



NEIL CAMARTA

Date and place of birth (if available): July 11, 1953, farm near Edson, Alberta

Date and place of interview: August 23, 2012, at the offices of Energy Resources Conservation Board

Name of interviewer: Gordon Jaremko

Name of videographer: N/A

Full names (spelled out) of all others present: N/A

Consent form signed: Yes

Transcript reviewed by subject:

Interview Duration: 1 hour and 11 minutes

Initials of Interviewer: GJ

Last name of subject: CAMARTA

GJ: It is 2:00 in the afternoon on August the 23rd, 2011, in a room at the offices of the Energy Resources Conservation Board. Present are: Neil Camarta, subject of interview, interviewer Gordon Jaremko. We will start out with a biography: you grew up in Edson?

CAMARTA: Yeah, I grew up around Edson; a farm near Edson.

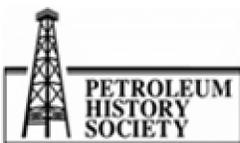
GJ: When were you born?

CAMARTA: July 11th, 1953.

GJ: You went to U of A for petroleum?

CAMARTA: Developer in a mill, chemical engineering. Yes, U of A chemical engineer, class of '75.

GJ: Where did you go from there?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: Well, I was in that era a farm boy goes to university. Farm boy goes and works for an oil company. So, I graduated on a Friday and then May 5th, 1975, the Monday I was working for Shell. I didn't stop working for them for 30 years; that famous old cradle to grave type of era.

GJ: And then? What did you start out doing at Shell?

CAMARTA: Well, I was a chemical engineer. But, when you come in the door at Shell in those days, they say, "Well, today we need reservoir engineers." So, I think they wanted to morph me into a subsurface reservoir engineer. So, I started actually doing some reservoir engineering work. They sent me to Houston. Actually, one of the reasons we joined Shell in those days is because we knew that Shell sent people to Houston on training courses. So, we all wanted to do that. That was one of the attractions. So, they sent me to Houston, took some training on reservoir engineering. So, I did some of that for Shell. Also did some gas plant engineering, so after I did some subsurface stuff I did some surface engineering. I worked in the field mostly at some of those famous old gas plants, like Jumping Pound and Waterton.

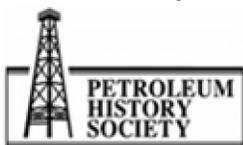
The first five years I did more engineering and then later on, you do less engineering because in all companies, Gordon, you hire the engineers typically. And so, you kind of quickly become a supervisor and you start supervising or managing other people to do the engineering. But, I did some engineering. I actually got to do some engineering for the first few years. All the stuff I was trained to do, those calculations, I actually did that for the first couple of years and after that I really didn't do as much engineering as I thought I would when I got out of university.

GJ: What made a guy from a farm want to take engineering and then go...

CAMARTA: I just fell in into it. So, I grew up in Northern Alberta and none of my family, none of them had ever been to university so we had no background there. None of my parents knew what, really university was. They knew you could go through and probably get a better job, but they had no experience with it. So, I was good in high school. I was kind of top of my class and took the bus back and forth every day. I was top of the class. And, some of my friends they were going into engineering. At least one guy, his brother was already in chemical engineering and he was going to go into chemical engineering. And, I thought well, what the hell I'm good at math and science. I'm going to go into chemical engineering. So, that's how I fell into it; my friend's brother of all things. So, my parents really wanted me to be a welder. They thought that welding was the way to go because my uncles were welders, back in the day, welders made lots of money. Lots of pipeline construction, that sort of thing. And, actually, I could weld. I didn't have a ticket but I was a helper for my uncles.

So, I worked with my uncles during summers, that sort of thing. So, my parents wanted me to be a welder and they thought that was the way to go. And, I said, "No, I'm going to be an engineer." They didn't know what the hell was but, "Are you sure it is as good as being a welder?" So, I could easily have become a welder, Gordon. But, I became an engineer instead.

GJ: What did you weld?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: Myself, I welded ploughshares. So, we had an old second-hand welder on the farm. So, when it was something of my uncles' I was just a helper. By the way, here is a little anecdotal thing. So, my job is to turn the heating up and down. My uncle would be welding and it would be too hot, too cold. And, they slap like this to get more heat. Or, more heat or slap down. And, I would, like kids, not paying attention and watch the birds or some other welders and BANG that goddamn hard hat. He'd throw that bloody hard hat right across and the hit the welder because I wasn't paying attention. So, you learn to pay attention when you're the guy that's supposed to be adjusting the heat. But, I learned to weld on the farm, welding ploughshares and building up ploughshares. And, that's a good way to weld because you can make no end of mistakes. You cannot hurt a ploughshare.

But, you know what most guys want to do the first time they get welder? They want to fix an old scoop shovel. There would be many on the farm, there is always a broken scoop shovel. Steel about this thin and the first thing you do, you touch that with the arc and if it had a hole this big or a crack, all of a sudden the shovel just disappears. So, my first welding job was a scoop shovel. I blew that son-of-a-bitch right up. But, after that they put me on ploughshares. So, I can weld heavy duty beads on ploughshares, building them up. How they wear out and you build them back up again.

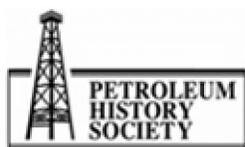
GJ: Did that help in your future, working with those kinds of things and seeing that kind of stuff?

CAMARTA: Only to the extent that you get it. I think you kind of get a bit of warm feeling about folks that do that kind of work. Later on, over the years, I have had lots of construction workers working on my project and you walk around and you see these guys welding. And, you can have a chat with them about welding. That's about all the good it did for me. Learning to weld was a useless thing. Because, I never actually had to do any welding but I understand it, I know it's a difficult job and I've always respected the guys that had to do that for me on big projects. I was always thankful. That and other crafts of course, so I think that was the usefulness of it, Gordon. I can empathize with the guys that do that kind of work for you.

GJ: But, isn't that an asset. If they can relate to you?

CAMARTA: Well, if you've got a big project – you haven't lived until you run out of welders on a big oil sands project. Remember when we were building that big upgrader we had 10,000 people onsite. And, after the Christmas break, there were a lot of other big projects going. And, you just pray they all come back to work. I remember coming back in the second week of January and you go around the site. And, I was thanking them, "Thank you for coming back." So, you want to have a better rapport so you don't look like another suit from Calgary coming in to prance around. If you have welded before, for example, you know you can have another level of rapport with these guys, Gordon, which I think it thoughtful.

