

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: John Ballachey

INTERVIEWER: Susan Birley

DATE: October 1984

SB: It's October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1984 and this is Susan Birley interviewing John Ballachey. Mr. Ballachey, I wonder if first of all you could give us an idea of when and where you were born and raised and a little bit about your early background?

JB: I was born in High River, Alberta on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1918. I went to school in High River through high school and I followed that up by going to Mt. Royal College for a year in 1937, '38.

SB: What was it like growing up in High River, was there a lot of oilfield activity around then?

JB: We were quite close to the Turner Valley field and of course, that was the heyday of the Turner Valley field. The whole are of course, was lit up by the flares. Being that close to the field we were very conscious of it from our earliest days.

SB: Did you spend much time going around to the rigs or anything like that, as a boy?

JB: Not really. When I was in high school I used to go up to Okotoks on Saturdays and unload drilling bits from railroad cars for the, I believe it was, Oilwell Supply Co. in those days. That would be in the early 30's.

SB: And was there a school in High River, or where did you go to school.

JB: Yes, there was a high school in High River. It was a self-contained community. Much more so than it is today. The roads were not such that you could travel too easily to the larger centres.

SB: So it was smaller than Okotoks?

JB: No, it was a larger community than Okotoks. It was about 1,200-1,500 in those days. Not much larger.

SB: Were there other people in school with you that stayed in the industry do you remember?

JB: I don't recall anybody in particular that stayed in the industry. High River was not an oil town, it was a ranching community, but it was close to Turner Valley.

SB: So I guess when times were slow people who worked on the farms could go and work on drilling rigs, did that happen very often?

JB: I'm not too sure it did in those days, yes, to some degree. Later on of course, in later years, that was quite a common thing for farmers to spend their winters working as roughnecks on drilling rigs. But I think that came sort of at a later era.

SB: How did the farmer and ranching community view the oil community, did they see it as something beneficial?

JB: Oh yes, I don't recall any particular problems at all in those days. The oil industry was quite small apart from Turner Valley. There wasn't really very much activity. And the farmers and ranchers in general accepted it, I think there were very friendly relations.

SB: And you went to Mt. Royal College, did you have something in mind that you were going to study?

JB: Probably law. My father was a lawyer and I think that was where I was headed.

#040 SB: And did you stay with it very long?

JB: No. After a year at Mt. Royal I went out to a ranch that my father owned at Nikisko, which was southwest of High River, next to the Bar U Ranch, which in turn was next to the Prince Wales Ranch. I spent a good deal of time out there. I had applied at that time for a short service commission in the Royal Air Force and had been accepted. I was waiting to be called, actually, when the war broke out on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1939.

SB: So were you drafted into the service then?

JB: No, no, at that particular time I went to the recruiting office for the Air Force and they said that they didn't need anybody at that particular time and they would let me know when I was needed. So it so happened that a friend of mine, Jim Drumheller, had been working with the Haliburton Oilwell Cementing Co. and he was leaving, I believe, to probably go back to University of Oklahoma. He was taking petroleum engineering. So there was an opening in the Haliburton company and I just went in there and went to work with them. That was in Black Diamond.

SB: What was your first job with them?

JB: Just a truck driver, cement truck driver and an acid truck driver and just sort of a general helper with testing and electric logging and all of the various functions that were performed by Haliburton.

SB: Was it a very large company at that time?

JB: Not in Canada, no, there were very few people. Mr. Dick Gibbons was the manager here, then Ken Doze had just left at the time I went to work for Haliburton, and Bill Dyson was with them, Lyle Thorn, Jack Pettinger and Shorty Smith, I think it was J. H. Smith, Shorty was his nickname. Shorty was a great character, very, very well known, in those days was well known in the oil industry.

SB: He'd started out earlier than other people?

JB: Oh yes, Shorty had been with the Haliburton Co. for many years when I started.

SB: Did any of those people come with Haliburton from the States?

JB: None of those people that I have mentioned, with the exception of Ken Doze, who came up from the States. But he had left Haliburton just about the time that I came. And Dick Gibbons, excuse me, Dick Gibbons of course, came up from Oklahoma.

SB: Had he set up Haliburton's office in Canada or was it set up already?

JB: No, Shorty Smith I believe, and one of the Haliburton's, I believe it was one of the Haliburton's that had come up earlier and was killed in a truck accident, were there long before Dick Gibbons came up. But Dick Gibbons came up to take over the operations.

