

## **PETROLEUM HISTORY SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT**

INTERVIEWEE: Rudy Roloff

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: July 11, 1992

### **Side 1 – 45:36**

[00:00:08] AK: Today is Saturday July the 11th, and I'm Aubrey Kerr and I'm in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Roloff. That's R-O-L-O-F-F, and your address here is 5136 - 50th Street, and I'm very pleased that we were able to be here. Jean McClause is with me and I'd like to start off in getting your life story by where you were born, and what year.

RR: I was born in Poland in 1927 and I was the fifth child of Herman and Emma Roloff. They were both born in Poland and came to Canada in May of 1928.

AK: Right.

RR: So I was just three months old.

AK: Oh, you just barely. Did your parents tell you where, what means they used across the Atlantic, was it a ship from Hamburg or from Bremen or did they ever tell you that?

RR: They used to say it was the Queen Mary but I don't think it was, because the Queen Mary wasn't sailing then yet as far as...

AK: And they'd have to go to Southampton to get it.

RR: Well we came... they did come to London.

AK: Oh did they? On their way to Canada?

RR: On their way to Canada.

AK: Is that right? So they must have crossed the English Channel and made their way over to the British Isles.

RR: That's right.

AK: And then they sailed from someplace in...

RR: Liverpool.

AK: Liverpool, yeah.

RR: Because I've got a picture taken in Liverpool.

AK: Is that right?

RR: Of myself, as we were coming through?

AK: Is that right? And what Port did you land in?

RR: Montreal, somewhere in Montreal.

AK: Yeah. Well now in those days they had a quarantine station downstream from Quebec City, which all immigrants had to land and be checked for health. And was that part of the journey do you think?

RR: it was never talked about will not liking you like I said, well, I'm not saying that your family stopped there or didn't stop there. So when you got to Montreal, did your parents have an idea that should come out to western Canada?

RR: Yes.

AK: So they knew, they knew where they were coming.

RR: They knew where they were coming... to Bruderheim because my grandmother was already here.

AK: Oh, I see.

RR: Well, that's my mother's mother.

AK: Right.

RR: And so they come right out too.

AK: So they'd been corresponding with your grandmother.

RR: That's right.

AK: So there's nothing, there's nothing coming out all unknown, and nobody knew anybody, but... so you were coming to family then.

RR: That's right.

AK: And so your grandmother lived right in Bruderheim, or on a farm?

RR: They bought a farm, right, just three miles west of Bruderheim

AK: Right.

AK: So they must have come out, back very early on.

RR: That I don't...

AK: Well, that's all right. I don't need to know everything, at least I'm trying to find out but... what about on your father's side?

RR: He was the only one that came out here.

AK: Yeah. No, I meant your father's grandparents.

RR: They all stayed in Poland...

AK: Oh I see, they didn't...

RR: He was the youngest of seven boys, and so he's the only one that came to Canada.

AK Oh, is that right? He was the adventuresome one, eh?

RR: That's right.

AK: And what was your grandmother doing in Bruderheim, *was she* running a farm there, or was she...

RR: Well, she came and she was working for a family by the name of Berg. And she came with what one daughter and three sons. They came first, my mother and dad, then their five children came later.

AK: And this Berg, was that somebody in Edmonton or was that somebody right in Bruderheim?

RR: No, well, Bruderheim.

AK: How would that be spelled, do you have any idea?

RR: B-E-R-G.

AK: Oh, Berg. Well, that's okay. And what was your grandmother's name

RR: Kruger.

Kruger, right. And what part of Poland did you know that your parents came from, was it the northern part?

RR: Lublin.

AK: Lublin, yeah, wasn't that part of Prussia at one time?

RR: Yeah, I...

AK: No. Yeah, because there were Germans. The reason I'm asking about this, it's very interesting, there's a... the fellow that had such lovely flowery language in the nursing home at Leduc, what was his

name, Sandrick, Paul Sandrick. Now, he was from North Poland, and he spoke German and he was also a member of the Lutheran Church. Was that your persuasion.

RR: That's right.

AK: Yeah. Did you know a family by the name of Nehring?

RR: Yes.

AK: Yeah, did you know one of them was an ordained minister, Arthur, and he died suddenly?

RR: That is right.

AK: Yeah, and you know that... and his brother runs a supply company in Calgary.

RR: So Perry's son, right.

AK: Reuben. Yeah, Perry's son, and well there's our connection, isn't it?

RR: Yes, he was friends with...

BR: Yeah, well we knew them. We went to same church, all of us.

AK: Yeah. Well you see it's very interesting that Arthur as a young person came to me for a job at Leduc when I was running the Leduc office as a geologist, and he came in and he said I've got two jobs - it's in my book - and he said, I've had an offer from the hospital at 100 hours and I offered him 200, so the choice was quite easy. So he came as the sample washer for me, and he worked in the office there and had an awful time getting a hold of him when he was in Pennsylvania. He was down there, and you get up so early, why, I had to get up super early to even get him because he was on his way to either the church or... but sadly I'd heard that he died suddenly of that asthma attack...

RR: At Bruderheim.

AK: Yeah. Because he was he was going to take that that pastorate there, I guess he was the pastor when...

BR: He was just an interim pastor.

AK: Yeah, he was just going to...

RR: He only had two services so, when we were in Phoenix and he was here, by the time we got back home, he had passed.

AK: Yeah, sad. Well that's the way it goes.

[00:09:12] So you were you were just an infant in arms then when you came... what's your earliest recollection of the Bruderheim area?

RR: That we lived on a farm four miles west of Bruderheim. And I remember real well where my dad built a house and a barn and just started out on a raw 160 acres of land and that's where we lived for five years.

AK: Well now had he purchased that land.

RR: No, that land also belonged to that same Berg.

AK: Oh, right. So he kind of rented it out to your dad.

RR: That's right.

AK: Yeah, so he was kind of the landlord then.

RR: Well, at the time yeah.