GJ: It is. When I was working at the Edmonton Journal, you really know the difference in the cultures there in Edmonton from here in Calgary. People that run big organizations like PCL and all that, they take great care not to appear to be putting on airs. They have the head office over the shop and they go to the shop.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: Because, those guys walk around and often, I found from the early days walk around these plants. You ask the guys in the plants, "What's going on." I found early on, if I came into the big Waterton Gas Plant, you come before everybody else in the morning before the crew that worked all night comes of shift, Gordon. And, you go into the controller. So, the first few times you do that they give you the cold shoulder. They're not too keen on engineers. And, after you go in and you have coffee with them and ask them what's going on, they'll start to share with you, "Well, last night we had this pump trip. And, that goddamn pump, I wish you guys would fix that pump because every time it trips we lose production, you should take a note on that." So, by the time they have the manager's meeting at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, you know more than everybody else around the table because the operators have told you what the hell has gone wrong or right. Then you can say, "We better get that bloody pump fixed because it's costing us money."

So, I've learned that you can learn from those guys. If you finally break the ice with them, they got their hands on what's happening in these plants and they can give you a lot of help. It's the same on a construction project. You talk to the welders and the welders are like, "What the hell is wrong with the productivity around here." You know, I've done this, Gordon. And, the welders say, "Well, I'll tell you what Neil. It's because you're not enforcing the rules. We're supposed to have a 15 minutes coffee break but nobody enforces that. So, some guys started having 16 minute coffee breaks and 17 minute coffee breaks and pretty soon you've had a half hour coffee break and everybody follows, because you let them get away with it. So, I learned that from the welders. So, you can actually learn a lot by getting in, because you can get underneath the information. You get official reports and all that. But, if you really want to know what's going on sometimes, it's good to put your ear to the ground and have enough of a relationship with these guys that you can actually find out what they think.

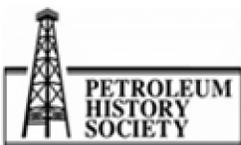
GJ: I'm going to take you back. How did you wind up in the oil sands?

CAMARTA: I grew up in Northern Alberta when they were building Suncor. Remember the late 60s, that's when I was in high school. Then, when I was in university they were getting going on Syncrude and I wanted actually to work in the oil sands, right off the bat. So, I applied to Syncrude, I applied to everybody because times were good in '75 when I graduated. And, I actually got a job at Syncrude. But, that was in I think, February of '75, they sent the letters out. "Congratulations, Neil Camarta." I probably still have the letter somewhere. "May 5th, 1975, please report to Mildred Lake for your job and you'll be make \$1200.00 a month," that kind of thing. Great, I don't have to worry about that anymore. I just finished getting my degree and I got a job. And then in March, I got another letter. Because, what had happened is that their partner...

GJ: Atlantic Richfield.

CAMARTA: Yeah, ARCO walked out. And, that put everything in a bit of a... everything got pear shaped for a while.

GJ: Just sort of in suspension, yeah.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: Yeah, they suspended everything and they said, "Sorry, we can no longer offer you a job." So, then I had to go get another job. So, I thought Shell is pretty good. But, Shell wasn't my first choice. My first choice was Syncrude. So, I guess that's probably the first guy to ever get fired from Syncrude if you think about that one. I actually got a job in the oil sands and then lost it before I even started for Christ sakes, so then I worked for Shell. That came back to the oil sands ultimately, but I went through all kinds of other stuff before I got back to the oil sands.

GJ: Well, why would you have wanted to go to Syncrude though when it was a project?

CAMARTA: I can't remember Suncor offering jobs when I graduated. Maybe they were, I can't remember. But, Syncrude were because they were building it up

GJ: Yeah.

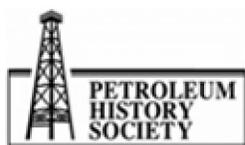
CAMARTA: Getting a project going, so I thought that was pretty exciting to be part of a new project. I guess I could have also applied for a job at Suncor but I don't think they were hiring in '75, I don't know why. But anyway, what I remember is that Syncrude were and I applied and they flew me up there. All that fun stuff and offered me a job working.

GJ: Did the oil sands inspire your imagination somehow?

CAMARTA: Yeah. I mean, we took tours in university. Well, first of all it started right back when I was on the farm. Because, here's the deal, I was so tempted to become just a Cat driver. It seemed like everybody, every guy and every boy my age, kids that grow up on farms can drive stuff: trucks, tractors and that. They were dropping out of high school and going to Fort McMurray; three months later they'd come back with a cheque and buy a pick-up truck. I thought, you can't beat that with a stick. That looks pretty good. I was even thinking about it. I was thinking of dropping out and going and driving a Cat in Fort McMurray because I could drive Cats and tractors and all that. My parents said, "No, you better finish high school. We're not sure about that dropping out of school thing."

So, I stayed. I was about the only guy left on the school bus – there was me and all the girls on the school bus. And, the guys, a lot of the guys were farm boys and what was the point of finishing high school if you can actually go get a job driving a Cat in Fort McMurray and come back in three months and buy a pick-up truck? That's kind of what bull guys think about is driving pick-up trucks. I remember sitting on the school bus and these guys going to buy their new pick-up trucks. I had cousins that would show me their cheques – cheques for like \$5,000 and stuff like that. It was a lot of money that they'd come back from working up in those camps and so and so. To me, it wasn't an astonishing thing to be able to go there and make that much money.

So, it started back then, the whole thing of moving all this dirt and being able to make all this money and so on. And then, when I got into university and into chemical engineering, we took a field trip to Fort McMurray and that was pretty fascinating. I think we actually toured Suncor at the time because they were up and running. We did a lot of our chemical engineering classes used oil sands as



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



kind of a like a case study, using examples of upgrading and being able to cut and the calculations. So, we were kind of soaked in it, quite a bit with all the touring and that sort of thing. So, it started back when I was in high school. And, it continued on through university. So, I was pretty interested in it, Gordon. It looked like a way to make a lot of money. It was not too far from home. People were building big projects, multi-billion dollar projects. It was all astonishing, you know. So, I liked the idea of it, Gordon.

GJ: There was real excitement to it then?

CAMARTA: Yeah, absolutely. It was exciting stuff. It still is. But, for a young guy in those days it was like, "Wow, this can't beat this with a stick."

GJ: I hate to tell you what I was making in journalism at that time, probably about as much an oil sands guy make in an hour, per week.

CAMARTA: Yeah.

GJ: Actually, I started in 1972, January when we were making \$95.00 in the Calgary Herald Newsroom. And that, at the last pipeline welding job I saw the base rate, taking everything into account, this was on the Trans Mountain Pipeline, was \$99.00.