SB: How was he as a manager?

JB: A very fine person, very highly regarded. He and Mrs. Gibbons were well liked and highly regarded.

SB: How many trucks did they have at that time?

JB: We had one big cement truck with steam pumps and I think there was a portable unit with

steam pumps. Then they had an acidizing truck and if I remember correctly, I believe we just had the one cement truck and an electric well logging truck. I could be wrong about that but as I recall it, that's how it was.

#088 SB: Had well logging been in use that much in, I guess that would have been the late 30's?

JB: This would be in '39 that I started with Haliburton. Yes, electric logging had been. . . compared to today's standards it was pretty primitive but it had been in used for quite some time. I think Lane Wells had been in here before that.

SB: And were there any other competitors, besides Lane Wells?

JB: Dow of course, ??? a subsidiary of the Dow Corporation. They were very, very active in the acidizing and cementing. Not in well logging as I recall.

SB: So was there a lot of activity at that time, when you started?

JB: Yes, there was a lot of activity. Well, there was a lot of activity in Turner Valley, particularly in the south end and in the north end. And there were, in the outlying areas there was quite a lot of activity up in the Lloydminster area, in the heavy oil and Wainwright. And in Taber, and then over in the Brooks area, east of Brooks and north of Brooks, in the Princess area. Standard Oil of British Columbia, which is Standard Oil of California, they were pretty active in the Princess area, east of Brooks, they drilled a lot of wells.

SB: And I guess at that time, most of the companies were just wildcatting were they, exploring wherever they thought there was a likely prospect?

JB: Pretty much, although there were some small fields like Taber that they were developing. But generally speaking it was pretty much exploratory work.

SB: And that was your main focus was working on wells, were there any other unusual applications of your services?

JB: No, at that time you just took a day off when there wasn't anything to do. If you had to work 7 days a week you worked, and you worked right through till the job was completed. There was no such thing as an 8 hour day or a 5 day week.

SB: So you'd be on hand to cement in the casing and doing all the testing, things like that?

JB: Whatever I was required for.

SB: You must have done a lot of travelling on the road during that period.

JB: Oh yes, a tremendous amount of travelling. We were all over, from Black Diamond, to Taber, to Vermillion, Brooks, just where there was work we were called.

SB: Were the roads in particularly bad shape?

JB: Yes, the roads were pretty bad. I don't believe there were any paved highways. Just the sections through the cities were paved. In Edmonton even the side streets were dirt at that time, you could get stuck right off Jasper Ave. if you weren't careful. Calgary had the main street through Calgary, from the south to the north, that was paved but the rest of it, they called them gravel roads. They were gravel in dry weather and they were just nothing but mud and quagmire in wet weather. The road between here and Brooks was particularly bad in wet weather.

#134 SB: If you got stuck what would you be able to do to get out?

JB: The big trucks were 4 wheel drive vehicles, FWD's, and one way or another, it might take awhile but you were able to get going.

SB: You couldn't call up a tow truck or anything?

JB: It would take a pretty good tow truck to get them out. Sometimes we would have to use cats.

SB: Do you remember any of the companies particularly, that you did a lot of work for? I guess Drilling Contractors would have been one, with Ralph Will.

JB: Yes, we did a lot of work of course, for Ralph Will. I consider Ralph a very, very close friend. He helped me a great deal when I was starting. Ralph probably was one of the most knowledgeable well men in the country and a very fine individual. He's of course, still here in Calgary, spends a good deal of his time here. And there were people like Gene Denton, later Denton, Spencer, Cody Spencer. Then there were several people, tool pushers like Little Red Young. He came up here I think, with Dominion Drilling from Wyoming. No, that was Ralph Dinning, excuse me, Little Red Young was another character here in the early days. There were just so many people. At that time, in 1939 and '40, you pretty well knew, not only did you know all the supervisors and the people in the companies but you know all the drillers and most all of the roughnecks. It was a very friendly atmosphere. Wherever you went you were among friends. It's changed today I think.

SB: I notice a lot of the drillers and things like that had nicknames as well, I guess that's sort of a sign that it was a really close community at that time. Do you remember, were any of the rig builders still working at the time?

JB: Yes, there were rig builders. Oh yes, my goodness there were rig builders.

SB: Did you come across Shorty Mann at all?

