

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Bob Brinkerhoff

INTERVIEWER: Susan Birley

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Susan: It's November 28, 1984 and this is Susan Birley interviewing Bob Brinkerhoff at his offices in Calgary. I wonder Mr. Brinkerhoff, if you could just tell us first of all when and where you were born and raised and a little bit about your early background. You were born in the Stares, were you?

Bob: That's true. I was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, many years ago. I'll tell you when if you'd like to know.

Susan: Yes, is you don't mind.

Bob: 1915. So, I've been a senior citizen riding the LRT and going to shows for \$1 and all that. But anyway we were a family of 5 children and my dad was cotton farming 50 miles south of Shreveport. I guess our family's future was portended by the fact that Texaco drilled 18 wells on the farm down there in 1915, 16 and 17. Using wooden derricks you know. So maybe a taste of that sort of had some influence on our later lives and what awe were doing. Because my older brother was Zach Brinkerhoff, well known up here and down in the States. And my younger brother is Milford, called Sonny and they're both still active in Denver. I have a little company down there they look after for me but I am a Canadian.

#019 Susan: So did you have the mineral rights on the land as well?

Bob: Yes, we sold the farm at a later date and kept the mineral rights. It's interesting that Texaco produced those wells until 1930 and when they stopped producing the wells, they lost their mineral rights, they went back to my family. So we made a deal with Sun Oil and a fellow named Grigsby??? for secondary recovery and we're still getting royalty from that and this is 1984. I guess maybe Texaco did a bad thing. They don't do many things wrong but I think they did wrong there.

Susan: Did you spend much time going around the rigs when you were young and getting a feel for the drilling. . .

Bob: Well, I was not really exposed to them because I was so young there and the drilling was done about the time I was born and for 2 or 3 years after that. It was out in the country and it was kind of a no-no to go over there. Zach did go over, he's a year and a half older than I and he was lost one day and they rang the big bell and all the coloured help jumped on horses and they found him in a ditch at one of these wells. Because in those days, rather than pipelining it, they would ditch it and then pump it into tanks. They did find him though and he was covered in oil and he was scared but he was all right. He had slipped down into one of those ditches. Then the family moved to Texas in 1921, to

Dallas which was a small city then, about 150,000 people. And that's kind of where we grew up, where we went through school and all.

#036 Susan: So there you probably got more of a fell for the oil industry. Was that really a major industry at that time?

Bob: It was but my father was more or less. . . he leased a bunch of land right after this happened and he sold it and he made a nice profit on it over in Louisiana. At that time we had moved to Shreveport for a year and a half before we came to Dallas. But when he got to Texas, he was an agent for Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company and he was brokering investment loans for industrial buildings. Like the Magnolia building in Dallas which is one of the larger oil companies in Texas. Hotels in Tulsa, buildings in San Antonio, Houston, Fort Worth and Shreveport. So he became pretty prominent as an insurance and mortgage loan person. We knew him up through the Depression in that business. Really the first person to really get active in the oil would be my brother Zach who left the University of Texas in '35, he lacked a few credits for his degree and he figured he wasn't going to take any English, he didn't want to do that. So he started roughnecking down in south Texas. And he went from there to east Texas, he got married there and he went. . . the old man eventually put 2 rigs to work and took the Brinkerhoff Drilling Company, the partnership between them had started in 1940 in Illinois and Dallas.

#053 Susan: So they start out with one or two rigs and work their way up.

Bob: That's right. Two rigs. And it was just amazing. The one rig was a Wilson Giant and it was the Continental Supply company that. . . their total price on a rig with drill pipe and everything complete was \$15,000 and they said, you put it to work and pay us when you can, so he did. Then Adam C. White went belly up and he had a National rig, it was a National 50 I believe, one of the first early 50's that were made. That rig was in trouble to the tune of \$25,000 so the same thing, the same deal he made with Continental, he made with National. Pay us when you can and he did pay them off. And the rigs were then transferred to the Rocky Mountains in 1945 I believe. And they set up office in Casper, Wyoming and in Dallas, head office in Dallas. And from there, that's more or less where they began to grow, from that point on.

#066 Susan: I guess they acquired a good reputation for their drilling, did they?