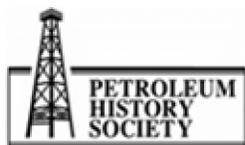
CAMARTA: Wow.

GJ: Per hour? Oh, my God. So, at Shell how did you move into oil sands? Did you have the option?

CAMARTA: Shell had an oil sands project going back then too. But, they were just in early days. It wasn't too big a team. So, they said, "No, we don't need any junior guys on that deal." These are like high level, high level people. So, small high level team and they were looking at their own oil sands project starting way back then in the mid-70s. So, they said, "No, you're going to go and work in the oil and gas business. And, you're going to start with being a reservoir engineer. We're going to train you to do that stuff." So, I got into doing some reservoir engineering and then plant. So, the first five years of that kind of stuff and Shell, to their credit, they moved me around quite a bit. They didn't leave you in one job. The whole thing was to give you some experience. They were pretty good at moving engineers around, mostly in the field. If you didn't get to the field and cut your teeth in the field, they didn't like you.

So, if you said, "No, I don't want to go to Pincher Creek. I don't want to go Fox Creek." They didn't want you. So, they wanted the people that were prepared to kind of take their skills and go out there in the field and so something. So, that's what I did. The first five years I spent a lot of time on monitoring wells, drilling production stuff, gas plants, building gas plants, operating gas plants, that kind of thing. That was good, actually, I liked it.

GJ: So, how did you get into oil sands?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: I will do a fast-forward and you may want to fill in the gaps. So, I did that for five years, bounced around from one place to another. And then they said, "Now, we want you to go and take a management position in Waterton." So, I went to Waterton and I worked there from about 1980 to about 1984 or '85, so a four or five year run. And then they said, "Well, you did a pretty good job. We want you to go Toronto." This is a Shell thing, the broadening thing. Once you got to Toronto and work in research. Not research, test tube research. But, there were agreements between Shell International and Shell Canada sharing service agreements, that kind of thing. So, I did that, lived in Toronto for a year. And, I came back. They said, "We want you to go to Waterton again for the big job, the guy running the whole show." Because, the first time I was running the technical department, second time running the whole show. I did that for a couple more years and then they said, "Now, it's time for you to go overseas."

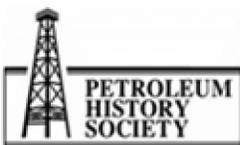
I went overseas, I worked in London. Then, I worked in South Africa. Then, when I came back, they put me in charge of corporate strategies. Which is kind of like, "We don't know what you're good at anymore. You've been gone so goddamn long. We'll put you into corporate strategies, reporting to the president." That's when I got into oil sands. Because, I couldn't get out of that goddamn corporate strategies job fast enough, so I jumped on the first thing that came along. My boss said, "Look at these old oil sands leases. We're about to lose them after 42 years. Do you mind taking a look?" And I said, "Goddamn rights I will." So, I don't think Shell would be in the oil sands if I didn't want to get out of corporate strategies, because I was the first guy to actually start looking at it back then. It had gone to sleep for 20 years and then the leases were about to be lost after about 42 years. Chuck Wilson said, "What do you think?" And, I started looking at, "I think we can make a go of this."

So, that was back in about '95-'96 and so that's when I got back in the oil sands. Although, I did like oil sands and it just kind of fell into my lap. I come back from all these years of other things and overseas. And, I had this job that I didn't particularly like which was corporate strategies. Because, I'd be gone for so long that they said, "You've been gone overseas for like six years now, we can't even remember who the hell you were. So, we'll bring you back to Canada. We'll give you this strategies job." I hated -- I didn't hate it, but I'm more of a hands-on guy. So, the first thing that came through the door was oil sands, Lease 13, the best lease of all. And I said, "Fine, I'll see if I can make a go of it." That started in about '96 and by 2003, we had production. So, that's how I got back into oil sands, Gordon. I wanted to get out of a job. I also liked oil sands, but...

GJ: So, you're coming to the point here now because I remember the 90s as a turning point. Because, you had GCOS that became Suncor, built in '67. Then you had Syncrude that went through the trauma and got built, only to have the oil prices start to fall within three years. And, the oil sands plants, the ones that were up and running were in fairly serious trouble.

CAMARTA: The early 90s was like mention the word "oil sands" and people spit on the floor.

GJ: Yeah.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: The compelling thing for Shell was we were going to lose the leases. We are going to lose Lease 13, the number one lease in the oil sands. Five billion barrels of oil, very little overburden, high grade stuff and I'm not so sure if it was Chuck Wilson or maybe the guys in The Hague that said, "Hey, five billion barrels? Could you say that again, slowly?" They got the lease back in, let's see now, I guess 1956 or something like that; August 5th, 1956 and you are going to lose it 42 years later in August, 1998. Chuck kind of saw this coming or The Hague guys saw it coming. You better find a way to try and hang onto it. So, I went to the Minister of Energy then, Pat Nelson. She said, "Christ, how many more years do you want?" And I said, "Well, give me five more years." She said, "You better put some milestones in there. If you don't perform, you're going to pay or lose it." So, I said, "Fine."

So, we met the milestones and got a project going. I think the Alberta Government wanted another player pretty badly because I think we were looking to sell it Suncor, to sell the lease to Suncor. But, Suncor already had a bunch of stuff, so they said, "The Alberta Government were supportive of us being in the game." So, that was one thing. But, Shell wanted to hold all that dirt. To hold the dirt, we actually had to get a project going, Gordon. The Alberta Government wanted some diversification. And, number three, the whole National Oil Sands Task Force, remember that came out?

GJ: Yeah.

CAMARTA: And, they came out with new royalty structures and a new fiscal regime which was helpful, because we had \$12.00 oil in those days and that was a real gut-buster trying to make an oil sands project work at \$12.00 a barrel. So, those are some of the things that helped out. Shell was going to lose the leases. The Alberta Government wanted more than the two players ahead already. And, number three, the whole new fiscal regime made the numbers roll better.

GJ: Well, I remember a news conference where it was announced that you were going ahead and hardly anybody showed up.

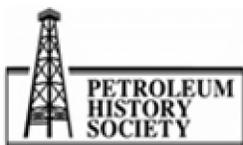
CAMARTA: Yeah, it was like an odd event, right?

GJ: Yeah, because...

CAMARTA: Because, all the other ones had all the drama of government support and all that. We just said, "No, we're going to go ahead."

GJ: I remembered there was an air of disbelief at that time because, actually, that was a really bad year for oil prices.

CAMARTA: It was dog year. So, December 7th, Pearl Harbour Day, 1999 is when we made the go ahead decision. So, that was a bad period. The oil prices were still \$12.00 or \$13.00, something terrible.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



GJ: How did you guys get up the nerve to do that?