JB: Shorty Mann, yes, I knew him. He was one of the early people. There was another family who were rig builders, the Matlock family, they were quite well known in Black Diamond at that time. I might also mention that prior to going to work for Haliburton, you asked me if there were any associations with the oil industry, occasionally we used to go out to, when I was in high school, we'd be called to go out to roughneck on the cable tool rigs. There were still cable tool rigs of course, back in the mid 30's and we'd be called out to roughneck on these and run casing and this sort of thing, which was pretty interesting. Interesting to look back on, I don't know how interesting it was at the time. We made a few dollars, a little spending money.

#179 SB: It sounds like it was a lot harder work than it is today, working on a rig.

JB: I wouldn't say that. The conditions for the workers were not too much different. There are some pretty rough conditions today too. On days like this when it's 26 below zero in October.

SB: When you were working on any of these rigs, or around them, were there every any mishaps that you were involved with or you were in the area? There was always wells blowing wild, I guess they used to bring wells in differently then, a gusher would be an indication that there was production.

JB: In the spring of 1940 there was an interesting, in some ways, blow out in the Princess area. There was a well being drilled by Drilling Contractors, for Standard Oil of B.C. John Galloway at that time, headed up Standard Oil Co. here. This was a well called CPR, Princess #1. It was just southeast of the town of Patricia, east and a little bit north of Brooks. That well blew out on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February in 1940. Some of the people involved in that particular event were Gene Denton of course, with Denton Spencer, then there was Chuck Bradford, who was up here with the California Standard Co. from San Francisco. And Little Red Young was the tool pusher and one of the drillers, I can't remember all of the drillers or all of the roughnecks on that well but one of the drillers was Mac Muir???, who was very, very well known at that time, a very fine person. Drilling Contractors had a first aid shack and a man who was there, a representative, a man by the name of Joe Milner Sr., you asked about nicknames, I don't think he was called it to his face but he was known as Iodine Dick. That well blew wild, most of the pipe was out of the hole, I think they were drilling at about 5,000' at the time, and they encountered this high pressure gas zone. They pulled all of the pipe eventually but the drill collars. The pressure

#219 of the gas was trying to lift up the drill collars and about all that was holding them in the hole were the rams, they had the rams closed on them. This gas, they had various estimates, it was a very high pressure gas and very large volumes, I heard estimates of anywhere from 40-60 million, but you can usually discount that by about 50%. Anyway, it really was quite a blowout and you could see it and hear it from many, many miles when you were approaching a well. But that went on for quite some time and I happened to be with the Haliburton Co. in one of our pumping trucks and Jack Pettinger, who was the cementer, the operator with Haliburton at the time. We were there for days, pumping materials into the hole. Very cold and nasty at that time. But eventually, they wanted to get the drill collars out and they had them snubbed down with some James and Reimer trucks. They had cables holding the drill collars down. At some point in time, I forget just exactly what day it was, they were trying to ease these drill collars out and as they started to open the rams the pressure of the gas just lifted the drill collars right out of the hole. There was a pulling ??? on the top, which caught the edge of the derrick as it came out and it just ripped the whole side of the derrick out. Of course, there was close to 5,000' of drill pipe standing in the derrick and the whole thing collapsed. Jack Pettinger and I were standing just a short distance away watching it and it was quite interesting. The crown fell right on top of the catwalk, and there were 2 of the roughnecks who were running, trying to escape the falling rig, looked back and they could see that they wouldn't, so they dove under the end of the catwalk. There were great tremendous wooden blocks in those days, holding up the end of the catwalk and they came out unscathed, although the crown fell right on top of where they were. But there were some sad features about it, there was a man by the name of Red Marshall, who was one of the roughnecks, he got caught in the substructure when the derrick went over and he came crawling out through all this mud and dirt and everything and he had a broken thigh. He was taken to hospital and died a few weeks later. Then there was another man by the name of Riley Austin, he was a roughneck whose nickname was T-Bone. When we had sort of a rollcall and collected

everybody to see if anybody was missing, sure enough T-Bone Riley was mission. So we went up on through the wreckage up on to the rig floor and there was T-Bone with his hand caught in between 2 joints of drill pipe. This gas that was coming up, blowing wild, was blowing right up past his arm and his hand. A group of us tried to release him and we weren't able to get him out. At the time we were concerned about fire, which is always the big hazard. So there was nothing we could do but a group just grabbed T-Bone's arm and just pulled. We got him out of there but it took all the skin and flesh off the palm of his hand and subsequently they had to take his arm off. But he got along fine after that, he was around the oilfields for many, many years and maybe still for all I know. Then there was another man by the name of Andy Flood, I think he was Riley Austin's brother-in-law, he had a minor injury. But basically that was . . .

