

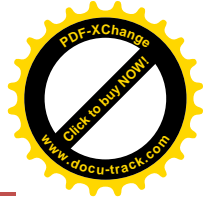
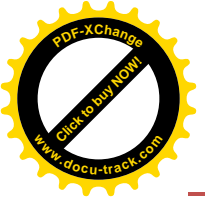


PETROLEUM HISTORY SOCIETY
OIL SANDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

JEAN (CULVER) LUND WAS BORN IN SIMCOE, NEAR LAKE ERIE. SHE ATTENDED ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SIMCOE AND THEN GRADUATED, IN 1951, FROM QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY IN KINGSTON WITH A BA DEGREE IN HISTORY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND ECONOMICS. SHE ATTENDED THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION FOR A YEAR AND OBTAINED A TEACHING CERTIFICATE AND ALSO ATTENDED SUMMER SCHOOL FOR EXTRA TRAINING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION. SHE TAUGHT FOR FOUR YEARS, FIRST, IN THOROLD AND, THEN, IN SARNIA, WHERE SHE MET HER FUTURE HUSBAND NEIL LUND. THEY WERE MARRIED IN SIMCOE, IN 1955, AND THEY HAD FOUR CHILDREN, TWO DAUGHTERS AND TWO SONS. TWO CHILDREN WERE BORN IN SARNIA AND TWO IN MONTREAL. NEIL'S CAREER WITH IMPERIAL OIL TOOK THEM FROM SARNIA, TO MONTREAL AND BACK TO SARNIA BEFORE BEING TRANSFERRED TO CALGARY. FROM 1968 TO 1969 THE FAMILY LIVED IN CALGARY AND WERE THEN MOVED BACK TO SARNIA. IN 1974 NEIL WAS TRANSFERRED TO SYNCRUDE AS VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS, INITIALLY IN EDMONTON. IN 1977, THE FAMILY MOVED TO FORT MCMURRAY. SHE DESCRIBES HER STAY IN FORT MCMURRAY AS "AN EXPERIENCE." AS A COMPANY WIFE, SHE HELPED TO ORIENT NEW EMPLOYEES AND HELPED THEM GET THE SERVICES THEY REQUIRED TO KEEP THEM IN FORT MCMURRAY. SHE SERVED AS THE "HOSTESS" FOR SENIOR VISITING EMPLOYEES AND DIGNITARIES. AFTER TWO YEARS, NEIL WAS MOVED TO EDMONTON WHERE JEAN JOINED THE UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CLUB AND SERVED ON THE EXECUTIVE AND AS PRESIDENT. THEY CONTINUED TO SOCIALIZE WITH SYNCRUDE STAFF.



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DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: 1925 in Sarnia, Ontario

Date and Place of Interview: 11:20 am July 16th, 2012 at the Lund residence below.

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Consent form signed: Yes Initials of Interviewer: AD

Transcript Reviewed by Interviewee: Yes

Last name of subject: LUND

AD: My name is Adriana Davies, and I'm a researcher/interviewer for the Petroleum History Society Oil Sands Oral History Project. It is Monday, the 16th of July, and it is 11:20 a.m. And I'm interviewing Jean Culver Lund, the wife of Syncrude employee, Neil Lund.

Jean, thanks so much for agreeing to be interviewed. I'm wondering whether you can tell me a little bit about your background—a short bio—and then we'll talk about your involvement in the oil sands in Fort McMurray, accompanying Neil.

JL: Well, I was born near Simcoe, Ontario, and went to elementary and high school there, and then graduated from Queen's University and then took a year at the Ontario College of Education to get my secondary school certificate. I taught for four years. One summer I did more, went to summer school and did more physical education, and I taught really many subjects but quite a bit of physical education, which you know was helpful to me in various activities, in helping in schools and things later on. We were married in 1955 and lived in Sarnia, then in Montreal, then back to Sarnia, then Calgary, and back to Sarnia. And then we came to Edmonton when Neil switched from Imperial Oil to Syncrude.

AD: So tell me, you know, what it was like, raising a family when you were moving around that much.



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JL: Well, there were quite a few difficulties. Every move you had to find new housing, new doctors, new contacts, new piano teachers, new activities for the children, as well as trying to make a new life for yourself in a new community.

AD: Now, you came out to Alberta initially to, when Neil came to work in the refinery in Calgary. So do you want to talk a bit about that?

JL: Well, we were only in Calgary, really, only for just a year and a bit. So that, and we already knew some people in Calgary, so we had good neighbours and... Well, with any move there are difficulties, but it worked out okay.

AD: So the next time you came out was in 1974, if I'm correct, to Edmonton.

