

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Ray & Norma Torguson

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: August 18, 1992

Side 1 only - 45:22

[00:00:06] AK: Okay. Today is August the 18th, 1992. I'm Aubrey Kerr and I'm in the home of Ray and Norma Torguson, spelled T-O-R-G-U-S-O-N. And what is the legal description of your farm here?

RT: Northeast of section 30, Township 58, Range 21, west of 4th.

AK: Right. And you're quite a ways distant from the productive limits of the field.

RT: Oh, yes. We're about four miles north of the Redwater, of the edge of the field.

AK: Right. Now Ray, I'd like to go back right to your grandfather. You mentioned about him being a shipbuilder in Norway. Could you give me a little background on your grandfather?

RT: I'll let you know...

AK: Did you know him?

RT: No, I never knew him. He died in 1918, I believe.

AK: But whatever your father told you.

RT: Oh, yeah. Well, they had a small shipyard in, what was the name of that, Norma? Bergen?

NT: Savanger.

RT: In Savanger, Norway. And they built a small ship, I guess it would have to be, and sailed it to the States where they, I believe they went to Kentucky and he had a wagon factory there, he made wagons for a number of years. And then they moved to Langford, South Dakota, where my father was born. And, like every place else, they dried out after a few years and they moved up to Hanley, Saskatchewan, where he bought three sections, I think it was. And they went into the steam thrashing business. The three boys each had a thrashing outfit and they...

AK: That was your father and your two uncles?

RT: Right, yeah.

AK: And this was before you were born?

RT: Oh, yes. Yeah, I don't go back that far. This was steam. And then my dad, after he married in 1919, they moved to Dundurn, Saskatchewan, where I was born, and where dad farmed until he passed away. I believe he was 87.

AK: When was that?

RT: That would be in 1971, I think he died.

AK: Right. So then, what about your mother?

RT: My mother was born in England, just on the outskirts of London. And they came directly from there to Dundurn.

AK: Oh, that's where your father met your mother.

RT: That's right. Yeah, so that's how they came to meet.

AK: Right. And did your father, did he acquire the land in the form of homestead or what?

RT: No. They, I believe one of my uncles had a quarter section homestead, but the rest, they purchased the land from land companies.

AK: I see. And do you know if they ever, if they ever had mineral rights on their land?

RT: My dad had mineral rights, yeah. We still have them on our...

AK: You still have an ownership of that quarter?

RT: Ah, oh no. It's a, how much land is it, Norma? About a section and a half, they have mineral rights, I think.

AK: Was it productive?

RT: No, no. It's a dry hole country.

AK: Miles away from the oil.

RT: That's right.

AK: Where is Dundurn?

RT: It's about 25 miles southeast of Saskatoon on Highway 11.

AK: Oh, I see. Near Raymond? No, near Raymore? No.

RT: Oh no. No, it's just nicely out of Saskatoon, it's the first town on Highway 11 out of Saskatoon.

AK Oh, yeah, right.

[00:04:46] So did you grow up there?

RT: I grew up there, yeah.

AK: And you went to school there?

RT: Yeah. I went to school at Hoosier School.

AK: Hoosier. And how much schooling did you have?

RT: We had grade 10 there.

AK: And you went to grade 10?

RT: Grade 10, yeah.

AK: And was that during the dirty thirties?

RT: Oh yes. That was just at the start of the war, you know, when I got out of school, yeah. Went to work in the army camp at Dundurn. That was my first job.

AK: Oh, is that right?

RT: Yeah.

AK: What kind of pay did you get for that?

RT: 45 cents an hour.

AK: 45 cents an hour. What was that, an 8-hour day?

RT: Oh, it was whatever they happened to work. Yeah. If it was a big job, we went until it was finished, type of thing.

AK: You were in the, what part, the cook?

RT: What's that?

AK: You were cooking?

RT: No, no. I was working for a living. We were just working construction, when they were building it up, you see.

AK: Civilian construction.

RT: Yeah. It was a relief camp during the war, or, you know, during the Depression, eh? And then it, as soon as the war started, it was an army base.

AK: Well, then they went in and kind of fixed it up?

RT: Oh, built up the dorms and...

AK: But that was the, the relief camp was the base.

RT: Right, yeah. They had summer militia, you know, even during the '30s, I think. But it was mostly a relief camp. They just fed people there, kept them there.

AK: Yeah. That was of one of R.B. Bennett's.

