

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Mel Pope

INTERVIEWER: Susan Birley

DATE: October 1983

SB: It's October 3rd, 1983, Susan Birley interviewing Mr. Mel Pope at his home in Vancouver. Mr. Pope I wonder if you'd like to begin with where you were born and raised and a bit about your family.

MP: Okay. My father was Oscar Munro Pope, my mother was Laura Margaret Pope. My father had spent 18 years in the western United States and western Canada as a Mormon missionary. In the early 1900's, about 1910, he came to Canada and settled in Blackie, Alberta where I was born on May 31st, 1914. I had 3 older sisters and 1 older brother. I lost my mother when I was 3 years of age, was raised for a short time by an auntie in Cornish, Utah and then was raised in an orphanage in Olds, Alberta and in Bowness, Calgary. I lost my father when I was 11 years of age. At 12 years of age, which of course was the maximum for an orphanage I was then shipped out to farms. I worked on several farms, different places, went to school and in 1929 I peddled my bicycle from Brant, Alberta to Turner Valley for the Turner Valley oil fields. The money was what I heard about. I hired on with the Royalite Oil Company in early September 1929. Mr. Fred Cameron at that time was in charge of personnel. One thing I can remember back in them days was of course, when I went to work I was broke, I had no money, I sold my bicycle to Snooky Archibald for \$1. Of course, in them days you could buy 5 and 10 cent package of cigarettes. My first job was as a flunky at the old Royalite camp. 750 men, we worked 12 hour shifts, we worked 7 days a week, our pay was \$2 a day all found which we figured was good money. Served 2 breakfasts, 1 dinner, 2 suppers and of course, 11 p.m. lunch. Names I remember at that time of the cook was Doc Martin, Bob Bentley, maitre 'd was Bill Harding. Vance Brown was one of the flunkies, a fellow by the name of Vancouver, that's all we knew him by, Vancouver Kernan. Another boy by the name of Jim Bannerman was there. Now when I arrived there in September, this was shortly after in the spring of 1929 when the old Royalite 4 blew up. That was the year Murray McCrae was killed, now I didn't know Murray prior to that but I heard many stories about it. My first impression of Turner Valley was of course, the smell, the rotten egg smell, the flares, Hell's Half Acre. You could read a newspaper any time, in the middle of the night. I remember the ducks and the geese on their flight paths at night and they would get confused with the flares and they'd fly around and around. Everybody in them days worked hard, they played hard. They boozed and they fought, there was very few women, there was no police. Calgary detachment came out to our dances. There was no telephone exchange, it was on Okotoks rural. But I think some of these names, people I remember at that time, was rig builders, old Jim Tardiff, Whitey McGuire, 2 of the biggest men I know. Turner Valley at that time was made up of small communities such as Priority

Flats, there

#041 was Dog Town, there was Whiskey Row. I remember one time I was broke, a big dance was coming up, I went up town, charged up a \$7 pair of shoes. That was worth a lot of money. I sold them for \$1 to get enough to go to the dance. Two bits to the dance, 10 cents for a pack of cigarettes, we were well away. Everybody had big cars and tar paper shack. Homer Jackson's tar paper shack was one place I remember in Black Diamond. Gas stoves, but the gas was right from the wellhead to the stove and many stoves got blew up and many shacks got blew up. One other thing I can remember with the big cars was a man by the name of Zwick, I don't know what Zwick did but he had a Stutz???, Bearcat and it was always his brag that he could make Calgary in 30 minutes, which was 42 miles on gravel road. It was something others didn't seem to be able to do. I can remember in them days, the old Black Diamond Stampede, they used to hold it at Butler's place in the north end of town, a big do. I always liked dancing, I always liked dancing all my life. A girl by the name of Charlotte Shaw taught me how to dance. The only dancing I'd ever done before that was I did the Charleston one time at Brandt, at school. People I run around with at that time was Ruth and Pearl Lawrence. There was also Molly and Cis Knowles. Their father worked down at the Royalite refinery. There was George and Bill Kirkpatrick and I think they came from Whiskey Row, I know the Lawrence's did. There was Eva McIntyre. For a short time I was transferred to the Home camp, there wasn't too many men up there but one person I do remember who was the bull cook, was George Jones, later known as Jonesy. In the fall of 1930 the Royalite paid my full wages, Mr. Stubbs of the Black Diamond Hotel paid my fees at training places in Calgary, where I went in for the welter-weight boxing where I took the Crown in 1931. Another person that comes to mind is Halfway Annie. Halfway Annie lived at Spring Coulee, the Spring Coulee halfway between Black Diamond and Okotoks. In '29 there was no roads in them days, it was mud mostly and horses and wagons hauling out machinery would maybe make Halfway Annie's where they would stop over and have a lunch and then continue on.

#074 SB: And did you continue working as a flunky for quite awhile?

MP: I've just got it here.

SB: Okay, go ahead.

MP: At the start of the Depression, the fall of 1931 we were laid off. We supplemented our income by digging ditches at 50 cents a foot. I was with Bob Bentley at that time and bob and I chummed around for quite a long time. These ditches were anywhere from 2-4 foot deep, we took 50's stretches, we would never quit until we made our \$5. Big callouses on your hands in them days.

SB: What were the ditches for, were they just at the sides of the road.

MP: I'm just coming to that. We were digging up water lines to some of the older rigs that came from the Hartel Dam, to salvage the pipe. Bob Bentley drove an 8 cylinder Roosevelt, we had great times with that car. We worked for a short while pick and shovel at the Royalite plant. This would be about the time that they were remodelling the plant. With my fighting experience of course, I fought in various smokers and different places. I

even came out to Vancouver and got a few fights out here, \$5, that was a lot of money. The winter of 1931 Bob and I went to Drumheller, Alberta where we cooked in a fish and chip joint in the old Bus Depot. We worked for Lawrence and Betty Krausert???. I can always remember Sammy Krausert, he'd be about 2' high, there was 2 boys and a girl. In the summer of '32 we loaded Louis Bjernson???, his family and his furniture on a trailer, we took them to Sylvan Lake, where we met Lou Churchill and we went to work cooking for Lou Churchill in the Dewdrop Inn, in Sylvan Lake, where I stayed until the fall of 1932. I got a message from Bob Bentley who was cooking in the Flathead Valley on a rig, that they needed men and in September of 1932 I jumped on a truck, a load of lumber was going to Flathead, went over the Highway to the Sun, into Montana. The only way up there was through, either Belton, Montana or Columbia Falls, you went up through Belton, it was at night, snow, and I wondered what I was getting into. At that time the job was a cable tool rig. My first job was working on the boilers, at \$4 a day, all found, which we thought that was great money. I was hired on by Frank McMahan and it was known as Sage Creek #1 being drilled by Columbia Oils. I also remember at that time George McMahan being up there. George Brake used to come up once in awhile. When they had first started this well to a depth of about 400', they hit some heavy crude. They bailed it out and put it into a tank and that is what they used in the forge house for dressing the bits. After casing was run through this crude and continued on with cable tool, they built another wooden derrick off to the side and the driller in his off hours would go over and drill and drill and drill. They never did find that crude. But anyway, it was a great source for our forge house. This rig was later changed to a rotary, a Dohini??? stone, ??? driven rig with a 3 cylinder upright marine engine with a hydraulic table, we didn't have a Kelly. A hydraulic table that went up 5', you set the slips, you drilled your 5' pulled the slips and run the cable back up again. Most of this was all diamond core, there was the odd time we did put a bit in the hole but in them days they didn't have 3 cone bits, they were 2 cone bits. They were about 3' high, they were split down the middle, you took them apart, you put new cones on, you bolted them back together and you went back into the hole. It wasn't until many years later the first time I seen a sport model 3 cone bit. In them days the lead tong??? man was getting \$4 a day, all found, these were good wages. The cat head and derrick got \$4.25, the driller's got \$8. The big money man, ???, diamond setter, he made \$11 a day, he was a rich man. The fireman made \$5.25 day. Of course, the fireman fired with cord wood, 2-125 horse boilers, you wheeled your cord wood into the boiler house yourself. Them fellows really worked for their money, 12 hours.