JL: Well, I'm not sure of the date.

AD: And I think that you actually did think about pursuing your own career in teaching. Do you want to talk ...?

JL: Well, yes, because at that time ... Well, all the children were in school by the time we moved here. And I thought well, maybe I'll ... I enjoyed teaching, and there might be a possibility of going back. I enquired and my, even though I had permanent first-class certificates from Ontario, I didn't have a BEd. I had an honours BA but not a BEd, and so I would have had to take more courses from the University of Alberta, and I felt at that stage it really wasn't worthwhile. And it was a bit frustrating that they had reciprocity with some other provinces, but not with Ontario.

AD: So, for how long did Neil fly up to Fort McMurray before you actually moved up there?

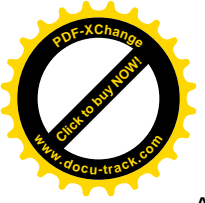
JL: Well, he seemed to be going there regularly, and he seemed to often stay overnight at the lower camp. He had tales of how cold it was. It could be so cold that the propane went off and the place was really freezing. And I guess he sometimes later on stayed in town. But he would ... I don't remember if there was any regular basis to his trips there. It was usually for perhaps two days at a time.

AD: So how long was it before you moved up to Fort McMurray?

JL: We lived here [Edmonton] for three years before we moved to McMurray.



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AD: And do you remember how that decision was made that, you know, he and the family would move to Fort McMurray?

JL: Oh, I think from the time he accepted the position in operations, we planned that we would be living in Fort McMurray. Northward was trying to work, as Neil was telling you, on getting housing there. Within about the first week after we moved here, there was pressure on me that I must choose a lot to have our house built, and again I had the children to deal with and school. But I would fly on PWA to Fort McMurray, and I had to find my way in a strange city to the airport. Originally another couple, I would only have to go to their house and then go on with them, but at the last minute they decided that they couldn't go. So, I was met at the airport by someone from Northward and shown a wooded area and was supposed to select a house from ... Which wasn't really more helpful than if I'd just looked at the map, because there weren't roads or many landmarks to decide that this would be a good position.

AD: So how long did it take to build the house?

JL: Well, I think our house perhaps was not at the top of the list for completion. I don't know. We lived here three years, and the house was just barely ready by the time we moved there.

AD: And at that point only two of your children came with you, because the older two were at university. Do you want to talk about that?

JL: Yes. Well, one was in, by that time, in junior high. The class ... It had really been planned as an elementary school, and I think he was in what was supposed to be the kindergarten room. I remember him laughing about the facilities being small sized. And the other ... Our daughter was at the composite high school in downtown Fort McMurray, so that she went on the bus in the morning, but any staying after school for activities meant that somebody had to meet her, because there was no bus or any ... And it was a long way from our house.

AD: Now, you mentioned an anecdote that when you decided that Neil was going to take the job and move out here, you mentioned an article in the *Globe and Mail*, accompanied by photographs.

JL: Oh yes, that was the day it was announced. I guess the day before it was announced in Sarnia that we were moving to Syncrude, there was a photo on the front page of the *Globe and Mail* of a dog team going down the middle of the main street in Fort McMurray, so that caused some hilarity.



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AD: So, you know, the move to Fort McMurray was a big deal for you. Do you want to tell me a bit about moving into the house? When did, which month did you move there and what was it like?

JL: I think we moved there probably just before school started, probably the end of August. And I think that we were only nicely arrived there and Neil went off to a management meeting in Jasper. I think I was on my own for the first week or two. But again, that's a long time ago, but it took some getting organized as far as finding out where things were and what was available.

AD: And so you drove. I mean, you took the children to school.

JL: Well, they walked to ... The one to junior high walked to school. I would often go and pick him up when it was bitterly cold. He stayed late for volleyball or whatever he was staying late for. And the same with our daughter at senior high, that there was a bus there in the morning.

Perhaps I shouldn't tell how we were cheating the phone system, but at that time a pay phone, the phone would ring and I would say, "Hello," and if no one was answering I would say, "If you are calling from a pay phone, you can hear me but I cannot hear you, so hang up and read the instructions." But that also meant that Eric, when he finished [school]... If the phone rang around five o'clock then I would say, "Yes, Eric, I will come and pick you up." He didn't have to put the quarter in [laughter].

AD: Well, it's small cheating, and of course you know you would save a number of quarters over ...

JL: Yes, well, he didn't have to have the money with him, available. And I would often think, Well, I hope that's who it is. Maybe it's some important person calling.

AD: So tell me about, you know, your first winter up there.