RT: That's right. Yeah.

AK: But you were still on the farm then.

RT: Oh yeah.

AK: I mean you didn't...

RT: Oh, no. We were too young for that but...

AK: No, but I meant your family was...

RT: Oh, yeah. My dad farmed there until he died. My brother is still farming it.

AK: Is that right? He's still farming on the same...

RT: Same land, yeah.

[00:06:53] AK: So, then when you, after you'd worked in this construction work, where did you go then?

RT: Well, I went building airports. Running Caterpillar tractors, you know, building airports. We built an airport at Davidson, one at Battleford, one at Fort Macleod.

AK: These were all for the Commonwealth Air Training.

RT: For the air training, yeah.

AK: Was that your own Cat?

RT: No, no. I worked for Thode Brothers Construction. They were local.

AK: How do you spell that?

RT: T-H-O-D-E.

AK: Thode. And where did they operate out of?

RT: Dundurn. They were farmers there, big farmers, and they got Cats and went into, soon as the war started, they were contractors.

AK: Is that right?

[00:07:47] Well then, during the war then, you were working with the Cats. And when did you, you said you joined up '47 years...

RT: In '43. I joined up in '43. Joined the Navy in '43.

AK: Well, that would be 49 years ago.

RT: Would it?

AK: 49 years ago, Norma.

NT: That's right.

AK: So, 49 years ago today?

RT: Yesterday.

AK: Yesterday. Is that so? And you joined the...

RT: I joined the Navy in Saskatoon and Norma joined the Air Force in Edmonton. The same day.

AK: And then, did, were you...?

RT: Oh, we never met until we come to Redwater.

AK: Oh, I see. So, you were... I see, I get you. Then you worked, sorry, you served with the Navy and...

RT: For two years, yeah.

AK: Were you offshore or did you...?

RT: Oh, yeah. I was a radar operator. We were in the Gulf of the St. Lawrence one year, one summer, until, I was there from April, I think, until the fall, and then I took another course, and then I went on a Corvette. Made three trips over to Ireland.

AK: Did you run into any enemy action?

RT: Oh, we dropped a lot of depth charges. We never knew, you know, what we were doing half the time. But we dropped a lot of depth charges.

AK: Did you get any subs?

RT: Oh, we never got anything. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence, we were dropping subs, there was three fair miles out there, and we had 19 depth charges on each one. And we dropped every, we were always supposed to keep one in case they surface, because they had a bigger gun than we did. And you were supposed to run up beside him and drop it, you see. And we dropped all our depth charges and didn't get anything. And then there was a Yank Destroyer farther out, and of course, they radioed, you know, and they got him in there, and he brought the sub up right away. He dropped one pattern and brought the sub up, yeah.

AK: Blew it up, eh?

RT: Yeah.

AK: Well then, did you go and rescue any of the crew?

RT: Oh, yeah. We had one on our, yeah, we got one young guy, about 18 or something.

AK: Yeah, just a kid.

RT: Just a young fellow, yeah.

AK: ??? everybody was a kid.

RT: Everybody was, yeah. We had kids 16 years old on ours.

AK: So, then, that was your experience then, and...

RT: Yeah, as far as the war, you know. We dropped an awful lot of depth charges, but we never knew if we got anything or, you know. There were subs out there all right. There were lots of them.

AK: The Gulf of St. Lawrence was just...

RT: Oh, yeah.

AK: And then they cruised right up the Labrador Coast too. Did you ever cruise up the Labrador...?

RT: We went up to Red Bay, yeah. There was a mine there, and we went in there one night with a warship. They'd sunk a ship, loading at the dock there. So, all they did, they built the conveyor belt over the ship and loaded them on the other side of it. It wasn't a river, but it was an inlet, it was like a river. And it was kind of hairy going in there at night, because...

AK: You wouldn't have any lights.

RT: No, there was no lights and it was crooked, eh?

AK: And your charts weren't very good either.

RT: No, I don't think there was any.

[00:11:44] AK: So, while we're talking about Norma, we'll maybe come to her later, and get her, where she served. She was with the Air Force?

RT: In the Air Force, yeah.

AK: And what areas did she...?

RT: Norma?

NT: I was accounting.

AK: Oh, you were in the accounting department.

NT: Yeah.

AK: In the Paymasters?

NT: No, no. He couldn't count ???

AK: Quartermasters?

NT: No.