#138 SB: I'll just ask if they found anything after all that time of drilling?

MP: The cable tool rig was there for 2 years prior to my arrival, I was there for 3 years and after I left, they continued drilling for at least another 2 years that I'm aware of. There was nothing ever found that I'm aware of but I do remember going down to Sage Creek, on the backwater, where gas would be bubbling out of the water and we would bail off Naphtha from the top of the water, put it to a shammy and we could run our car on it. But this I think was a lot of do with why they continued drilling there. I found Columbia Oils very fair in their wages. This of course, was a promotional well and when they run out of

money and they give them time to do a little more promotion to get some money, if we stayed in camp our wages continues and our board and lodgings continued. Until such time as we were ready to go again. But there was some slack times where some of us did leave. The only way out of there from latter September to early May was snowshoes. We were 72 miles from Columbia Falls, Montana. However our mail used to come to . . . our mail came in from Belton, Montana by a half ton truck that had cat tracks on the rear and skis on the front. Their Post Office was Trail Creek, Montana, the border was 12 miles from camp, Trail Creek was another 6. I can remember coming off shift at 7:00 in the morning, strap on the snowshoes, go 18 miles to get a letter and 18 miles back and be back in time to go to work at 11:00 that night. Game was plentiful, we were right next to Glacier National Park. I never did have a gun, I never shot game but I used to strap on snowshoes and my camera. In the summertime I would climb mountains. I can remember our customs man, Jim Sinclair, his brother was a fireman on the rig, Colin Sinclair. These were tall lanky boys and they could cover 40 miles a day on snowshoes with no effort. I can remember in Jim's home, a bear hide hanging on the wall, the biggest one I've ever seen, 8' x 11'. During one of these slack periods, I elected to come our, I came out to Waldo, British Columbia, a lumber town. I tried hacking ties there for awhile but that was just too hard work. I wound up slinging beer in the Waldo Hotel. This is where I met my wife, at that time, Mary Turnbull, she was the maid. We became engaged. Word had come out that they were going to increase their supply of firewood for the boilers, so I went back in and we took a Gypo??? contract from Columbia Oils to cut timber on an old burn. We got 25 cents a log, we did our own falling, our own swamping, we cut our logs anywhere from 12' to, multiples of 4. And we would never quit until we had made our \$5, which was 40 logs. There was 3 teams, there was Otto Anderson and Al Howes was on one team, Art Anderson and Mel Pope, myself, on another team, Ed Runstrom and Jim Hill were on the other team. We would walk 6 miles to get to the cut. At noon I would sharpen the ax, after we had lit a fire with a gallon can for coffee, a few pine needles tasted good in our coffee. Art Anderson would file the saw. This would go on the same every evening after supper when we got back, sharpen our ax and file our saw. Art and Otto Anderson's father, Andy Anderson, an old trapper in the area, was quite a man with a broad ax. I can remember the skis on our Lynn tractor would break or the bunks on our sled that we hauled the logs in and he would take his broad ax and he could make a ski or a bunk in jig time. They had a Lynn tractor, which was a truck with cat tracks on the back and skis on the front. We hauled these logs in, we hauled in 8,000 logs. In them days we played poker for beans, we paid off our debts with cigarettes from the commissary or tobacco. That was the one year I chewed tobacco, I didn't have time to light a cigarette or to roll a cigarette, you chewed tobacco.

#215 SB: Was there a danger of gas coming from the well at any time?

MP: Not at that time, this was a slack period, they were still shut down. But we did get this contract. Once these logs were in, 3 of us, Art and Otto Anderson and myself took a contract to saw and split these logs into cordwood. We would just take turns around. Columbia Oils supplied a cross cut power saw and 6 pound splitting mauls??? and we

would switch, one man would do the sawing and 2 split and pile, 2 hours and then we'd switch around. There again, we wouldn't quit till we'd made our \$5. But we sure learned how to make a pile of cord so that we could make a fast cord. July 17th, 1935, Ed Runstrom drove me out to Fernie, B.C. Ed became my best man and I married Mary Turnbull. We spent our honeymoon in Kalispell, Montana. I had never met Mary's mother prior to this, till the day before the wedding but when she had told her mother that she was marrying this pugilist, a Mormon, my goodness, how many wives has he got, he's likely growing horns. Mary had never been such country. We took her up there, I spent \$10 for a tent in Kalispell, and hauled it up. We had boards, I put up a tent, we had a coal oil stove, I dug a hole in the side of mountain for a cooler. Some of the other people were living in old log cabins down on Sage Creek and they felt sorry for the newlyweds. But every time it rained they had pots and pans all over the floor, we were dry and comfortable. We hadn't been married very long when the cook, Bob Bentley was killed in a car accident in Lewiston, Montana. Mary was elected cook, at \$50 a month. I was on the boiler, farming at \$5.25 a day. Goodness, we never had so much money. I can remember one time we didn't have any fresh meat, we lived on corned beef and candled eggs. But there was a bear got into our garbage dump one time, we thought, my this would be great to have some great bear steaks. ??? Grant was down with his 303 Ross rifle and I was right along with my trusty 22. We shot the bear, the bear took off, I took off after it and fell over it in the bush. But we did skin the bear and we had some bear steaks for supper but everybody ate corned beef. That period in late 1935, Mary and I came out and went home to Fernie, British Columbia. This would be the winter of 1935 and '36, son #1 was on his way. I got myself some knitting needles and I knit his booties, I knit his jacket, his cap, I knit blankets for his carriage and we had a great winter that winter. In April of 1936, I was called to Turner Valley and went to work for Snyder and Head Drilling Contractors, on Highwood Sarcee #1. Snyder and Head Drilling Contractors was a combination of rotary, which we called them swivel necks, cable tool, which you called jar heads. Clarence Snyder was a jar head, Jigs was a swivel neck. They had got together and set up the Snyder and Head Drilling Contractors. That was they could go either way.

#278 [I think this must be Mary speaking]: This is where Aubrey wanted you now to explain the type of machinery you worked with, the old fashioned ???, you know, to what today's modern equipment ???.

MP: Okay. Yes. This was on Highwood Sarcee #1. I got me a place to board and room, a cabin on the Union Hill in south Turner Valley. We were just across the road from the BA south plant, at that time they were building it. Times were hard, every morning there would be a line up of 2 or 3 hundred men, to be picked for jobs for that day. Most of our drilling in them days was fish tail bits on 2 cone rock bits, only these 2 cones are a little bigger, they had what we called a lubricator, filled with what we called Hughes Oil. The thickest, blackest stuff you've ever seen.