AK: Right. And your dad farmed it, and did he ultimately buy it.

RR: No. Then we moved to a rented house right on section 14, but it was kitty-corner across from section 10. So my dad got the northeast quarter of section 10 as a homestead for \$10

AK: Oh, so there was still a homestead available, even that late?

RR: Even that late.

AK: It's surprising isn't it.

RR: And then we weren't living on that homestead but he started clearing the land, and then other guys were going to come along and buy it unless you lived on it.

AK: Yeah, well you had to prove it and live on it.

RR: That's right. So he built a house on the homestead and he moved on to that homestead. He built the barn and that's where we lived for quite a number of years.

AK: And that's where you grew up.

RR: Yep. But went to school right from there, the Bolton School.

AK: How far was that?

RR: A mile and a half.

AK: Bolton? B-O-L-T-O-N

RR: Yeah Bolton.

AK: Yeah, right. And I guess that was all in this, would you call it German community, or how would you call it?

RR: Mainly, mainly. But there was others like, Percy Williams wasn't too far away, his son also taught school in Bolton. He was my teacher.

AK: Percy Williams, he was the basketball player, wasn't he? Or he was the coach...

*All three talking at once*

[00:12:01] AK: What's your earliest recollection of summer jobs or did you work in the summertime on the farm?

RR: Just on the farm.

AK: Yeah, so you helped your dad on the farm.

RR: I helped my dad and went out in the harvesting at 14 years of age and start helping neighbors.

AK: Yeah, did you have a combine?

RR: Not tat the time, no. Just worked for the neighbors, yes,

AK: I see, so you went around stooking?

RR: That's right, the thrashing.

AK: Yeah, right.

RR: Driving tractors for???

AK: And eating a big meal at lunch time?

RR: You had to.

AK: Yeah, lots of hard sweaty work. So what, to what grade level did you go in school?

RR: Grade five.

AK: I see, and did you quit then?

RR: Yes, before, before I even got my diploma? I didn't quite finish grade one???

AK: And what was this due to? ??? to get back and keep working on the farm?

RR: That's right.

AK: Keep your dad, help your dad there.

RR: Yup, and just help, like working and getting the odd jobs and kept working at them.

AK: Did you have jobs off the farm then from then on?

RR: That's right, for sure.

BR: Not off of the farm but for other farmers.

RR: Well, just other farmers but off our farm, right?

BR: ???

RR: Oh yeah, until 1948 I went to ??? in the winter times. I went to Spurfield ??? there.

AK: Where?

RR: Spurfield. Was out by Rimbey?

AK: Slave Lake. Between Smith and Slave Lake.

AK: Oh, yeah, yeah right. `

RR: The only way we could get there was by train and it took us six hours by train from Edmonton.

AK: Oh, yeah, it was just stop and start, stop and start. That was the old Northern Alberta wasn't it. So by the time '47 rolled around had you any idea about working at Leduc?

RR: No, not then yet because then I was still a logger, because after that I went to BC and I logged in the Valemount...

AK: Oh, did you? That's north of Kamloops, isn't it?

RR: That's by ???, no Clearwater.

AK: Clearwater, right. West of Jasper. So you worked there still as a bachelor?

RR: Yep. Yep, and then I came back and did some farming, we were farming 300 acres then...

AK: Oh, you dad had...

RR: We were getting bigger all the time, and we bought our first tractor in 1948.

AK: Oh, my. Yeah. But getting back to that logging job, what kind of money were you getting there?

RR: A dollar an hour

AK: And you'd have to pay your board out of that?

RR: No. That was all included

AK: Oh I see. You got your board, and what about boots and logging gear, you had to buy that?

RR: ???

AK: Yeah right.

RR: You had to take your own blankets along too.

AK: Oh, yeah, right. So that that was only a matter of a short time up there wasn't it?

RR: Just the one winter.

AK: Yeah, right. I see so when things were kind of shut down at the farm that was one way of making an extra buck or two and bringing it back.

RR: The interesting point was four of us went out from Bruderheim in a ... we drove out there to get a job.

AK: What way did you drive out there, you go up by Jasper?

RR: We drove through the Yellowhead, yup, there was no roads there. We had to lay clacking to cross creeks and then take them off again or if we had to cross the railroad, we'd lay down planking across the railroad and then took the planks off again.

AK: So much for the Yellowhead Highway, eh?

RR: That was the Yellowhead (laughter). And then of course it's slow. But we were ??? the day we got work, and, peeling power poles, cedar poles, at two cents a lineal foot.

AK: This wasn't an hour, this was piecework.

RR: This was piecework, two cents a lineal foot.

AK: And you divided that among the four of you?

RR: No, we each kept our own tally.

AK: Oh, I see.

RR: So if you worked hard you made more money, if you didn't work so hard you got less.

RB: And what year was that?

RR: I think that was??? '49, that was in the winter of '48, '49

AK: Now what age were you then?

RR: Probably 18-19.

AK: And you're still you're still a ??? eh?

RR: Oh, sure, sure.

[00:17:44] AK: What year did you get married, you two people?

RR: Well then in 1950, well, I was working on the farm again, it went through the summer. So they were drilling a well on 3, the 1556 21 Seaboard it was. So I was driving the traffic...

AK: Give me that legal description again.

RR: It was 3 of 15-56-21.

AK: Well, that would be here. Then there would be right...

RR: Right here, this this well right here.

AK: Well, yeah, that was their first well.

RR: No, it wasn't but they still hadn't completed drilling these, they were drilling. And Bob Bischoff was sitting on that well, on the drilling rig run and I was coming home with my Minneapolis tractor and I stopped in there and I talked to Bob and asked him for a job and he says, you can go to work tomorrow.

AK: Yeah. Now Bischoff is spelled B-I-S-C-H-O-F-F. but where was your farm with respect to this?

RR: right about there?

AK: Oh, well then you were very close.

RR: Yeah, just right there.

AK: Now where... would Bruderheim be down in here somewhere.