RT: We were at a reunion at Claresholm two years ago, wasn't it?

NT: Yes.

RT: And this fellow was there. What was it he got charged with?

NT: He didn't return a screwdriver and he was charged for it. And he was still hoping that [incomprehensible].

AK: Right.

[00:12:33] So then, after the war was over, where did you go?

RT: Well, we went to Flin Flon, work in the mine, that was the only job there was.

AK: You still hadn't met Norma?

RT: No, no. I got out of the Navy in November of '45, and she stayed in until the next summer.

NT: Right. ???

RT: But we went to Flin Flon, worked in the mine that winter. And then we came out in the summer and I, the neighbour fella had a Cat, Brushing, up at Star City, by Melfort. So, I went up and worked for him most of the summer. And I think it was about in the first part of October or something, I went to Lloydminster and went to work in the oil field.

AK: And your first job was with whom?

RT: Community Petroleums.

AK: Community Petroleums. And who was the boss?

RT: Pat Raman was our foreman.

AK: How do you spell that?

RT: I'm not sure.

NT: R-A-M-A-N.

RT: My cousin married his brother, I should know...

NR: ???

RT: Yeah, Pat was...

AK: Well then, was there some money behind that in Toronto or Calgary, or?

RT: Well, like Pat's dad, and my dad, and my two uncles, and John Loveseth, I'm not too sure how many more, who were the part of it.

AK: And what was your job?

RT: Oh, just pumping and hauling oil.

AK: That sticky bog stuff? With that sand in it?

RT: Yeah. Bitumen, yeah.

AK: Did you try to produce it in the winter?

RT: Oh, sure. We went year-round. Oh, yeah. We had heaters in the tanks.

AK: Yeah, you must have...

RT: The tanks were up on stilts, like platformed, 8-feet high, and all they had was a six-inch clip gate, or seven-inch some of them. And then a piece of pipe with an elbow on the end of it. And you turned that down into the, they had a three-foot bung on the back of our tank. And we put it in there and opened the valve and filled the tank. That's how we hauled it. But it, sometimes if the fire went out in the tank, it could take a long time to fill the tank.

AK: Yeah, I'll say. Now, was that after it had been de-sanded?

RT: Oh, yeah. That was, well, the sand settled out in those tanks. They had to be cleaned all the time.

AK: Yeah, you'd have to.

RT: Oh, yeah. They pumped a lot of sand.

AK: Right. And what was your wage then, do you remember?

RT: \$200 a month, seven days a week. Yeah. If we, sometimes got off Sunday afternoon, if we worked hard enough, and got ahead.

AK: You were, what were you producing? About 50 barrels a day, or?

RT: Oh, they went up to 80. We had 56 wells, and they were all producing. They probably wouldn't all be producing all the time, you know, but they'd be down for servicing and stuff.

AK: Well, then the price was pretty poor too, I guess.

RT: I really can't remember but I think it was under a dollar.

AK: Yeah, it wasn't very much.

RT: No, it wasn't very much. They just had those old single pull service rigs and...

AK: Now, you were saying that some of this crude got hauled to Leduc?

RT: Well for, just for firing the boilers.

AK: Yeah, it was just fuel. But where did the rest of it go? Did it go to the Husky Refinery, or?

RT: Well, we, there was a little refinery at Borradaile. Just out of Vermillion.

AK: Oh, Borradaile. I know. B-O-R-R-A-D-A-I-L-E.

RT: Yeah, I think so. And we hauled there until Husky came, see. There was a, the old refinery in Lloydminster, I forgot what they called them now, they were just west... e took some of the oil there, some of it went to Borradaile, and then when Husky came, of course, they took most of the production.

[00:17:10] AK: Okay. So, this job went on, this production job went on, and then you... when did you first hear that you were going to have a job at Redwater?

RT: Oh, well, I came up here. I had my holidays and I came up here, and I was a good friend of Chess Scutchings, I don't know if you met Chess.

AK: No. Scutchings?

RT: Chess Scutchings, yeah. He was an engineer with leaseholds.

AK: And he was working out of here?

RT: He was here, yeah. And so, I came up to see Chess, and I got on with leaseholds. And then my brother, he was with me, and then he came up here too. And went to work for leaseholds.

AK: Now was this at the same time that the McLennons came?

RT: McLennons came at the same time, yeah. We all started working at same time.