JL: Well, I don't know. Bitterly cold, that's all I can remember. A lot of snow and bitterly cold. The ... really frighteningly cold. One time, it was one thing for the power to go off, as it frequently did, but when it went off when it was minus 30 something, then I would get the fireplace started and try and shut things so that we had that one room that was at least warm. But the water going off and the power going off, really it was an inconvenience, but when we were so dependent on electricity we don't realize [this today].

AD: So that in the winter it was a real problem.



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JL: Well, it could be, yes.

AD: Now, Neil would regularly go down to Edmonton for meetings.

JL: Yes, I think sometimes he would go for two days and he would stay overnight in Edmonton, went on PWA. I think the plane left at 11 o'clock at night or something like that. And he drove himself and left the car there. Well then, it was so cold the car wouldn't start when he came back, so I would drive him to the airport. I remember one night it was really so cold that it was a bit scary, whether I would [make it home] ... Because, again, from where we lived to the airport was quite a drive and part of it was through, you might, say, uninhabited territory.

AD: Now, what was it like being a company wife when you arrived? And a manager's wife?

JL: Well, I don't really ... I guess the only thing about it was we seemed to do a lot of entertaining. People, we were trying to entice people to come. I know we had several dinners for perspective doctors. I would include the other neighbours and executive and their wives, in order for the doctor and his wife to look things over, that we weren't all ... that we were kind of civilized people. And then there were numerous other people that came through. And at that time, it was a place for summer employment, so the friends and family that would ... The sons and daughters would maybe come and be in Fort McMurray and so it was ...

AD: Constant entertaining.

JL: Well, lots of coffee parties and lunches and dinners. No wonder I've stopped cooking now.

AD: Now, you couldn't teach. So what did you do? You know, for self ...

JL: What did I do? I guess a lot of the time I was putting on a dinner for 16 or 20 or whatever, and helping with the family still at home. And, in the summer time the two at university, they were back for the summer. So that was busy, and then somehow or other through a friend that lived in the townhouses not too far away and they had a small, kind of common room, a small room, and enticed me that I should be teaching an exercise class. Well, it turned out to be a social as well as an exercise class, and I met different people and we had a lot of laughs about the exercise class. That was one morning a week, and I did do some preparation every time. I had a lesson plan.



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And then one of the people who was in the exercise class was there because her husband had come from Ontario Hydro, and she was complaining how she missed her piano, so I said, "Oh, we have a nice piano." Fine. So she came a morning a week, bringing her probably two and four year old, only Lithuanian-speaking children with her. So, I looked after the children while she played the piano. And so that was another morning a week.

AD: You were the welcome wagon.

JL: I think so. Yes, in lots of ways that's a good term.

AD: Now, you mentioned executives. How many executives and their families actually moved to Fort McMurray?

JL: Well, I don't know what you would call executives. I guess the other executives were under Neil, you might say, but most of them lived right around. Neil mentioned Carl Sherman. Kay Sherman lived nearby, and she and I had quite a few laughs together. I remember, I could see her clothesline from our front door, and one time I was going to start the washing and no water. So I phoned Kay and said, "I see you used all the water, already." And Bonnie Sammis from Louisiana lived nearby, and she was very upbeat and positive.

Overall, most of them were. I guess we did our grumbling about lack of shopping and having to go stand in line at the grocery store, but I think overall people ... Well, one of the women who was in the exercise class lived nearby, and I saw her recently, and she said, "We really had a good time, didn't we." So, I guess, it was certainly interesting, and interesting people, and lots of complaints and lots of things we did without and had to put up with. But we managed to make a life, I guess you might say.

AD: And there's a sense of pioneering. Would that be correct?

JL: Oh, no, I wouldn't call us pioneering, really, no. I think of people who didn't have electricity and running water, even most of the time didn't have it ever, so no I wouldn't say we were pioneers.

AD: Now, you also did some other volunteer teaching, didn't you, besides the exercise class.

JL: Oh, a little bit in the way of ... One of the mothers had a child in elementary school who was interested in gymnastics and I had had a little training in that, so I helped a little bit after school for a time with very rudimentary gymnastics.



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AD: Now, in terms of Neil's role, how do you feel that you assisted him in accomplishing that role in getting the plant up and getting the workforce that was required? Do you want to talk ...

JL: Well, I don't know what I did in the way of assisting him, except trying to help make the wives of the people who were there, make them perhaps happier and more content by getting groups together and introducing other people. But as far as [the operations], I was very rarely at the plant. In fact, I hardly ever was there. So mine was more on a ... And I was able to cope on my own and deal with household problems on my own, too, so that I guess is helpful that I am fairly independent.

AD: But in essence, you had to put your own career on hold, I mean, at that ...

