

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Jack Pullen

INTERVIEWER: David Finch

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DF: Today is the 28<sup>th</sup> day of February in the year 2000 and we're here with Mr. Jack Pullen at the offices of the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists in Calgary. My name is David Finch. Can you tell us how you came to be associated with the CSEG.

JP: Well, the CSEG got started in the late 40's, early 50's and I came to Calgary in 1953 to live. In Saskatchewan, where I had been before that, they were having occasional meetings of the geological group but when I came to Calgary the group was a geophysical group. So I was very interested in learning more about that, so I participated in that. Initially they were having the occasional evening meeting, technical meeting and that was a place where you learned about geophysics. That's what drew me into the CSEG. I also joined the SEG, the Society of Exploration Geophysicists at the time too. I felt very strongly that you had to be part of the profession in order to be a professional. I think it was 1952 I joined the SEG, and the CSEG about the same time.

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DF: And the SEG is American?

JP: Well, it's the international society.

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DF: International, good.

JP: It's headquarters is in the U.S. but it's international.

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#018 DF: How did you come to be on the executive of the CSEG, tell us about that?

JP: I had been involved. I'll start back a little ahead of that I think, in the middle to late 1960's, I had become involved with a bunch of CSEG activities. It started with the CSEG Family Picnic and Barbecue, which was a unique thing that the CSEG did for awhile. I felt really fortunate to have a chance to participate in that one. The late Hal Godwin, was one who had pushed this and it went for quite a few years. It was a very interesting combination. Lots of people have barbecues in the evenings and country and western music and a big meal and lots of beer.

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The CSEG decided that they were going to make this for families. A lot of us had small families at that time. The average age of the geophysicist in the community would have been, well, something like mine, it would be in the late 20's, early 30's at the time and

that's when you have young children. So having a family picnic and a barbecue together was a unique thing that the CSEG did. The way it worked was that the contractors and drilling companies found this a really great way to show their appreciation to their clients. So they'd buy a bunch of tickets and distribute them among their clients and their clients would all go out to this big picnic. And you'd have the traditional picnic things, kids races and adults races and all the things that you could always have at a picnic, plus you'd have a barbecue with lots of beer and lots of chance to talk with your buddies and do all kinds of interesting social things. It fit very nicely because of the age group of the geophysicists in town at the time.

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So I got involved with that and ended up being Chairman in 1960. I can pursue that topic a little bit, if you wouldn't mind. It carried on through to about, I think, it's 1976, it finally became discontinued, regretfully I think. But two or three things happened, one was that the location they originally had it at, had failed essentially, financially, it wasn't working well. So we moved it into Happy Valley and that was okay, except it got too big, the picnic got too big. In 1970, when I was Chairman of that committee, there were 1,200 people at this picnic. At that time there was no place in Calgary where you really could hold 1,200 people. We had to bring in, rent a large number of tables and chairs from the rental companies in town, we had to bring in, I don't know, 25 port-a-potties. The food was no problem and the beer was no problem but the rest of the facilities just weren't available in town for a picnic that size. So it kind of faded down and disappeared, partly again, because the average age was a little higher and the kids were older and you know, teenagers don't want to go to picnics. That's not what they do.

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#055 DF: So that takes us into the early 70's, so you've become quite active in society's activities.

JP: Yes, there was that and the next thing I got involved with was the Doodlebug Golf Tournament. Now that's a very famous CSEG event. It's going on it's 47<sup>th</sup> or 48<sup>th</sup> year right now. It got started early and has continued in a very strong format and a very proud tradition of the CSEG, where about 100-200 geophysicists get together and have a 2-3 day golf tournament. It's been in Banff many times, a few times other places. It's a very strong tradition by many of us in the industry and I got started in the early 60's going to the Doodlebug Golf Tournament and got involved in the looking after it in the 70's and ended up being Chairman of the Doodlebug Golf Tournament in 1972.