RR: Yeah, they're on Section 32 of the new 5520...

AK: Yeah, the next Township. Oh, I see, so you were in the... you were already in the general area?

RR: Right. So I stopped there and I asked Bischoff for a job and he says, you go to work tomorrow. So I went over there. this is where their other lease was, the house was being built there and I started to work there on September the 20th 1950.

AK: 1950, alright. Now what kind of money was he going to pay you?

RR: I started out at 97 cents an hour.

AK: That seemed to be a kind of a number that was... 87 and a half, some people got 97, a dollar...

RR: That lasted for five days and then I got an to increase to \$1.07.

AK: Oh, boy, you were living...

BR: ??? made bookkeeping must have been interesting...

RR: And at that time, work was my girlfriend. So then we kept on farming and working at the same time, the following spring, I thought it's a good idea to get married.

BR: Well, we had a house. Do you know???

AK: No, he didn't have his house, it was built but not for him.

RR: That was Seaboard.

AK: That was a company house.

BR: Oh, I see. I thought you were going to be eligible for...

AK: Not yet.

RR: So then I only worked from September till June, and I wasn't eligible for holidays yet, and I wanted to get married. So, again I went to Bischoff and asked him if I could have time off to get married. And he says, good idea he says, take two weeks vacation.

AK: Well that was wonderful, he was a generous person.

RR: That's right.

[00:21:15] AK: What was what was Bischoff's background? Was he a petroleum engineer?

RR: That I don't know. I/m sure he was.

AK: He must have been a degreed person.

RR: Oh for sure.

AK: Yeah because he must have known something about what... but your very first job when you said you got up here, tractor here, your first job, what were your duties?

RR: Roustabouting, carrying tubing through the mud to the well so they could run it in.

AK: Just about anything.

RR: Just about anything.

AK: You need brute strength and ignorance, eh?

RR: That's right. And of course once the wells were drilled in, I helped build the battery right from scratch, and then I was the operator and operated.

AK: Yeah, well now when they built the... when the tanks were being put in, didn't one of the tank companies come in and build it for you.

RR: Yes.

AK: Who was that?

RR: Yes it would be Black ??? and Bricing.

AK: Do you remember the name of the fellow that ran that?

RR: No.

AK: So you had about what 500-barrel tanks there?

RR: 1000-barrel tanks. At this place, we had 4000-barrel tanks and a Maloney Crawford treater.

AK: And by that year, had you started to make water right away?

RR: Oh, the following, but we went about a year without water.

AK: Well now that first year, did you have to pump the wells?

RR: Not all of them, no.

AK: Some of them flowed?

RR: Yeah,

AK: So you didn't start cutting too much water til...

RR: Until we start popping them.

AK: Yeah. And what were those wells, were they... you were pretty green then but, did they ran... run the casing right through and perforate?

RR: Open hole. All of all our wells were open hole.

AK: Is that right?

RR: Six and an eighth.

AK: Six and eighth inch casing.

RR: About 7-inch casing. Six and an eighth with the hole.

AK: Oh yeah, right.

RR: Because... why they did it, I don't know, but they'd cord pretty near every well.

AK: Well, that's something that might turn out to be valuable maybe later on.

RR: Well, that's right.

[00:24:00] AK: Do you have any recollection of who the contracting drillers were?

RR: Commonwealth was one and that's about all that I remember, because they were on these wells here and all the rest were already drilled when I came on.

AK: Yeah. It was a question of offsetting too. Was it Bay that was offsetting you here, at the south? I'm trying to remember.

RR: Yeah, that's right.

AK: Was nothing to do with Hudson Bay.

RR: No, no.

AK: And then they became Tenny???

RR: ??? They just had the one well there, or two wells he had.

AK: And not very good either, they were right on the edge.

RR: I think Vern Hunter had something to do with those.

AK: Oh?

RR: Yeah, he did because I remember he built the separator

AK: Yeah but he was working for Imperial Oil.

RR: There was a... unless there was another Vern Hunter.

AK: Well, there was a fellow... the reason I mention it, it was maybe it was, you ever hear of a name Jimmy Stafford. Now he worked for Bay for awhile. Well anyways, that's interesting that they're all open hole. Well, you must have completed those wells high enough up so that you weren't into the water.

RR: That's true, but eventually...

AK: Well, yeah, they'd water out, yeah, they'd start to come. Well what about the wells, these little fellows in here looks like there was one was a dry hole there.

RR: That's right. That was a dry hole and then Seaboard gave up that lease...

AK: They gave it up? Now, we're talking about section 7, we're talking section 27 right of 56-21.

RR: Right, and they drilled that hole and it was dry. So they just left the casing in there and they didn't properly abandon it and then about in 1962, Western Minerals went and drilled a well in there to offset this same one, and they produced it for... I don't even know if it's still producing now or not. I'm not sure.

AK: But you didn't have any ownership on the other side of the river, that was somebody else's. Well then, these were already drilled by the time you joined Seaboard.

RR: Yes, they were the first eight-well strip by Seaboard.

AK: And you had no connection with the producing operations there, in the first...

RR: No, not to start, but sure did later on. I've worked on every one of those wells.

AK: You mean like working them over.

RR: Yeah, the workover.

AK: Yeah. Well when the water started coming in, Rudy, what was your first, or what was the company's first reaction were they gonna run cement plugs and plug back?

RR: Well, the first thing we did, we had problems was on this lease here.

AK: Yeah, that's section...

RR: 2 of 15-56-21. That was our well that watered out first. So what we did is run a Model D packer in...

AK: Was that a Hughes, I mean a Baker?

RR: Baker. And a wire line, and set it by electric charge, and that's a permanent packer. Then we run a stinger through there and we pumped in 200 barrels of goop, now that was the trade name, they just called it goop.

AK: And did it set up?

RR: It set up when it hit salt water. So we pumped it in there and as it went under pressure and it filled all these holes and it set up and we shut... then we'd pull the stinger out and put our well on production. You know, we'd just pull it up above the above the packer and then a flapper valve in the packer closes, and that's how we produced.