AK: Now that's M-C-L-E-N-N-O-N. And there's two brothers, Lauren and Jack. But they had been brought over by C.B. Barlow.

RT: They were with Barlow in, I believe Wainwright, I think, they were working, and Roy Hartling, he was, Roy Hartling was our production foreman.

AK: Right. So then when you, with Scutchings and all that, then you all joined forces then, eh?

RT: Well, we all went to work for Western Leaseholds. And Bill Scutchings came up after, too. Bob Rogers and Henry Adams, quite a bunch came from Lloydminster.

AK: What was your job here?

RT: Pumping.

AK: Yeah. Now, you had nothing to do with the drilling?

RT: No.

AK: You didn't, eh? Didn't have, no.

RT: Nothing to do with drilling. Chess Scutchings used to look after that, and some other fellow.

AK: There was a fellow that... I'm just trying to think, so, your exposure then was just in the production side, and do you remember people like Rich Swann?

RT: Oh, yeah.

AK: S-W-A-N-N. And did you ever remember seeing Ed Campbell?

RT: Oh yeah. Ed Campbell was our, our production foreman here.

AK Yeah, he was in overall charge, wasn't he?

RT: Yeah, right. He was the fellow in charge.

AK: And of course, he's been dead now about 18, 19 years. Very sad. He had that Lou Gehrig's Disease.

RT: Is that right?

AK: Yeah, he died.

RT: We heard he had passed away.

AK: Get that out of the way. That's all right.

[00:20:10] But by this time had you found out about Norma?

RT: Oh, yeah. I imagine so!

AK: Oh, you did, eh?

NT: When was that?

AK: When did you meet Norma?

RT: She used to work in the Royal Bank.

AK: Oh, you were in the Royal Bank? Was that when it was in Maloney's?

RT: In the garage.

AK: In the garage. And then you moved into better quarters, eh? So, you had this, kind of, financial experience from the Air Force?

NT: No, I took a course after, so...

AK: You took a course when you were going...?

NT: I took a course at McTavish Business College.

AK: In Edmonton.

NT: In Edmonton. And then...

AK: Was that before you worked with the Royal Bank?

NT: Mm-hmm. Oh yeah.

AK: Maybe I should get some of your experiences about the Royal Bank and the crowds of people that were in there. Or are you going to be busy with something?

NT: Oh, no. I was just going to read a book. Well I started there in May of 1949. And...

AK: Right. Well, it must have just opened then, did it?

NT: It opened in April. And I think we moved into the new bank in September of that year. And Mr. Smith was the manager, and Stan Hughes with the teller.

AK: Right. Just the three of you?

NT: The three of us, yes.

AK: How did you manage?

NT: I don't know, because I didn't know anything about banking. But anyway, it's grown into quite a bank now. Like, it's moved...

AK: Yes. You would see a lot of the hands coming in and there'd be a lot of cheques to be cashed.

NT: Oh yes. Some of them we were stuck with, and some of them were okay.

AK: Yeah, rubber cheques.

NT: Oh, yes. We saw those too. We used to run out of money sometimes, and they had like, what they call, like any old money you'd put away., and sometimes you'd have to bring that out to...

AK: Oh, stuff that was going to be sent back to burn.

NT: Mutilated, we'd call it. We'd run out of money, we made a trip to Edmonton early one morning, so we could open up, because the money parcel wouldn't always come out, and we ordered money...

AK: How did it come out?

NT: By train. Just on the train. Didn't have...

AK: That was the daily train then, was it?

NT: Mm-hmm. And coins would come in a great big bag, and you'd pick them up at the train station. But the bills themselves were in a bundle and they'd come through the post office.

AK: Oh, they'd come by mail?

NT: Oh, yes.

AK: So, they'd be registered mail, and then you'd go over to see Jim, Jim Evasio (???)

NT: Yes. You'd pick it up and there'd have to be two of us go, usually the manager and someone. The manager...

AK: And sign for it, eh? You'd have to have two signatures?

NT: Two signatures. And the manager would always take a gun. We always had a gun with us. We always had a gun in the cage, when we were tellers. Every morning we brought out our money and a gun, we thought nothing of it, you know.

AK: Right. Well did you go for target practice at all?

NT: I did once.

AK: You did? Whereabouts?

NT: Just out in back of the bank. We were allowed to fire it once in a while. So, I shot it one time.

AK: See if it was still working, eh?

NT: Yeah.

AK: You didn't hit anybody?

NT: No, no. I...