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You ask about what things are most fun, most enjoyable experiences and working with the Doodlebug Golf Tournament Committee was a really positive time for me. The people involved there, on the Committee, are people who are invited or volunteer to be members. In other words they want to be there and they enjoy being there. So you get a group of 10-15 guys together and ladies too, guys together that are there to have a good time and enjoy it and do the best they can. For instance, just an example, you have to have an inspection trip about every month, in preparation for the tournament. The tournament

happens in September so you have to have an inspection trip to make sure the golf tournament is okay in June, July, August and so you have to go and visit the golf course and maybe play a little golf, you know. And have a good time with your friends and have a chat.

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When the tournament was in Banff that was very easy to do and very enjoyable and it became a social event and a very positive personal time. And you get to know all the people there. The committee is organized too, in a very, very good way. You are on the committee as an assistant to one of the sections one year and you are looking after that section the second year. If you're the one who gets kind of chosen to be the Chairman, the third year you're a Vice-Chairman and they the fourth year you're the Chairman and the fifth year you're the past Chairman. So you spend a lot of time, over five years, if you get to be Chairman of the Doodlebug and I had the privilege of doing that in 1972. But really the story that I'm bringing that to is that, that is one of the prime CSEG events. It raises your profile in the industry tremendously and that's really the reason, because I'd been doing the Barbecue and then the Doodlebug, was the reason I got elected President of the CSEG in 1975.

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#091 DF: That's what I was about to ask, is that how you get in?

JP: That's one of the ways, it's a matter of how well you're known. Working on those committees in any organization is how you get known. It's nothing you consciously do, it's not your goal but it works out that way.

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DF: Now, in reviewing your Presidential statement from the year you were President and that was 1975, you said that the relationship between industry and the university was very important. Can you tell us about that?

JP: The university. . . this was the era when I was Chief Geophysicist of Hudson Bay Oil and Gas Company. I was visiting universities, recruiting students to work in Calgary as geophysicists but there weren't any geophysicists being graduated in Calgary. They didn't have a Geophysical Faculty at the time. And that's why it was pretty important to me to see that this. . . you know, it was important that we do that. We could get geophysicists from the University of Saskatchewan, that was a prime place for hiring, the University of Alberta in Edmonton had a modicum of them and Winnipeg did and Vancouver did and Calgary didn't. It would seem very important to encourage that. That would be another story for the CSEG, they eventually endowed a Chair in Geophysics at the university. I didn't have much to. . . well, I raised money for that but I don't know much about the rest of that story.

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#109 DF: What were the technological changes that were going on in the 1970's and how did the CSEG help its members cope with those changes?

JP: I don't think that the CSEG had to do much to help its membership. We continued to have a very solid monthly technical meeting. That was going throughout all the 60's and 70's and still carries on to today. Interestingly enough, a big change occurred in the 70's, when the companies decided to pay for their employees to go to the technical luncheons. Before that most of the individuals, going to a technical lunch, paid for it themselves. In fact, when I was President, that was the case. We were still having the lunches at Penley's, that's another story. We had it in a, shall we say a small. . not small, it was big enough, but it wasn't a very fancy location. And they put on technical lunches, I think the price was \$2.50 or something like that. We had the technical lunches there but everybody that came had to pay his own way. So they weren't heavily attended, 100 would be a good number of people. But that was the way the CSEG provided the geophysicists in Calgary with the opportunity to learn more geophysics. In the late 70's I think it would have been, the oil companies decided, yes, it would have been the late 70's, because it became a little perk, when people got scarce, then the companies decided, maybe we should do a little something to help them out. And this was one of the things they did, they started paying for the luncheons for the geologists and the geophysicists and engineers and so forth. So the CSEG moved it's luncheons to the Calgary Inn and the quality of the meals increased, as did the price but it no longer became an important factor, when you weren't paying for it. But before that you paid for your own and you thought about the topic before you went.

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#135 DF: In your annual address, you mentioned that the CSEG was relatively small, why was that a concern for you?