JL: Well, of course, I'd already done that. I'd only taught for a few months after we were married, and then, of course, we moved to Montreal, so my career had kind of, already kind of finished. And my brief attempt in Edmonton to revive it, I didn't persevere.

AD: Now did you go down to Edmonton at all or very often?

JL: Very rarely, very rarely.

AD: So you relied on local shops and stuff. Can you tell me what amenities were there at the time?

JL: Well, there was one Offereins dress store. And there was Alice Haxton's general store. And there was one Safeway and one Co-op. And they were very, very strained. Before Easter or something, you had to go to Safeway and be prepared to stand in line and maybe not procure what you were hoping to get. My next door neighbour before, for some time before ... I guess she must have been there a spring before we were, because she phoned to say, "The bedding plant truck is in. If you want any bedding plants, you have to get downtown right now." Because that was the one source if you wanted any petunias, now was the time to go. So that we were really lacking in commercial businesses.

AD: But you dealt with it. I mean, you didn't feel as though you were particularly deprived.

JL: Well, I'm not really a shopper anyway, so no I guess ... Outfitting the children for university was a bit of a problem. They sent a trunk by airline, by train rather, from Fort McMurray, which was a bit of a trip.



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AD: [telephone rings] Ya, we'll just hold on until he's answered it.

Outside voice [videographer]: I'm going to pause it here, okay?

AD: Ya, might as well.

AD: Now, do you think that in terms of the Edmonton-based senior management, did they understand, the issues for that first generation of staff up there?

JL: Well, especially at this point difficult to say, but no I think they really didn't. They had no intention of ever moving to Fort McMurray themselves. They would fly in for a day, for a day, and fly out. I don't know if any of them even drove the five-hour trip with part of it gravel and no shoulders to go to ... So they had a different aspect altogether of what was happening there.

AD: Now you've mentioned the dinner parties for 16. Do you want to tell me who would be your guest list, and how frequently did you do this?

JL: Oh, I didn't keep a diary, but I did keep a notebook, and I actually found it listing the various guests and the menus because I thought I didn't want to have the same people and have the same menu every time. So, that it was a very varied group. There were many official-type people that were visiting or were hoping to be recruited. Then there were many of our, some of our friends who were curious as to where we were who came and stayed with us. Edward Lincoln, who had been our daughter's piano teacher, came through the auspices of the music teachers, I guess, at Fort McMurray, to give a concert to help raise money. He came and stayed and, of course, had dinner with us and stayed over night. When I look through that notebook I'm afraid I'm amazed I don't remember a lot of the people. I thought, "Oh, were they really at our house for dinner?" I don't remember that. And some of the names on the list, I have no idea even who they were. But that's ... It was a revolving guest list and a long time ago.

AD: So every weekend you would be catering for some event.

JL: Well, probably not every weekend, but there were some weekends ... The Imperial Oil managers, at that time there were more refineries and they met annually with their wives with them. And at the time that they met in Edmonton, the wife of the local refinery manager was a friend and she called to say that, "Well, Bill's bringing the refinery managing group to Fort McMurray to see the plant, so would you have us for lunch?" Well, yes, so that was about 20 some I guess, and I'd already had a bunch of people coming the next—that was Saturday—coming for dinner on Sunday. So that was a busy weekend.



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AD: So you weren't phased by this.

JL: I suppose I was somewhat, but it ... I've always done quite a bit, had done quite a bit of cooking, so ... And, at that time, there was no caterer in town or any place, any bakeshop or anything, so I put out the food, which I guess was okay. Now, nothing gourmet but ...

AD: Good solid food.

JL: I guess,

AD: Now, were you given an entertainment allowance?

JL: No.

AD: So basically you were ...

JL: This is out of Neil's salary. However, we've I guess always had quite a bit of company and, as I said, some of this company was personal. It was friends from back when or relatives or friends of friends. It wasn't all official, that's for sure, but it still added to the number of plates on the table.

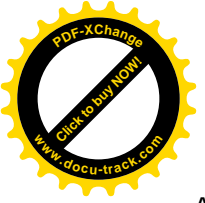
AD: Now, did you hesitate at all ... because I know you mentioned the couple who was going to go up with you to select a lot, but they had no intention of actually living up there. Did you ever consider not going up with him?

JL: No, I don't think so, because when he took the position we knew that we would be moving to Fort McMurray, so, no, I didn't say, "I'm not going. I'm going to stay in Edmonton." As later on many of the wives, when there were more people moving to McMurray, many of the wives did stay here. I guess they practically all did.

AD: Now, you mentioned that you began to teach the women's exercise group. But there was a wives group of people working up there. Do you want to talk a bit about that and your relationship to it?