Bob: I think so. There's no question about it, they had the top equipment. They ended up doing an awful lot of Alaska work and then they were eventually sold the company to Petrolane, which is an awfully large conglomerate in 1977. For in the neighbourhood of 30 million dollars it turned out to be. And incidentally Zach has stayed on until recently, as Petrolane has now been sold out, but he stayed on as sort of Chairman of the Board of the drilling Division.

Susan: So when they moved into the Rocky Mountains, that would have been a new field that was starting up then was it?

Bob: Oh yes. There's a lot of new. . . Elk Basin. . . I'm not quite as familiar with that area

because I was not even working for the company. In fact I never did actually work for that company except temporarily in '41, '42, when he first started out. But the Elk Basin, they did a lot of work in there. The travel unit worked for British America and they did work there. They had numerous contracts.

Susan: And they had an office in Casper, Wyoming.

Bob: They had one in Casper in the old bank building there. And Zach had to buy a home, he started raising a family and Governor Brooks, the governor of Wyoming, his old home there, they bought it and kind of fixed it up. It's sort of an interesting. . .it's one of the few homes that's a two story brick, it goes back a few years. Anyway much later it was determined it would be better if both Dad and Zach would move to Denver. Dad from Dallas, Zach to Denver from Casper and then keep Casper as a field office which they did.

#087 Susan: And how did you get involved in the drilling end of the business, you hadn't really been involved. . . .?

Bob: I was more or less, I think my forte was the fact that I had a degree in Business Administration. When Zach first started in Illinois he had no records at all. He had nothing but cheque stubs and deposit slips and he was running behind on things that should be done like reporting income, employees and so forth. So he asked me, would I go up there. And I had just married and I said, sure, I had sold my furniture business in Dallas. Which I did and set up an office in the Cleveland Hotel at Mount Carleton Illinois. This sort of got things going, we hired a person when I left there in '42, to look after all the records that he needed, the field records and the accounting end of it. So then I did go back, I think I mentioned to you earlier, the war was beckoning most of us young guys about that time. And so I had agreed to volunteer under the 3B category and I went out to Mineral Wells, Texas and took these examinations and I passed them all right. This Major Harris called me in and he said, well, we're going to flunk you because you've never had anybody under you. You've never had any personnel under your supervision. I said, that's crap, so under the arrangement I was restored to the 3B category, which is a deferment, married person, and I went to work for North American Aviation in Grand Prairie, Texas which is halfway between Dallas and Fort Worth. Working night shift in the fighter plant. I think our greatest. . .what we were known for most of anything were the B-51 fighter planes that we built. That work went on until 1945 when the war was over. That's when I got into the furniture business so I brought you up to date on that. And it was after a back operation in 1948 that they asked me, would you go to Canada, we want to set up a company up there. I thought about it and gosh, you're so depressed with a bad back and I was laying there in a cast, fusion, I'd been there 9 weeks on my back and I agreed that it would be great. So the two of them had made a trip up here and they had lined up accounting, the bank, the insurance and the law firm that we needed. And they had done this in 1948 after Leduc discovery had really turned the heat on. So I got it all together and I arrived here Dominion Day in 1949 and we had one of the U.S. rigs that were brought into Tilley and we were drilling our first well, the Scott #1 for West States Petroleum. So the first thing I did when we got to the Palliser Hotel and

checked in, I had an old used typewriter and a cardboard file, I made out a payroll. Having visited to the bank and got all the cheque forms and all that together, I made out my first payroll. And I think they were waiting, they were a few days late getting it incidentally because they had started the well around the middle of June. So that was the beginning of the company.

#127 Susan: Do you remember what your first impressions were of getting into Canada? Did you feel it was any different?

Bob: I couldn't get over the fact that I had trouble buying gas, it was a holiday and back in those days, the holidays and Sundays, people shut everything down.

Susan: Even gas stations.

Bob: But I finally found gas. In fact the guy, he had a note on his station, give me a call and I'll come down and sell you a tank so that's what I did.

Susan: So you stayed in the Palliser Hotel for awhile.

Bob: Several months.

Susan: And I guess that was really the centre of all the activity at that time.

Bob: It really was.

Susan: Do you remember any other people that were staying there in the oil business?

Bob: Gosh, there were numerous people.

#137 Susan: Neil McQueen was he there at that time?