AK: Isn't that something, eh. Well that's interesting that you'd have that experience. Well then, was it at this time that you...

NT: About that time, I guess. If I remember right.

[00:23:58] AK: Yeah. How did you meet, you two guys?

NT: Oh, I don't know. He just came to the bank, I guess. Oh, we met at a dance at...

RT: Met at a dance at Egremont.

NT: At Egremont, sure.

AK: Where?

NT: At Egremont, just a town around here.

AK: Oh, just up here?

NT: They used to have dances there every Friday, and I guess that's where I met him.

AK: Yeah. That's E-G-R-E-M-O-N-T. Because Sophie, I think we've spent, spelled that before. Sophie's my secretary and she'll hear that. I spell out all the words for her, I think...

NT: E-G-R-E-M-O-N-T.

AK: I know. Yeah, so that's where you got to know each other, eh?

NT: Yeah. And then I went to work for Western Leaseholds.

AK: Oh, you did?

NT: The pay was a lot better than...

AK: Oh, the bank?

NT: Than the bank.

AK: Oh, sure it would be, yeah. And where was the office then?

NT: Which, the...

AK: The Western Leaseholds office.

NT: The Western Leaseholds.

RT: It was in that metal building there, south of town. I'm not sure the construction company that's, they still use the building.

AK: You mean in the eastern part of town?

NT: Mm-hmm. Across from that big church on the east side.

AK: Oh. On the way to the fertilizer plant.

RT & NT: Mm-hmm.

AK: Yeah. How many people would you have in there?

NT: Oh, there were about three or four women working there. Three women I think it would be.

AK: And you were keeping the production records?

NT: Yeah.

AK: Did you have to read the charts?

NT: I didn't do that. I just recorded...

AK: Did they have charts then? Those big circular...

RT: Gas charts. Oh yeah.

NT: Yeah. Mm-hmm. They did that. But someone else did that, I didn't do that. And then they had... I'd just get the sheets and a report from them.

AK: From the battery operators?

NT: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

AK: How much had been produced and...

NT: Yeah.

AK: And, who did the royalty returns? Did anybody do the royalty returns?

RT: Probably in Calgary.

NT: Probably Calgary. We didn't do any...

AK: Yeah. Of course, it was all owned by Western Minerals, so it didn't matter. But I think there was one parcel up at the north there, that was on Crown land, that Western Minerals had.

[00:26:16] So you, then you were married at that time too?

NT: We got married in 1952. 40 years ago.

AK: Is that right?

RT: '52, yeah.

NT: And then shortly, well, then we went to live in Bruderheim. But still with Western Leaseholds.

AK: Yeah, because there was an office on the south side of the river there.

NT: It was some, it wasn't really much of an office.

AK: No. It was in a kind of a garage, I'm told.

NT: Probably, yes.

RT: Right, yeah. There were living quarters there.

NT: Because then they'd bring the records from there over to Redwater and that's...

AK: But were you still employed by Western?

NT: Not after we were married. They didn't allow a husband and wife...

AK: Oh, is that right?

NR: No. Brothers could work there, but not husband and wife. So I quit.

AK: Oh. So then, when you were living in Bruderheim, you were raising a family then I guess?

NT: No. That didn't come for another five years. No, we went to, then we lived back in Redwater for a little while, and then we went to, we quit Western Leaseholds and went with Hudson Bay. And then we went to Camrose and Armena, and then to Leduc and back to Redwater with Texaco.

AK: Right. Well now, the occasion of you're going to HBOG. You know what HBOG is? Hudson Bay Oil and Gas.

NT: No, I hadn't heard it as HBOG.

AK: You never heard of HBOG? Yeah, well everybody in Calgary calls it HBOG. Oh, yeah, but sadly, it's no more. It was destroyed by Dome Petroleum, in turn, Dome was destroyed by Amoco. And Amoco, of course, is, they're having trouble.

NT: [incomprehensible]

AK: Yeah, it was... well, what was the occasion of your switching over to HBOG.

RT: Well, you always figure you're going to do better.

AK: Oh, yeah. Did they give you a little more money?

RT: I think so. And then they were going to make me head roustabout but they, they always wanted to send me to Valleyview, but Norma wouldn't go so we... I pumped there for two years before I came with Texaco.

AK: And you were pumping down at Joracan (???) eh?

RT: Yeah. We were at Armena.

AK: Yeah. Well how many wells did you have down there?