AK: So it was a permanent packer.

RR: It was a permanent packer, yup.

AK: Well then did you run this this packer in on wire line?

RR: On a ??? wire line.

AK: Right and you knew exactly, you measured it in, you knew...

RR: Exactly where you wanted it.

AK: But that was open hole wasn't it?

RR: Right, yep.

AK: And did it have enough that it could seat out against the open hole?

RR: Yeah, you picked it off the logs and where you wanted to set it because you set it in a tight street, and it worked.

AK: Oh, yeah. And then when you put the well back on production, did that reduce the water content?

RR: It sure did. It usually worked good for 3, 4 or 5 years after that.

AK: Oh, I see, so it was certainly worth your while to do that. Was that common practice throughout the field?

RR: No.

AK: This is something that you people did.

RR: It just was Seaboard because nobody else wanted to run a permanent type packer, like Texaco. Yeah, even when I come over to Texaco, they wouldn't run a permanent type packer, we used to run those other lane wells??? squat packers.

AK: Oh, and you can always retrieve them.

RR: You can always retrieve them.

AK: Yeah. Of course, they were always looking for the buck, something they could use again, isn't that right?

RR: That's right.

AK: So this this sort of thing was going on. Did you ever remember any of the companies talking about unitizing?

RR: Yep, quite often they talked about that.

AK: And did you ever have any...by this time was Bischoff still there or had he gone back?

RR: No, he wasn't here.

AK: When did he go back to the States? Pretty early wasn't it? Once they got the well drilled?

RR: Yeah. He was gone before '58 for sure.

AK: Yeah. And Dick McCosker was here too, and then he moved to Ventura, California after Texaco took over.

AK: Right.

RR: but that's a name you might not even remember.

AK: No I don't remember that name. So they there was nothing substantial that you remember about unitizing except that there was this talk in the field.

RR: Just talk, because it never really...

AK: It never, it never came to into being, it was never... Okay. Did you ever hear about the different companies, say like Amerada and Royalite... their position with regard to unitization? Did you ever talk to the Amerada hands or...

RR: No. Amerada had that big section in there, right over here...No, and they're still upgrading that one section and that's it.

AK: That's it, they're not...

RR: They're still by themselves.

AK: Yeah, oh yeah. Did you have the feeling that they were kind of, "don't bother us we're going to do our own thing" sort of thing?

RR: Probably, that's right.

AK: Yeah, but Royalite did a lot of work in trying to, you know, get the thing sorted out, get a better allowable.

RR: See, with us being on the edge of the field like that too, we were the first people, this was still Seaboard, to run a submersible pump.

AK: Reda?

RR: We ran the first Reda pump in Redwater town.

AK: That's R-E-D-A. Could you briefly describe that pump to me, Rudy, just how it worked. Did you run it in on tubing?

RR: You run it on tubing with an electric cable on the outside.

AK: Where, running down the side of the...?

RR: Yup, tied on onto the tubing all the way into the hole, then we ran it down to about 3,100 feet because your 50-horsepower motor is right on the bottom of the well, it's the lowest thing in the whole thing.

AK: That was a 50-horsepower motor?

RR: Yeah, it's 50 horse.

AK: And then what voltage was it running on?

RR: At 440.

AK: And that cable was handling that.

RR: That's right, yeah. And it was it was producing 2200 barrels a day at that time.

AK: And what was it, an impeller pump?

RR: Yup.

AK: With a turbine...

RR: Well, with stages, we had 50 stages in it.

AK:50!

RR: Yeah, and they just keep on going up and up and up with it.

AK: Well inside the tubing, were there?

RR: Well, the tubing is still 2 7/8. But your whole pump and all it measured, the overall length with the pump and the motor was about 40 feet, 40 feet long,

AK: And then you thread that on to your tube.

RR: On to the tube, solid.

AK: And there was nothing, nothing inside the tube?

RR: Nothing inside the tube.

AK: I see. So you had these...

RR: Just the check valve of course.

AK: Yeah. Well gee, that would be far more than the Board would allow you to produce.

RR: Right. But see then we were already making water, and we were already on this water system. So we could, we were trucking the water, and disposing... there was no pipeline in yet.

AK: Well what cut were you up to then? How much of the water cut?

RR: Oh by the end we were cutting at least 60% water.

AK: Yeah, and so out of 2200, that would be over 1200 barrels a day of water.

RR: Yeah. So, so then we'd cut it back, and then that didn't last very long either, you know, the water coming in...

AK: Well it would come in at such a rate... well, the Reda pump was really sucking on it.

RR: That's right.

AK: Well, it was aggravating it, wouldn't you say it was?

RR: It was.

AK: Yeah, so it was a great thing for moving fluid but the wrong kind of fluid.

RR: But before we read it, we did all our... moved on bigger pump units, bigger pumps...

AK: Try different...

RR: Oh, we tried everything before we did this???

AK: Oh, I see, so Reda was kind of the last resort. Yeah, right.

RR: And when it quit on the Reda, it was suspended. That was the last.

AK: I see. So you just... would you retrieve the pump and...

RR: Pulled it out, yeah.

AK: Did you use another hole somewhere.

RR: That very same pump, then I took it and they sent me over to... now what did they call that other field... Thompson Lake... and we had to do every well over there. But that was a different formation, that was in a sand formation they needed to just sand off, it be just didn't want to work there at all.

AK: Well it would, wouldn't the sand plug up the impellers? i`

RR: It did. It just wouldn't work in that field. So we pulled it out sent it back to the shop and then we used it back in the Redwater field. By the time I retired, we pretty well had all of these Wells on Redas. Or submersible pump, they weren't on Redas.

AK: Yeah, the idea of that type of... so you'd need to have some pretty heavy wiring coming into your lease, eh?

RR: That's right.

AK: 440 volts. What'd you bring it in at, 13,000, cut it back, or?