SB: What was your job on the rig.

MP: I was a lead tong man, a roughneck on this particular job. Drillers on this job, my first

driller was Floyd Walker. Other drillers were Woodrow Wilson, Duckie Welch, I can't remember the others right off hand. It was in June 1936 that Turner Valley Royalties came in with crude, the first crude well discovery. This was when the boom started. Turner Valley Royalties I think, was owned by R. A. Brown Sr. When we finished Highwood Sarcee we moved over to offset Turner Valley Royalties with B&D Royalties. A bonus was offered but when we did bring the well in there were so many said, well, I worked so many days and I worked so many days that we never did get our bonus. It was on this job that I received my first derrick job. It was also about this time that I saw my first sport model drilling bit, 3 cone. It looked so small I didn't think it would stand up to anything. It was about the time this boom started, in '36, in late '36 I saw my first steel derrick. This is when they started coming in. Derricks prior to that were just built by rig builders with planks and spikes. The rigs all came in pieces, you took off your jack shaft, you took out your drum. The sub structure was made by 14-14 timbers and we'd drill holes through them with 3' augers and bolted them together with bolts and set our rig up piece by piece on top. In late 1936 I seen my first unitized rig. This was a rig where everything was in one unit and you just skidded it up. Some of these older rigs we had no chain guards, you just put on a chain and away you went, the only guard we had, we put a plank over the rotary chain but otherwise we had no safety. There was no hard hats in them days, there was no safety boots in them days, although we did used to wear 8" loggers boots with corks, some of them even went as high as 16" tops. Why a roughneck would want a 16" top I'd never know, unless he wanted to keep his pants clean in the mud.

End of tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

MP: Our drilling mud consisted of clay that was dug out of the ground in north Turner Valley and was hauled to the rig. We had big, tremendous mud boxes with steam coils and I can remember picking and shovelling this frozen clay in the mud boxes and cooking it. To get to work, those that had cars, I paid 25 cents a day. Our surveys at that time, we'd just run an acid bottle on the sand line, let it set for 20 minutes and pour it out. The acid would etch a ridge around the bottle to tell you whether you were straight or whether you were crooked. That's the only survey we ever had at that time. On May 4th, 1936, #1 son was born in Fernie, British Columbia. My wife came to Black Diamond in July of 1936. We got an apartment in the Black Diamond Hotel. The maid and beer slinger in the hotel was Jack and Polly Hitchens. Polly Hitchens was like a second mother to us and to our son for many years. Later on we rented Art Crawford's house and while we were there we purchased from George and Bessie Burk, their house, for \$525 with the house and 2 lots. We thought we were really getting took. But I did have 2 lots, we had it surveyed and I sold one lot to Allen and Ann Wright where they built their first home. I dug my cellar with a pick and shovel and a wheelbarrow, it was all gravel. There was a creek went

through my yard. I filled my creek up with the gravel. When I got ready to cement the cellar I got a keg of beer and a bunch of roughnecks and we run that cement in jig time. At 2:00 one morning I had timers from Frank Nickles and I started to jack the house over when the wife woke up and took off. I can remember one accident we had while going to work. I was riding with Frank Leak, Dobie Snyder was with us when Frank hit the rear wheels of a tanker. We pulled the wheels right out of the tanker. We stopped sudden, Dobe was in the front seat, he got his head through but I went right over the top and landed on the cement. We were rushed to Black Diamond where Doc Taylor looked after us and sent us on to Calgary. I had 58 stitches put in my face, which you can't see today. Dobie Snyder got a sliver of glass in his throat and we nearly lost Dobe. I can remember our first cement job, Granville Oils #1, Haliburton. Shorty Smith ran things then. Before we got ready to cement we had to chip all the concrete out of the old pumps and get things going. A little later on Jack Haliburton came up and got things organized, hired and sent up Dick Gibbons and Ken Dose, and that's where the Haliburton Oil Well Cementing Company really got off the ground in Turner Valley. New rigs and derricks were all coming in at that time, unitized, no more wood derricks, they were all steel. Jigs Head at that time, severed their relations with Royalite Oil Company. Snyder and Head were a drilling contractor and also Jigs Head was a drilling superintendent for Royalite all at once. But when things started to put up like this, there was one option, either stay with Royalite or sever his with Royalite, which he did do. I stayed with Snyder and Head. I was on the rig up crew of Floyd Walker for many months after that. New rigs coming in. I can always remember making our headers, our steam lines, our mud lines out of 4 and 5" drill pipe. We would cut them off, thread them by hand. It was about that time that I met Lauder Nowers. I used to be pretty good at the artist work with a pencil. I drew a picture one time of Jigs, of the comics and I hung it on the wall of the doghouse. Underneath I put Jigs Head. Then I also drew a picture of Wimpy out of the comics and underneath there I put Wimpy Snyder. You know, no sooner than I had them pinned up on the wall, than here, Snyder and Head drove in. I was going to tear them off but Floyd said, don't do that. Anyway it was a great laugh and Floyd talked about that for many years after. I was moved to West Turner Petroleums #2. This was Frank McMahon and they had brought in the Dohini stone gear rig from the Flathead. This was my first cat head job. They had contracted out to Snyder and Head to drill the hole, cost plus. Nobody knew how to run the darn thing, it was gear, 3 cylinder, marine upright motor. You run it in reverse and you run it ahead, it all depended what you wanted to do with it. That's when I got my first cat head job. I was with Bud Kelly, Lou Kelly was also a driller on that. West Turner Petroleums later became Pacific Petroleums. One year, during this period, in the winter, we had a space heater in our kitchen. The chimney became plugged with ice and the wife, the baby and I very nearly died. We were only found because Joe Jackson came to pick me up for work at 11:00 at night, and it was unusual that Mel was not out there waiting for him. He came in and found us. We were taken over to Joe's house. The baby seemed to be all right, I was put in the bedroom with a bed pan, go ahead and throw up all I wanted to. But I very nearly lost my wife. Dr. Landers came up and a shot of adrenaline was the only thing that saved her. During this time we had a St. Bernard dog, Danny Boy,

he had a sleigh, he had a harness and he'd pull them kids all over town. He was a big dog, you couldn't do much with him. He'd put his paws up and he'd just about knock you down. He'd follow the kids to school and he would get in to the school and the teacher just couldn't get him out. Mac McLaren was the principal at that time.

#096 SB: At that time when Turner Valley Royalties came in and a lot of other drilling companies started up, did you want to mention some of those?

MP: Well, I'm not too familiar with them.

Mary: Well, what company's came in Mel?

MP: Bower and Bower come in. I don't know. But I did work for some you see. Now for instance, West Petroleum Operators I worked for, I worked for Atlas Drilling, I worked for National Drilling, I worked for Bower and Bower. Both Oklahoma and California styles. My crew, I had the best crew in the world, there's some names, oilmen today.

SB: And that was after you left Snyder and Head was it?

MP: Well, I haven't left Snyder and Head yet.

SB: Oh, okay, well carry on with that part of it.