#292 SB: So you were fairly lucky then, that. . .

JB: But all the time the well had blown we were working with brass tools to avoid sparks and working with the utmost care to avoid having any accident, having it catch fire. And some time later they were testing this gas and they found it to be inert. But we didn't know that at the time. So generally speaking, that was sort of the story of the CPR Princess #1. It was finally brought under control on about the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, 1940. I believe it was Jack Pettinger and someone else with Haliburton were on the well at that time, I wasn't there when they brought it under control.

SB: Did they have blow out preventors at that time on most wells?

JB: Not like they do today. I'm not sure, it's so long ago, I forget just exactly what they had. But they didn't have the sophisticated equipment they do today.

SB: And was that a cable tool or rotary rig?

JB: No, that was rotary. The only cable tools at that time, that was in 1930, '40, the only cable tool rigs as I recall, were down in the Taber area.

SB: Did you have very many cases where people would go unconscious from sour gas or anything like that?

JB: There were a few of those. I was never associated directly with them. Oh yes, there were quite a few of those accidents. I can't recall. I recall one in Turner Valley but I know there were quite a few of them. They dug these cellars and they used to go down in there and somebody would fall unconscious and somebody else would go to help them out and of course, they'd both go.

SB: Did they ever supply gas masks or anything like that?

JB: I think it was much different then than it is today.

SB: They just had to try to make do with what they had?

JB: That's right. I don't recall any particular equipment that was used. You just sort of tried to stay away and avoid that, you knew it was there and you tried to avoid it.

End of tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

SB: I was just going to get some idea of where you lived in Turner Valley and what the social

life was like?

JB: It was a pretty active spot at that time. The main centre would be Turner Valley and Black Diamond but there were also some pretty active communities. Hartel was pretty active and then there was Little Chicago and Little New York. They were at the south end of the field and they were very, very active in those days. There was plenty of activity of every type. I stayed in a boarding house when I was in Black Diamond, when I wasn't out in the field somewhere, a boarding house that was run by a woman by the name of Mrs. Blue. There was a man helping here, sort of did all the heavier work, a man by the name of Jim Leslie. They were very, very well known people in the early days. Then of course, there were a lot of drillers and people like that, that worked in the field, that were living in the same boarding house.

SB: Do you remember how much you paid?

JB: Oh golly, no. Practically nothing compared to what you would today. I forget the figure but it was pretty small but of course, we weren't paid very much. I think I was paid something like, probably, \$125 a month with Haliburton so you couldn't pay very much board and room and have anything left over. But we got along fine, you could live on that. There was no overtime, nothing like that.

#039 SB: But I guess you were just glad to have a job so you stuck with it.

JB: Oh my goodness, you had to have a job. And it was interesting work and there were a lot of good people. I look back on it as being a very wonderful period.

SB: Do you remember, you were fairly young when the 1924 strike occurred but did you notice, I guess your family would have noticed when the Depression hit and families moved out of the area. Do you remember much about that?

JB: That was a little later on, that was 1929, '30. Oh yes, that was a pretty rough time for everyone. And not only was it the Depression but a series of very, very dry years. That's a whole other story altogether. There was a tremendous amount of suffering, and the dust storms we used to have. You couldn't even drive a car, you couldn't see to drive. There were a lot of bad years, I don't know how people really put up with them.

SB: I guess as the oil industry began to improve, towards the end of the 30's did it?

JB: Things picked up.

SB: And people came back into the area?

JB: Oh yes, things picked up quite a lot. I think the oil industry made a tremendous difference, it at least created some jobs for people.

SB: Did you have much to do with Royalite or the larger . . .

JB: Oh yes, I used to know quite a few of the people, I must say we probably knew virtually all of the people associated with all of those companies in those days. And there weren't very many in total.

SB: Did you go to any of the Turner Valley Oilers games?

JB: Oh yes, they had a great hockey team in the old Allen Cup days. They had a good hockey team. And the High River Flyers too. At one time they had the Turner Valley Oilers and the Drumheller Miners, well, that's another era.