RR: That's right, about that, anyway.

AK: Yeah, because it would be... in a transformer to knock it down.

RR: You'd have to run a high line, tell Calgary Power?? to run a highlight right to the lease, and then you have to put your transformers up.

AK: Yeah. Now, they'd make you put your transformers on your lease.

RR: Oh sure.

AK: Yeah, so you didn't get....so what it was, it was just fighting a losing battle with the water, I guess you could say?

RR: That's right.

[00:38:08] AK: Yeah. Well, now, how about the batteries as a whole were you able to meet your lease allowable, like wasn't it about 40 barrels a day of well? That oil?

RR: At the time, and then it just kept on going up and up and up. But we did make our allowable for quite a few years and this is the reason why the submersibles were going in, if you didn't make your level, well, you just put in another submersible.

AK: I see, yeah. And you were handling more fluid.

RR: Much more fluid, much more.

AK: Well, what about this saltwater, did you observe all the rules very religiously and make sure that none of us had found another way out somewhere?

RR: No, no, because we sure did...

AK: There was some of them that, the water didn't find its proper home, got into the sand hills, I heard.

RR: No. And we got that pipeline in, of course, we did have spills or pipeline failures.

AK: Yeah. So you hooked up, when would that be that you hooked up to Redwater water disposal?

RR: About in... I'd have to take a little bit of a guess but in '53?

AK: That would be about right. Well, the operation south of the river, they had, you had your own disposal wells down here then.

RR: No, oh, yes, I'm sorry.

AK: You didn't pump it across the river.

RR: No. No, there was disposal wells here. As I remember, running it across here, the line that's how it went and out to the disposal and that's the first ??? that got water, so that's... we only hooked on as you needed it to, and then these came later, this one came later, and then this one came later also.

AK: Well you were working with Western Minerals or Western Leaseholds, did you ever hear of a fellow named Ted Campbell, W.G. Campbell, he was an engineer.

RR: No. I remember Jim Campbell was the field foreman here for a while.

AK: Then you continued your work as, was it after these leases, when was it that you were able to occupy this house? On the 27th.

RR: 1956.

AK: 1956, eh?

RR: That's right.

AK: So you were, you were elevated to...

RR: To foreman.

AK: To foreman, and then you looked after... did you have some battery operators working for you?

RR: Yes, yeah. Four of them.

AK: Did they work shifts or?

RR: No, not when I was foreman. But I had to work shifts. I was a pumper.

AK: Yeah, and why did you not make them work shifts?

RR: Well, that's another little story...

AK: Well, you mean you make your allowable during the day and then shut the wells in at night?

RR: No, we just let them run. But when but I started as a pumper, we had to work shifts and we were separate from this side of the river of course, and we had to work shift work and then work at night, and then we got finally got away from that, the shift work. We said we could handle it without it, working at night. So they said okay. And then when we divided this up, so we'd offer Western Minerals on this side, and those guys that worked over there, then they'd come along and says, you have to work shift work again, because we got all this extra work. So you have to go back on shift work. But we're going to have to lay off one guy, and Leo Christiansen was the foreman then, and I says well if you have to lay off somebody and you have to work shift work, I said you better lay me off. I says, unless you can give me enough work to keep me busy all night, I don't want to work. But if you give me enough work that I could stay busy, I'll work. So he run to the foreman, he phones Bischoff and Bischoff says, if Rudy says he don't need to work shift work, don't work shift work. We never worked shift work again. Because there was nothing to do.

AK: No, otherwise you're just standing around. The other thing about shift work, if it eliminated, a lot of this was eliminated by automated lease custody control. Did you have automated pumping and shipping of oil?

RR: No. Not yet.

AK: Not yet. When did it come in for you people?

RR: That was quite late. But see, then it was Interprovincial Pipeline, they, it was their business to ship the oil.

AK: You mean they picked it up at your lease?

RR: They took it right out of our techs.

AK: So there was... and oh that's what... it was no more Imperial Pipeline.

RR: It wasn't yet. See it was Interprovincial first. And...

AK: Well, my understanding was Imperial, Imperial Pipeline and then Interprovincial took it at the loading racks.

RR: No. See there was a... they called it Interprovincial Pipelines...

AK: Is that right?

RR: With Bob Bardner??? was I think one of their first people and it wasn't run by Imperial at all. I don't think Imperial really took it over until about, oh well into the 60s.

AK: Well anyways, be that as it may I didn't want to be opening up cans of worms, but you didn't really get automated until into the 60s.then, is that it?

RR: That's right.

AK: Well, some of the earliest automated experiments were done in Redwater. Were you aware of that? Well, Imperial's batteries. They were they were experimenting with it to see if they couldn't cut down. I mean there's another way of cutting down on labor.

RR: Oh, yeah, that's right. You'd have to run up there and check every tech. But we had it on all our techs, so automatic shipping didn't... ??? later years and we, that's when you could get rid of storage tanks because you'd be producing into one tank in the....

AK: That's right. Yeah, that's right.

RR: And you had water ??? if it was too much water it cut you off and...

AK: Right. I'm just going to turn the tape over.

## **Side 2 – 31:00**

[00:00:06] AK: We're on side two, and we were talking about automated lease custody control and you were saying that it didn't start in until the 60s, is that a fair statement, right?

RR: Yeah.

AK: Now, what year was it that Texaco showed up?

RR: Well to me, it was in June of '58. That's when we amalgamated with Texaco.

AK: Had there been rumors before that that there was going to be some changes, takeovers?

RR: No, no, not really. Oh, no rumors.

AK: Yeah, well, could you describe what happened when... well first of all did you have some kind of a pension plan with Seaboard before that?

RR: Yes.

AK: What was it, contributory, you'd put in so much and they'd put in so much?

RR: No, they were just, they were just giving us a pension as far as I can remember or recall. And then in June of 1958 that pension come to a stop and they called it a paid-up pension.

AK: So what they do, cash payout, wrote you a cheque?