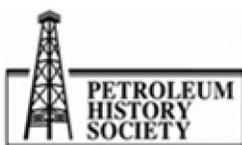
CAMARTA: So, a couple of things. One is that Shell owned 100% of it, so it took some of our risk off our plates when BHP and then Western Oil Sands entered the picture. Western Oil Sands took 20% and Chevron took 20%. So, we only had 60% of it. I think they regret that now, wish they had 100% from the get go. But, nobody saw that oil price going like that. So, we all floated some of the risk.

We thought at the time we had a project that did make economic sense at \$12.00. If I could have delivered at the price we had back in 1999, it would have made sense at \$12.00. But, as the oil price went up the costs started to go up, Gordon. Remember that? The price of steel and labour and everything went up. So, the price went up, the cost of the price went up but the oil price went up faster. So, what saved our bacon was the oil price. But, back then it was a very close thing to actually get this thing approved. It was touch and go. Mostly, because the oil price was so damn low. But, I think Shell International and Shell Canada wanted to have more oil in the portfolio. This is five billion barrels and it was a lot of oil. I think the other projects had proven that it was doable. We weren't going to the moon, technically. It was doable and that proved to be true. Just awful goddamn hard to execute these projects, we never saw that coming. But, we know that now. These are tough projects, but the increase in the oil price saved our bacon, Gordon.

It started at \$12.00 but at the time we started in 2003 the oil prices were kind of pushing up to \$30.00 a barrel. Then, up and up and up it went. So, even though the project went up, the costs went up probably by 50%. Instead of coming in to \$4 Billion, it came in at \$6 Billion which is astonishing. The oil price went up multiples of 100%. The very good thing for Shell Canada, our share price, it went up many, many, many -- rolled up over several times. So, it was a good thing for our share prices as well. All that worked out good, but mostly because of the oil price. The thing actually worked, number one, it made oil and number two, the oil prices were going right through the roof. We got our timing perfectly.

GJ: Yes. A couple questions arise from that though. In order to get into something on that scale, even assuming that you could keep your cost projection where you thought it was supposed to be, do you still need some kind of special mentality that says, "I have to get through the movements in the oil prices and not worry about that too much?"

CAMARTA: So, what you do is you kind of pick the lowest oil price you think you're going to see for the next X years. I think at the time we were actually were using \$12.00 a barrel. And, you want to convince yourself that you can actually get your capital back at \$12.00 a barrel. I mean, you want to get some payout. You don't want to be underwater forever and ever and not get your capital back. So, that's kind of the torture test. At the lowest oil price you can think of, a reasonably low oil price, can you actually cover your cash costs and get your capital back without spending 20 years to do it? So, it looked like that was the case at \$12.00 a barrel. So, we weren't going to just bleed to death, start this thing up and then be under water, can't cover our cash costs and kind of strand all the capital as well. So, that was the test. And, we could do that at \$12.00 a barrel. Now, the cost



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



went up 50%. If the price was still \$12.00 a barrel, it would have made a more difficult project for sure. But, the oil price went through the roof so I covered my tracks.

GJ: I think you already answered this: but did anybody even guess that the oil price was going to do that?

CAMARTA: Actually, Shell International was very pessimistic about the oil price back in the day. And, this is public information. They strategized through the scenarios back then and they actually believed the oil prices were going to go down. Here's why, they came off the \$12.00 roll, that oil price line; that is what we used. But, they were very bearish about oil prices. They believed that Saudi Arabia and these other countries that owned so much reserves that they were simply going to liquidate all their oil. They were going to like, dump it. Because, if you look at it: if you had oil in a bank somewhere, you could sell it, drivel it out at \$12.00 a barrel. That would take a long time. If you sold it all today, you would maybe make less money and get less for it, but you would be today's money not future dollars.

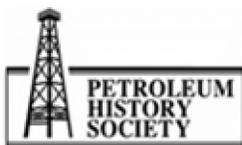
Anyway, the economists in Shell kind of said, "I think these guys are going to want to keep pushing. They want to liquidate it faster than wait 20-30 years to get it out." So, they believed that was going to put pressure on the oil price. But, what happened is I know people that seemed to realize there was China in the background buying. And, they were starting to buy oil and need more oil and importing oil. And, demand took off. So, the oil price took off with it, Gordon. Anyway, Shell was bearish about the oil price and I think most people were. I don't know anybody that was predicting where the oil price would go, nobody. I think maybe I felt it might go to \$18.00. \$18.00 was kind of an historical price, but that was like an upside. If it ever got to \$18.00, it would be had over the windmill.

GJ: Yes, okay.

CAMARTA: But, we all looked at this thing and we were good at the supply side. Nobody took a look at the demand side, very hard, as far as I know. Nobody, kind of lifted their heads up off the calculators and said, "What about these guys in China with one and half billion people? What if they start using more oil?" I think that's what happened, Gordon.

GJ: That project, Albion plus the Scotford Upgrader that is a different structure from the other projects. You have an assembly line there that is basically 500 kilometre long production line.

CAMARTA: That was the other thing that made a go for Shell. Shell already had a refinery, right. They already had a refinery that was based on synthetic crude. So, the output we had is that if we built the upgrader next to the refinery we could supply our own feedstock instead of buying it from Syncrude and Suncor. I forgot that. That was the other thing that kind of made added value for Shell, that nobody else had. So, we could actually build this upgrader, run it right beside the refinery and create our own feedstock. So, we decided to build the upgrader near the refinery in Edmonton, which was different. The other guys built the upgraders up north and we built ours in the south. I still like that idea because it's easier to build and run anything in Edmonton than it is Fort



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



McMurray. But, we had to move bitumen from Fort McMurray to Edmonton. And, we then had to come up with the Corridor Pipeline, the whole pipeline concept, to make that work. But, that's the model Shell stuck with and they built the second upgrader there too now. So, it was a refinery, Shell had an existing refinery that really helped make the economics look a little better for us then.

GJ: I remember going to the official opening of that refinery and Peter Lougheed there and it was like that movie *The Right Stuff*, where the guys were going to the moon? It was very much had that atmosphere and flavour to it. That big video and...

CAMARTA: Oh, yeah. They did a good job. The Hague went too.

GJ: The plant was very, very impressive to an outsider.

CAMARTA: Big bunch of pots and pans. I didn't think that thing would ever get built. I took a look at it and I kept looking at it, I go up there every other day. And, I think God, how big and complicated is this thing. What the hell have I started here? That's when I would talk to the welders a lot and say, "Well, I hope to hell you guys stick with us so we can get this job done."