SB: I guess that was one thing people could do though, is go to hockey games. I heard they'd

go to Saturday night dances and things like that as well. So you eventually went into the Air Force?

JB: Yes, I joined the Canadian Air Force and eventually became a pilot. Then I was an instructor in Ontario for a period of time, then I went overseas. When I was overseas I was attached to the Royal Air Force for operational duty. I was with the RAF Squadron #107. We flew the Mark 6 Mosquito, which was a fighter bomber. And took part in a lot of the activity over there, D-Day and the what was known as the Battle of Arnum. Looking back on it, it was an interesting period of my life. Then when I came back from overseas, I was stationed at #3 SFTS in Calgary. At that time they were converting, on the Cessna Crane, which was a twin engine training craft, on to the Harvard, which was a single engine plane. I was in the conversion flight. I had to help to convert several of the instructors, who also were friends of mine, Bob Brownridge, Archie Wilder, Smoky Stover, and many, many others. Then following my service in the Air Force I went back with Haliburton. That would be in the spring of 1945. I spent most of the summer of '45 in Taber and boarded at that time with a man by the name of Roger Bannister, and Kay Bannister.. He worked for Haliburton as well, they were from the Bannister family of Okotoks.

#092 SB: Was that the same family as Ron Bannister?

JB: Yes, same family. I had a wonderful summer. That was the year I got married, then I went back to university in the fall of '45. Went up to the University of Alberta in Edmonton to take law.

SB: Did you go through with it, finish your degree?

JB: Oh yes, I graduated in 1949. But during my summers while at university, as soon as I would be through with my classes in the spring I would immediately go to work with Haliburton and spend the summers with Haliburton. Then when classes started in the fall I would just go back to school. It was a tremendous help to me, both financially, just having a job in the summer was a great thing.

SB: I guess just keeping in touch with the industry was an advantage too.

JB: My goodness yes, it was just great. When the Leduc field was discovered, in the spring of 1947, I was field man for Haliburton in the Leduc area. Then in '48, the Redwater field was discovered so I was field man for the Leduc area and the Redwater area for Haliburton.

SB: Had you noticed much of a change between when you left Haliburton to go to war and when you came back? Was there any change in the amount of activity going on in the field or anything like that?

JB: Not really, the big change didn't really take place until Imperial Oil discovered the Leduc field.

SB: Had drilling activity dropped off very much?

JB: No, I think it started to pick up about then. I don't know what happened during the war years. I was away for a good period of time so I don't really know what happened then. But when I came back there certainly was enough activity to keep everybody on their toes.

SB: Did you ever know of any companies that were associated with Wartime Oils or did you ever do any work for them in Turner Valley?

JB: No. I don't recall anything like that.

SB: Do you remember ever running into Garnet Edwards?

JB: Yes, I do. There were a number of people that I recall.

#129 SB: So around the time of Leduc you were still working for Haliburton, do you remember the actual event?

JB: I do remember very, very well when Imperial were drilling the Leduc discovery well. I believe if I'm not mistaken Imperial had drilled somewhere in the neighbourhood of 125 wells probably, without any success. It so happened I was just on one of my rounds one day and I happened to be driving by the Imperial well at Leduc and I noticed that they had production tanks on the lease. Immediately of course, that was something that was a little unusual. So I stopped in to see what was going on. I don't recall who the engineer was but he was somebody I knew, a good friend of mine and I asked him what was happening. He said, hell, we've got an oil discovery here. Of course, that was pretty interesting but the public announcement didn't come for some time after that.

SB: Did they want to, do you think, control the amount of companies that would be going in and buy an interest in the area?

JB: Oh no, I think it was more they were just doing some testing. They didn't like to give too much information until they were sure of what was going on, what they had. Of course, that really caused a great commotion in the oil industry.

SB: I guess in just a short time there were a lot more rigs in the area of Leduc?

JB: There were a lot of rigs came in after that, and a great land play of people all over trying to buy leases, a lot of drilling activity.

#153 SB: Do you remember the Atlantic 3 blowout, were you involved with that at all?

