

PETROLEUM HISTORY SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Kitty Wilkins

INTERVIEWER: Aubrey Kerr

DATE: July 10, 1992

Side 1 [45:02]

[00:00:07] AK: Okay, I'm Aubrey Kerr and today is Friday July the 10th. And I'm in the home of Mrs. Kitty Wilkins. W-I-L-K-I-N-S. And you are on the... what's the legal description of your property?

KW: South West of 3-57-21

AK: Right. SW of 3-57-21 and I have Jean McClause who is going to... one of these days she is going to do interviewing instead of me. But I don't know when that'll happen. So the... the story of Redwater is somewhat different to this book. But it has a lot of memories from people such as yourself. And first of all I'd like to have you tell me what your maiden name was and when you were born and where.

KW: My maiden name was Walker. Katheryn Walker. I was born in Edmonton, but I moved to the farm when I was 2 years old. We just lived 4 miles north of here, on the farm.

AK: Right. And your...

KW: And I was born 1913 July the 23rd.

AK: Oh, so you just have a birthday coming up soon, right. Now you had your father, his name was Len Walker, and your mothers name was?

KW: Margaret.

AK: Yes. Had they both been born in Canada?

KW: No they were born in London.

AK: London, England.

KW: Yes. Suburb of London I guess.

AK: Yes, and when did they immigrate to Canada? Do you have any idea?

KW: Well, I think about 1908 or 09. Because he came to the farm in 1915. So he worked in Edmonton for awhile.

AK: Right. What was there... did they ever tell you what their purpose was in coming to Canada? Why they were attracted to Canada?

KW: No. He worked... my dad worked at the London Stock Exchange. Well I don't know why he ever gave it up to come out here.

AK: So he was... he had kind of a financial background, did he?

KW: Oh yes. But he turned out to be a pretty good farmer.

AK: And what kind of job did he have in Edmonton when he arrived?

KW: He worked for the city. But I don't know what he was doing. He worked... well it wasn't a very big city then.

AK: No, it was probably administrative job of some...

KW: No, I think not. I think it was out... I don't know. He just happened to come...

AK: All right, that's fine.

KW: I don't think he was in any administrative job.

AK: Well then what interested him in becoming a farmer?

KW: I don't know. His friend came out. I know that... I think at the same time. But why he set up on that farm when there was nothing there but jack pines and swamp. There was about 10 acres of good land, that's all, but it had a beautiful view. And that's what he wanted. Isn't that something?

AK: And did he start to break the rest of the land?

KW: Oh yes, he did. About every winter he would go brush about 10 acres. And then we kids would have to pick the sticks and pick the roots after he got it broke.

AK: Well with... when he obtained this land, was it in the form of a homestead?

KW: Yes, it was a homestead.

AK: He filed on it?

KW: Yes.

AK: And that would be about what year? 19...

KW: Yes I guess... 19... about 1915, or 16.

AK: Yes, you were born...

KW: I was born in 13. I was about 2 when they came out.

AK: And this... what did he get? A quarter section?

KW: He got a quarter and there was a guy who came there on the next quarter, nothing but jack pines and slews, and they'd filed on that. But he didn't stay there very long so my dad bought that quarter. But it's a good quarter today, there is no water. You know it was all beaver dams and water and there is nothing anymore.

AK: Why, is it...

KW: It's got it all broke up. Well it's all dried up. And it's been all dried up for years.

AK: Is it... can they cultivate on it?

KW: Oh yeah they crop it. My brother crops it every year.

AK: So your brother still lives there?

KW: No, there's no... My nephew just pulled a big house up on the farm now from over here.

AK: Oh that's Anne's son.

KW: Yes.

AK: That's right. Anne.. and there was a...

KW: Anne. She's my ex-wife you see... or my ex-sister-in-law.

AK: I know.

KW: Well, so that's their son.

AK: Yes, I know. And so there was a picture in the paper. So he's living on this quarter which your father had filed.

KW: Yes. They are living in a trailer right now until they get the house.

AK: Yes. Well they had to get the foundation right. Well let's see, now you went to school whereabouts?

[00:06:02] KW: In Pinehurst. The school was right on our quarter at the top of the hill.

AK: So you didn't have far to go?

KW: We went home for lunch every day.

AK: And how many grades did that...?

KW: Only up to 8 and that's all. And then Wainscott, except my 2 spoiled brothers and they walked to other side of Redwater, my oldest one did, to get his grade 12. Then the youngest one.

AK: Walked?

KW: Yeah, walked just three miles or four, but the youngest one, by that time their school was pulled into Redwater. But it was about a mile out of Redwater then. Ufford school.

AK: Alfred?

KW: Ufford.

AK: Oh, Ufford. U-F-F-O-R-D?

KW: Yes, it's in there I think.

AK: Yeah. Well...

KW: But doesn't matter but that's where it was and it was a mile, about a mile south of Redwater. West and south.

AK: And all during this time you were living on this quarter that your father had.

KW: Yeah.

[00:07:05] AK: And at that time you had married...?

KW: Well, I was working. I'd walk three miles to work doing housework, that's all we ever do. And then for a year I lived with my grandpa in Redwater. They had the post office for years. Well my... he was married to my mother's sister and they had it for... he died and then she kept it on for years.

AK: Now was his name...

KW: His name was Arthur Walker. My dad's dad. And he come out from England in 19.. about 1919.

AK: Oh he came out after your father.

KW: Yeah, oh yeah.

AK: Well, why was he attracted by what your father...?

KW: Well I guess Dad told him how rosy it was out here. And I can remember they had one boy and the baby girl. And I can remember her, I was only... I wasn't that big either. Up and down, pushing the pram up and down and crying to go home. Well, we had to go... my dad had to go to the Fort to meet him because there was no railroad through Redwater.

AK: No that's right.

KW: And so he had to go with a wagon and... so what a come-down it was for her. But they liked it after.

AK: What was her name?

KW: Bessie. That was my mother's sister, but she was married to Arthur. And then she moved to Beaverlodge after.

