was saying to me, this horse was just the most terrible horse, we can't control him, can't control him. I said, let me look after him next time we move out. So the next time we moved out I said, I'll watch him, we got him packed and we were going and he finds these two trees and he goes in between them and he's going forward and I got down and I got a big stick and I hit him right between the eyes with that stick. And he backed out of there and he looked at me and uh-oh. So then on we went and we get in that night and you always had to take old Sam and tie him to a tree. Actually you had to tie him to a tree and unpack him. No, you unpacked him first, that's what they told me, that's what the Party Chief and the packer said, we always unpack Sam first. I said, okay, let me look after that, so we got into camp and I took him about 100' away and scrubbed him right up to a tree and left him. We unpacked, put our tents up, unpacked all the horses and then I went over and I punched him in the nose and I said, Sam, now I'm going to unpack you and you better behave from now on. And he did, that was it, he was a good boy from then on. And my story about the bears up there. Actually we carried a gun, we had an 8 shot automatic pistol. When we were traversing we would carry the gun. We never shot any bears but what you do is you make a noise, lots of noise. Like if you were going along, you'd sing a song or whatever so they know you're coming. One night we had this big old grizzly come a snuffing down. We're sitting there, we've had supper I think and he's snuffling along coming and we started yelling and hollering and all of a sudden he saw us and he took off. And that's the only real bear we tangled with. But the grizzlies can be bad. We saw a few of them but it was always at a distance and they'd always take off and leave us. So my bear experience. Well, the worst bear experience I had was in my home town. The hotel that I told you my grandmother used to, she ran the hotel, did the cooking. Grandpa was the quarry foreman, the daughters waited on tables and what not. Anyway when my mom married and I was born, we had a house right behind the hotel. You opened the back door of the hotel and that's where they put the garbage from the hotel, right there. The guy that ran, they had a kind of cafeteria and a pool hall downstairs, anyway, this guy that was running this sports facility downstairs used to come out and he'd stand out there and he'd throw stuff to the bears. They were kind of lurking around there. This one day he threw something out and then he opened the door and he looked out and the bear was standing right there and he went Grrrrr and that guy just about passed out. And I told him, I said, you should not be feeding those bears, they're eating the garbage but they don't need to be fed by you. And that could have been a fatal experience. I know as a kid hearing stories of someone up at Gap Lake, they were throwing chocolate bar pieces out the window of their car and the bear reached in and lifted the face off of some guy. You know, there have been lots of bear accidents, that's for sure. But we were always aware of them, we always made noise and like I say, in the Yukon we did carry, I think it was a 45 calibre, 8 shot, automatic pistol. But we never had to shoot a bear, thank God.

#226 DF: So what contributions in your career do you consider to be most significant, what

are you most proud of?

RO: Well, I'm proud of that White Rose thing. I think I'm proud of most of the things I worked on. And although I can't tell you all of the things I was involved with when I was with the CSPG, I'm sure that. . . you know, I chaired meetings, I gave speeches to various organizations and things on what the geologists do and what the CSPG was, these kinds of things. I think that's important, I think that it has to be done by people who are current and know what the heck's going on, and like I say, now I'm not current. Because I suspect that most of what's being done is being done with computers, I really do. I don't think they're looking at the rocks like the used to anymore.

DF: What part of your career did you enjoy most?

RO: I enjoyed my whole career really, I was fortunate, I was there at the right time. You know, we had the NEP, yes, some hated it, but it made us able to do things we'd have never been able to do. So that part of my career, although it was tense it was stimulating and interesting. And knowing all the people that were involved with the organization, the student industry field trips and just overall, CSPG was rewarding, it was nice. And you know, I do go to a past Presidents dinner and see guys and say, oh, what's his name. Now, we don't know too many of the. . . other than the current President and so on. 1988 I retired and that's about it, I haven't been involved technically since then.

DF: Any regrets, things you wish you might have been able to do? Did you get much international experience.

RO: No. Actually we did get involved in the Gulf Coast with Husky and I did have to go down and meet with companies and discuss technical things. But actually they formed an international group and in fact my original vice-President when I was with the company, he became international office out of Houston. They then built a staff of sorts and I had a Chief Geophysicist who worked half time for him and we never knew whether he was there or here. Finally I hired a new Chief Geophysicist because I couldn't keep track of him. I see him at golf now and then, he's long retired too. But it was a fun career, it really was. And I'm glad that I didn't. . . you know, when I made the decision to go to Edmonton and take geology, not engineering and not go to drafting school and become a draftsman I made a very wise decision. My parents were so happy that I'd met my wife to be because I'd been into that rodeo stuff and god knew what I was going to do. And then I met her and then I decided I wanted to go to Edmonton and become a geologist and I did. They really must have breathed a sigh of relief when we got married in 1956 and that was it, I was on my way to a stable career.

#284 DF: Were you a cowboy, did you do some rodeoing?

RO: Yes.

DF: Really, tell us about that.

RO: I was a boys steer rider. I rode bareback horses, Morley, Water Valley, Ponoka. The ranch people, there was an older brother, and a next brother who was sort of my brother, he was one year older than me and he's rodeo big. Bull riding champion and he was a judge and what not of the rodeo for many years. Anyway he was riding in the boys steer riding and he won some things.. The only time I won money was at Water Valley one year, I think I

won fourth place or something. But it was fun, I travelled with them and we went to these rodeos. I had to pay \$10 probably to get into a ride but that was it. I very much enjoyed watching rodeo, I still do, I still watch the bull riding, bull riding and bronc riding. Still some of the people that I knew from years back are still around and dying or going or whatever. But I don't regret getting away from that life and into the bush life and city life that I had as a geologist. I've seen parts of the world that I wouldn't have seen. Now this rodeo guy I'm telling you about, he's been all over the world with rodeo, judging and what not. And of course, he owns a big ranch out Cochrane way. So he's in it. But it was a good thing I got into geology and exploration, specifically exploration. Because it's the fun part of the game I think. Development, it's okay, but it's a little flaky.

DF: Any other stories you'd like to tell us.

RO: I don't think so. I think you're tired of me.

DF: Oh no, I could listen to you for hours. Well, if you have nothing else to say and I'm sure you do. As soon as I turn off this tape recorder, you'll have lots more to say, I'll just take this opportunity on behalf of the CSPG and the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project, to thank you so much for allowing us to come into your house this afternoon and spend some time here asking you some questions and getting your recollections, they're very important and we appreciate very much your time.

RO: Well, I appreciate very much your demeanour, your way of handling it. I was pretty apprehensive.

DF: Were you?

RO: And I feel a lot better about it now. Well, I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to remember things.

DF: You did well.

RO: Which you don't, like specifics of things. Because it all happened 13 years ago, or 14 or 20.

DF: Yes. So thank you very much.

RO: Okay.