MP: Okay, so go ahead?

SB: Yes.

MP: During this boom period, of the drillers that I can remember working for at different times were such men as Charlie Visser, Sammy Sewell, Vern Hunter, Blackie Murphy, Loren Leesom, Bill Pallister, we called Bill Stud, Harry Morris, Dick Knight, and of course, many others which . . . I remember one year, in October 1941 on a work over job on Major Oils #3 in the north end of Turner Valley, the H2S, where we had an accident. The boys became overcome in the cellar while we were trying to change the head, where we lost Norman Thomas, we used to call Spider. Steven Cassidy we lost. In the hospital was Sam Hector, Bill Murray. I think I was about as sick as anybody but Doc Lander and Jigs Head elected to leave Mel Pope at the rig site with the two bodies on a flat bed truck and watch them overnight. That was the same night that they had the fire at Black Diamond lumber yard. My son Lloyd was in the hospital getting his tonsils out, the wife was there, when these people coming in being burnt, people coming in from the gas well. No word on Mel, it was quite a trying night for my wife Mary. Early in 1941 Snyder and Head ceased as a drilling contractor. I went to work for West Petroleum Operators. I drilled for awhile for Atlas Drilling, National Drilling, Bower and Bower. These rigs were both Oklahoma style, some were California style.

#132 SB: What was the difference between Oklahoma and California style?

MP: California style, you racked your pipe behind the finger. Oklahoma style you racked your pipe on the ??? board, most of us didn't like the Oklahoma style. But I did have, I had one of the best crews that I ever had in my life. To hire on with these people you would just get a call saying I want you to work at such and such a time and you arrived with your own crew, you hired your own crew. While working for these contractors, I had, as my cat head man, Allen Wright. My tong man I had Jim Irwin, my derrick man was Neville

Wright, I might say he was one of the best derrick men I ever had. My pipe racker was Sandy Addison. Sandy had drilled cable tools years before. I remember going back again though, before going to these contractors, my first drilling job with Snyder and Head was with Grease Creek Petroleum, northwest of Calgary. And our first job when I arrived on shift was laying down 5" drill pipe and in the process, picking up 4" drill pipe. When Jigs Head and Clarence Snyder drove out to the rig and sit in their car all day and watched me. I don't think they did me any good, I think there was a little deterrent, but anyway, I did all right. Then I went on from there. During the time working for these contractors, this then would be on footage basis, where high balling and speed was the main factor. With this crew, I think we had the fastest crew in Turner Valley. ??? Adams used to try to beat us but he couldn't. He would never believe, he thought we doctored the stool pigeon in the doghouse, which showed what we had done. Also during this period we would get a drilling job for one contractor, we would drill that hole, then we would look for another job and go for another contractor. But due to the slack period, when we sat down and figured out our wages, over the course of the year, we figured we would make more money to go back with Royalite as a roughneck and work steady and make more money, which we did so. I hired back then with the Royalite Oil Company, in 1942. When Fred Cameron asked me what I had worked at I said, I worked everywhere except racking pipe. I'll be damned if he didn't put me racking pipe with Floyd Walker. But I guess Floyd Waler thought I did all right. The spring of 1942, this was on Northwest Hudson's Bay #8. Another driller there was Archie Miller, this was the first time I ever met Archie Miller. I can remember during this period other things, 1938, the Twin City Hotel was built in the town of Little New York. We also had Little Chicago. I can remember 13 cafes in that area. This old district all became Longview, Alberta in later years. My son started school in Black Diamond, teacher at that time was Bonnie Beckman, who later married Oliver Beasterfield in the Black Diamond Hotel. Principal was Gordon Manue, Mac McCullough, Ian McLaren. I can also remember during these years to supplement our wages, I played pool a lot, pea pool. Ed Bannoit, Ian McLaren, Bill Deiss. In behind the pool hall, an old Turner Valley character, Pete Croll had a gambling den. At that time the Turner Valley Flare came out, our first newspaper, with Barnie Halpin. We also had Bob Edwards Eyeopener from Calgary. Great newspapers. Tricks we used to play on some of our new employees, we'd have them bail the rat hole to keep it clean. If somebody happened to snooze over their newspaper, we'd just light the newspaper or we'd put a wet newspaper on his leg and put a hot nut on it. They'd wake up fast. If they weren't standing around doing anything we'd make them polish the cat head, or we'd send them to go for the left-handed file. I can remember the time, I was working for Floyd Walker, graveyard crew, things were a little slack, I laid down behind the steam engine, put a sledge hammer under my head and snoozed. Floyd come over and put some old grease on my glove, then tickled me under the nose with a feather. My goodness, it took me 3 weeks to get that old tar off my face. In the spring of 1944 we went wildcatting, we left Turner Valley, or I left Turner Valley. We drilled Imperial Jenner. I was promoted from pipe rider to derrick man at that time. Drillers at that time, and tool push, Bob Stanhole. We had Leo Cassidy, we had Don Bishop, we had Art Bishop. Harry Webster

was there, Harold Long was there. One experience I can remember on this hole, we had run casing but we had got no production, therefore we had to pull the casing but pull the casing, we didn't have casing cutting tools in them days. We sent for Charlie Sonacher and he came out and shot our casing but I can remember squatting on the floor with this can and him pouring that nitrogen in and the black flies eating me up. I can also remember Charlie and Bob, when they were finished, he went and rinsed his can out and poured it in the hole in

#215 the ground and put Harold Long's hat on it and then set it off and it just scared Harold to death. When they did finish the rig we tried to move to Youngstown. We had to put it on a railroad for Tilley but due to mud and wet weather we could never get this rig there. We finally wound up, put it on the railroad at ??? and moved on down to Tilley. But at Jenner we stayed on the other side of the river at Knutson's farm. Good food but we all slept in the granary. Didn't have enough beds so the beds went shift by shift. But they were great experiences in them days. We moved to Tilley, Alberta, we were drilling Monogram #1. This was my first pushing job for Imperial at that time. Frank's #3, George Burk had it, he was drilling south Tilley, in Rolling Hills. We can always remember the pheasants and the ducks that we lived on. We lived with Slim and Mary Cain for a short period. We moved to Vauxhall, Amelgra #1. Somewhere in there is where I met Aubrey Kerr. Elsie I met in later years. In Vauxhall we lived in the hotel, later we got a house. I remember one time a blizzard where we were all blocked in, other rigs in the area were all shut down but we did keep going, 2 hours on and 2 hours off. We were there for 60 hours with no food. We ate snow for water, we shovelled snow into the tank to keep the boiler going and I became quite sick after that. I suppose some of the snow I'd eat. I remember at that time Royalite Oil Company had their first strike. They had 2 seismic rigs in the area. They thought they should get as much money as we got. Of course, I reported to Floyd Walker by telephone that morning and they were fired immediately. Within 4 or 5 hours we had a new seismic crew down for these rigs. We were then transferred to Nordegg, Alberta, a coal mining town. There was one hotel which was mainly a camp for the miners. There was another camp run by a person of the name of Federation, where I stayed and ate but it was a company mining town. Brazeau Collieries owned the town. Cab driver I had, Vern Phillips, we knew him as droopy lip because of the slug of tobacco in his lip. From the mine, our location was on the muskeg. We knocked down with a cat, with the branches and the timbers, to make a road into the lease and the lease was on a muskeg. I went up to the mine and I seen Mr. Story of Brazeau Collieries, I bought a carload of 3" plank, we corduroyed the whole lease with plank. We set the rig on it and while we were drilling the whole rig and the whole lease would just shake. I can remember one time Brazeau Collieries twisted off a 6" steel shaft that drove their fan in the mine and they didn't have a spare. They came to me and I gave them a 6" drill collar. I also had Phillips with his cat go up and grade their streets and from that time on, Brazeau Collieries would do anything for us. Great relationship. We come down one time and helped them build a bridge that went out, the whole crew. For water, Ray Fox was my water hauler but I didn't have to haul much water. I went 3/4 of a mile up the hill and found a lake and we siphoned the lake to the rig, that was our water. All summer, I don't remember any one week went by