AK: Your mother's sister.

KW: Yeah. Oh, that was a big mix-up but...

AK: Oh, but she married.

KW: She married my dad's dad.

AK: Oh I see.

KW: There was 40 years difference between them but they had a nice life until he died. Then she ran the post office for a long time after that.

AK: Right. Well, then there was another person that has run the post office for a while.

KW: Jimmy Washoe, after she sold it, Jimmy took it over.

AK: Yeah, right. And he's retired now.

KW: Oh yeah.

AK: So your grandfather and your... and his bride, did they live on the...?

KW: They lived on the next quarter that my dad had bought for about a year or more because there was a nice house on it. It was quite nice. But then he got the post office job. He was a big conservative I think, that's how he got it. I was.. I don't know, must have been 19... in the '20s.

AK: Well those jobs were based on political ...

KW: That's right.

AK: Oh yeah. You get the postmaster and the word went out and this fellow...

KW: Yeah. But they had 3 kids and they were all going to school in Redwater. But we're just going out to Vancouver to their daughter's....my Bessie's daughter's 50th anniversary wedding, in September.

AK: Oh, that's quite a stretch, isn't it?

KW: Yeah.

[00:10:05] AK: So then when did you marry Mr. Libby?

KW: 1934.

AK: '34. I see. And you continued to live...

KW: We lived here since '34.

AK: Oh you're lived on this farm.

KW: ON this farm, because his mother and dad lived in a house just across... the main road used to go from the Fort right past their front door, you know, there was no road here. And it was like the Victoria Trail. You know...

AK: Oh yeah.

KW: And then it just branched off and come.. went all the way along the high ground to Redwater.

AK: So instead of this one over here at 38, that wasn't there?

KW: Oh yeah, oh there was no road there. When I came here it had only went to this corner. And it was a lake, it was all a lake. And my husband and the neighbors with horses put that road through.

AK: Is that right?

KW: When we went to Redwater we would have to go to this corner and then a mile north, and a mile that way. You now, it was all water.

AK: So your former... your first husband had had this property here.

KW: His... see he was overseas and his brother was killed overseas and he had filed on this homestead. So the dad and mom by the time he got back from overseas, they were living over here because his brother had built a house. Some kind of a house. And the dad had a good job in the Fort but he give it up to come and he didn't know the first thing about farming, that old man. Didn't know nothing. He was in the cotton mill in the east, overseer, all those years. Came to the farm.

AK: Did he finally learn how to farm?

KW: Not the old man, but Harold had to take over. All he could raise was nice flowers.

AK: Well, there you have it. That's something.

KW: A good garden and nice flowers.

JM: Can't eat flowers.

KW: That's what my mother used to say, you can't eat flowers.

AK: No that's right. You can't eat flowers.

KW: And Aunt Millie's?? husband used to say the same thing, you can't eat flowers.

AK: So you and your husband lived here.

KW: Yeah, all those years.

AK: Yeah, and then you raised so many...

KW: Five kids.

AK: Five children.

KW: Yeah.

AK: And they're...

KW: Well, they're scattered a little. One is in Kelowna, my one daughter, and one is in, my oldest boy is in Saskatchewan. And one is in the Fort, and one is in Sherwood Park, and one is in Redwater.

JM: So close.

KW: Last night I was doing new potatoes and they all come home for supper.

AK: Well, that's wonderful. Great that you were able to get digging the potatoes.

JM: How do you serve them? I will ask you later.

AK: So this has been your home since.

KW: Yeah, well we had a shack. Four kids were raised in a shack just behind here. And then when they all come in my husband started. well, we got \$5,000 for them to sit the well. That's what we built this house with, \$5,000.

JM: Great.

KW: So we've been here ever since 1950 in this house.

[00:13:20] AK: Right, now who was the company that ??? \$5,000?

KW: Imperial.

AK: Oh it was Imperial Oil. Right. And that gave them the right to move in a rig.

KW: Yeah, that's right.

AK: Well then, since then, are there producing wells?

KW: Oh there's still...3 of them are producing, yes.

AK: Well you still get rent from them?

KW: Yeah, but you know for 25 years all they paid was \$195 for a well, for 25 years, because you know, once you've got....

AK: Per year.

KW: Yeah. But once you sign that, you can't break that contract. So after those 25 years were up they had to do something because the ones that fought got more right from the start.

AK: Yeah.

KW: You know they went to the arbitration.

AK: Well this is important. Don't worry about this being on tape because these are the sort of things that are part of the story. Now I had... I've had stories just like that in this book, where they had to go back and renegotiate their surface rights at Leduc.

KW: Oh yeah. They have to do that every 5 years now.

AK: Yeah.

KW: But you know, we had 4 wells and a battery and we weren't getting \$1,000. Now I get, for the battery alone, \$2,200. And for the wells, the 2 in the field you get... oh \$2000, it's around that. And the one in the bushes is not producing... it hasn't been, they've just got it cemented in. But they haven't abandoned it, so they still have to pay rent. But they don't pay that much.

AK: No.

KW: Out there. But it's still...

AK: You get so much for each of these producing wells.

KW: Yeah. And I get some for that one, I think it's \$1,100 now, but used to be \$800. But until they put it back the way it was, they have to pay the rent. But they don't abandon it in case they have to use it again. Costs money to...

AK: When did you find out that, when did you... I'd like to go back and try to bring the chronology along. When the discovery well was made on the Cook property, that was in the fall of '48.

KW: Yeah.

AK: Okay? When did you first start to realize that there may be some activity.

KW: We didn't realize until he came and wanted to have the rent, or the well.

AK: Surface rights.

KW: We didn't realize that it was going to... and these neighbors across the road he had just... the well was out at Cooks already. And he sold that farm. Well he cried after that, I'm telling you. Those guys made lots because they had two quarters and a half section, little bit on the river.

JM: Yeah, lots of stories.

AK: Now did they have... they didn't have their minerals did they?

KW: Oh no.