RT: Just four.

AK: Just four. That was just one quarter section, eh?

RT: Just a quarter, yeah.

AK: What was that, on Section 26? Or Section 8?

RT: I'm not sure. It was on Lycings (???) farm. Vern Lycings.

AK: Yeah. It was free-hold?

RT: I think Vern had the mineral rights if I'm not mistaken.

AK: Yeah. Well, it could have been that way. So that was all they had there, at Armena?

RT: That's all they had at Armena at that time.

AK: Boy. But that was all one field, as you could see in the photo there in the book.

RT: That's right.

AK: Well then, what was your next move?

[00:29:25] RT: We went to Leduc, from Armena.

AK: Was there some, there was some Hudson Bay production there?

RT: At Kavanagh. I had two wells over, just east of Calmar. And then I had 10, I think, at Kavanagh.

AK: These were, were these D2 wells?

RT: Oh yeah.

AK: They certainly weren't D3.

RT: No.

AK: No. And what year was this, that you're...?

RT: That would be from, just before Christmas in, well in November of '54 until November of '55. We came up here in November '55.

AK: And then when you came to Redwater, who were you with?

RT: Texaco. I came here. Well we had bought this farm, and so, we came back here to work for Texaco, and we've lived here ever since. We're just four miles down the road here to go to work, eh.

AK: Oh, that's where the production was?

RT: Yeah. Our office was just four miles south of...

AK: I see. Okay. So, what was the inducement to switch to Texaco? Simply because you had the farm?

RT: To quit Texaco? Oh, I retired. I was getting old.

AK: No, no. I meant, when you quit Hudson Bay Oil and Gas.

RT: Oh, to come up here? Oh, yeah. We just, we built up the house here and lived here.

AK: So, the purpose in leaving Hudson Bay Oil and Gas was simply...

RT: More or less, yeah.

AK: More or less to live here, and Texaco had a job waiting for you?

RT: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

AK: And that was in '55?

RT: '55, in the fall of '55, yeah.

AK: Yeah, now in '58... you see, there was another, like where Rudy Roloff was working...

RT: For Seaboard.

AK: For Seaboard. Well then Seaboard was swallowed up by Texaco in '58. So then did that expand your activities?

RT: Oh yeah. We had more wells then, you see.

AK: Yeah. But you, how many wells did you have up at the north?

RT: I can't really remember anymore. I think...

AK: It was only a couple of quarters.

RT: Well, no. We had a half section at Opal. We had, C block was a half section, and then we had B Block down here, was nine, I think we had nine wells there, if I'm not mistaken.

AK: Yeah, we'll just shut it off here.

[00:32:07] AK: Now, we're going to talk a little bit about Todd Meech. That's M-E-E-C-H. And you said that he was up here in '47 looking for coal?

RT: They were, yeah. They were, he, we were out at Battery One, that's at north of town, that battery. And he came out there on a visit., and he was telling us that in 1947, he walked down that railroad track, and they were looking for outcroppings of coal, because they had the mineral rights on the land there, you know. I guess they didn't find any coal. But he remembered doing that.

AK: Is that right? That interesting. And here, ironically, they were going to get oil. Right. Well he had quite a few other sections of land that were not productive, you know.

RT: Oh here, in this area. Yeah I think so.

AK: Off the field.

RT: Yeah, off the field.

AK: Well then, when you were with, going back to Texaco then, you continued to work with Texaco?

RT: Right, yeah. Until '82 I think.

AK: '82?

RT: Yeah, I retired in '82.

AK: And what age were you then?

RT: 60.

AK: Yeah. You were, were they giving you...

RT: Early retirement.

AK: A pension?

RT: Oh, yeah. I get a small pension. Not too big a pension. But I get about [incomprehensible]

AK: And that's only based on your service with ???

RT: That's right.

AK: With Texaco. Not with the others.

RT: No, no.

AK: They didn't roll it...

RT: We never had a pension at...

AK: Western Minerals?

RT: I don't think Hudson Bay even had a pension. Western Minerals never had a pension. And I don't think Hudson Bay had a pension, when I was there. They probably did after, you know.

AK: Oh, I see. So that, moving away from... you never went back to Bruderheim, then?

RT: No, no.

AK: No, that was... you didn't have any property there?

RT: No.

AK: You were just renting or...?

RT: We just, well the company put up a little place for us, didn't they?