JP: Actually, being small has its advantages and disadvantages. Calgary is a singularly unique technical society in that most of the geophysicists are within about a five block area of downtown Calgary and it makes it really easy for you to communicate among each other. As I see other sections of technical societies in big cities, they have quite a problem getting together and choosing a time when everybody can get together and communicating with their people. Here, geophysicists have a lot more to do with each other and I think, being small, which is a matter of opinion. I don't quite know why I thought being small was a problem at the time but I don't think. . having 2,000 members is not really very small. And I don't think it's a problem at all, I think it's an asset. It relates to the size of the SEG of course, which has 20,000 members.

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DF: How did the SEG help with information gathering and disseminating in your Presidency?

JP: In my Presidency and all along we were affiliated with the SEG and the profile of the CSEG is enhanced by the SEG, more than a little bit. Of course, there are the publications that come out of there but many people. . membership requirements are not the same for the two societies. However the profile of the CSEG is enhanced by the fact that the SEG. .we invited the SEG to come to have a convention in Calgary. We enjoyed that until the convention got too big for Calgary to handle. In fact, the first convention of the SEG in

Calgary was in 1962 and I worked on that one. That was fun too. We carried slide projectors to the balcony of the auditorium. These are big glass slide projectors, 3 1/4 by 4 1/4 glass slides, which the speakers all had to provide for their speeches and you'd have one or two projectors up there and we did our own projection. I worked with Jack Bowden, who's passed on now, in that. That was in the auditorium and it worked out very well. I don't remember any of the statistics of it but it worked out very well, so well that the SEG came back again in 1969.

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That was, I think downtown but also fit well and enhanced the CSEG at that time. Because to have the SEG come into town, you had to organize a very large number of the CSEG members to do work like projecting slides and looking after selling tickets and all those things. The SEG had a very small staff. In 1977 we invited them back one more time and I was heavily involved in that one, I was Chair of the arrangements. That was a serious problem because we no way, had a big enough facility. We had to convince the Glenbow Museum to lend us two floors of their space for exhibits. That was a one time thing that was a big challenge. We had to talk to the pundits, the experts, the high powered people in Calgary very, very hard to convince them that that was okay to do. The Glenbow Museum was very, very cooperative. The whole city had to cooperate with the SEG to bring the exhibits into town. The number of participants was in the thousands but the exhibits was the problem but we were able to borrow two floors of the Glenbow Museum and that will never happen again, I'm sure. That was the last time the SEG was in Calgary because the exhibit space just isn't there, until this year. It's coming in, in the year 2000, since 1977 it hasn't been here because there wasn't the space.

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#190 DF: You mentioned the auditorium, what auditorium are you talking about?

JP: The Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium.

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DF: Thank you. How did the Scholarship Committee encourage Earth Scientists?

JP: The CSEG has been giving scholarships in Earth Science for a long time. I noticed that a scholarship was given. . in the years I was President, one of the early scholarships was given to a geophysicist who wanted to study at the University of Calgary. He was already working as a geophysicist and he wanted to take a Masters degree. He had to take it through the Mathematics Department at the time, I was mentioning that they didn't have a geophysics group and they didn't. So he had to take it through the Mathematics Department and get some sort of a Masters in Mathematics out of it. But he was doing geophysical things. I still know that man and he's actively doing very fine geophysical work right now too and that was one of things. Scholarships have always been important to the CSEG, the CSEG itself plus a number of the contractors have got together and have the Scholarship Committee and give scholarships every year.

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#206 DF: During your Presidency, collecting memorabilia was also important, can you tell us what kinds of things you were able to collect?

JP: There was a huge amount of things that eventually have been collected by the CSEG, in terms of memorabilia. It occupied a full room in one of the contractors office buildings for quite awhile. Finally, we were collecting memorabilia such as I was showing you earlier, information . . . eventually it got so big that it . . . it's museum quality size and style and eventually we discovered that we could give it to a museum in Ottawa and have it taken care of there because we didn't have the enthusiasm I'll say, or the resources to maintain it ourselves. Unfortunately I guess you would say, it's in Ottawa, it's being well cared for but it's not being exhibited at all. It would be nice if we could have exhibits like that. The SEG has got a roving exhibit that they've put together that moves around, it'll likely be here in August. It would be great if the CSEG could do something similar but I don't know whether it's being considered or not.