AK: No, but there was the surface rights that he sold.

KW: Yeah.

AK: Yeah, of course if you'd had minerals here you would have all been...

KW: We didn't think anything about the oil until he came right to saying that they wanted to put a rig in, because you know, we never thought about it coming this far.

AK: Do you remember what year that was that he came?

KW: Well it'd have to be in '49.

AK: Well it could have been... you see what was happening down here was... I'll just turn this off.

(pause audio)

[00:16:47] I'll continue with my explanation. Imperial had the crown leases and when they found the oil they had to give half of their land... Imperial had to give half of their land back to the Crown to Edmonton, and they in turn started selling it off, you see, and that's why the Scurry was sold and that's why the Dome parcel here was sold. And I believe Dome got a very, very... they paid a very high price for it. And I don't know whether you'd seen any of the action there.

KW: Well, that's... Dome was just down the road.

AK: Yeah, just kitty corner. And then straight across, you said was...

KW: Right here was Pacific.

AK: Pacific Petroleum. And they'd paid a pretty good price for it. Now, do you remember who the person was that came to... what was his name?

KW: Mr. Smith.

AK: Was his first name Ewing?

KW: I can't... I can't remember.

AK: Was it Ewing Smith?

KW: I don't think his name was Ewing.

AK: Yeah. Well there was a Ewing Smith.

KW: He was a lab man for a long time around here, that Smith.

AK: And he was an Imperial Oil employee.

KW: And he was a company man, you know, they all came to you so nice. But he wasn't out for you, he was out for the company.

AK: Well sure. Yeah. That's right. That's an important point. There were quite a few of them. Now did they ever at any time approach you and say, hey we want to buy your whole acreage and...

KW: No.

AK: We'll just... then we can go wherever we want on your land.

KW: No, they didn't, no.

AK: They didn't do that. But I know there was cases where farmers sold their whole...

KW: Yeah.

AK: Right, now is this the one about the fellow that was so upset about...

KW: Well he had already gone so this guy that bought it, their son, he's the one that rents our farm. They're still living on that farm. They built a big new house. Let me think, but they've been.. the dad died, but it's the grandson that's running it now.

AK: Right. I'll just turn this...

(pause in audio)

KW: ??? hauling water for the well.

AK: We are talking about when Ewing Smith came to talk to Kitty. Just let her say this... when they came. When he came to see you. What were you thinking?

JM: Say it again.

KW: I was thinking buying a new washing machine, about after scrubbing on the board for years.

AK: That was your first...

KW: That was my first thought.

AK: Did he start... did he bargain at all with you?

KW: No. Do you know what he said? Everybody's going to get the same. We treat everybody the same. Which they did until somebody got smart and started fighting.

AK: Yeah.

KW: The neighbors got \$380 a well because he went through Arbitration Board or something, but when he told us we were going to get... everybody was going to get the same. Well, then a few years later somebody got around with a petition. They were going to... but a petition is no good, it never goes any further than the local, didn't go to Calgary or anything. But you can't fight it once you sign. So for 25 years we were stuck with that \$195.

AK: Yeah, and there was there was no escalation clause in it?

KW: Nothing.

AK: Just 25 years, bang.

KW: Yes.

AK: And just to repeat those amounts, you got \$5,000 for the...?

KW: For the... to set the well.

AK: For use of the well site.

KW: Yeah, for rent like, or whatever.

AK: For the first year.

KW: Yeah.

AK: But that only went for the one year.

KW: Yeah, for the one well.

AK: For the one well. That was an outright payment.

KW: Yeah.

AK: And then you...

KW: Then you got rent.

AK: Got rent from these other well sites.

KW: Yeah, but I think they paid every time they set a well.

AK: Oh, yeah, they'd have to pay something for the use of the land.

KW: Yeah.

AK: And the easement, getting in and out, access road.

KW: Yeah, and then they paid for pipelines and then they got so many pipelines they used to just put them in and we didn't even know they were in there.

AK: Oh. They'd have paid them for a...

KW: They paid for easement. Yeah.

AK: And that would include both the oil pipelines and the water pipelines.

KW: Well salt water is different.

AK: Yeah.

KW: That was a different company.

AK: Yeah, that was Redwater Water Disposal.

KW: That's who my son worked for a while.

AK: Oh did he? Like...

KW: My oldest son.

AK: What was his first name?

KW: Howard. Howard Libby.

AK: And he... did he work with..

KW: Howard Devitt??

AK: With John ???

KW: But he left soon after that.

AK: Oh I see.

KW: Worked a few years.

[00:22:17] AK: Now can you remember who it was that moved the rig in here to drill your hole?

KW: Brinkerhoff, was the first one.

AK: Brinkerhoff, right. And what kind of a reception did you get from them? Did they keep the road orderly?

KW: Oh yeah. They were good.

AK: Yeah, they weren't...

KW: No, we didn't have any trouble with any of them.

AK: Now, where did they work out of? Did they work out of a camp at Redwater? Or do you know?

KW: Well, I guess so. There was lots of camps at that time.

AK: What arrangement did they have? Do you know if they ran on that... there was supposed be to one big mess hall to start with.

KW: Oh, to eat you mean, or something?

AK: Yeah.

KW: Well after the hotel burned down there was what they used to call the greasy spoon.

AK: Yeah right. And would these...some of these fellows on the rig Americans?

KW: Well I think some of them were. I think the tool push was an American.

AK: Yeah, I'm sure.

KW: I think his name was Bob Brown. He was an American I'm sure.

AK: Well then do you remember who drilled the others?

KW: No, I can't remember the name and I know who it was too. But, I can't remember.

AK: In other words, Brinkerhoff just drilled the first one, and then they moved on.

KW: The first one. Yeah

AK: They didn't continue?

KW: Different ones came in then.

AK: Oh I see. You'd think that they'd stay with...

KW: Well they moved to other sites you know.

AK: Oh, know there were other sites. Well now when did they drill across the road from you?

KW: Well, it was after.