RR: No, they just held it in trust and in the bank until I retired. I took early retirement on January the 1st 1983, and that's when that pension kicked in.

AK: So you started to get paid out of that pension.

RR: I'm still getting a pension from them, from Seaboard.

AK: Right. Nothing to do with Texaco.

RR: That has nothing to do with Texaco.

AK: So when you started with Texaco, it was a brand-new ballgame, you had to start contributing to their plan?

RR: That's right. Yep, that started all brand-new.

AK: Well, did they allow you to start contributing the first year or did you have to wait a year?

RR: No, right off the bat. Because they took us over, and as far as Texaco was concerned, our seniority run all the way through, we didn't have to stop over, and start over again.

AK: I see, you didn't have to be demoted.

RR: No. and even for our holidays we were getting two weeks and then you had to go for 15 years to get three weeks. Well, that all counted.

AK: So you are, you were just a ??? It was the same company except...

RR: That is right.

AK: By that time what kind of money were you making, was that on a salary basis or an hourly wage?

RR: I went on a salary in 1956.

AK: Oh, you went that early, yeah.

RR: As soon as I was moved into that house and promoted, I was on salary every since.

AK: Oh, yeah that was a lot better, then.

RR: Oh yeah, for sure. A lot more work too.

AK: Well that was work that you had to do. So in June of ' 58, then you had a new supervisor or person that you reported to?

RR: Yes. Then I had... foreman was in Edmonton, but I was the only foreman out here.

AK: And you reported to this person in Edmonton?

RR: Yes.

AK: Well then did they decide that they were going to pull all of the Texaco and Seaboard acres?? together?

RR: That was even pre-arranged because immediately in June of '58 it was, we were one group in Redwater right off the bat. Yeah, and that's when we moved from this place to this place. There was another house here that Seaboard had.

AK: So Section 17.

RR: Yeah. So we moved over there, and then we left... this was all my area.

AK: Well then by that time, hadn't a bridge been built?

RR: The bridge was built in '76, '67.

AK: Just about coincided with the... so you were able to get back and forth then?

RR: Across the ferry.

AK: Oh a ferry.

RR: Yeah across the ferry.

AK: Where was the ferry?

RR: Just a mile a west of where the bridge is right now. That's where the ferry was. But originally the ferry was, it was right down here.

AK: Was is called the was it called the Vinca ferry?

RR: Yeah. When the oil field was being drilled, when it started in 1950, the ferry was still running way over here, and then they moved it over a mile west of the bridge.

AK: But then when that was all going on, it would be impossible for the rigs down here to have anything to do with the drilling operations here. They were all kind of decentralized because of the river.

RR: That's right. Yeah.

AK: I mean, there's no point... and you'd... I understood that some of these people had offices in Bruderheim.

RR: Western Minerals did, at one time.

AK: That's right. Western minerals did yeah. So they had their operations there. Okay.

[00:06:25] What kind of a setup did you have then, you had, did you have some people over here and you talked to them by phone or how did you...

RR: Nobody here, no phones at that time.

AK: No walkie-talkies?

RR: You just went to see them and that that's about it. And in spring when the ferry was out, or in fall when the ferry went out, then there was always a time where the river wasn't froze you couldn't drive across the ice, then they had a cage, where about four men could get in and they rode across on this cable. And it had a little engine, so you'd coast halfway down and when you got to the bottom you'd start the motor up and ???

AK: Oh boy, scary, scary as can be.

RR: Until you could drive across the ice and then you... or go around by Fort Saskatchewan. See if you did need a rig from here on this side of the field they'd just go around by Fort Saskatchewan, across the bridge.

AK: Yeah, but then that bridge is changed too.

RR: Oh sure.

AK: Yeah, that's a new bridge from what it originally was, because you can see the piers of the old bridge downstream there. So this this sort of thing went on and did you continue to stay in Redwater?

RR: All the time. We moved into a house just kitty-corner across here. We had it built while we were living on this lease. So we never had a phone and there was no chance of getting a phone, then we were using raw gas from the battery to heat our house.

AK: Real good stuff eh?

RR: And at that time I was doing drilling in Frog Lake and Hardesty, and all over the country and my wife was alone. And so we says, that's no good. So I asked Lindeberg if I should build a house in Redwater or if I'll be in the Redwater area for a while. He was the superintendent. Vern Lindeberg, in Edmonton.

AK: Yeah, was he an engineer?

RR: No, he just came up from the states as a head roustabout. Just worked his way up. And he says, you go ahead and build a house, but don't put in the lawn, he says, put potatoes in the lawn, because you might have to move. But we never did move, and we moved into that house and then I worked...

AK: You built that yourself.

RR: Yeah, I had my brother-in-law and...

AK: Well yeah, okay, but on that property, was that part of the Imperial infill?

RR: It would have been, yeah.

AK: Were there Imperial houses on each side?

RR: Just across the road.

AK: Oh, across the road.

RR: Just across the street. There was Imperial, those small houses, but not on this street. You see, then the doctor built this house, the barber built this one and we were right next to it. We could see our old place right from here.

AK: Right. So that made it easier for your wife, to stay in a house here.

RR: Yeah, because we moved in there in 1959 into that new house. And then I was working up in Talbot Lake, supervised drilling, and that's close to Fort Vermillion.

AK: Oh, that's a long ways.

RR: Yeah, took a 12-hour car ride to get in there and to get back home again. 12 hours one way.

AK: You should have flown in.

RR: We never had no airstrip, and at that time you have to drive up the Peace River and go down the Three Creeks Road, and down what they called the Honolulu road because it was the old Seaboard Honolulu, Federal built up there, and ever after I was working, every winter, I'd be out on drilling projects at Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, 200 miles out of Fort Nelson.

AK: They spread you out thin, didn't they?

RR: They sure did.

AK: And at that time who was the head drilling superintendent, then, that you would report to.

RR: It was Vern Lindeberg, at that time.