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DF: It's a lot of work though, isn't it.

JP: Tremendous amount of work. You need dedicated people and a lot of money.

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#224 DF: Your President's Statement said you were working on trying to get a history published. Can you tell me about that?

JP: Yes. We realized at the time, that was 1975, that's 25 years ago isn't it. . . 25 years ago, that things were changing very rapidly and that the oil business in Calgary had been around since the 20's and very little of it had been really preserved. Particularly geophysical things and that it was important that we do stop still sometime and do the best we can. We had a committee designed to receive memorabilia and to do history and they worked hard at it and eventually decided that they needed to put it together. They had collected the information, they needed to put it together and get it published and did so in 1985 under your authorship.

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DF: Thank you, that's not where I was headed but there you go. Anything else, you've had some time now since your Presidency, 25 years, anything else that you'd like to say in the long term about the CSEG and what it's done?

JP: I think in the 70's era, it's important to understand that that was the era when governments started really getting into the oil business. The geophysicists being in the vanguard of the oil exploration cycle felt that very, very strongly and immediately. Our friends the geologists have resolutely stayed out of political matters and they can afford to do that because they're not in the position geophysicists are. During the 70's we were forced to do something about the way governments at all levels, and I'm not picking on the federal or the provincial or the municipal governments, all of them thought they wanted to get in to enjoy some of the fruits of the oil business. They came chasing us.

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I was fortunate enough to get the assignment in the early 70's of forming the first Government Relations Committee for the CSEG and we undertook a number of things, which we felt had some real affect. One of them was the geophysical incentive program. The Province of Alberta, noticing the diminished drilling quantities and diminished success rate was encouraging additional drilling, so they had a Drilling Incentive Program. We talked with them about, why don't you have a geophysical one. They said to me and my committee, why don't you suggest one, so I did, I wrote the Geophysical Incentive Program outline for the provincial government and to my great delight and astonishment they accepted it wholus, bolus. It became the foundation of the Drilling Incentive Program, which continued. I don't have the solid dates for it but from around 1975 through 1980 something. It provided the basis of support for geophysical activity in Alberta for that time period. Although it was criticized, as time went on it got a little elderly, I guess you could say and perhaps there were some things done under the Geophysical Incentive Program that shouldn't have been done. But basically it provided the explorers of Alberta with a great deal of new seismic data, high quality, modern, by those standards, 400% or better, seismic data, that had to be available to anybody that wanted it and was willing to pay for it, at a discounted price, to all the explorers in Alberta. It has, I'm sure, been the foundation of a great deal of successful oil exploration in Alberta. That's one of the things we did.

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Other things we did were, some of the data processors in Calgary were complaining about oil companies who were sending data out to, principally the United States, to their home companies, to be processed and sent back. They were concerned about that and were talking to the federal government about putting taxes on it. Well, taxes are an anathema once you start putting taxes at borders, it's not the way international geophysics is done. So we did a study and repeated it several times on the amount of data that was brought in from outside of Canada to be processed in Canada and the amount that was sent out of Canada to be processed outside. It turned out that there was far more coming in than was going out and we were able to convince the government that they didn't need to do that taxation.

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The third thing that we worked on, at that same time there was a hard core of, shall we say, bias. Some people in Ottawa were being told that there was all this data being held by the oil companies in secret and not divulged to anyone else. We did a survey of that as well and determined that of data recorded, in Canada, almost all of it was available on the market, to somebody who was willing to pay for it, at a reasonable price. We were able to convince the federal government they didn't need to collect that data. They were going to collect it and archive it themselves and look after it. We frankly, effectively got the federal government to postpone the proposal that they collect all that data themselves and give it back for about 10 years by doing this survey. Then, interestingly enough, about 10 years later, the same faction in Ottawa got convinced that they should do it anyway and they have done that now. As it comes on the market and it's essentially free for the cost of

reproducing it, there's considerable challenges associated with that today too.

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DF: So thank you so much on behalf of the CSEG for taking this time to talk to us about your year as President and we'll end the interview at this time. Thank you again.

JP: Thank you.