AK: After you drilled your well?

KW: Yeah.

AK: That would be Pacific and Dome. So they'd be offsetting. Do you remember when they drilled Scurry?

KW: Well, it was after too.

AK: Yeah, well these were all Crown reserve parcels, see, they were sold at different times.

KW: See Scurry is on school land. That was the school land, every so often...

AK: Section 11.

KW: Sectioned the school land, but then it went up for sale and my neighbors bought it. This neighbor, Millie's husband bought it. This half section they own.

AK: You mean the east half of 4?

KW: Well they are on the east half of 4.

AK: Yeah, well that was Imperial Oil.

KW: Yeah.

AK: Well that wouldn't be...

KW: And the next one...eh? Scurry is across the road.

AK: Yeah, I know. They are on the south side of the road.

KW: Yeah. But Dome had one next to them I think, the west half of 4.

AK: Yeah, right.

KW: But it isn't Dome.

AK: Well, it's...

KW: It sold 3 or 4 times because our storekeeper down here has it now.

AK: Oh.

KW: Ross Wessinger has it. He bought it so...

AK: You see one of the things that... it's interesting that you people hadn't any idea what kind of money these oil companies were paying for these parcels.

KW: Yeah, I guess.

AK: The were \$11,000 an acre for the oil rights. So it was pretty important for them to get in here and drill.

KW: Yeah.

AK: Well did you hear anything about Dome or Pacific, what kind of money they paid for the surface rights?

KW: No. But they paid \$400 a well for rent right off the bat. We were getting \$195 and they were right off getting \$400.

AK: Well that's the sort of thing I mean. You see it wasn't equity... there wasn't equity among the different companies.

KW: Oh no. There still isn't. Some still pay more. They still do.

AK: So that was the sort of thing that...

[00:26:54] So what did you think of the general change of the community here as a result of the oil coming in?

KW: Well, we were sitting down here.. I didn't know too much about what was going on but we had this big old house, like Harold's mom and dad... he died and she went to the States to her daughters. And as soon as the oil came in a power wagon backed up to the window and took everything out. Everything that was any good out of that house.

JM: Why?

KW: Well because they stole it. Who knows. Riff raff was coming in like you wouldn't believe.

AK: Oh I see.

JM: Is that right?

KW: Lots of people coming in like that.

AK: Yeah, drifters and...

KW: Oh yeah. And you know they were working and fooling around. Boy, but when my husband was going over and my daughter, and they saw the curtain blowing out the window. And they'd broke the window and backed up to the up... and threw everything out of upstairs and.. .

JM: Oh, isn't that cruel.

KW: And she had left trunks full of stuff and her sister had left because she died. And of course the daughter, we were... my husband was waiting for the daughter to come up and they were going to go through the trunks and this and that. And by that time there was nothing. They broke the locks, took everything.

JM: Was there a lot of...

KW: Well, there was things you know, nice things to save.

AK: Well that would be Mrs. Libby.

KW: Yeah. When the oil first came in that's what happened. But there was a lot of really rift raff coming into town with that.

AK: Well how did they control that? Did you ever...?

KW: Well they had an old... Jack Gordon was the policeman here, the town cop. But I don't think he could control much. He'd shut his eyes and look the other way. But then we did get the Mounties to look. But they couldn't find anything.

JM: That's a shame.

KW: There was so much of that going on.

[00:28:58] AK: So that was the sort of thing, yeah... well did you hear much about the companies not cleaning up the lease after their well was drilled?

KW: Well I know our renter ran into some trouble and they had to come back and clean it up after they... they'd buried some things you know. Wasn't too much.

AK: What about the mud pit that you had? Did they clean that up?

KW: Oh yeah.

AK: That was restored to your satisfaction was it?

KW: Yeah. They were pretty good

AK: Was your husband... was Mr. Libby still alive then?

KW: Oh yeah.

AK: When did he die?

KW: He died 15 years ago. 1975 or 4, or 6, I forget.

AK: Yeah well, so he was here with you when this was all going on.

KW: Oh yeah.

AK: So, let's shut this off here.

(Pause in audio)

AK: Now this, you were saying... Jean mentioned this one about... now did he have wells on his property ultimately?

KW: Oh yeah. The guy west of ...?

AK: Lakusta.

KW: Oh yeah.

AK: Now I wonder if he's the same Lakusta whose son Ed is in Calgary.

KW: Well I don't know if he is.

AK: No. Well there were several Lakusta's right?.

KW: Oh yes, different families. We had one living east of here.

AK: Oh yeah.

KW: But there is one that's got the elk farm just north of Redwater. I think that's Mike's son. Mike Lakusta.

AK: So Mike was out somewhere...

KW: Oh he's on... yeah west of Redwater. Northwest.

AK: Why wasn't he...?

KW: He wouldn't let him on the place. And for months he held them up.

AK: Well he'd... they'd have to get a court order.

KW: Oh they did.

JM: But the land meant more to him.

KW: That's right.

AK: Well sure. His land was...

KW: And they had ruined lots of land.

AK: Really? In what way?

JM: You mean, the??? didn't restore it?

KW: Well, you can't. There's ??? everywhere. You can't build where you want to build, around, anyplace, because there's pipelines.

AK: You have to know, you can't dig down.

KW: That's right.

JM: But they never destroyed the soil, or anything like that.

KW: No.

AK: Well I just wondered...

JM: Inconvenience.

AK: We've heard stories about spilling saltwater illegally.

KW: Oh yeah, we've had a saltwater spill or two but that's out in the... they've got a saltwater reservoir on our place out back there, and it went into the creek and everything but ??? it did kill some trees along the creek.

AK: Did they restore that?

KW: No. You get a bad landman, he won't restore anything in 10 miles and was so easy going you know. And they let him...

AK: You got a bad...?

KW: This one wouldn't, but the other one did.

JM: You are very knowledgeable about all of this.

KW: Well, we didn't know anything you know when the oil came in. We didn't know anything. We just took their word for it. They were going to treat everybody the same and he's such a nice man.