NT: Two dog houses.

RT: We had two dog houses. Yeah, right.

NT: Stuck together. That was our first house.

RT: With a porch between them.

AK: Oh, big deal, eh? And that was with Western Minerals?

RT: And that's where we lived, yeah.

AK: Isn't that something, eh? Okay, by the time you kind of got settled in here at...

[00:34:51] But going back to the early days, the boom days of Redwater, what was your impression of the town and the boisterous roughnecks? Do you remember any of the, like the beer parlour fights?

RT: Oh, there was lots, yeah. But really, you know, in my experience, Redwater was never as rough as Lloydminster was.

AK: Is that right?

RT: Oh no. No. See Lloydminster was, when those guys, they came out of the Army and the Navy and they came right to Lloyd and they were pretty tough, some of them guys. They'd mellowed out quite a bit. There was a lot of fighting, went on here too, but not as much, no.

AK: So that Lloydminster was a fairly hairy...

RT: Oh, it was a boisterous place at one time.

AK: Well, of course, you see, the big boom in Lloydminster was in '46.

RT: That's right.

AK: A lot of people don't realize that there was a boom there.

RT: Yeah. Before Redwater, like.

AK: Of course, the whole problem was that Lloydminster had hardly any production compared to what was going...

RT: Oh no. No. There wasn't.

AK: So that's interesting. But then here, how would you say the people reacted? Say like the Ukrainian farmers reacting to the newcomers.

RT: Oh, I didn't see any problems. We never had any problems that I remember. Everybody was pretty hard up in them days. That area back of Maloney's Garage, where Sheshnick's Garage is now, that was just one shack dropped off after another in there.

AK: Yeah. I know. It was in the picture, yeah.

RT: You know. It was... and people, they got along. Seemed like, eh?

AK: Yeah, right. So, there was all this shortage of shelter and places to sleep and all that?

RT: Oh, it was... we lived in a chicken coop our first, I lived in a tent until it got so cold you couldn't sleep in the tent anymore.

AK: And where was that?

RT: That was in Redwater. What was the name of those people lived on the corner there?

NT: I don't remember.

RT: Yeah, I can't think of the name. But it was on the east end of town where your turn to go south on 838, or...?

AK: 38.

RT: 38. Yeah. Right on that corner. There was a farmyard.

AK: And you lived in a tent?

RT: We lived in the chicken coop there.

AK: Oh, in the chicken coop. Did you know about the chicken coop that Imperial Oil had for their office?

RT: Oh, I remember hearing about it, but I don't remember seeing it though.

AK: Oh, that's very famous, that's going to be in my book too. But that's a separate story. Okay, then you...

RT: We built a little place, at the Leaseholds' campsite.

AK: Oh, what was it, like a little shack?

RT: Shack, yeah. 14 by 24 or something. I think there were five of us batched there that winter.

AK: Batched?

RT: Oh, yeah. There was no cooks.

AK: And you were all in the one...?

RT: Oh, yeah. We all we found a place to sleep, we all lived there. Oh, yeah.

AK: Is that right. Of course, that was before you met Norma. So that was fairly rough times, that way.

RT: Oh, it wasn't that bad. We lived good. We used to make stew and...

AK: Yeah, you'd get along.

RT: I'm sure!

AK: Now these other fellows that worked for Western Minerals, the production hands, were they local fellows, or was there...?

RT: Mostly from Lloydminster. Pretty near the whole crew, I'd say. Lloydminster and Wainwright.

AK: Well, that would be a combination then of you and C.B. Barlow.

RT: Well, it's Barlow's crew and, yeah.

AK: You know he's still alive.

RT: Oh, I think so.

AK: I talked to him last week.

RT: Oh, is that right. Gee whiz. He wouldn't remember me, I guess. But we used to know him, yeah.

AK: You remember him coming in?

RT: Oh sure. At Lloydminster. More so than here. We never saw much of him here. But at Lloydminster we knew him well.

[00:39:20] AK: Right. Well, then when you were ready to retire from Texaco, what... that was your decision at age 60, you ...

RT: Oh yeah.

AK: What did you do then, did you start farming then more intensively?

RT: Not really. We shut down.

NT: We cut back.

RT: We used to have a herd of cattle.

NT: He didn't want to retire, but he was still working.

RT: I used to winter 125 head of cattle here.

AK: Is that right?