all summer that we didn't have snow. Bill and Fern Gould were two people that were there, Harry Webster was there, Art Green was another man that was there. We then left Nordegg later that year and went to Coutts and drilled 2 holes, Ericsson Coulee #1 and 2, east of Coutts, out by the buttes. Water out there was a problem. I remember hiking up over the buttes to a farmer on the Montana side that had a dam. Of course, he got a bottle of whiskey and a fee if he would turn so much water loose so that we could have water to drill. But after drilling 2 holes that water never did reach our rig. Coming down through

#302 them dry old buttes it would find a fissure and it would take a couple of days to fill it up, it would go a little further. We had to haul our water quite a way to do them jobs. I can always remember, Frank Burk was one of my drillers, along with Harry Webster. I can always remember Frank with a shift truck and a coyote box coming in from the rig. I'd see him from town, I could see him coming for miles. I don't know how fast that truck went but Frank had here there.

SB: What was a coyote box?

MP: A coyote box was a box on the back of a half ton truck with 2 benches in it and that's where we put the roughnecks, the peons, or the coyotes or whatever you wanted to call them. And the driller drove the truck to and from work. We had one on every rig. Of course, just during these years, liquor, cigarettes were rationed. We used to go across the line, Sweetgrass, where we could get 40 ounces or run, over proof, or cigarettes, I smoked American cigarettes for years after that.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

SB: Go ahead, yes.

MP: During this period at Nordegg, on October 3rd, 1943, son #2 was born in the Turner Valley Hospital. As of today, October 3rd, he's 40 years old and I'm really not that old. From Coutts, we moved to Bow Island, the Taber area and I'll always remember the Franks #1 rig, which was a truck rig, 41 ton, a 6 wheel drive, you could lock your differential, your top speed was 20 miles an hour, the low speed was 2 miles an hour. I can remember fording the river, the Milk River, the town of Milk River. I always figure a foot of ice would hold a freight train but when I got on that ice with this rig, I'll tell you, I went up hill all the way to the other side, that really scared me. We then moved from Coutts to the Bow Island, Taber area, taking this rig from location to location. This was all irrigation country. Our water truck would go ahead with a crew with plank and we would fill the irrigation ditch full of planks so the rig could go through. We forded rivers, we forded creeks, we went up over hills. We could never go on any bridges on the road. We drilled Chin #1 south of Taper. We hit an artesian well about 400'. We had quite a time killing that water. We went on down, the hole was dry but the Conservation Board requested, or demanded, that we leave this as a water supply. This was dry, dry country, a lot of sheep herders in the area. We run 4" casing and we left it as an artesian well. I was

#040 back later months to inspect the location and we had quite a lake in this Chin Coulee. Sheep were coming from all directions. During these sojourns around the country, to different towns and different locations, I met people such as Gordon McConnell, these were all geologists, Don Mackenzie, Doug Layer, George DeMille, geophysicists, Diane Loring. I never did know what happened to Diane, I haven't seen here since. I went back to plug off Hudson Bay, Ericsson Coulee, with its drill rig at one time. We did a wash over job at Tilley #2, we did a work over job on Tilley #3, Amelgra 1. Spent a short time at Letbridge #1. At that time we were transferred north. In the later 1945, this was about the time that Royalite severed their relations with Imperial Oil and became an independent oil company where we had our option to stay with Imperial or stay with Royalite. I elected to stay with Imperial. We went north to Minburn, where we were drilling up the Kinsella gas field. One thing I can remember about Minburn, this would be our first camp, we didn't have a cookhouse but the sleeping quarters were old army Quonset huts. We did have a bathroom and water. I can remember how cold it was and Harold Long and I, pick and shovel, digging the outhouse. Harry Morris was our tool push. After about 2 days of trying to get by this frozen gumbo, I asked Harry how deep he wanted this thing and he said, about 3 months worth. It was while we were at Minburn, we had come from a dance at Mannville, about 2:00 in the morning when one of our boys had just come out of the army and sitting at the table in the dining room, we were having a cup of coffee, he shot himself through the head. This would be about 2:00 in the morning. We waited for the RCMP to come out of Vermillion and that was quite an experience. Shortly after that, I had a 22 rifle, I threw it away and I've never had a gun in the house since. We then went to Two Hills for 3 diverni holes. Two Hills was a Ukranian town, we had our camp there. We couldn't understand them, we didn't get along with them too well. But after drilling these holes became quite friendly and when they found out we were leaving they had a big party and a big dance and a big feast at the community hall for the boys that were leaving. We then went to Vegreville, more Viking holes. Spent some time in Viking, this is where Ralph Archibald met his wife. Ralph is still on Vancouver Island I believe.

Mary: No, Provost, Noreen comes from Provost.

MP: Provost, okay. We then went to. . . about the time of the Leduc discovery, Franks #3 was there with Bill Blim and Don Bishop and they pulled Franks 3 for Leduc and they sent us from Viking to Provost. The wife and I stayed at Padogan, we got a house from Sonny Haughton and boy was that ever a cold country. One of our drillers, no names, went to put the derrick up, ice frost on the drum, dropped the derrick. We spent most of the winter in the garage, welding the derrick back up again. We had a community well in Padogan and I can remember Mary one time, the ice building up during the winter, prying the pump with a pail of water and then trying to get over this hump of ice, slipped and fell and she walked in the house, she was all ice. She smashed her knee, it was quite an experience.

Mary: ??? to build the cabin.

MP: From the Padogan or Provost area we were then transferred to Morinville. While in Morinville we were there a considerable time on different occasions. This was where our son started school. It was a French town, it was a Catholic town and the schools were all

French and nuns. Our sons learned French, could say their Catechisms. By the time we left there they were quite the Frenchmen. It was while at Morinville at one time where we drilled up, I drilled 8 production holes in the Excelsior field, that I built our cabin. Other drillers and people on the rig had cabins and I went to every person and found out what they had did wrong, what I should have done to make it right and I built my cabin. 3 x 12's, laminated, 6 wide, steel shoes. I phoned every railroad in the country to find out the narrowest bridge they had, 11' was the narrowest bridge they had in Medicine Hat, I made it 11' wide. I forget how long it was.

#098 Mary: 27.

MP: About 27'. We didn't have TV's in them days, we had a radio. My radio, I put insulators and strung 180' of wire around through the insulators in the ceiling, for an aerial. But we found out that the radio worked better if I just tied it to the bed spring. From Morinville then we went, spent many years in different areas. We spent some time in Bassano, Tofield, Egremont, Bruderhiem, Vimy, Lamont.