AK: Yeah, that's right. Well that was the image they wanted to present to everybody you see.

KW: That's right. Well that Frewman, did you ever know him? Frewman was the landman for Imperial for years after that. And I forget his first name.

AK: Oh. How do you.. is that F-R-E-W-M-A-N?

KW: I guess so, I can't remember.

AK: Or F-R-U-H..?

KW: Everybody hated his guts but you know he wasn't that bad. But he won't dare go into Sawka's yard because he was really... well they'd call him everything but he'd still come back.

AK: Yeah, well that was when Mr. Sawka was still alive.

KW: Yeah, oh yeah. But you know, when Imperial had to sell out, across from the gas plant, they had to sell that half section because they'd spoiled the land or something. So Imperial was supposed to buy it. But we found out that Truman has it. But he is... I think he is dead now or retired or something. But he has that.

AK: Under the table?

KW: I guess so because his name is on the title.

AK: Oh boy. Was that the... right next to the discovery well? Or near the plant, eh?

KW: Yeah it's right across the road from the plant.

AK: Well it would be right close to where Anne lives.

KW: Yeah, just down... Anne lives here and it's just down here across. It's kitty corner to the graveyard, like this.

AK: And has it been built on?

KW: No, not, no. There was a house on it but...

AK: It was vacant eh?

KW: Yeah.

AK: Yeah, right.

KW: They killed all the trees and everything so then they buy it. Well that's just what happened up here, you know, to the fertilizer plant, was this... ???

AK: Oh well that's all right, no, I want to know about that.

[00:34:21] KW: Well anyway, at the fertilizer plant they spoiled the water. Across the road, the horses wouldn't drink out of this dugout. So they had to drain it and it was poison water. So now that, you know that house that I told you that was moved up to our farm?

AK: Yeah.

KW: They had... Imperial had to buy that from this lady that... she's gone to Halifax now or something. They bought it because I guess the water was no good. So then my nephew got all that, and he had to leave everything black, like for farming. But I guess the water was no good.

AK: Imagine that. Well that's that damn ???

KW: Yeah, well they got a pond in there. It's poison water, yeah but there's a... their pond is there and they shoot every two seconds to keep the ducks away all summer.

JM: Oh really.

KW: And you know this guy that lives just across... but his well is plumb full of water which was never full before. So I suppose nobody could ever live there. But they own it now, they bought it. They bought the farm. But he can still farm it as long as they don't need it. But they might need it sometime.

AK: I hear that the fertilizer plant is up for sale.

KW: Yeah. I saw it in the paper yesterday.

JM: Is that right?

AK: Oh was it?

KW: Yeah. It's an ad. It's in the paper. Sheritt might be interested.

JM: Sheritt Gordon?

KW: Yeah. They haven't a clue how much it's going to cost yet, but...

AK: But you see... I understand those holding ponds are full of gypsum. And you can't do anything with it.

KW: It's the gypsum that's in the pile all the way around. But...

JM: Oh, is that not a pond inside?

KW: There is a pond inside that.

JM: I thought maybe it was a settling pond of some sort.

KW: Well I don't know, but it's a pond, but it's poisoned water because you hear that gun going off all summer. Shooting... keeping the ducks away.

AK: Oh yeah. So they won't land in it. So it won't kill them.

KW: Yeah.

AK: Because they figure it would kill them?

KW: Oh yeah, of course.

JM: So it's the gypsum.

AK: What a hazard.

KW: Well it's the gypsum that holding now. But what they are putting in there, and you know that's going to go into the river. Every water... all the water...

JM: Gets into the ground.

KW: Gets into the river...

AK: Ultimately.

KW: (distracted by a bird out the window) Hummingbird, didn't you see him?

AK: Oh there is a hummingbird feeder right there.

JM: I watched your redwing back...

AK: But no, these are things that have really disturbed the community. There is nothing wrong about what we are getting down because I've heard this from other people so not to worry.

KW: Yeah.

[00:37:12] AK: But perhaps we could switch over to another subject. Getting back to your father, when did he first start to get interested in the running of the village here? Do you remember?

KW: Well he was always...once he moved off the farm, see my mom died and he moved off the farm. And he went to Sexsmith, my brother was up there, so he moved there for a year. But when the oil came back, he came right back and got a job at the hotel at the desk working...

AK: Oh yeah, he was working at the desk, right.

KW: And he was interested in all... in the village then. And he got into, right away, he got into running for Councillor. He was Councillor.

AK: Now did he remarry?

KW: Yes. Oh yes. He remarried. I don't know if you... do you know Sandy Wilson? Did you.. you didn't interview him or anything?

AK: No.

KW: Well his dad lived west of Redwater. And his dad... they were Scotch and so his sister came out here to visit and she said, she went to the hotel this one time and she said I'm going to marry that man, and my God she did too.

AK: She had him. She targeted him eh? And what was her name?

KW: Martha Lindsey. But her brother's name was Jack Wilson, they lived west of Redwater all those years. And his dad was the first banker in Redwater.

AK: Is that right?

KW: But then I guess he must have gone to the States because we never, I never even knew him. But they had, in a tent, a bank in a tent just across the railroad tracks.

JM: That would have been interesting.

AK: Now there was this... the first indication that's in this book here, the picture of your dad and...

KW: I just gave them a good picture of my dad and the three village Councillors to my brother. I gave it to my brother. I said, oh you might as well have it.

AK: Just a minute. I'll just turn this off.

(pause in audio)

[00:39:34] AK: We are now looking at page 73 of the book, Memories, and there is the first village Council, Walter Maloweny, but pronounced Ma-lowe-ny, M-A-L-O-W-E-N-Y. And your father, Len Walker, and then a Paul Proskurniak, that's P-R-O-S-K-U-R-N-I-A-K. Now your father, it says here, was appointed Mayor and the first Secretary Treasurer was Mrs. Proskurniak. Well now at this time, this was before the farm, before the hotel burnt down. Your father worked as a clerk there. Was that right? As a...