RT: When I was working. Norma used to, we had a setup, there was a manger full of hay and I used to turn them in there in the morning, and she chased them out after I went to work. Oh yeah, we managed.

AK: So, you were part of the operation here?

NT: Oh, sure. You have to be if you're going to be a farmer's wife.

AK: I'll say.

RT: But she ran a greenhouse here for 18 years.

AK: Where, in Redwater?

NT: No, right here.

AK: Oh, commercial?

NT: Yeah. I sold bedding plants and...

AK: What about cut flowers?

NT: No. I never got into that.

AK: Bedding plants, eh?

[00:40:32] Right. And we haven't talked about your family yet. What, how many children...?

NT: We have two sons.

AK: You have two sons. Right. And are they...

NT: Well, one lives in the trailer, the father of (???) lives in the trailer over there, and he works for Esso. He worked with Texaco, and now he works for Esso.

AK: Oh, that's right because Esso took over Texaco.

RT: Right.

NT: He used to be on offshore drilling, testing. Drill testing.

RT: He was with Johnson Testers for what, 5 or 6 years?

NT: Mm-hmm.

RT: He was up in the Beaufort Sea and Hibernia, Sable Island. He covered a lot of that, yeah.

AK: So, he's kind of settled down now.

RT: Well, he's... a little bit, yeah. He's working here.

AK: These are the grandchildren here?

RT: Yeah, right.

AK: And his wife works too.?

NT: She's a receptionist at the County of Thorhild office.

AK: Oh, over here then.

NT: Yeah. Just straight up the road here.

AK: Well you're kind of half-way between...

NT: Mm-hmm.

AK: So, he goes into Redwater every...

NT: He goes this way and she goes that way. He goes at 7:00 in the morning, she goes about 7:30.

AK: Is that right. Away they go, eh? So, you babysit?

NT: Well, not always. They have a babysitter usually, but the kids were kind of tired coming off holidays, so, we took them with us.

AK: Right. But then your other son?

RT: Well, he worked for Sherriff Gordon for 10 years, or just about 10 years. He got his steam papers, then he worked in the boiler house there for a bit. But he couldn't stand shift work, so, he's back in school now.

NT: He's going to NAIT.

RT: He's going to NAIT, yeah.

AK: Well that's excellent. Is he married?

RT: No. He's a bachelor type.

AK: Well I'll be darned. Well, this has been a most interesting interview, because it's opened up another, yet another aspect of the early days, you see, this is what I'm getting from different ???

RT: Different experiences.

AK: That's right.

[00:42:38] And I just wondered, Norma, I could start with you. What is your, looking back over the years, have you got any philosophy or any comments to make about what life's all... the true meaning of life?

NT: Well, I don't know... keep your nose clean. I don't know. I found, like we've been married 40 years, and I think it was a good 40 years. But it doesn't seem all that long, like from the time that when I was in the Air Force to, coming to... it isn't that long, really.

AK: Incidentally, what was your rank in the Air Force?

NT: I was the Leading Air Woman. Not very high.

AK: That word 'leading', t doesn't mean a hell of a lot.

NT: We used to call it L-A-W. Next step would have been a corporal, which isn't very high either.

AK: No, no, that's

NT: We were the...

AK: No. You were about the equivalent of a Private.

NT: Yeah. That's the third step up from the bottom. But there were lots of us.

AK: And what about you, Ray?

RT: Oh, I was just a radar operator. But I was just a...

AK: No, but I meant your philosophy of life.

RT: Oh, I haven't got any.

AK: You haven't?

NT: I think you've got to make life as interesting as you can, I mean, you owe it to yourself to...

AK: That's an excellent thing to say. You make it as interesting as you can.

NT: You make it what you make it.

RT: We had a good life. Texaco was a good company to work for. The others were too, as far as that goes.

AK: Well with Texaco, who was your man in charge here?

RT: Well here? Rudy Roloff was production foreman for most of the time.

AK: Did any of the wheels come up from time to time?

RT: Oh, yeah. We'd get visits, yeah.

AK: Did you ever hear of a fellow name R.W. Sparks?

RT: No.

AK: Jack Sparks? He was the president.

RT: Of?

AK: Of Texaco.

RT: Oh, we never saw the president. No.

AK: That was pretty heavy duty. Well, anyways, I want to say thanks very much. It's now 25 to 12:00. And our tape is just about over. So, thanks very much for your letting me into your home and sharing some of these memories with you. Over and out.

End of Interview