SB: Did you have your cabin at all those places?

MP: We took our cabin to most of these places.

SB: How did you move it?

MP: Truckers at that time seen these people coming in, these are before we had trailers, these cabins being made. They made themselves units to haul these cabins. They were low slung and made out of 4" drill pipe, just a few inches off the ground with wide tandem rear wheels and they just winched the cabin up on it, slide it and then take off down the road. They used to haul us for \$1 a mile, which was quite cheap for these truckers in them days. One time when we were at Morinville we went out southeast of town to Carbondale, a coal mining town and we drilled Sturgeon #1. Shortly after sputting in we run into an old mine shaft, which was not on the records and it shouldn't have been there. We checked with the department of Mines and Resources and we were informed at that time that years ago, these miners in Carbondale, after shift, would have their own little mines and their own little shafts and the whole country was undermined. We pumped in 250 sacks of cement and I don't know how many time let it set, and then another and another. We finally got through it but we would certainly never fill up a mine shaft. On another occasion, moving back from Camrose where we drilled Arlena #1 we came back to Morinville. While in Camrose we got a pet crow and we took the crow with us to Morinville and it was quite the pet of the boy. Any time we would send the boy up town to get something from the grocery store the crow would go ahead, land on the signs and caw away at him and then go a little further. We had a great time with that crow. Unfortunately that fall, we don't know what happened, whether the other crows killed it or whether it froze to death. While we were stationed in Morinville, in 1948 was the year we sold our home in Black Diamond and my wife and children came to live with me. We sold our home to Tommy Thompson, derrick man, milk man. I was then hired out with the Franks #1 rig, to the Royalite Oil Company and went to Bassano to redrill Crowfoot #1. In the drilling reports they had noted 2" of mercury on the pita??? tube and they thought they had some gas. But when we drilled it out and put it on a test we only got 2"

of water. So that hole was abandoned. I was then sent to Leduc field with the Franks 1 rig where the rig then was sold to the Imperial Oil production department for a service rig. I serviced 3 wells in the Leduc area, with a production crew to train them and then went back to Tofield on the Franks #3, working under Harry Webster at that time. We continued our journey around the province to different places, until 1950. We were then transferred up the Mackenzie Highway, base camp at Steen River for Imperial Oil where I drilled Lutus Creek #1 and drilled Adair Creek #1, Dizzy Creek #1 and then I went to Fort Vermillion

#153 as a relief tool pusher during holiday season. Fin Lineham I relieved. And word came that Floyd Walker was looking for me. When I came out on my long weekend I came to Calgary to see what Floyd had in mind and that's when I joined the Feturity??? Oils Ltd. Correction there, it wasn't Calgary, it was Edmonton I come to see Floyd. There I met Bob Heard and Lloyd Wilson. At that time it was Feturity Oils and Development Drilling Ltd. In later years we changed that to Feturity Drilling Ltd. That was when I went back on a camp job to Hudson's Bay, Wabasca, #1, 160 miles northeast of Peace River, just south of Buffalo National Park. We hired the whole crew, we put the whole rig together in Edmonton, put it on flat cars, took it to Peace River and took it in. When we got there they had a camp but I think the camp had been sitting there all winter with seismic crews, frozen up, cold, over 60 below zero. But we finally did get things going. Our drillers there, I had such men as Al Street, I had Stan Pope, I had Bob Stewart, oil men, some of these fellows maybe you won't know. I had such a good deal . . . I was the time keeper, I did the payroll, I mailed the reports. Now we didn't report to our office in Edmonton too often. It was by radio, through Fort St. John, and maybe once a week. We had an awful time trying to find water. They told us our locations a couple of miles in the Wabasca River but we couldn't find it. I drove back the 160 miles to Peace River, I got the Hudson's Bay aircraft and we flew back over the location and found the river, about 7 miles east, down a gully. I had aqua gel in paper bags and I dropped them on the route for the cat skinner to make the road and that's how he made the road, he followed my splatter of aqua gel all along and down 7 miles. Cold and snow, quite a bit of snow. The water hauler, he always drug behind him a fir tree to keep the road nice and level and straight. We had no geologist on the location but when I radioed in and reported that I was in the granite wash they suggested I keep going and they flew in a geologist and confirmed that I was in granite. We abandoned that hole. But I can remember for days and days on end, no wind, 72 degrees below zero, the steam going straight up. This was getting on towards the end of February and we had to get that rig out before spring because muskeg don't freeze very deep. We moved that rig out to Drumheller, where there it was only 10 degrees below zero but the wind, I damned near froze to death, I wished I'd have gone back to Wabasca. In Drumheller we drilled 2 holes for Scurry Oils, which was Scurry Yellowknife Howie #1, Scurry Rainbow Drumheller #1. That was the first time I met the mud man, Tom Kinnet. We moved from Drumheller to the south end of Leduc where we drilled Feturity Weisner #1 on a Feturity lease. No luck there. We went to Athabasca and drilled Major Lake #1. Major Lake #1 was where we lost circulation bad. We pumped

down bags and bags of walnut hulls, beet pulp. I finally went over to a farmer and bought 2 loads of oats. We finally got our circulation back but that was one of the worst lost circulations zones we'd ever run into. Then we moved over to Fawcett and we drilled Rork Creek #1 for Feturity and this is where that rig set. Work at that time was hard to get. Up to this point I had worked on 98 consecutive wells during my career and this point on I've lost track. In the spring of 1953, the rig was then sold to the Reading and Bates Drilling Contractors on a purchase rental deal with the stipulation that Mel go with the rig.

#223 SB: Could you just go into a bit of detail about who owned Reading and Bates?

MP: Reading and Bates was a drilling contractor from Texas and it was run and managed pretty well by Texans. Names miss me right at the present time. But they did have several rigs in Alberta. They had just started up not too long prior to this. And that's about all I can tell you about Reading and Bates.

SB: Did they have an office in Calgary?

MP: They had an office in Edmonton. We moved then to the Stettler area, drilling for Socony Vacuum. Names there that come to mind is Ken Lord, Merrill Rasmussen. We drilled three holes in Erskine, we made good time, I had a good crew, we had a good clean rig and we set drilling records on all three holes in that area. I was then transferred to Bengough, Saskatchewan, where Reading and Bates had brought in an old, old national 50 rig from Odessa, Texas. We had 3 American drillers, American tool push to help me set up, I didn't take long to fire him and I didn't take long to get rid of the drillers either. It was a terrible wet year, I remember one American driller, he'd never seen gumboots in his life. He was tramping through the mud with these gumboots, he wore them gumboots all summer, he would never take them off, he'd never seen them in his life. I drilled holes in Bengough, Saskatchewan, Horizon, Sillon, Ogama and in Bengough. A period there in the fall of 1953 where Reading and Bates drilling department and myself agreed to disagree and I quit. The day I quit, that afternoon Archie Miller phoned me from Calgary and I asked him how he knew I quit and he said, well, I didn't, I was hoping you would, I need you. It was about 3 weeks before they got relief down and I did eventually wind up in Calgary.

SB: Was there any reason for you getting rid of the drillers and the roughneck?