Bob: He had a suite there for years and years yes. I knew him quite well and I have a speaking acquaintance with him but he's not a close friend of mine. Numerous people that I got to know. . .of course, my wife and family, I moved them up in the early summer so I was really no there too long. And we rented a place on the north hill. A little small cracker box house and I had two children at that time. We stayed there and I got acquainted with a guy named Lyle Caspo??? who's well known in the oil business, he was with Pacific Petroleum and on 4th Street in Mission, he had a bungalow there and I remember he said, he'd like for us to rent it from him. He was going to be away. So we made a deal and I had some of my furniture in storage, most of the stuff was his and he had a deep freeze full of pheasant. He said, help yourself and I looked at him. They were completely feathered, had not been plucked and not been drawn. Can you imagine that. That's the British way I guess leaving pheasant. Then I built a place in 1952 in south Mount Royal, built a home there.

#152 Susan: Was it very hard finding accommodations when you came, was there a shortage?

Bob: As I recall I had made my arrangement before I came and they were expecting me and they knew what I was going to do. It's better to rent to somebody who's going to be there a month or two rather than an overnight salesman or something so I had no problem that way.

Susan: What about finding office space, was that hard to come by then?

Bob: That was tough. We finally did get into the Lancaster building, third floor, lawyers' office. One of the lawyer's had become a judge I think and so he vacated his 11 x 12

room. And it had an outside entrance which we. . . and the door going into the other's, we just blocked it off with a file. And we got along very well there until a little later on there was a supply company that had space up on 6th Street so we moved up there. And it wasn't too much later than that, that the Baron Building, is it the Baron building, the one where the Uptown Theatre is, I think it's the Baron building. It was built and Mobil was the prime tenant in there and we got up on the top floor, on the west side where it was awfully hot, no air conditioning and we shared the top floor with Haliburton.

#170 Susan: How about the Petroleum Club, you got involved with that fairly quickly I guess?

Bob: I did. It was very convenient for the Palliser because when they started the club and we were, as far as I'm concerned I was one of the beginners with them, the Palliser looked after all of our food and they were able to serve us liquor and finally moved us up on the top floor up there. It was quite a popular meeting place. It was some years later that we finally made the deal. . . when was it, was it 1950. I think so. It wasn't that much later then, that we finally shared the facilities with the Renfrew Club.

Susan: I understand that there were problems getting a liquor permit. Was that just because of the laws in Alberta were kind of strict.

Bob: They were awfully strict, they really were. I remember at one point in time. . . there's an automobile company, in fact that's where we moved to eventually, it was the upper floor on 6th Avenue, the whole downstairs of this building was an automotive supply company and you had the steps going upstairs. We finally were able to land up there and that was our first area that we had and it worked out pretty well, and we improved it. The club always was a money maker, it always made money. It's a luncheon club, it never has been much of an evening club. I guess when you eat lunch down there, you don't want to eat supper down there.

#195 Susan: Do you remember what the common discussion topics would have been among the people, what the things were that they were concerned with at that time.

Bob: I don't think politics, it seems to have been more important recently than it was in those days. Because I think there was a lot less restriction as far as what you do and there was an incentive, even though you're all selling for \$2 a barrel instead of \$30. . . .

Susan: Did you talk about stocks much, stock trading?

Bob: I had some friends that spent a lot of time watching the boards and playing the stock markets. Some of them to the detriment of their jobs too. They were there too much, at the time they should have been back at the desk. I just always kind of picked. . . my little investments I would make would just be some. . . I had a few favourite things that I thought would move and I just bought them and held them. I wasn't in and out all the time. Of course, there was no capital gain tax in those days. That didn't come in until January '72. So what you made you kept and what you lost, you lost in other words, there was no write offs. But there was a lot of money made in those days that way. Particularly if companies would sell out. They would keep all the capital profit they would make.

#217 Susan: Do you remember Harry the Horse at the Palliser?

Bob: Yes, I do. He always wintered at the track you know. I think Miss Laborg??? can tell you a lot about him.

Susan: So at the time that you came in 1950 then you had the one rig at first?