JL: Well, I had no relationship to them. It was the wives of the operations people—one wife in particular, I guess—thought there should be some kind of a group and got it going. And some friends of mine went to it, so I had reports back from it, but no I didn't ... I felt I would be better not to go to it, and I really think that I was wise not to have gone.





AD: And it was a group that basically raised issues, and didn't Neil meet with them periodically?

JL: Well, yes, he went to their executive meeting I think once a month to hear their [complaints]... But they did plan some activities ... It seems to me one day they had a basket weaving. You know, they tried to have some activities, because at that time there wasn't a Y, there wasn't anything in the way of civic opportunities, so they did some good social things.

AD: Now, Neil was involved in thinking ahead in terms of attracting a workforce and their family. You know, he pushed for certain amenities. Do you want to talk a bit about that?

JL: Well, I think that was really more before we moved there that he was trying to convince people that, the educational authorities, these people are coming. We're going to need more schools. There was only a little old hospital. We're going to need a better hospital. We're going to need commercial activities and various ... So that he spent a lot of time with various government agencies and well, people ... I don't know what store people he spoke with. Hudson's Bay, for one, but I don't know more than that, trying to and trying to encourage Syncrude that they should be donating money to help with a new arena and new facilities in the town.

AD: Now, Neil mentioned, thinking in terms of potential employment for Aboriginal people. Were you involved in any of those activities?

JL: No, I didn't go with him to Fort Chip or various [reserves]... No, as he said, he and Terry Garvin, they made an overnight trip to Fort Chip. They were laughing about it afterwards, because where they were supposed to stay wasn't available or something. Anyway, they flew into different communities to try and encourage them to get an education and that there would be employment waiting for them.

AD: Now, do you want to talk about the diversity of the workforce at Syncrude at that time and how you experienced it as a wife and mother?

JL: Well, there were a lot of people from Newfoundland at the schools and where they were looking for work and were willing to come. There were people from England, specifically Wales. I met some of the ones that had come from there. People from Louisiana. People from Nova Scotia. It was an interesting group, really.

AD: Very diverse. I mean, was there a divide between the union—well, it wasn't a unionized workforce—it was Suncor. But was there any division, you know, between the operational staff, the



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people that worked in the extraction unit or whatever, the mine site, you know, versus management.

JL: Really not that I know of. I guess the management people lived in the nicer area with the nicer single-family houses. But, I guess it was a small town, and in a small town you're all together. It wasn't ... not divided into echelons of society by any means. At least not that I was aware of.

AD: And was there a difference between the new, the newcomers, the Syncrude employees versus the townies, you know, who had been there throughout the settlement period?

JL: Well, I guess like anywhere you move, you're more likely to find friends amongst the other ones who are also recent arrivals, whether you move to Sarnia or wherever. It's people who are already settled in their ways, have their friends, they are, you know ... So that you naturally congregate to who are new to the community, no matter what that community is, whether it's Edmonton or Sherwood Park or wherever ... I wouldn't say that it, it wasn't a closed community by any means, but the way the housing was set up, the housing of all the people that lived around us were Syncrude, so that it just naturally followed.

AD: Now, the ... your husband worked really long hours. He travelled, I'm assuming. The other husbands had similar busy schedules, so it was really the women relating to other women. There were stresses on marriages, would you say?

JL: Yes, I assume so. Of course, no matter where you live there are occasions that there are stresses on marriages, but perhaps more so in a frontier community. Frontier's perhaps a little bit harsh, but an isolated community at that time.

AD: So that you experienced marriage breakdowns. I mean, do you want to talk a bit?

JL: I really don't know of any actually there. I know some of the people who came there, came probably because of a previous marriage breakdown and perhaps with a new partner and undoubtedly, like in any community, there were marriage breakdowns, but I don't at this point know of them.

AD: Can you tell me any anecdotes about your time in Fort McMurray? You know, amusing, funny, tragic. I mean, what ...

JL: Well, not really. I can't ... I guess through school our younger son got to know people who were in the town. One of his best friends, his father ran the billiard hall, and he and Morris are still friends. Morris now lives in Edmonton. That's it. But as far as anything particularly funny, probably



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there was lots of things but I don't really remember them now.

AD: So that, you experienced this life in a resource town for this window of two years, and, you know, what did you take away from that experience when you came back to Edmonton?

JL: Well, that it was that we had an interesting time there. Perhaps our children were missing opportunities there that they would have had in a bigger community as far as there just wasn't the way ... the same music opportunities or recreational activities at that time that there are in other communities. Now, of course, they have wonderful recreational facilities there, but they didn't then.

AD: How would you have felt if Neil had to continue working there?