JB: I do, I remember that very well. I was somewhat closely involved with that one. Atlantic 3, that was a well drilled by a company owned by Frank McMahon. Denton and Spencer were the engineers on that well, and Clarence Matthews, who's dead now, Clarence was the engineer on the job at the time. Lord Stafford was pushing tools. They had a lost circulation problem. I wasn't actually involved too closely at this stage, although I do remember being there on occasion. But the Haliburton company was called in and they tried to set a lot of cement plugs so they could get through this lost circulation zone. They just couldn't get the plugs to set so that they could regain circulation. So there was a decision made that they would drill through this lost circulation zone dry, and Lord Stafford, who was a tool push at the time was very, very much against it. But anyway, they did go ahead and drill. Of course, when they drilled through they lost their mud and the well blew out. From that point on there was considerable excitement. Haliburton Co. brought up a man by the name of Cy O'Donnell, who was sort of a specialist in this type of work, he came up from Texas. One of the measures they took to try and kill the well was, they pumped about 10,000 sacks of cement into the well, hoping it would set up and they could control it. It was unsuccessful but I think they had about 6 Haliburton trucks

and 2 Dow trucks pumping this 10,000 sacks of cement. They didn't have ??? in those days. It was a pretty big job. And they pumped everything they could think of into that hole, cotton, cotton seed hulls, my goodness, just about everything. I can remember, when I first was assigned to the job on a full time basis by Haliburton, Tip Maroney and Charlie Visser, of Imperial Oil, had been given the job of controlling this well, by the provincial government. They were given a free hand. Tip Maroney insisted that he could have no interference from any of the government people. So he was given that authority and Haliburton assigned me to work with Tip and Charlie and to stay with them 24 hours a day, so that if they needed a Haliburton truck or any service at all, we were right there, ready to go. One of the things I remember was crawling around under the substructure with all this oil coming up everywhere. It was quite an experience to see this. Then of course, a little later on the gas cratered up through the ground, I suppose over most of the . . . well, certainly all over the lease. Wherever you walked there was gas coming up through the ground. Looking back on it, it was an extremely dangerous time but nobody seemed to worry too much about it then. Although you kept your vehicles well away from the area so that there were no danger of fire from exhaust.

#210 SB: I guess activity shut down in the rest of the field more or less, did it, while this was going on?

JB: Not so much that. They started to drill 2 relief wells to try to control it. One relief well was on the south side of the lease, as close as they could get and the other relief well was on the west. I don't believe that the well on the west, I don't think it ever reached the required depth to intercept the wild well until, I don't think it ever did. I think they used the south well for killing the well eventually. When they drilled this south relief well they brought a man in by the name of Andy Hamilton, from Dallas. Andy had a product called Cal-Seal???, which is a gypsum product which, you could control the setting time. They pumped Cal-Seal in from the south relief well and it was timed to set just as it entered into the main well bore on the well that was blowing wild. I happen to remember, I was watching the pumps at the time and the Cal-Seal started to set and it set very quickly and you could just see the pressure on the pump gauge going up, until just finally you couldn't pump anymore. That was how they killed the well. But it was a long process.

SB: I guess you would have known Spi Langston and people like Lyle Caspol???, they were both on the well the whole time.

JB: Oh very well, yes. Well, you knew pretty well everybody in the industry then. But when the well caught fire at the time I happened to be in Edmonton. We were having dinner in the evening and we could look right out southwest, across the river, to the Leduc field. This was towards the end of August. Jack Pettinger had gone down to the States and his wife Edith and their 2 boys were having dinner with my wife and me and we just were sitting there, looking out southwest and all of a sudden we saw this well catch fire. So we just jumped in the car and went out there.

#256 SB: I guess in a way, that was a relief, when it did catch fire it diminished the danger did it?

JB: Well, it was very fortunate that there weren't people injured.

SB: Yes. I guess from what I've heard Clarence Matthews took it very, not personally, but he felt very responsible for it as well.

JB: Well, I don't know. I expect he probably did. Somebody made the decision to drill through the zone dry and it just so happened that it blew out.

SB: Did it make the other operators in the field more careful, did they know what to look out for?

JB: Any accident like that does, of course. You build on that.

SB: How many Haliburton people were involved the whole time, besides yourself?

JB: Off and on, there were people like Pettinger and Percy Davis and Dick Gibbons. I suppose generally speaking probably. . .well, Paul Beddard, Pettinger and people like that who were with Haliburton, off and on they would have took part in it.

SB: At that time had Haliburton established an office in Edmonton as well as Calgary?

JB: Oh yes. Haliburton had offices in Edmonton, out at the Municipal Airport as I recall. Perhaps it might have been at the Railhead at that time, certainly the head offices.