KW: He worked as a clerk in the second hotel after the...

AK: Well what about the one that burnt down?

KW: Where the pool room is now. Right there.

AK: Yeah, but what about the first hotel.

KW: He wasn't working there then.

AK: Oh he wasn't involved in the first hotel.

KW: Now he was in the second.

AK: I see. But when...what you were saying, when he heard that something was going on here in the oil he came back from Sexsmith, and his job then was what?

KW: Well he was a clerk in that hotel. In the new hotel, right away.

AK: Oh. They built one right away.

KW: Yeah, they started building it right away.

AK: Oh. Did you have any stories about that fire?

KW: No.

AK: I'm trying to remember, there was somebody in there that.. it was... that had his clothes all burnt up. I guess there was a bunch of them. Well then your dad served as Mayor and then it says here there was another... it seemed like there was another election. And Nick Syrnyk became Mayor.

KW: He owned...

AK: Was that an election or...?

KW: I guess so. He owned the theatre in Redwater. It's still there. That's where they reprint the review out of.

AK: Yes, I was in that building.

KW: That's what he had...

AK: So that was his eh?

KW: Yeah.

AK: Did he build that himself or was it already there?

KW: I don't know. Well I don't think it was already there.

AK: That's spelled S-Y-R-N-Y-K. Then he became Mayor. Had your father run against him?

KW: Probably did, but see it... I was down here with 4 kids, I wasn't interested in...

AK: Oh I see, you weren't following that closely.

KW: I was here. No.

JM: You were busy.

KW: Yeah. And my husband was away lots on the rigs. And I had all the milking cows and...

AK: Yeah right. Well now...

KW: I didn't care what went on in Redwater.

AK: You just mentioned your first husband, Mr. Libby. What was his first name?

KW: Harold.

AK: Harold. Now he... did you say he worked on the rigs?

KW: Yeah, service rigs. Not on the big rigs.

AK: Oh. Well what company did he work for?

KW: Oh I don't know, they were just private companies so lots...

AK: Yeah, well did he ever work for Kenyans???

KW: No, he didn't. No.

AK: That was one he did not work for.

KW: Yeah.

AK: I see. What about Baldwin and Canal?

KW: No, he didn't work for them either. I can't remember the name.

AK: Well that's all right. Would he stay away for...?

KW: Well yeah sometimes. He was, well maybe this was on a big rig, he was at Brooks and he was at Camrose and he was all over.

AK: Oh well he must have worked down at drilling rig then.

KW: He might have at one time yeah.

AK: Was that his...

KW: I don't even know the names of them rigs.

AK: Was that his background, kind of?

KW: Well he was... when he came from overseas he had to come to the farm, eh? He wasn't a farmer in the first place. But he still farmed it anyway. Could have been a lot better.

JM: They had to learn a lot of things to farm didn't they?

KW: So hard times, and he went to work on the rigs.

AK: So you met him here in...

KW: Oh I met him... I was only about 15 when he started coming to our place.

AK: Oh that was an early...

KW: He was 15 years older than me.

JM: He wore you down, eh?

AK: And he was living on this property?

KW: Yeah, living with his mother and dad over on the...

AK: Oh I see.

KW: Yeah, just across the bush... there is no bush now but there was.

AK: Right. So that was how it all started. Okay, I'm just trying to put some of this other stuff together. I better turn this tape over, it's just getting about the end of the tape. So we'll flip it over.

Side 2 [33:13]

[00:00:14] AK: This is side... you sure, yeah. This is side two. Well this is the only way we can get the words. This is side two of our interview of Kitty Wilkins. And I wanted to ask you a little bit about Anne Key and her life. She was... she started off as a teacher did she?

KW: Yeah.

AK: And when did she marry your brother?

KW: Well I can't remember the year.

AK: No.

KW: That's quite awhile ago.

AK: Right.

KW: I can't remember the dates.

AK: Okay. And then that didn't work out, but was... that house that she occupies now...?

KW: They had just built that house and about two years later he left.

AK: Oh I see.

KW: Left everything to her.

AK: Yeah, well then she has that place. And then I guess a few years later she met Lester. Well was she...?

KW: Well they.. I guess they probably met, they used to go to conventions and things you know. He was a shop teacher in Edmonton.

AK: Yeah, right. She was still active as a teacher.

KW: Yes.

AK: Had she started to contract MS?

KW: Not when she married him I don't think. She could have, because she was on medication for different things and they found out it wasn't what they were treating her for. Her brother died of Alzheimer's.

AK: Oh, she had a brother.

KW: She has three brothers. Or four I guess. Three or four brothers and no sisters. But they were treating her for Alzheimer's, they figured that was what she was getting, and she collapsed at Red Deer this one time and they took her to the hospital. And they found out she didn't have it. She had MS. So you know...

AK: The wrong diagnosis. That's terrible.

JM: You'd hardly think they'd connect the two.

KW: I don't know.

AK: Well her, let's see, her maiden name was...?

KW: Yakimic.

AK: Yakimic, right. I've had... we've had quite a few conversations with her. And she's been very helpful in getting... ??? at the museum.

KW: Well yeah, she'd been here a long time.

AK: Do you know when the idea of the museum first started with her?

KW: Well it was still when she was still teaching. She started getting... have you been into the museum?

AK: Oh yeah, one of our... see we've been up here several times. So we went through the museum and she has put a lot of time and effort into it.

KW: Oh he does too now.

AK: Lester. Yeah. Where was he living before?

KW: In Edmonton.

AK: Oh he was in Edmonton first.

KW: He had a big house in Edmonton, but his wife had died and he kept renting that house out but now his granddaughters have bought it. He couldn't stand the renters.

AK: He's going out to Vancouver Island sometime this weekend for some kind of a...

KW: Parksville. He has a property out there.

AK: Oh he does?

KW: Yeah he has a trailer on it. His daughter was living in it, but I don't think she is now. I don't know who is.