MP: Well, no reflection really on the American drillers, now they knew their job and they knew their job well. But they had no conceptions of drilling procedure in Canada. Possibly Texas, yes, but they were just far out of line and also they had no conception on the matter to set a rig up in this country. Cold weather, they'd never seen cold weather or snow in their life.

#272 SB: So they you started working with Archie Miller.

MP: Yes. Of course, after leaving Bengough we came home to Edmonton for a short visit with my family and then I came down to Calgary to see what Archie Miller wanted. Archie Miller wanted me to come to work for him, he had Duke Drilling and Development Company Ltd. was the name. This was owned and operated by the Guinness family, Lord

and Lady Boyd, Lady Patricia. She owned it, Lord Boyd was in the House of Lords. They later became Viscount and Viscountess. Unfortunately Viscount Boyd was killed this last summer in London. Now I sold Duke our cabin and it wound up in Whitecourt, ??? yard. We sold our home in Edmonton and moved to Calgary. I can always remember the Christmas of 1953, when the wife come down from Calgary, had the turkey in the pan and I was staying in the motel. For Christmas dinner we put the pan in the oven and opened the lid to warm the oven and she had nothing in it but gravy. The turkey was on the table back in Edmonton. But during my sojourn to the Duke Drilling I have many happy and memorial events. At that time there were such names as, in the office staff was Willoughby, we had Harry Locke for secretary. Archie Miller was drilling superintendent. We later had Dick Gibbons, Bob McFarlane, later on in years we had Roy Spooner. Max Cherniak come to work with us in 1954. A lot of good men, we had men such as Jim Kendrick, Swede Black, Al Connolly, Ed Asel, Woody Gilbertson, Guy Maddison. When Archie asked me what kind of rig I had worked on and I said, anything, any kind of rig you've got except a unit rig and I'll be damned if he didn't put me pushing tools on a unit rig out of Innisfail. However, within 3 weeks I was called into the office as a field superintendent. Later on I became drilling superintendent and Archie became manager. We had 6 rigs, with 2 in Montana. The first thing Archie did was fire his pilot and get rid of the airplane. We sold our national 75 in Montana and I went down to Glendive, Montana and loaded out the unit 20 rig for Calgary.

#314 SB: What was the history of the Duke Drilling Company before you got involved with them?

MP: Duke Drilling Company, among their other interests throughout Canada and the world, was the Guinness people, this was their first venture within the oil well drilling, contracting business. I had heard of these people before but didn't do much about them, but, due to some managerial difficulties they had, Archie Miller was called in with the instructions to revamp the organization. And that's where I came in, to help Archie. Over the years I believe, Archie and I, mainly Archie, did do a good job and built it up into a very fine drilling, contracting business.

SB: And it changed its name eventually?

MP: Eventually they changed the name, in 1954, due to the name of Duke Drilling and Development Company Ltd., that development was not good for trying to get contracts. We changed the name then to Duke Drilling, 1954 Ltd. and that's the name it continued with throughout its history.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

SB: So would you like to recount some of the experiences you had working for Duke Drilling?

MP: Yes. Any time we had any wire line splicing to do we used to call in Ben Tune, he would

come and do our line splicing irrespective of where it was. Our machine work, I can remember, we always had our machine work done at Barber's in Calgary, Hank Gilbertson comes to mind there. Hank was quite a character. Archie and I always did our own fishing job. If there was a fishing job I did it, if another one came up before I was finished then Archie would take it and somebody in the office would take reports. We carried on every rig, our own over shots, our own taps, our own dies, we made our own baskets out of subs and casing. The only time we would ever call in fishing men or fishing companies was for equipment that maybe we didn't have, such as doing a whip stock job, wash over pipe or things like that. I can't recollect that Archie or I ever lost a hole in any respect. I remember the one hole we drilled, in Visty??? Lake, in northwestern Alberta. 180 some miles out of Peace River. We set the rig right on muskeg. We did manage to get our surface casing in but the cement cellar sounded hollow as hell. We called in the cement truck and I put an additional 250 sacks of cement. I think maybe the whole rig would have went down the hole if we hadn't have done that. I remember drilling Shell Peers, George Cormack was on the job. This was a day work job, we had a deadline to meet, the promise of a bonus, which we did do. I went up on the job and stayed with George for the whole job. I can remember one time I had gone to George and told him to get that bit out of the hole, he was going to lose his cones and oh, he just wanted to make another foot. But he lost his cones. He sent for a magnet but before the magnet got there I just got a torch and make a basket out of a piece of 7" casing and got the cones out of the hole and continued on. Once again, we drilled for Shell in Panther River. There again, we did a good job and in appreciation of our good work, I have a beautiful photograph of that rig and Shell Panther River. One time on one of our rigs at Valleyview, Alberta, I remember a boy got his leg tangled up in the smitting??? chain, when the rotary table was running and that is about the only serious accident we had. We lost that boy. We had 2 rigs in the Big Valley field, we drilled many, many holes in that area. We had a national 50 and we had a small Cardwell. On Hudson's Bay Ram River, we had a blow out with hydrogen sulphide gas. There is quite a story to that. We were subject to being sued for over a million dollars but we finally wound up that we were ahead of the game. Lady Patricia discovered that the drilling business was subject to such a large amount of money they decided to get out of the oil field business. All our rigs were then sold, in 1969, to Trimble Drilling. I came to Vancouver in December 1969 after 40 years in the oil industry. I still stayed with the Guinness people and I worked for British Pacific Building Ltd. as an operating engineer in high rise apartments, and office complexes.

#060 SB: Would you like to summarize the different changes in technology that you witnessed over the years that you worked in the oil patch?

MP: I think so. Over the many years I was in the oil patch, many interesting transitions and/or advent of drilling procedures and programs and equipment came to mind. For instance, in the early days, it was always common procedure, we used 8" drill pipe to sput in with and then we used 5" drill pipe to drill the small bore. But in later years that all went down to 4" drill pipe and then it went to 3" drill pipe. We used 10 and 11" drill collars, which you

never see today. Of course, then in later years, the advent of the aluminum drill pipe where a small rig could drill a deep hole came in. The bits, in the early days we started out with fishtails and if we were drilling up to a 17" hole we ran reamers. This was also when the 3 cone bits came in. Hughes Tool, they also came in a little later with a 2 cone bit. Reid Roller Bit Company had a 4 cone bit. They all had their purpose, the hole would go crooked with 3 cone, sometimes you could straighten it with a 2 cone and vice versa with a 4 cone and a 3 cone. Other bit companies came in, in later periods, Security Bit was one, Globe Bit. Then they came in with the button bits which is things we hadn't had before.

SB: What were those used for?