#286 SB: I guess after that you were more or less getting into your law career were you?

JB: Not in the summers. No, that was full time Haliburton in the summers. Then I graduated in law in 1949 I expect it was, and I came to Calgary. I articulated for Mr. Burnett of the firm, at that time it would be the firm of Burnett, Hazleton and McNeill, it's now the firm of Burnett, Duckworth. Mr. Burnett had been a partner of my father's. My father was a senior partner of the firm, Mr. Burnett was his partner. I articulated under Mr. Burnett and my brother-in-law, John McNeill was associated with the firm at that time. He subsequently went down with Trans Canada Pipelines to Toronto and then later became president of the Great Lakes Pipeline Co. in Detroit. While I was associated with the Burnett, McNeill firm, I was only there 2 years, I had been persuaded by a man by the name of Bernie Sturrick, he suggested to me one day in Edmonton that I should start up some sort of a servicing company in the oil industry. With my background I of course, felt the same way. And we looked at various things, we looked at the possibility of a cementing company. George Davis, he was a Haliburton man who was a good friend of mine, he and I talked about that. And I knew Paul Boland very well at the time, Paul of course had Regent Drilling. He was very encouraging, he told us if we could start cementing he'd certainly give us every bit of support that he could. Incidentally Paul died, his funeral is today. So as it turned out, we did not start a cementing company, although we went into it pretty deeply. But I did start a well servicing company. I became involved with a man by the name of George Ward, who is now a partner of mine in the business and a good friend. He and a man by the name of Roy George and I and Jim Drumheller started a servicing company which we called Redwell Servicing Co. Primarily most of our business was in the Redwater field at the time.

End of tape.

SB: Most of your activity was in the Redwater field then?

JB: And the Leduc field, in that area. And shortly after that we decided that we would get into the drilling business. So we bought a Cardwell drilling unit and our association with Imperial was such that Tip Maroney and Charlie Visser kept our drilling rig busy in those early years. They were very, very helpful. So that drilling company is called Bighorn Drilling. Subsequently an English group bought my interest out completely. Roy George dropped out completely and George Ward and Jim Drumheller stayed in with minor interests and operated both the servicing company and the drilling company.

SB: Did you have much to do with Eric Harvie in the Redwater field, Western Leaseholds or their operation?

JB: We didn't have too much to do directly with them, although Mr. Harvie had been a friend of my father's and I knew him very well and used to see him occasionally at various times. Of course, I knew his son Don very well. No direct connection in so far as doing work for them or anything, no direct connection.

SB: Were there any major events in the Redwater field that you can remember, or was it mostly straight forward?

JB: Pretty well straight forward. There are other people that could tell you a lot more about the Redwater area than I can. That was sort of towards the end of my career with the Haliburton Co. up there. I do remember when the oil came in. Haliburton people, our testers were on that job. I can remember getting a phone call in Edmonton, probably 2:00 in the morning from the tester just letting me know of the discovery there, which was pretty interesting.

SB: So after that I imagine a lot more drilling companies became involved did they, with Leduc and then Redwater?

JB: Oh yes. Union Drilling with Bill ??? and oh, yes there were many, many drilling companies.

SB: I guess, were there a lot of promoters that sprang up around the Redwater field?

JB: Oh yes. I don't recall any details but there were many of them.

#034 SB: So you didn't really stay in law very much at that time. Had you done any work with the law firm for any oil companies or was there much involvement with that?

JB: No, not really. After about 2 years in the law firm, I remember when I was practising law Grant Spratt who then was with Canadian. . .

SB: Anglo Canadian?

JB: Anglo Canadian. . .Canadian Oil Companies I guess. He asked me if I would join their company, Herb Bagnall I think, was with them at the time. I didn't go with them. On another occasion I remember Marsh Porter, Mr. Justice Porter he later was, and Major Lowry who at that time owned Home Oil, they came over to, they interviewed me and asked me to join Home Oil, which I again, didn't do. But just about that time I had an opportunity to go with what was then the Western Canadian Petroleum Association. I knew several of the directors in that group, Ralph Will and people like that. I was persuaded by the money involved, which was a lot more than I was getting paid in the law office. Because of the work, I thought I would enjoy it with the Western Canadian

Petroleum Association, at that time Bill Oxyer??? who was an Edmonton lawyer, was president. He used to commute from Edmonton to Calgary. Shortly after I joined them, one weekend in Edmonton he went out to his cottage at the lake and whatever happened, the story was that he'd been stung by bees or whatever and he died. Whether it was a reaction or a heart attack I don't know. But I hadn't been with the association very long at that time. Then shortly after that it was changed from the Western Canadian Petroleum Association to the Canadian Petroleum Association.

