

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Peter Bediz - CSEG Presidency

INTERVIEWER: David Finch

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#015 DF: Today is the 28<sup>th</sup> day of March, in the year 2000 and we are with Mr. Peter Bediz at the offices of the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists in Calgary. My name is David Finch. Can you tell us how you came to be associated with the CSEG?

PB: That's really an outgrowth of the interest one has in his profession. Prior to being in Canada I had been to other places where I joined these associations and I found them very beneficial. They gave me a third dimension of the relationship that you don't ordinarily find in the regular routine sort of work. You have a better understanding among people that you deal with, with your competitors, and with the technical meetings you learn new things, new developments. And the local associations are tied in with the, I'll call it mother company, the Society of Exploration Geophysicists in Tulsa, Oklahoma. These are the main things that makes you interested.

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So when I came here, my first thing was to join, at that time, the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists, ASPG, now it's CSPG. Of course, CSEG, any related associations such as that, due, primarily, to my interest and a selfish interest really. With an association like that you can do a lot of joint deals, such as the blast on . . . some rock they call in B.C.

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There were several seismic crews, it's amazing, I don't know, 21 or 22 seismic crews, that recorded at a distance anywhere from a few miles to several hundred miles. And all the accumulated data was studied and given to the University of Calgary, which was at its infancy more or less, at that time. So you feel like you're part of something being done for the science or the scientific interest, rather than the dollars, which in turn improves the technical knowledge in other areas, that you can apply to commercial areas as well.

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#040 DF: Can you tell us about that blast at Suffield?

PB: Well, it's been a few years ago, I couldn't find my notes on that but you know, they had a . . . government I think it was, experimental entity there. They were doing experimental work . . . on a lot of things and they decided to . . . it was a practice ground for the army. I think they still do it, even they come from Britain to have military exercises. Somehow or other they announced that they were going to have, I don't know how many tons of a

blast, and they informed the industry. I'm trying to think, I gave him the first medal of course, I can't think of his name now, as a contributor.

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One of the awards that we were giving, he got that. Anyway that gentleman was quite interested in it. As far as I can remember he was instrumental in getting us interested. There again, there was a very close harmony between the contractors, beyond the competitive attitude. A thing like that we all cooperated. This gets me back to your first question, if you didn't have an association, this may or may not have been done. The CSEG took the responsibility of organizing it. I forget now, the reason why this blast occurred, it might have been related to army studies. I kind of think it was, I'm not sure.

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#061 DF: What else do you remember from the year you were President, that was what year and what did you do?

PB: It's a good question. First of all, I was extremely pleased to be the President and also then Executive Committee prior and then subsequently to that, to do things that, unfortunately, they have been discontinued, I suppose for good reason. One of them was what we called the public scientific lecture. During my Presidency we had a Dr. C. Beals, Dominion Observatory man, a very distinguished scientist. We had him come to give a public address and we had more than 750 people at the Jubilee Auditorium. The public came in, we didn't charge anything. This was not my invention, the administration before had started this but it was very beneficial. For some reason or another, that is not being done today.

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You know, it's amazing, APEGGA spends maybe, thousands of dollars, advertising, this is the best advertising I can think of and also informative to the public and to the younger people to develop their interest in science similar to this. So that was one thing, another thing was again, the continuation of something George Blunden, who was the President before me, a year or two before me, and it was very commendable stuff. I was at the Executive Committee then. We organized what we called the Doodlebug Spring Dance. It was designed purposely for the field people, who were coming back from a long winter, day after day, working for 100 and so many days. I used to call. . their arrival. . I used to see the seismic crews on the highway, they were coming south when I was going north and jokingly I said, this is like a Dunkirk retreat. The equipment was all beat up and muddy and so on, naturally then we had to repair them and paint and so on and so forth.

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But somehow that beautiful thought of, in effect, thanking the field people for what they have done. And it wasn't easy for anybody to be in the bush for 100+ days and they were there. Like somebody said, maybe you might want to erase this thing, the dark Indians looked quieter and whiter everyday, as time goes on. You know, these were young people. So what happened, I don't know, but it turned out to be a higher level CSEG members dance now. Whereas I'm not sure, but I think, we made it free at that time or at least subsidized it. And the people liked it, it was a good public relations.

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Personally I feel very good about trying to establish a much better relationship among the contractors, among the competitors. When my company gave a party, a Christmas party let's say, something of that sort, I invited my contributors and at first, people were shocked. I said, well, I'm not going to have my company feel superior because my competitor isn't here. We are competitors, I'll compete when he is here as well. Believe it or not, that went real good and there was a much closer relationship. We still competed, don't get me wrong but this also opened the way now, they'll see me having sometimes, having lunch with my competitor, just to have lunch and no other thing. And the gossip. . . you know, Century is going to be merging with . . . the company of that other guy that I was having lunch with. . . that was not true but that wasn't harmful or damaging anything.

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So this is. . . I'm the type of a guy that likes things like this and I think we accomplished that. Not only my term of office, but others too. We at that time, contacted the school children and gave them a booklet about seismic, some ideas about seismic work, exploration, trying to get them interested in our business. We had school teachers go to conventions or some geophysical seismic activity to see what was going on, as our guests. Of course, we had an ulterior motive, for them to go back to the classroom and tell the students, seismic is a good business. That was a better understanding that way. Besides that really. . . the lectures we had. . . we had more than ten and to my amazement, in my term of office, I would say about, at least 75% were by Canadian authors or researchers. That was good at the time. This is all, what I'm saying is in relation to the CSEG. I think that's about all I can think of right now.