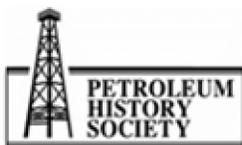
GJ: In hindsight, was it a good thing to build an upgrader? Or, would you have been better off just doing bitumen?

CAMARTA: In Shell's case, better off to build the upgrader because the differentials are fairly wide, I mean for the first five years; differential light and heavy oil, fairly wide. Because, the oil price was going up but the bitumen price wasn't going up as quickly. So, the upgrading margin was starting to increase. So, the upgrader made a lot of money. In fact, Shell elected to pay royalties on bitumen, not on synthetic crude. And, I got that bet right. Remember the other guys Syncrude and Suncor paid on synthetic?

GJ: Yeah.

CAMARTA: And, we decided to pay in bitumen. It was a call we had to make and I convinced Chuck to pay on bitumen. I said, "I think bitumen prices are going to stay low, Chuck, because not too many people are going to build upgraders." Or sorry, "I said there were existing upgraders down in the States, people are going to ship down there." The market will be there for that. So, I convinced him – and myself, I guess – that bitumen prices would stay low relative to the real crude price, and the differential would open up. If people built lots of upgraders it would close, but I said, "I don't think so many upgraders are going to be built." More bitumen is going to be built, but then upgrading. I made that bet and it was right bet.

So, Shell got money back on that upgrader very quickly. So, there is a good payout on that thing. That will come and go though, always, Gordon. Plus it also had the integration with the refinery, which made sense, right. It wasn't just our own kind of tame market. But, that'll come and go. I mean, there will be some years when the differential is so narrow and we'll say, "Why the hell do we



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



have an upgrader?" But, you just have to wait a couple years when people stop building upgraders and it goes the other way, right, so.

GJ: Okay. Another question I had about that project is: did the environmental considerations have a significant role in the way that project came together?

CAMARTA: Absolutely. I spent more time talking to The Hague about CO₂ and about First Nations people and about other environmental issues, like tailings ponds, than I did about the economics. Think about it, it's a European based company, it's a Holland/Dutch based company. And, they were way up the curve on global warming compared to North America. So, they were fussed about all the CO₂ we were going to make. So, that was an issue for them. Also, fussed about tailings ponds because they had gotten out of mining, they got out of coal mining and minerals mining. They said, "You're going to get us back into mining here. Tailings ponds and all that, we don't like that too much."

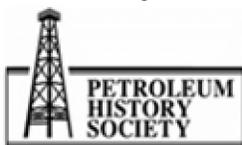
I remember Phil Watts, the chairman. We took him up there to visit once and he took a look at the map and he said, "Who lives around here?" And, I said, "Well, there are these First Nation people." He was thinking Nigeria, indigenous people that cause -- I said, "No, it's not quite the same thing." Anyway, that was another issue. I said, "We can work with these First Nations people here." And, we did. We did a good job of that too, I think. It took a lot of convincing to convince The Hague that we could manage the CO₂ issue, that we could manage the footprint issue and the tailings ponds issue and that we could manage having these neighbors, First Nation people living next to us.

So, it was a big deal. But mostly because, we were a Dutch based oil company: our major shareholder back then was Shell International, based out of Holland. And, even the employees then, one of the biggest voices against the project were the employees in Shell over there. They were going, "What the heck is this?" Shell was actually trying to get more gas, not more oil. And, gas is kind of a clean fuel and so forth, so the idea that we're getting into this oil sands mining business was like, Holy God, what are those Canadians doing over there. So, I did a lot of work on that front.

GJ: As a practical matter, were things built into the project like to reduce CO₂ ...

CAMARTA: We went the distance on things like energy conservation. If there was a more efficient burner, we bought it. If there were more heat exchangers available to reduce energy consumption, we did everything. We stood on our heads to produce energy consumption. So, that helps. If you don't burn the fuel, you don't make the CO₂, Gordon. SOX and NOX, we bought the latest and greatest burners so that we produced the very least SOX and NOX. We bought trucks that emitted lower amounts of NOX. We brought in low sulphur diesel from our refinery in Edmonton to burn in the trucks, so we didn't make any sulphur. Part of the motivation for creating that new froth treatment process was that it was much less energy intensive than the current state of the art technologies.

So, on and on and we had a long list of energy improvements built into the project and then we scrubbed again and said, "Is there more we can do." So, extra capital went into investments in the



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



original project that would reduce our energy consumption, because that was the main thing, Gordon.

GJ: Okay. Did you have any inkling when you started this, about what the oil sands were going to run into with the environmental groups?

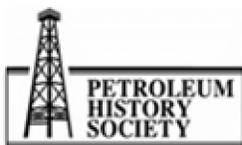
CAMARTA: No, no. There were only basically two players back then. We were third player in. Most people actually wanted us to go ahead. I remember the people in Fort McMurray they'd been through boom and then bust in their day, definitely in the bust mode in the 90s. Prices had fallen, so they wanted another project up there in the worst way. And, so did Fort Saskatchewan and other projects. Publicly and I think politically, people wanted this project to go ahead. So, that was very good. I think that's still the case, by the way. But, people are bit jaded now. But, back then, everybody wanted the project to go ahead. So, it had that momentum. First Nations people, we worked hard with them, gave them real jobs, not just slashing trees, but opportunities to get into heavy hauler business, that kind of thing. So, that worked out well. So, they were supportive of the project for the most part.

We still had environmental push back but it was Pembina and I'll never forget about Toxic Watch. I know all those guys and they come up with a hundred some questions and issues and we work through every one of them with them and so forth. So, it wasn't merely as hostile or as "in your face" as it became later on. So, I didn't see it. I didn't see, back then, I thought it was difficult enough. But, we got through it. I didn't see how much more difficult it would become. I guess I should have because whenever I went to Europe and going to Europe in 1996 was like from global warming, it was like it is today here. They're much more worried about it, global warming.

GJ: Is some of that hostility getting through here now? What do you think of it?

CAMARTA: I know lots of those folks. So, I've been through subsequent hearings on it. Petro-Canada's going to build an upgrader in Fort McMurray. So, we went to a bunch of hearings there and I've dealt with the Green Peace guys, at the hearing and so forth. If I just calm down and just listen. And, if they say things that are just completely wrong, you just say, "No, you are wrong there." But, I found every time I actually engaged with these guys and you can lay out some rationale or things that you're going to do to try to mitigate the problem. You kind of come back to a balance. I think even though folks are more hostile today, I think that you can still work with those guys and try to at least get them to understand what you're trying to do and that's helpful. I think the public still, by and large, when the public hears: here is one side. And, you tell the other side of the story. I find the public will listen. I find most reasonable people will listen to you. It makes it a lot harder, but that's fine. It shouldn't be easy, right?