AK: But his career was as a shop teacher?

KW: Yeah.

AK: Is that right? So he must have...

KW: At Jasper Place School.

AK: And he must have... husbanded his resources all during the years and saved them up to acquire these properties.

KW: Well, he only had that one house in Edmonton. He sold it. He was glad when his granddaughters bought it.

AK: Oh yeah.

KW: Those renters, some of them are terrible.

JM: Oh yes.

AK: They just smash a place up. And you don't know, they are so nice when they come to the door. They promise to do this and that.

KW: That's right.

AK: Right. I'll just turn this off.

(pause in audio)

[00:05:11] There one other thing that's kind of interesting here. This fellow we interviewed yesterday, he was a complete overstatement, but it was their perception. He was the tool push on Redwater number 1. And he said, when we came to this area there was only two Anglo's and the rest were Ukrainians. Well I said, what about the Walkers. He mentioned the Cooks and ...

KW: Oh you know, east of Redwater like 2 miles, 3 miles, there was only one Ukrainian family going to our school. Now there were... then there ended up being nearly all Ukrainians. But there was only one and that was the Malachuks. Lakustas, different Lakustas. And the rest were all English. But there is no recollect...you know, they went and there is no pictures of them or anything. There was Hunts and Rileys and Howards...

JM: Is that right?

AK: Is that right?

KW: So many people and then up north of us, 2 miles north, was a whole French settlement that was called Val Soucy. And there was the Soucy's and the ??? and the Roy's, you met... you did interview Mrs. Roy?

AK: Well yes sure you see, Yvonne Roy.

KW: Yeah, and you know there is no mention anywhere about that. Because nobody took any pictures,

JM: And they didn't... maybe didn't stay with the farming is that it?

KW: They were all farming long... for a long time, there were before...

JM: Yeah.

AK: Yeah, well you see, it is... there's a map in the front here that shows...

KW: And that Mrs. Roy, they lived 2 miles north and 2 miles east of us at home. And her older sister didn't go to school. She used to drive them, bring them to school and take them home. Come and get them, couldn't walk.

AK: You see the way this map is drawn, or a least marked, as if the Japanese were way up to the north here you see.

KW: No the Japanese were west.

AK: See there's...

KW: Oh yeah, well they've got Japanese here.

AK: Oh yeah, that's right. That's where... that was where the main...

KW: Opal. Opal was a pretty good town because the railroad was going through Opal, and not through Redwater. So my dad and a few neighbors had to haul cream, when they were selling cream, all the way over to Opal. It was about 9 miles, or 10 miles from our place.

AK: Yeah, but then when they built the railway through Redwater...

KW: That just killed Opal right there.

AK: Yeah, because you see the railway through Opal was built before.

KW: Oh yes, and it was all the way to Fort McMurray.

AK: Yeah, right.

JM: That's happened to a lot of towns didn't it?

KW: Yeah, so Opal, there's just nothing there.

AK: Right, so and the other thing, I don't know whether you remember but, I was told that Kerensky was the siding where they first loaded oil out from.

KW: Yeah, well that's Kerensky that's just north of Redwater.

AK: That's just up here a little ways.

KW: Yeah.

AK: And it's... I guess it never went...

KW: Oh no there was nothing there ever anyway.

AK: What about Egremont? Did it...?

KW: No, it's dead. There is nothing there.

AK: Then Radway?

KW: Radway's dead too. They are all dead. I mean they are little towns, eh?.

AK: But Radway was where the first hospital was.

KW: Oh yeah, that's where all my kids were born, in Radway.

AK: Oh is that right? You went to there? You didn't have them at home?

KW: We had to go all the way to... we didn't have a doctor. Oh no, I had them all in Radway Hospital.

AK: Is that right.

KW: I had my first tonsils out when I was 14 in Radway.

JM: You were able to get to...

KW: I was about one of the first, that was in there.

AK: Well Radway was run by the Sisters. And I was told it was quite a well-organized place.

KW: Oh yeah, it was nice. It was a good hospital.

AK: So you didn't, like a lot of other people, had the children at home?

KW: My mother had all hers at home, but I didn't.

AK: You were decided that...

KW: Yeah.

AK: So this was back in the '40s?

KW: Yeah, well my first born was born in 1937. And I had... then a daughter and 4 years later there was another one, and 3 years later... and the son was 2 years, and then one was 6 years later.

JM: Nicely spaced.

KW: My doctor.. it was a different doctor I had for the last one and he said, why don't you shut that old bugger up in the clothes cupboard. Because I was 40 when he was born.

AK: Getting on in age, yeah. So this has been... this was quite a long pull for you up to Radway then?

KW: Oh yeah, it was about 12 miles for us. Or more, 12 from home, but it was 4 more from down here.

JM: So how did you get...?

KW: We went with a team... we had an old truck most of the time. We had a little truck and went.

JM: You got there in time?

KW: Just made it once. Just made it once and the doctor wasn't even there. But we used to haul the mail, and we had a little old truck, we used to haul the mail. We had the post office here, and my husband would go once a week to get the mail from Redwater. And the original post office was Cookville, and that was friends of ours had it way down, and they gave it up and then there was no post office.

AK: Yeah, well that's marked here that there was a post office in 1910.

KW: Yeah. And then there wasn't any and when we first got married about a year later they wanted to know if we wanted the post office. And I said, no I didn't want it, what did you get, \$25 a year for the dumb post office?

AK: Yeah nothing.

KW: And you were tied down for 6 days a week.

AK: Yeah, that's right, you had to be there.

KW: So my husband took it. And he hauled the mail for \$7 a week, \$7 a trip. For all those years we had... and we were in that shack so we had to make a little cubbyhole for the post office... for the people to come in the front door to get the mail.

AK: And then you had to have a place to register letters?

KW: Oh yeah, we had everything there.

AK: You have to do all the servicing.

KW: There wasn't much, you know just the neighbors that come for mail.

AK: Yeah, there wouldn't be that much.

KW: Was glad when the boxes came to Redwater.