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#137 DF: Okay. Can you tell me more about the Doodlebug Golf Tournament, any stories about that?

PB: Yes indeed, I can tell you about that. It was an excellent get together, well organized and organized in a modest fashion, even though we were centered around or in, the Banff Springs Hotel. I think it brought people together. It didn't matter whether you had a high score or low score. You interviewed him, another President, he always won in my competitive time, the first prize and you're now looking at a guy, who invariably every time he played, he got the highest record ever in those tournaments. I was given a machete because I was always in the bushes and they thought with a machete, I could get out of the bushes. It was a lot of fun, it was an excellent social time and there was no terms and conditions, if you want to come, you're welcome. If we had, at that time, more than we could accommodate, we saw to it that we cut here short and . . . to accommodate those people there.

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I think that's one of the greatest things the CSEG had developed and there again, the old timers did that. In the early stages, there was some. . . really, not important, but they tried to make it important. . . friction between the CSEG and the Golf Committee. They thought the Golf Committee was acting too independently, after all, we're paying them x number

of dollars, which we were, a hundred number of dollars. At that time, we didn't have thousands of dollars available, for various reasons, and one of them being, at that time, the provincial requirements of law, required that we do not make any profit. We had to break even, which meant that we were careful about receiving more funds from any sources. We had to spend it, at the end of the year we had to come \$0.00. These things entered in the picture but these were really not important, they were resolved and finally there was a very good harmony between the two groups and understanding. It was a friction that wasn't really called for, not necessary, just human beings I guess.

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#172 DF: The year you were President, you established a Statistics Committee, what was this committee about?

PB: As I recall, statistics on the activity of crews versus the time of the year. This has been and still is the biggest problem in the seismic industry in Canada, the seasonal aspect of the work. What are you going to do with people. My time, if you had 25 crews, you could put them to work in the winter for 3 months. But economically, at the end of the year, you lost money. I'm coming back to the question. .but I, by thinking and experience, I found out I can go . . the number of crews for the winter should be about twice as much as what the crews I could handle in the summer months. In other words, expand only once. If you have four crews in the summer, you could have eight crews, and come out making profit. We had to think about profit as well those days, nowadays too for that matter.

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Statistics, that was one of our main concerns, crew activity. And it was a requirement for SEG, not an official requirement, they were doing that themselves and we had to feed in the information. I think we also touched to the salaries, being very careful as to not divulge anybody's salary or any company's salary. At that time, CPA, Canadian Petroleum Association, they changed their name now, they had a Statistics Committee and we were requested some statistical data and with this committee we were prepared to give them answers instead of guessing. I really am not too certain. . I should say I don't remember exactly what the Statistical Committee did, other than these things.

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You know, in seismic business, we have come a long ways. In my experience of and involvement in, the seismic business, I wasn't the very early ones but I was one of the earlier ones, I worked with seismic records with grey or black background, six traces. Today you have hundreds of traces being used. We graduated from ordinary paper records, to first, analogue recording on tape and then digital recording on tape. With the digital recording on tape we are now doing unbelievable useful things, such as we are applying that even to reservoir engineering. The 3-D is so useful in finding oil. So we have come a long ways and these things didn't just happen, they didn't drop from the sky. They were old timers that worked step by step by step to bring us to this thing.

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There were times contractors looked upon this as a sort of necessary evil. I want to

remind everybody that a contractor, GSI, was, true, given a contract by the American, U.S. government, but they were the very first ones to start digital processing of data, which we are enjoying and doing so many things with it. So I have a suggestion to the young generation, if I may read that because that's a little critical thing to say, I don't want to say anything wrong. I would like to bring to the attention of today's younger geophysicists that the means at their disposal today, resulting in outstanding rate of success, did not just happen. It is available to them now, because of the old timers, old doodle bugs, tenacious persistence and at times, sacrificial contributions. Accumulation of many transitional series of successes they attain, that have given us today the possibility of doing marvelous things. So let us remember the old folks helped a great deal to get where we are today.

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One thing I should have mentioned, while at Century, as an accomplishment, I was instrumental in setting up the very first data processing centre in Canada, even though it was an analogue system. We had a great deal of problems with it because we didn't have the transistors those days, we had tubes. I was very proud that Century had that initiative. If I may have a few more minutes, interesting thing to me. The system we had was developed by TI, Texas Instruments, who was related to our good competitors, GSI, Geophysical Services Corporation.

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TI of course, being semi-independent, they wanted to sell their product and I got a tip on that from the States. GSI here, I found out, did not want to have anything to do with a data centre. So I took advantage of this situation, made a deal, through the help of my Tulsa office, I might add, to get TI to agree, for us to purchase their analogue data system and give us the technical support, which they did very well. This created quite a shock to people that thought if I was denied all these things and so on and so forth, just the competitive aspect of it. I think that was something of interest that people in the future should know.

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DF: On behalf of the CSEG and the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project, I'd like to thank you so much for taking the time to share this.

PB: Thank you very much, it's been a pleasure.