JL: I guess I would have continued to live there. I wasn't anxious. I wasn't saying, "Well, now we must leave," or anything like that.

AD: But not everybody made that easy a transition.

JL: I think that's probably true. I think there were, as I said, there were some wives that didn't move there when there was the grand move to McMurray. And there were others that I think did a lot of complaining while they were there. And, of course, I only knew a very small fraction of the wives that were there, but of the ones I knew, Neil mentioned Betty Hunt ... he mentioned Dick Hunt and his wife Betty lived across from us and was a fine person and neighbour. And so no, overall it was a good bunch of women.

AD: Now, did you get a sense of how successful it was going to be at that stage.

JL: Well, of course, at that time it was a finite ... The oil sands had a finite life. That it would be all mined out within, I've forgotten, 20 years or something. But I guess it was a sense of accomplishment when they first started to, after all the problems, send oil down the pipeline.

AD: Were you there at the opening ceremonies?

JL: Yes, friends who he had previously worked with for Syncrude came and stayed with us, and I was at the opening ceremonies, yes.

AD: So what did you think of it?



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JL: I really don't remember that much about it. I know there were some complaints that some of the politicians who really hadn't been ... were front and centre, shall we say, whereas they felt that the Syncrude workers might have had more upbeat comments. But politicians are politicians, and they want to be on the stage.

AD: And so did you do any special entertaining that weekend?

JL: Well, we had a couple staying with us. I remember that, but no.

AD: Who stayed with you?

JL: Well, it was a couple that had worked for Syncrude and that had gone on to other things.

AD: Did you know Frank Spragins and his wife Nel?

JL: Oh yes, I knew Frank and Nel in Edmonton, and Neil said that Frank had gone for the starting of the actual start and he came and had dinner with us that night and Frank was already mortally ill but he seemed to really enjoy having been invited and was appreciative of that and he, I remember, he enjoyed the meal. So that, I guess that's the last time I saw Frank alive. No, I guess he was at the opening ceremonies, but I don't know as I was talking with him then. But the last time I was, kind of, in close contact with him was that time.

AD: You then ... Neil finished up his career here in Edmonton. And in terms of then his move up the ranks. I mean, how did that affect you as his wife?

JL: Well, I guess the only way I was affected was that we moved frequently... and we've gone into the fact that each new community you have to make new contacts.

AD: So it was easier for you to return to Edmonton then.

JL: Well, I was familiar, somewhat familiar with the city, but I was in Fort McMurray and Neil was in Edmonton and I guess the family was still ... Eric was still in school there, so I would fly down for a day to look to see what housing was available, and there was very little available at that time in Edmonton.

AD: Now, in terms of your various moves, do you want to talk about that? The difficulties of shipping furniture and mementoes and so on across the country.



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JL: Well, the movers overall are quite good. The move, we didn't have any real disasters. The move from Sarnia to Edmonton, the van leaked, and quite a bit of our furniture was wet and some of it had to be refinished. And I said to the truck driver, "Our things are all wet."

"Oh, I thought that I didn't put anything of any value by that leak." So, he knew that there was a leak ahead of time, so, anyway, it didn't end up burned or in the ditch or anything as some people have had.

AD: Now, you know, are there any other ... What did you do, as far as volunteer or others, church, when you moved back to Edmonton, which now has been your home since ...

JL: Well, I belonged to the university women's club in Sarnia, and I guess I belonged to it here. Yes, before I went to McMurray. And I had belonged to the engineers' wives association before we went to McMurray, and before we went to McMurray I did volunteer work—I think that might have been engineers' wives perhaps—out at, guiding out a Fort Edmonton. And I did volunteer work in the schools, and then when we returned I became a little more involved with the University Women's Club and was on the executive for quite a few years and was the president for two years.

AD: So, reflecting on your husband's career in the oil patch, what do you feel about it?

JL: Oh well, I feel that he was never unemployed ... so that's a good thing when you hear of other people. So, and I'm sure that he liked some aspects of it better than others. It's like in anything, some days are better than others, whether it's teaching or oil refineries or whatever. There are problems that come up, and Neil is very even, I guess is one way of putting it. He doesn't become ... I think with all the problems he had to deal with in the startup of that big Syncrude operation, other people would have been having high blood pressure, nervous breakdowns, or various health issues, but he seemed to cope with it fairly well.

AD: Would you say that those two years up there were among the most stressful years in, you know, in his work life and your marriage?

JL: Oh I think, I guess he's the one to say, but I think, oh yes. I think that the time in McMurray, there were so many, as they say, issues, what with the weather and equipment and the personnel, it was, and having to deal with not only the executive left in Edmonton but with the so-called management committee of the various owners of Syncrude that were not aware of the on-the-ground situation.