AK: What about Fort Saskatchewan? I understood that the mail had to be picked up at Fort Saskatchewan.

KW: No, not since..

AK: That was before the rail came in then.

KW: Maybe. Well they had a stagecoach, I guess, going from Fort to God knows where up to, maybe to Athabasca or someplace, I don't know. But I know before I came the post office was down about 3 miles east of here. Jack... or Atwoods had it. They were old-timers here. The old... Jack Atwood's dad built the school, or some of it. So then when they gave it to us it was called Amelia because...there was a

Cookville in Ontario and of course in Canada you can't have two, so they named it after the first Mrs. Cook, Amelia. That's who this district is named, Amelia, now.

[00:12:58] AK: Did you ever know the Cooks?

KW: Well I did know... I knew the old man. I didn't know.. but I knew all the rest of them. You know all the kids, there's 10 of them, 9 or 10 of them.

AK: Well one of the most striking pictures in this book is that of Amelia Cook, I thought, a very striking person. Well incidentally is ?? Kerniack still alive?

KW: I don't know. But they left Redwater a long time ago.

AK: But there was a Mrs. Cook in the area.

KW: Yeah, Amelia. That was the second Mrs. Cook. There was a ...

AK: (shows a picture) There.

KW: Oh yeah, that was the first Mrs. Cook, yeah.

AK: A very striking person.

KW: And this is Sam, yeah.

AK: Now he was the father of...

KW: Hilt.

AK: Of Hilt yeah.

KW: That was Judd's grandfather. He's Judd's grandfather. See Hilt is Judd's dad, and there was Hilt...

AK: Well Hilt was the... he was the farmer...

KW: He was living up on the hill.

AK: He was the farmer and then he had children.

KW: Yeah, well Judd is one of his, Hilt's kids. And Judd.. there was Judd, and Percy and Rick?? And the second one was... the second Mrs. Cook was a French lady. And they used to call her P.I. for some reason or other. I never did know her. He was gone.

AK: So he... right.

KW: I remember him coming to... my dad was a J.P. for, Justice of the Peace for about 50 years, and there was always someone coming to our house you know, with trouble. And I remember him coming with someone, they were fighting over a will or something I don't even know.

AK: Oh was your dad also a..?

KW: He was a Justice of the Peace for 50 years I'm sure.

AK: Is that right?

KW: Yeah, on the farm, there was always somebody coming with trouble so I'm telling you, we knew... and I remember in 1918 or 19, when the flu was bad. After somebody would leave the house he'd sprinkle sulfur on the big heater we had in the living room to kill the germs. And there was always somebody... somebody coming in to the house you know, everybody. He always would throw that sulfur. I can still see it.

AK: You mean, when we are referring to your dad, we are referring to Len.

KW: Yeah. Oh yeah, he was a Justice of the Peace.

JM: But they handled a lot of different things did they?

KW: Oh yeah.

AK: He'd get some kind of a stipend for that...

KW: I don't know. I don't think he got anything from the government or anything. Sometime when he signed the paper, or something, someone might give him 2 bits. Then he'd... then we'd be working hard and he'd give it to us. That was like a gold mine.

AK: Yeah. 25 cents.

KW: Yeah, he was a J.P. for a long time. Even in Redwater he was. Then the Mounties would come to our place you know, you'd see everybody. There was always...

JM: That's interesting.

AK: Would he have a kind of an informal court? Could he hear a case?

KW: Well he... we never had a... he never had a court. But he...

AK: Well Justice of the Peace could give summary convictions you know and send people to jail.

KW: Oh yeah. Like these people west of us, they were always fighting over the water. You know, there's a runway and you can't stop it. But somebody would plug it up and they'd come always to him because they're fighting over this water, and it's not supposed to run.. And it does, it's supposed to go and keeps

going until it gets into the river. But they were always fighting about that. The Sauderways??? and Begories??? and all of them.

JM: Then would he refer it to a higher court or...?

KW: Well I don't think so. He'd just...

AK: He'd try to act as a mediator, right?

KW: Yeah. And the same with this quarter down here. These old people that lived there, they bought it, they were Ukrainians of course, and they bought it from the guys before. Well this guy was farming a little bit extra, you know, so when they went to fence it straight, oh man, there was trouble right there because they figured they'd bought that extra piece. But the guy on the next quarter, he's fencing and he's taking some of their land they figured. And they were up there raising hell about it. But you know the fence has got to go straight. So he had to come down and he had to find the pegs and he had to measure. I can still see all that for him, doing all that stuff.

AK: Oh yeah, getting all the corner posts and finding the...

KW: Yeah. But you know they bought... they figured that was theirs.

JM: How about a lot of marriages?

KW: Oh he didn't ever perform marriages. No.

JM: I thought maybe Justice of the Peace did, but maybe not.

AK: Well he had a right to. The power.

KW: I suppose he did, but he never did no.

JM: In those days it was all in church I think, wasn't it?

KW: Yeah. Except now, they don't even go to church.

JM: They don't bother doing that.

[00:18:26] AK: Well, I'm just wondering is there anything else that we should ask Kitty about? Did you keep any photographs at all of the old days?

KW: Oh, I've got... The kids, I tell the kids you take what you want. But my daughter's got an album I was just looking at the other day, from 1908-71. She's got them all labeled and everything. I should show you a picture of my dad.

AK: Oh that's wonderful.

KW: He went to Scotland, of course Martha was Scotch, eh, and the first trip they went over to Scotland. And they got him dressed in a kilt playing a bagpipe. I got to go show you that. Have you got time to look?

AK: Oh yeah, we'll just... I think we can conclude our... Well we'll just stop it for the moment.

(pause in audio)

[00:19:18] AK: Incidentally Sophie, the name Libby is spelled L-I-B-B-E-Y and we are looking at photographs here of Harold Libbey who served in WWI. And here is Harold Libbey in '27 eh? That's your husband.

Remainder of tape is looking at photographs.

Audio ends at [00:33:13]