There are issues, Gordon. You should open your kimono and say, "Here's what we're going to do." And, you should have public hearings and you should have people take their shots. I wish they would be constructive, they're not always constructive, but that's fine. And then, you ignore the



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



crazy stuff and say, "Okay, what is your real issues and let's put them on the table. Let's tackle them." So, I think that's part of the job. We should have to do that.

GJ: Okay. On the costs side, were there lessons? Is there somewhere on a shelf a book that says, "What to do?"

CAMARTA: Every project has something called, "Look Back".

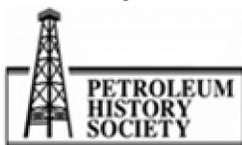
GJ: Oh, okay.

CAMARTA: As long as nobody ever opens that book. Then they go to the next project, "Oh, those guys. They probably don't know what they're doing." So, people don't look back as much as they should. But, every look back it comes with the same answers: more planning, more planning and more planning. The top three things you can do are plan, plan and plan. So, the more front end stuff you do. The more engineering you do. The more work you do back in the office before you get to field. The better off you're going to be, because if you hit the field and you're half-cocked and your engineering isn't quite complete.

Here is a typical scenario: so, you're in a bum's rush to get out there and get this project going. And, you've got your AFE and people want to see some dirt fly. And, you start clearing the ground to get some guys in the field. It's seasonal too, so everybody is saying, "Oh, the winter's coming. We better get something done here. Let's start pouring some cement." So, the engineers are like, "Hell, we don't even know what the plant's going to look like yet, never mind where the cement is going to get poured." So, people start to say, "Okay, we'll divert the engineers to work on this piece and get something going." So, you get something going. All of a sudden, instead of a push to the field there's a pull from the field. The guys in the field are saying, "We've got some people here. We've got to keep the people busy. So, instead of everything being planned in full, which is do this and do that and get the stuff done in the field and out of the way. You start to become schedule driven because you have to get stuff done before the coming winter or at some point in time. And, you start to make some mistakes. You start taking stuff out to the field which isn't quite engineered yet. And you say, "Well, we'll finish the engineering in the field." That just drives a lot of inefficiency into the field.

That is probably the root cause of a lot of problems in big construction projects in Alberta. It is just piss-poor planning. And, you have to look in the mirror. Is it me, the owners pushing schedule. Then you beat on the contractors and they start to take some shortcuts. What happens if you get on a big construction projects and you've got a bunch of workers working over here but all of a sudden, there are no drawings and no tools. So, you show up and you're on this part of the site and they can't work. Then, they have to move them to that part of the site, takes half a day to get reorganized. Root around in the snow and look for stuff, pipes and so forth. You waste a lot of time.

So, that productivity problem that we always blame on the craftsman, there is a lot of blame to go around for that. But, I think it starts right here. Guys like me that need to really make goddamn sure we don't get schedule driven, Gordon, which drives all kinds of crazy behaviours. And, drives stupid



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



behaviours and the biggest one is that we get stuff going in the field, there should be no construction before it's time. Everybody says that like a bumper sticker and we all, as the oil price is going up and everything, "We've got to get this oil going. Let's go like Jack the Bear. We're smarter than those last guys. The last guys screwed up but we're not going to screw up. We can fly this." And, they can't. So, you got to stick to your guns. If you stick to your guns and make sure everything is 100% before it hits the field, you'll have a lot better time in the field. If you try to shortcut that, you will blow your toes off every time.

GJ: The other question I had. I've heard people talking about this, is in order to be an oil sands builder, do you have to have a different outlook from the style of industry you started in with drilling wells into reservoirs?

CAMARTA: So, it's a different risk portfolio, right?

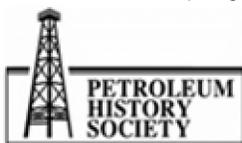
GJ: Okay.

CAMARTA: If you're an E-'n-P guy, probably your biggest risk is a geological risk. Are you actually going to find something, right? So, you want people to understand that risk. You want people that are good finders, right. Find me a place to go and we'll drill. So, if you find it, after that it's pretty easy. The oil comes up and the gas comes up and you plumb it up and away you go. That's a geological risk issue. Oil sands, there isn't a geological risk. The oil sand is there. The risk is: execution. It is all this capital you have to lay on the ground to turn this crap oil into something useful. It's a horribly capital intensive business. So, the risk is in the capital and the execution of spending that capital. So, the E-'n-P business is more short-term, you drill a well you can probably plan and drill most wells in six months or within a year cycle, it's all kind of quick turn over. You kind of win or you lose and you move on.

In the oil sands, to get the same barrel of oil you have to spend probably seven years because it's a long, drawn out deal. It's very capital intensive. A lot of capital has to go down before that oil gets in a tank somewhere. And, the risk you see is the execution of that much capital over that much time and not having the costs run away. So, it's a different mind-set.

GJ: It's not fortune hunting anymore?

CAMARTA: No, it's more like refining. It's a funny mix of things. You're making oil and you're booking reserves, which is like ENP. You're in a big projects doing mining. Mining guys are like E-'n-P guys, they tend to be more cowboy-ish. They drill a well and do some mining, that kind of stuff. But, oil sands mining projects are an interesting mix of culture. So, you've got these mining guys who are like E-'n-P guys. They're driving trucks and digging dirt and throwing dirt around. They're pretty sophisticated, but it's a different kind of mind-set. Then, you tie everything else, all the pots and pans are like refinery stuff. Those kinds of people are different, they're not cowboys. People that run refineries are typically guys that have a lot of capital there, everyday they've got the feedstocks nailed down. They've got everything running reliably and that sort of thing. So, they're all about that: keeping everything running reliably and steadily. So, that's the back end of it and



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



hydrocarbon and things that burn and blow up, pipes. And, the front end of it is trucks and shovels and guys driving around in pick-up trucks, and the guy with the biggest truck is the boss and all this stuff. It's a funny mix of cultures, big belt buckles, cowboy boots. It's just like E-'n-P guys, yeah.

GJ: That still happens?

CAMARTA: Yeah, in my experience that's the case. You never want to mix them up. So, part of the reason we burned down that Albion plant the first go. Had mining guys mixed up and running the hydrocarbon out of it, they weren't as careful as they should have been and ended up having some problems with it. So, they burned it down. Anyway, you want to keep mining guys with mining and oil guys with oil.