AK: Oh, I see. Where did they have their offices in Edmonton?

RR: 10305 Princess Elizabeth Avenue.

AK: Where in the heck is Princess Elizabeth Avenue, is that out by the airport.

RR: By the municipal airport.

AK: Yeah, the municipal.

RR: Yeah, that's right. And their first office was, when I joined, it was on 109th Street and 82 Avenue. And then they moved over there, and they were there ever... well, of course in later years yet.

AK: Well, maybe Texaco might have taken Seaboard's office, did they?

RR: Nope. No, it was a different office. Seaboard was on the north side of the river, Texaco was on the south side.

AK: Yeah, I seem to recall it was quite close to the old CPR station.

RR: That's right, you're right.

AK: Yeah, it kind of comes back to me.

RR: You got that, right.

AK: Yeah. Well, we'll have to get after Bishop. Okay.

[00:12:12] So as this went on, you also experienced the gathering of gas, you had to lay your own lines on your lease?

RR: Just the tie-ins.

AK: They brought their lines to you...

RR: It was Majestic, it was the contractors. That's the Majestic, they laid all the gathering lines. Not they brought it right into the lease and we just had to tie in.

AK: Now was metered, was that gas metered?

RR: Well, yeah on our gas charts. Yeah. That's right.

AK: So it would give you an idea how much gas you delivered.

RR: That's true. Just on the gas charts.

AK: Was there very much gas coming out of those wells?

RR: No, not very much at all.

AK: Right. Okay, so you had a quite a combination of work that you were... you were still in a sense superintendent of production here?

RR: Yup. I was the Field Foreman, that's what they were called, of Redwater and area all the time.

AK: Yeah and yet on top of that they toss these other jobs at you.

RR: That's right, like Boundary Lake, I was there for four months one winter.

AK: Boundary Lake? Lord.

RR: Fort St. John area.

AK: No wonder your wife would want to move into town. By that time your family was growing up was it?

RR: That's right.

AK: Yeah. I didn't ask you about that. How many children do you have?

RR: Just one boy? He was born in '59.

AK: Oh right, and that that was it eh?

RR: That's it.

AK: Right. And he's the one that got you your book.

RR: Yeah, that's the one. That's our grandson there.

AK: Oh great. That's... yeah. So when you were along with Texaco, did you have any special benefits like pensions or just the straight company pension?

RR: Company pension, and of course your savings plan and you could put in six percent and they would put in 3. They would put in half of what you put in.

AK: They should have matched it. A lot of companies match.

RR: Yes, a lot of them did.

AK: Yeah, right. Did you have to abandon any of these wells or suspend them?

RR: Yeah.

AK: About Section 8, we abandoned...

AK: Up here.

RR: Yeah, that's Texaco... we abandoned that one, and we ran a packer on the oil line and put cement on top and then when they come back for block allowables, then we went back and drilled it out again.

AK: To get your allowable. Now what did block allowable mean, Rudy?

RR: Block allowable then was you could take the oil out of an inside well, if this one was capable of making an allowable. So you'd only put the well on production and you'd prove that it could make oil then you could go ahead and shut it in and take that allowable out of a better well.

AK: So it was a type of transfer of allowables.

RR: That's right. See with... now this is interesting too, is... this is Western minerals here, this was ours, of course, But this was Western minerals. That was a real good block there, could make lots of production. This one wasn't so good. So what they did, they made a deal with Texaco at the time, because it was Texaco already, that we'd pump this well, and this well and just make as much oil as we can, but they'd give us a full allowable out of it, as long as they could use it to join this half to that section. And that's what they did, because they said as long as it was contiguous they could do that.

AK: Well, it kind of contiguous, yeah.

RR: Yeah, you see, but as long as... but see when we got extra oil we couldn't make a full allowable out of those wells anymore. They were just on the down slope already, but they could make so much oil out of there, so that way they could give us some oil and then make up a whole bunch of this that they couldn't make over there.

AK: Yeah, you'd have to watch your royalties though, you'd have to keep track of that oil, wouldn't you, because it detracted a different royalty.

RR: Oh, yeah.

AK: See the royalty off the black part is different from the royalty off the seaboard part.

RR: Yeah, well, they figured that out somehow.

AK: No, but I meant you had it recorded, didn't you?

RR: Oh sure. Oh, absolutely.

AK: You had to say where it came from, then they do the fiddling with it.

RR: Yeah, that's exactly right.

AK: Yeah, there was a lot of that transfer stuff that went on.

[00:18:27] Then as you got into this farther and farther, when did you decide that you wanted to pack it in? Or what impelled you to...

RR: Well, I was 55 years old and this was 1982 and I had worked 33 years and I just decided that maybe it's time to shut it down. And we got an acreage at Bruderheim, which is 290 acres.

AK: Oh, that's pretty nice, good-sized acreage.

RR: And we always did farm that, even while I was working. Well her brother, Myrt's brother farmed it for us, but we always...

AK: Was this part of your original, your dad's acreage.

RR: No.

AK: On your side.

RR: Yeah. And so we're still farming it. We're still farmers today.

AK: Well are you, you actually going out to it or do you have somebody crop it for you?

RR: No. We really do the physical work.

AK: Is that right?

RR: Every bit of it.

AK: Oh, boy. 240, that's a pretty good slug of land. 180 and 60. So you decided. now was age 55 a special age so that you could get an improved pension or?

RR: Yes. That's the earliest that I could get a pension.

AK: All right. And did they offer you something, they said, or did you go and ask them?

RR: I asked them for retirement, yup.

AK: And they gave you, was it a sweetened pension based on the number of years or on your age?

RR: Probably the number of years, and age. I took a reduced pension because of going at 55.

AK: Oh you had to take a little less?

RR: A little less, because...

AK: Well some of them were sweetening it right up like Imperial, they sweetened it right up to an actuarial age of 65 for some...

Myrt: What years were that started?

AK: Oh, about the same time.