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AD: So, I mean, I guess he absolutely relied on you to keep a stable home. I mean, that was really the retreat from the [work world].

JL: Well, I don't know. When he'd come home and there'd been a flood in the basement or something, whether he thought it was a retreat or not, but on the other hand I had been dealing with it, so ...

AD: So, how often did these occurrences happen that you had to deal with domestic problems.

JL: Oh well, different places, different things. But, yes, there were various. When he was moved from Calgary back to Sarnia, he left on the I guess the beginning of September, but the family and I didn't move 'til November some time. And when we were in Montreal and we had three little children, he was told Friday afternoon that he was transferred to Sarnia Monday morning. I think, in these days, things like that wouldn't happen, but at that time he said, "Yes, I'll be there Monday morning." So, I'm left in the wintertime in Montreal with three preschoolers in a little house and no family support nearby.

AD: So, the whole job security was everything, would you say, because you've commented on that?

JL: Well, I would say no. I wouldn't say job security was everything. I think most of his, I guess all of his moves were promotions, so be happy, I guess.

AD: And you saw your role as really supporting him and smoothing his way.

JL: Well, I think that was a different time. The Imperial Oil wives, we... I certainly wasn't the only one moved around, and everywhere we went ... When we moved to Montreal, I didn't know the other Imperial Oil wives, but the ones who lived near us were very helpful. And, again, when we went to Calgary, there was kind of an already-made club, whether you knew the people or not, because at that time the two-career family was very rare. It was quite different than it is now ... I think that we, the wives, kind of relied on each other, whether you welcomed the newcomer and said good-bye to the one leaving.

AD: So, did you make some good friends within the Imperial Oil family, as it were?

JL: Yes, yes.



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AD: And it's my sense ... My dad worked at the Imperial Oil refinery from 1949, initially in construction and then eventually in plant maintenance. And I remember, as a child, the parties. You know, they did Christmas parties for children, and picnics and so on. Was there that aspect there later on?

JL: Well, we were never at the Edmonton refinery, but Sarnia refinery, yes, had family picnics every summer, and we would go to those. And, I guess, Montreal, yes, I can remember going to some gathering or other there.

AD: Did this continue here with Syncrude? I mean, was there this sense of camaraderie or not?

JL: I don't know of any family gatherings with Syncrude.

AD: So that the corporate culture really had changed, would you say?

JL: Well, I guess now they have Christmas parties, now that there are more people. They have Christmas parties for children, and maybe it was just when ours were at an age that they weren't into Christmas parties. So, I guess, I hadn't better make any real comment about that. But they had some social gatherings yes.

AD: So how did you connect with Imperial Oil wives? You mentioned, you came back to Edmonton. How did that connection happen?

JL: Well, I don't know. I was just thinking who was here at the time. Bu, yes, there were Imperial people here that we knew.

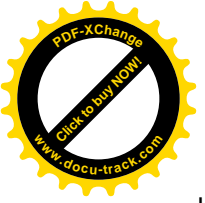
AD: And, you made those connections, those social connections, yourself. They didn't happen through ...

JL: Well, through prior friendships, I guess. People, there were Imperial Oil people here that we had been friends with in Montreal and Sarnia. So it was ... Some we already knew from the past.

AD: Now, in terms of the oil sands, of course, I'm sure you've continued to track their development and progress. I mean, do you have any observations or thoughts, I mean, since through your husband being involved in the early days?



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JL: Well, certainly it's become much more in the public eye, and there are so many more companies involved. And Fort McMurray now instead of being 15 thousand, which was kind of at the peak when we were there, it's close to a hundred thousand. So it's really quite amazing how it has expanded.

AD: Have you gone back to visit?

JL: Not for a few years.

AD: But you did go back?

JL: Yes. Well, we were back for the occasion when the Native employees asked Neil back and had an evening that we were invited to. Yes, I was back for that occasion.

AD: Can you tell me a bit about that evening and ...

JL: Well, it was certainly nice that they were appreciative of the early efforts of people like Neil and Terry to encourage their employment. And, as I said, they had a video showing the people driving the big trucks and working at the plant. And, then, they had little gifts to give to Neil and Terry and I've forgotten who else was there, but ...

AD: How long ago was that?

JL: Oh, I don't know quite a few, many years ago.

AD: So that they, the Aboriginal community, appreciated that pioneering work.

JL: Yes, yes, probably now it's all forgotten, but at that time there were people that knew there were people who had pushed for Native employment.

AD: And was Spragins promoting Aboriginal employment?