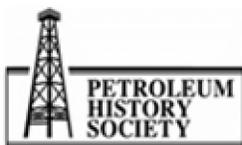
GJ: Okay. Did you run across notable figures; somebody that you would think of as a model or mentor or something in the oil sands?

CAMARTA: There are a lot of characters in the oil sands that I look up to. I always had a lot of time for the Syncrude guys. I have to say this, Jim Carter and Eric Newell and the other guys. I mean, they could have made things very difficult for newcomers. They were good. They worked with us and helped us out. I mean, they were just supportive in general. They weren't going against us let me put it that way. They did things like work on the Royalty with the National Oil Sands Task Force. We wouldn't have had a project without those guys' help. They were always pretty generous and good guys. And, they were just gentleman. The Suncor guys, I have known Rick George. He's been around this game for a long time too. So, there are a couple of guys I've looked up to. Steve Williamson, recently; he has a pretty good head. So, those guys I've worked with them, worked for them, some of them.

On the Shell side, we didn't have so many oil sands players. We didn't have any oil sands experience per say. We have some great guys at Shell, but nobody that you could say, "I learned all my oil sands lessons from them." It was more of other people in the industry that I turned to. We had some people that you would never have heard about. There were a few people that saved my bacon. One was the union leader, Mark McCullough [president of the Alberta Building Trades Council]. He's the guy that when I had the big mess at the upgrader, we went for a walk on the site and nobody could figure out what the hell they said. "Tell you what," he said, "construction is like war and here's what you have to do, one, two, three." And, he was right. That guy I had a lot of time for. There were a couple of project managers, the General Patton types that were remarkable. They really knew their stuff. They could handle big, complicated projects and pull me through.

So, there are long list of people like that. When you've got thousands of people working on these big projects, there are always the folks that stand out. Plus, there are characters. I like characters, interesting people. That was fun. I got to work with some exceptional people.

GJ: Does the oil sands attract those kinds of guys?



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: It does, it does. It gets big. Big attracts people that like big challenges. It's a gut-buster taking on an oil sands project. So, it attracts people that like complicated efforts and like to get their teeth into that kind of stuff. It does. Plus, there's lots of money in it, right. If you want to fill your boots and if you're good at oil sands and you're prepared to kind of work out there in the bush for a while, you can make a lot of money. It tends to attract some very good people.

GJ: Are you done in the oil sands now?

CAMARTA: No, no. It's hard not to be done because every time I turn around there are people saying, "Neil, can you help me with this or that." So, I think I've made the mistake of promising 25% of my time to ten different people, all in oil sands by the way. There is an in-situ oil sands player that I've been helping out with a little bit. So, that's just an example, small oil sands player in-situ. There's a mining project I've been looking at, some guys helped me. So, it's the kind of thing that reverts to people. I don't run around and say, "There's a piece of dirt and I think I have to get up." People will say, "I've got some dirt, Neil and I don't know quite what to do with it. You've got some experience, what do you think?" So, that's when I tend to get mixed up in it. So, I find that interesting. I have some fun with that. And, there are also some technology things. A lot of things I'm working on, some new technology. I think at the end of the day, oil sand is all about technology and engineering.

GJ: Okay.

CAMARTA: We don't have to find the oil we just have to find ways to do it more cheaply and more efficiently and less CO2 and that's technology. So, there's all kinds of interesting -- there are a thousand engineers every day working on a cheaper, faster, better way to do oil sands. I like those kinds of characters, right?

GJ: Yeah, okay.

CAMARTA: So, I've been mixed up in some of this new technology stuff as well. Most of the stuff I do still swivels around the oil sands. I'm not working full-time at it. But, once you're a tar baby it's hard to get unglued from it. Once you get stuck in the tar baby, it's hard to get unstuck. Plus, I have a place in Kelowna. I live here but I have a place in Kelowna. And, that's the elephant's grave yard for old oil sands people. They all go there to die. But, they're not dead. They're like 55 years old and they retire there and then they kind of get bored stiff and they want to get something going, because of where I run into them.

GJ: Were you ever tempted to live in Fort McMurray?

CAMARTA: No, I never -- no. I would have done it, but more in the early days. But, I spend enough time up there to be equal to almost living there. But, always in camps and stuff like that. But, I spend a lot of time in Fort McMurray. They have lots of parties, lots of events and galas. They have a big social life up there because they're smaller, a relatively small community, remote. So, they have a lot of fun. So, I've been to lots of parties up there. I have had a good time, I know that much.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



But, I've never lived there. I have a tuxedo and the only time I've ever worn it, really, is to parties in Fort McMurray believe it or not. It's like going to Vegas. They have some great events.

GJ: You must have encountered Melissa Blake?

CAMARTA: Oh, yeah. She's a good ham. I like Melissa, she's pretty smart.

GJ: She's one of my interviews for this ERCB project.

CAMARTA: She's a good sausage, yeah.

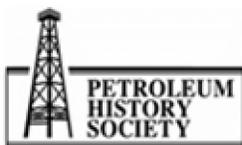
GJ: In the different functions of the board, the board provides an arena where she can get a hearing. They had a disagreement with the government. It didn't pay any attention when Ralph Klein was still around. So, they finally intervened the hearing. They didn't want to do it. They were quite embarrassed to do it, but anyway.

CAMARTA: Yeah, yeah.

GJ: Okay. Has all the environmental criticism -- especially the media coverage that has tended to take it a lot more seriously than we ever used to do -- changed the business? Has that made the business slower and riskier, do you think?

CAMARTA: Sure. It takes longer to get projects approved. You have to spend more money than you thought you would have had to on new technologies or ways of minimizing those environmental impacts. But, I think that's okay. Again, I'm not afraid of that stuff. I think we can always do a better job. And, this is a hugely impactful business. When you spend this much capital and it's a very energy intensive business. It's a very big footprint business. It's a very water intensive business. You can see people on Google Earth, you've got an impact; there are no two goddamn ways about it. You have to work on trying to reduce that. Bottom line, we have an impact. You cannot say you don't. In the overall scheme of things, do you have more of a positive impact than a negative one? Do you do more good than bad, right? It's that old test. That's what the ERCB is there for and I think we do. We create thousands of jobs. It's good honest work.