RR: But it's so different that now or even a couple of years ago, see Imperial Oil, they do that because they're ??? to get their older people to get out. But at that time I asked them if I could take early retirement at 55 and they says well, maybe not. See, they didn't promise it.

AK: They didn't want to let you go.

RR: No. Until '80, '82 was already... the crunch was coming. So when I asked for retirement, I told them why and all this sort of stuff and they says, well, okay.

AK: But they still penalized you.

Myrt: Did they say it too fast?

RR: Well that was, only to a point, that if I had stayed until 65 it would have been so much more.

AK: Oh, yeah, but what I mean is that the way they were fixing people up with envelopes or golden handshakes that they were, they were actually improving the... instead of penalizing, they were giving you a bonus.

RR: Yep. Nope ???.

AK: No bonuses that they were going to tax you on.

RR: No, not like that.

AK: No. What do you think would have happened if you'd stayed on till Imperial swallowed Texaco up?

RR: They'd have probably fired me.

AK: That ??? are you? So the year that you packed it in was '83.

RR: January 1, '83.

AK: Right. And that was that was... how did it feel? This is a question I asked the other fellas, you went to work one day, the next day you didn't go to work, right? What was that feeling like the next morning? Was there a... if you can recall it and if you'd care to tell me because I think it's very interesting.

RR: Right now, and even at that time I was so busy that I never missed going to work at all.

AK: You were busy with other things.

RR: I was so busy with other things and this was January the first and then, where did we go that winter right away, in '83.

AK: You took a holiday, did you?

RR: Yeah, because we were traveling quite a bit then, and I remember in '82 we went to Europe, no in '80, and so we were just traveling quite a bit. And then spring come along and we were putting the crop in.

AK: Oh yeah. Now would give you days off for that.

RR: Oh, no.

AK: You'd have to do that weekends.

RR: Yeah. And like I says, her brother was working...

Myrt: He hired the work done by most of the men, between family. He hired them and they did the work and we were able to keep the farm that way. Otherwise we wouldn't have kept it.

RR: And harvesting, I drive the combine and Myrt drives the truck.

AK: Oh, yeah, you talk about farming. So you've really, you really never left the farm, did you?

RR: That's right.

AK: Is that a fair statement?

RR: That's a very fair statement.

AK: You never really left the farm.

MR: That's why he retired early, he says I want to farm a little bit yet.

AK: Well, sure why not. Well that was good. I guess the geography was just right for you.

RR: That's true.

AK: The geography was right, the time you stopped your tractor and walked in, that was kind of a bit of fate stepping in.

RR: It just all worked together.

AK: Yeah. Okay. I think that that statement's kind of good. I like that, that you never left the farm. But what about the... what I'm trying to get... just wrapping it up here Rudy, that your feeling about the oil industry as a whole and how you felt bout it, you certainly are very knowledgeable in production, that goes without saying, but did you did you feel like you'd want to keep your hand in or how do you feel about the philosophy of your work over the years?

RR: Well, I think it was it was great, and I'm sure glad I had the opportunity to work with it and everything. But then when the time did come to retire I was ready to get out of it too.

AK: You felt the time had come.

RR: The time had come, yeas. Because I was on the... I was driving so many miles.

AK: Oh, yeah, and in those winter trips, I don't know how you put up with it. Didn't they fly you at all?

RR: Oh, we did, at times we flew when it was, just you know, like if we had an airstrip at the lease or something and... but then some of those air trips through, you know, they left something to be desired. Flying into Fort Nelson in the bush there with the pilot, ??? sure. His name was Sherwood Moffitt and with a Cessna Twin, or a Cessna plane and we'd get to the end of the runway, and in Edmonton, they'd stop and he'd warm it up and everything to make sure it goes, and over there, you get on the plane and go to the end of the runway turn around and zoom, you're ???

AK: Yeah, some check. What wells did you have at Fort Nelson?

RR: We drilled Kotcho Lake, we didn't have producing wells. This was always wildcats.

AK: Oh, yeah because Kotcho is all Pacific and Petro-Can.

RR: Yup. And we abandoned, we drilled 3 well at Fort Nelson country, and abandoned every one of them.

AK: They weren't on the reef, you were looking for the big reef.

RR: We couldn't get anything???

AK: Right. Did you drill up northwest of Fort Nelson along the Alaska Highway?

RR: Northwest, no. Not northwest.

AK: You were down more in Kotcho.

RR: That's right.

AK: Oh, well yeah. So they, of course there's a lot of history about Texaco in my green book there, filling the blue one too, but they're early adventures. Well this has been very interesting, any other philosophical comments you want to make about how the world goes, and what you ever, you know...

MR: I just helped him, that's all.

AK: You were his helpmate.

RR: That's right. She kept the home fires burning. She was always there when I came home.

AK: Well that's good.

RR: But she did come up to visit me when I was in Fort St. John, I was gone for four weeks and I knew I'd have to stay away four weeks. So on the third, the fourth week, she came up and stayed with me in Fort St. John. Then we drove home together

AK: And that was in the wintertime.

MR: Spring, I think.

RR: That was in the spring. When it was drilling, supervised drilling at Swan Hills, she got in the car and come up to see me.

MR: Yeah, he was gone for six weeks. Darrell wouldn't know him any more.

AK: Did they ever ask you if you'd transfer to Swan Hills town?

RR: No. We just, we had production there, but I'd always look after, look at getting a contractor to do it over there.

AK: Yeah, because Texaco did have some production up there.

RR: See, that was Texaco Canada, at ??? but we were on the other side of the river, and we were still Texaco Exploration, so we were separate.

AK: Well now your employer was Texaco Ex?

RR: Yup.

AK: Never Texaco Canada.

RR: Until they amalgamated, the two, did amalgamate, I don't remember what year.

AK: Well, it was all the same sort of.... well, I want to thank you very much for your time, and I've enjoyed it very much and I think it's added a lot to, you know, my research work and so here it is, it's 12:15 p.m. and I'm going to sign off. Thank you.