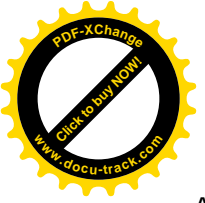
JL: I have no idea.

AD: But you knew that Neil and Terry Garvin were really ...

JL: Oh yes, because it was when we were in Edmonton that Neil would go off for a day or two days to visit the various outlying native communities.



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AD: So it actually started before he even went up ...

JL: Oh yes.

AD: for those two years there.

JL: Oh yes.

AD: That's, that's really intriguing actually. Is there anything else that, you know, that you'd like to share with me, either about your experience in Fort McMurray or other experiences in the industry.

JL: I think we've fairly well covered things ... It was an interesting time, and I think more so because there were so many people who came from different places and of course that's still going on, even more so.

AD: So if you had your life to live over again, you would want that experience.

JL: Oh, I don't know about that. You can't live your life over again, so there's no point even considering it.

AD: Well, then thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed and for giving me a perspective, you know, a woman's perspective.

JL: Well, you've brought back some interesting memories of the activities and the people involved. So, thank you.

AD: Okay, I think we're done. Good.

JL: You'll unhitch me.

AD: Well, once Neil ... [taping ends].

Outside voice [videographer]: I'll just step around.

Neil Lund: Oh you're hooked up. Oh, oh.

AD: Don't worry.



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Outside voice [videographer]: And hold on one sec.

NL: Do you want me to turn that around so you can ...?

Outside voice[videographer] : Sure, beautiful shots right there.

AD: So, Neil, I gather that the Aboriginal community recognized your contribution to pioneering work with respect to recruiting Aboriginal people into the Syncrude workforce. Do you want to tell me a bit about that plaque?

NL: Well, it was in celebration of 25 years of native development. The gathering occurred in 2003, and I was only one of several Syncrude people who were invited to Fort McMurray to a very pleasant gathering. This was the, what do you call it, memorial ...

AD: Yes, the remembrance.

NL: The remembrance which was given to the guests.

AD: And who were the other Syncrude people?

NL: I don't remember.

AD: Terry Garvin.

NL: I think Terry Garvin either was there or should have been there, but I don't really remember. I remember that one of the ladies that we sat with, Mariella Sneddon, was an employee of Syncrude. She was a nurse and a local Native lady.

AD: Now, so you ... when did you begin this work in terms of Aboriginal recruitment? That was before you went up to Fort McMurray. Correct?

NL: Well, we attempted to contact some Native groups with the thought of initiating employment talks and we got various results. Generally speaking, the Native chiefs, the heads of the groups, in the various areas, were not happy at the thought of their young, educated people leaving them. And I guess there's been more success in trying to move some of the work to the Natives rather than moving the Natives to the work.



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AD: Well, thank you so much for sharing, because Syncrude certainly has been a applauded in terms of encouraging Aboriginal entrepreneurship and also employment, so it's nice to know that these initiatives happened in when you were involved in the construction and commissioning of the plant.

NL: I hope it continues.

AD: Thanks so much.

AD: These things get lost.

JL: Well, the companies aren't doing archives any more, so that it's nice you are doing this work.

[Conversation out of hearing.]

AD: Yes, we know we're doing it at the right time and we're persevering, so that if you have any names that you remember, particularly in the Edmonton area, or Calgary area, because that's easiest.

NL: I think I mentioned some that came to mind, but you already had them. Some of them you'd interviewed already.

AD: Ya, I had a wonderful interview with Ron [Gray], incidentally.

NL: Well, he goes a way back.

AD: Well, City Services, I mean, way, way back. And he's a historian of the industry as well, so he fills in all sorts of stuff. [Break in recording]

AD: Who's number two [laughter]. It's a tossup. So it was good. And I mean the whole research aspect, the presentations to the Energy Resources Conservation Board, I mean all of that. The prep for that, and, as he said, you start, and then you had to go back to the bench, the laboratory. So it was back and forth, so it was really very, very, very interesting. So, as I was saying to Jean, to me it's like I'm working on a gigantic jigsaw puzzle

NL: Well, that's because two peoples' recollections of the same event can be diametrically opposite.



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AD: Well, I haven't had any Well, actually, I mean, the one thing is the whole shift to, you know, the whole shift to truck and shovel and so on, on the Suncor side. There are different people ... I mean, of course, the CEOs, of course, take credit whereas, of course, it generally came up you know as an idea ...

NL: The big thing with truck and shovel was the manufacturers of trucks and the manufacturers of shovels both got bigger and bigger.

AD: Exactly

NL: Whereas the excavators ...

AD: The move away from draglines, I mean ...

NL: Well, the draglines were already about as big as ... [recording ends]



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