If the oil just fell out of the ground and became like Saudi Arabia, I don't know if socially that's a good thing. It's like Spain, a bit of a history on that now too. But, Spain had a lot of gold. They went over, took their ships, took it away from the Aztecs and came back. Guess what? Hyperinflation, missed the industrial revolution, missed the agricultural revolution and Spain ended up on the ropes. Something that comes easy isn't necessarily a good thing. So, this oil sands from a social point of view, it is hard work. It's a technical thing. It's a labour intensive thing. It creates lots of jobs, lots of subsidiary jobs. I think that's a very good thing for economy. This isn't easy stuff. It's hard work. This is not for lazy people. You can't be lazy and be an oil sands person. You've got to be a hardworking, educated, skilled person. I think that's good for any society and it makes lots of money: royalties, revenues, jobs, income tax and all that.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



The thing we've got to work on is to continue to reduce the impacts, because we do have impacts. So, that doesn't happen overnight. Things like, reducing the tailings ponds, right? I think you were at the opening of that. Remember that old number one tailings pond, you used to fly over that and look down. Now, it looks like a Hutterite Colony. It's astonishing what we've done there. That's all a good thing. I think the technology will lift the game. It will reduce the footprint. I think it will reduce the energy consumption, reduce the CO2 and water usage. I think reduce the scale as well. The big mining projects, I think there is probably more to be built, maybe one. You will see more SAGD because that's where the oil is and they tend to be smaller and less impact. So, smaller projects, probably smarter technology and therefore, less environmental impact. So, I think that is where the trend is going to go.

GJ: Back to the biography, outside the oil industry, what do you do when you're not working?

CAMARTA: Well, I've got muscular dystrophy. I've got a version of it called: FSHD.

GJ: Right, yes.

CAMARTA: What I'm trying to do is take my money and put it towards finding a cure for FSHD [Facioscapulohumeral Muscular Dystrophy]. So, it affects my upper arm strength. It's not a big deal, it's not killing me. But, my kids have it. So, other people have it. I study up on things. I read genetics for dummies. I've gone to research conferences. So, I know a lot about this disease. And, the neat thing about it is we're living in a time -- this is genetic and they understand genetics a lot better because they've got the whole human genome figured out. So, they've actually had some breakthroughs just recently. In fact, just last week they announced that they take mice with my disease and they've found a way to cure these mice and actually reverse the FSHD. So, when you get it to the mouse level, you're not too far away from the human cure.

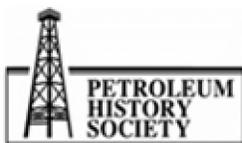
So, what I want to do is make goddamn sure they do that sooner rather than later. Not necessarily for myself and the kids. So, I'm forming a foundation to get support for that research. But, mostly in the first instance for my own money going in there but if other people want to contribute to it, great. So, that's kind of what my main focus on life is, is to find a cure for Facioscapulohumeral Muscular Dystrophy, FSHD. So, that's it. But, I'm also on the SARS Board. I'm a bag man for the United Way. I try to help them out, get more money. I'm involved in some "for profit" stuff as well. And again, I make money from that. Hopefully, I'm going to take that and put that towards the FSHD research. So, whatever I do I'm working for charity, Gordon, one way or another.

GJ: Okay. Does it have a name yet, the foundation?

CAMARTA: Oh, it's going to be called the FSHD Canada Foundation.

GJ: Okay. Is there quite a bit of incidence of that?

CAMARTA: It's not like breast cancer. Like, one in 2,000 people have it. But, kind of multiply through, you get lots of people within it so. So, it's not rare. It's the most prevalent kind of muscular



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



dystrophy. The thing is, I got it, goddam it. So, it pisses me off to have it. It's not a big deal but hard for me to put the stuff up on top of an airplane and that. But, I can see my mother she's almost in a wheelchair now. I don't want to be a wheelchair. I don't want my kids to be in wheelchairs. So, if we can cure mice, we can't be that goddamn away from it. I've got this engineering optimistic mind set. Goddamn it, I can fix this thing. So, that's what I want to do.

GJ: How old were you when you first knew?

CAMARTA: I did not think I had it until I got into my late 40s. I guess, in my senior month.

GJ: Yeah.

CAMARTA: Yeah, it was normal. So, it didn't really kick into until I was about 50, 48-50 years old.

GJ: Is it detectable other than that you can notice the strength?

CAMARTA: The way it's detectable, the factual part is mostly the eye muscles. I sleep with my eyes open. My eye muscles are too weak to close my eyes. But, if I'm sleeping and my eyes are half open, it's spooky looking at me. That's how you know if somebody has got FSHD. They're eyes tend to stay half open when they're sleeping. That's how you know.

GJ: It runs in families, obviously.

CAMARTA: It does. It's genetic, dominant.

GJ: Two other things. Did you for future consideration, have documents or especially photographs that might of interest to the archives?

CAMARTA: Absolutely, I've got a lot of that. Because, what I did is I took my camera around all the time. I had a little camera, electronic cameras back in the day. I took pictures all the time because I wasn't sure if anybody else would. It was mostly people stuff. It doesn't happen anymore, but the first time you produce a molecule of bitumen, that event, the guys in the control room going wild. Those are the kind of things I tried to record.

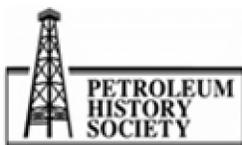
GJ: So, I'll pass that on. We've got your numbers and all that good stuff on my piece of paper here. That was digital equipment you were already using? Like, you were already part of the 21st century...

CAMARTA: Absolutely, yeah.

GJ: ...some of us weren't.

CAMARTA: I got past the slides long ago.

GJ: I still have a film camera.



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.



CAMARTA: Do you?

GJ: I do.

CAMARTA: Can you get the film?

GJ: I haven't used it for a while but yeah, you still could go to Blacks. There's also the Camera Shop over on 11th Avenue there. You can go all the way back to black and white.

CAMARTA: Get real retro.

GJ: Is there anything I missed asking you about?

CAMARTA: No. I think you've done a pretty good job. Probably, I can't think what it is. But, if you think of anything give me a call. I mean, you're camped out here for a while aren't you.

GJ: Yeah, I'm in here for quite a while.

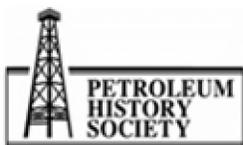
CAMARTA: Yeah. Sure, maybe I'll buy you a cup of coffee and fill in some blanks if you still feel like you're missing something or don't know what the hell I'm talking about, give me a call. Or, you can fire me an email, which is probably better. It can only be easy by email.

GJ: The other thing I have to tell you about is my daughter has a magazine called: Oil Sands Review. And, as part of this project each of us participants are going to be writing stories about people who have been interviewed. So, some of this will ultimately, I guess in the fall my target date is mid-September to December something. So, we'll probably talk a lot about how that sands revival got going. And, you told me some really interesting stuff about the mentality involved in oil sands. It's some genuinely interesting material.

CAMARTA: There are some real colourful characters in this business.

GJ: Yes, absolutely.

[END OF RECORDING]



Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.