MP: A button bit would have no teeth. When you get into hard formations, now you could drill granite with a button bit. Also diamond bits came in, that's again where you could drill granite with a diamond bit. A button bit was just small round marble, carbon tungsten, impregnated into the cone and a crushing effect, instead of a tooth chipping effect. They would grind away there for hours. We used to like them, we could leave them in the hole for maybe 60 hours. So we had no trips to make. But these were things of progress and as things went along. . . plush joint drill pipe we used to have at one time. We'd have a big cart with wheels in the floor with plugs, so the elevators would fit. And we had the side door elevators or the double door elevators, different kinds of elevators. I remember one time a horn came off a double door elevator and came down and hit Iver ??? on the head. Fortunately this then, was after the days when hard hats were compulsory. Previous to that they were not. It laid Iver up for a little while but I think today Iver still has that horn silver plated in his trailer. And I believe he has. We had extreme line drill pipe. Of course, when that stuff came in then came in the tapered elevators. All progress. Slip type elevators for plush joint drill pipe but we used that mostly for flush casing. When diesel rigs came in, of course then steam went out. We had diesel power, that eliminated firemen. We had motors such as twin GM's, we had Cummings, both single and twins, we had Walker Saws, we had Superiors. Our generators, with no steam, of course, we didn't have steam generators anymore. We wound up with mostly cat generators, D-311's or D-315's.

#099 SB: Did you find it easy to switch over from steam to diesel, did it mean much changes in procedure?

MP: Not really. The power was there similar to steam. It maybe wasn't quite as smooth but it was just a matter of learning to run a draw works with diesel power against steam. Whereas diesel power your motor is running continuous, whereas with steam, it only runs when you open the throttle so there was just a little transition from one way to another but really saw no problem. The pipe tongs, we used to spin our pipe in with a rope and then our torque on our drill pipe would be so many x amount of raps on the cat head and so many x amount of pull for the size of drill pipe. Then of course they had, then came in the torque gauge, you put the torque gauge and then a driller would know exactly how much torque he needed for whatever particular joint he was using. In later years power tongs came in, which just simplified, it did away with a rope for spinning in the pipe. But in

most cases we didn't use the power tongs. They were handy for running casing. Going back to the derricks of course, we started out with the old conventional wood derricks. Where you build a wood gin pole on the top of it and to take your crown up, we took the crown up in pieces, a wheel at a time, a shaft at a time and assemble it. Then came in the steel derricks and the steel substructures. Just the same thing, your derricks but then we had unitized crowns at that time, went up in one piece which was much better. As things progressed then came the jackknife rig. Now this, the crown was integral on the rig, on the derrick. You strung your box on the ground, you raised your derrick with a combination of A-legs and your drilling blocks. Everything speeded up. Drilling by contract hole, so much a foot, time was money, footage was money. It speeded everything up. I can remember back on surveys, we never had surveys on the rig we just guessed where we were at. But finally they did bring in, our first surveys was the acid bottle. We'd run the acid bottle down the hole on the side line, let it sit for 10 minutes, pull it out, wherever the acid had etched a ring around the bottle we knew whether we were straight or off. But we never knew where we off. Later on of course, came in the survey instruments, a little circular chart with a needle and when that was set it went off, the needle punched the hole and you looked at the chart, it told you what direction you were and how many degrees you were off. In later years we tried several holes, not too much success, with instead of mud we used air drilling. We had a bank of motors, a bank of air compressors and we drilled with air. I would say that most times we made exceptionally good time with air but water was always a problem. You'd overcome one water zone problem and then you would hit another. I don't know as whether the air drilling, even today has become very popular or not. I remember at Erskine, in the Stettler field, the National 50 rig, it was my first skid job I did with a rig. Where we put the substructure and rig, with the derrick up on 4 large dollies and a D-8 cat would winch it from location to another. This we could start tearing out in the morning and we were drilling before evening, on the same day on another new location. This was another way to speed things up, save money. But we didn't do that too much, you had to be in level country and you had to be location to location, you couldn't go very far that way. It was also in the Stettler field that I used the first hammer drill, another innovation that came in. I drilled 3 holes in Stettler, I had a good crew, I had a good neat rig, a National 50A and we set records that I don't know has been beat today, with a combination of our hammer drill and a good selection of drilling bits. And of course, good management.

#150 SB: When these different new inventions and equipment came out was there any reluctance by the drilling people to accept them?

MP: Yes, I would think so and possibly to a great extent but then, of course, these people come out with these new equipment and new ideas, they also came out with good salesmen and good talkers, which eventually somebody was going to try it. And then of course, if it was a success, unless it was sponsored by or made by a different oil companies or different supply companies you'd be able to get them through rental firms. Rental firms, Import Tool comes to mind, which is Don Wilken, I think was the first time I met Don. Although I think Don did work for Oilwell Supply in Okotoks many years

before. National Supply, they were one of the old timers, I think they were originally in Okotoks but both Calgary and Edmonton. All different kinds of rigs, National, Oilwell, Cardwell, but then of course, you went to Cardwell Supply. There was the Unit rig which was manufactured and made by the Midcon Supply Company. They had a big place in Edmonton, Bill Sable comes to mind. Emsco, now I didn't have too much to do with Emsco, I don't even think they had a warehouse. There were different rigs, there was a Franks and the Dohini stones and many, many others. To bring to mind, right at the present time I can't. Of course, other things you needed, special tools you would go to rental firms. You had places such as Import Tool, you had Wilkerson, McLean out of Edmonton, you had the Lion's Supply out of Edmonton and of course, many others. Then of course, there was always rental firms were started up where you could rent equipment. If you didn't want to buy it, you only wanted to use it for a job or two, you went to rental firms.

#173 SB: And you family's had some involvement in the oil industry too, I understand.

MP: I think my family would be of great interest to this oral history. I had 3 sisters, my oldest sister was Lalla, she married Wilbur Anderson, one of the old time drillers, I think he spent his life at the Royalite Oil Company and Imperial Oil. Lalla was the manager of the Alberta Government Telephones exchange in Okotoks for over 22 years, trained many girls, even her own 2 sisters. Another sister Eva, married Homer Jackson from California. Homer was up here, worked in the oil fields in drilling in the early 30's, '36, returned back to California and was with McCullough Tool for many, many years until his retirement. The youngest girl was Lura, Lura married Hillary Head of Snyder and Head Drilling Contractors. She is still alive, living in Calgary.

SB: And what about your own sons, I understand one of them in working for Esso now?

MP: I had two sons. Son #1 came out of high school, joined Imperial Oil in the drafting department and he has celebrated his 25th wedding anniversary just last year and he's been 25 years with Imperial Oil. He's got a good position at this time in the Calgary office. Fact is, I think he's in the same building you people are in. Son #2 has been a salesman all his life, he lives here in North Vancouver and he will always be a salesman but he's doing real good too and we see him and the grandchildren quite often. Ken, we have 2 grandchildren, a boy and a girl, Lloyd we have 2 grandchildren with Lloyd, 2 girls. The oldest girl was married this last fall.

SB: So looking back over your involvement in the industry, are there any periods or companies that you enjoyed working for more than others?

MP: I think going back through the years, all the years, I think I enjoyed working for everybody and with everybody. I do believe the highlight of my whole life was the years that I was with the Guinness people. We were very happy, we were well treated and when we did retire they were very good to us. I retired from the Guinness people in December of 1982. We're in good health, we keep busy with our hobbies, we watch 4 grandchildren grow up and now hopefully we're waiting for our great-grandchildren.

SB: Well, thank you very much.

MP: Over the years there have been many occasions, there have many names and many events,

names I don't recollect at this time or some that I did. Now I'd like to give my apologies to those names that I have forgot right at this time, to list them all and to list all events I think we'd have to write a book.