SB: Do you know how long it had been in existence before you joined them?

JB: No, I don't. Quite a few years. Then I believe, it was Bob Harrison took over from Bill Oxyer and of course, Bob was very, very well known. He'd been with British American, he was a lawyer as well and he took over as manager of the Canadian Petroleum Association offices here. I'd spent some time with. . . I think I spent 3 or 4 years with them.

#073 SB: What was their main activity at that time?

JB: Just association activities, just representing the oil companies, looking after their interests.

SB: Were they mostly the majors that they represented, did people feel that way at that time?

JB: They certainly were, probably they comprised most of the membership would be the majors, I think at that time. But there were people involved like Griff Humphries, who was pretty well known. I was trying to think who else might have been in there that might have been of interest. Ralph Diamond was another young man that was with the Petroleum Association. We used to work very closely with the various committees of the association. It was a great place to get a different perspective of the oil industry.

SB: I guess at that time you were thinking of developing markets and getting exports approved and things like that?

JB: There were all sorts of things like that. Then just about that time, while I was with the association, Premier Manning and a number of the directors of the association were instrumental in forming what was then known as the Alberta Gas Trunk Line Ltd. The theory was that this company would be set up and would build a great trunk line, large diameter pipeline from the north of Alberta, from the Edmonton area, straight down to a point just north of Calgary and then it would turn directly east to the Alberta border and that would be the designated carrier for all gas for export. In theory it was great but it didn't work because the capital cost was too great and there weren't sufficient volumes to justify anybody but the users paying for the total cost. So it just sort of died on the vine so to speak, although the company didn't of course. But that concept did.

SB: At that time were they considering tying it in with Trans Canada Pipelines or had that been. . . ?

JB: Yes, that was the idea.

SB: And had Trans Canada been approved at that point?

JB: I'm sure it had. The main purpose of the Alberta Gas Trunk Line Co. was to maintain control of the gas in Alberta, both price wise and production wise. Under the provisions of the British North America Act there was a concern on the part of Premier Manning and

his government that the federal government might exercise control right back to the wellhead. Trunk Line was designed to prevent that from happening. There are lots of various opinions on that, whether or not he was correct or not. But in any event, that did not happen.

#115 SB: So they wanted to. . . is that when the provincial government started establishing some kind of control over production and unitization and things like that.

JB: Generally speaking. When the Alberta Gas Trunk Line Co. was started, Ralph Will I believe at the time, was chairman. Certainly he was instrumental in establishing the company, under Manning's guidance. He asked me if I would join that company. I really didn't have an awful lot of choice, I was more or less drafted into it. And Bill Connode was going to be the general manager of the company. Bill Connode of course, I'm sure that there are many people that you've interviewed have mentioned him. He came up here, he was the first chairman of the Conservation Board in Alberta and he had been with the Texas Railroad Commission prior to that. A very, very colourful individual. Anyway, I was to be assistant to Bill Connode, who was the general manager. But I didn't go from the Petroleum Association directly at the time it was formed because they were waiting until it was established, so I stayed right with the Petroleum Association until there was a need for me to go into Alberta Gas Trunk Line. At that time Bill Connode, as one of his people over there he had a man by the name of Don Macleod. Don was with Alberta Gas Trunk Line for many, many years. He's retired from that company now, he's associated with Petro Canada at the moment. So that was a very interesting period of time.

SB: Do you remember, were they involved at all in going to Ottawa and lobbying the federal government to help bring about these changes in marketing and export?

JB: In the early years of Trunk Line yes. They were involved very much in these hearings in Ottawa and Washington. We grew quite rapidly, from nothing to a very, very major company, in the matter of a few years. We had to support the applications of Trans Canada Pipelines in Alberta and in Ottawa, and in Washington. As well as the Alberta Southern Group, when they started to export gas.

SB: When you were with the Petroleum Association, did you find yourself at cross purposes with IPAC, for instance.

JB: IPAC came in later.

SB: Oh that wasn't established yet?

JB: I'm not sure just when it was established. I remember when it was established but I don't remember the time.

End of tape.