Bob: We only had one rig and I think I had mentioned that two rather prominent people, Joe Montalban??? was a roughneck on that rig and Don Fleming???, who the industry is well acquainted with. He's not very well, I haven't heard recently how he is doing. But they were both roughnecks and they went a long ways in the business. Joe I understand is at Billings, Montana, has his own company down there, has had for years. Don moved into Calgary eventually and had Barrel Tools??? and a few other companies.

Susan: How did you acquire them?

Bob: They hired out to us, partly because they were sort of under the umbrella of California Standard, trainees.

Susan: Were you drilling for Cal Standard then?

Bob: No, for West States. But we wanted roughnecks, we had brought our drillers and our tool pushers up so all we needed were hands.

#239 Susan: Do you remember who your driller was?

Bob: No I don't, not in those days. They were not here too long, we rapidly trained Canadians and I would say, I think the only Americans in the company were myself and John Blackenhorn??? and Burr Reding??? Burr Reding was a drilling superintendent in Edmonton. And we stayed on for years. My brother Zach was President of the company but he wasn't that active, he was pretty busy where he was. But he certainly would stay on top of all the drilling equipment, he was an equipment man and design, he was really good at that and performance, he was good at that. So that was important. We ended up with 22 rigs within a 2 years period so we did a lot of buying. Most of these were new rigs.

Susan: Was it difficult bringing them in, did you have any trouble with customs?

Bob: No problem at all, they were not manufactured anywhere in Canada at that time. And we just ordered them through the supply companies and we dealt primarily with National and Continental, the two major supply companies.

Susan: You would have remembered Alvin Geddes???, was he with National then?

Bob: Blackwell, National yes.

#260 Susan: So when you started out you first of all did the rig down in southern Alberta was it?

Bob: Yes, we did. We stilled down there. West States, they were not much of an operator in Canada, this was just a shot they were taking. Those rigs, that rig and most of the other rigs moved north around Edmonton area. Redwater was becoming quite active and we did a lot of work for Texaco and Imperial and Pacific and Western Minerals, Gulf. Mostly majors, we worked mostly for the major oil companies. We did a lot for Hudson Bay Oil and Gas too which was a continental, really. . . .they were an excellent company to work for.

Susan: You mentioned that the bank and the law firm and everybody had already been chosen, do

you remember who they were.

Bob: Oh yes. Royal Bank and the insurance people were Middleton Tate at that time and Finnerty, Finnerty, McGilvery, Robertson??? were the lawyers. We used Pete, Mark, Mitchell??? from the beginning, accounting and tax work. I'm still using them today.

Susan: With the law firm, what kind of issues would they deal with?

Bob: Well, what they did really, they set up the company and all that junk you know. That was done before I got here, in fact I just had to go over and get all the signing done and the papers together. My father who is a 50% partner in Brinkerhoff Drilling, the company down below, this was going to be a corporation up here so he decided that he would like for each of his five children to have 10% of his side of it. So Zach who already had 50 became a 60% owner, he was a majority owner and the rest of us each owned 10% of the company. We put up the money for that and we capitalized the company I think, at \$10,000, that was the total equity and we borrowed the rest. I think part of the security was the fact that we had a rig paid for that we had leased. The company didn't own it, no, but there were no payments to be made on that rig. The lease payments were real modest to get us started.

#303 Susan: Who did you finance it through?

Bob: well, it belonged to Brinkerhoff Drilling Co. in the States. The money we needed we went to a bank and got and the money we needed for equipment we got from supply companies. So all we had to have was kind of operating capital with the back. No capital loans at that time, they came later on additional rigs.

Susan: And with the insurance, did you ever have any major things that the insurance company would have to cover?

Bob: No, mostly what a contractor insures against is the loss of his equipment. It's mostly done through Lloyd's, the local brokers were Middleton, Tate for Lloyd's and it's very lucrative normally because you don't normally burn a rig down very often. We've had a few cases where we've had to collect on that but it's never been a total loss type thing, where it just burned to the ground. But there's been quite a few losses occur.

Susan: Did you have any kind of policy for your employees?

End of tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

#022 Bob: Yes, we made a deal. We were required to carry Workers' Compensation, that was a government thing here. In the States it was always private, my insurance company down there. We finally did set up with London Life, a retirement plan and it was I think, compendium with the times, it was generous. And when we sold this company out to Sun Ray DX??? in 1967 we purchased the rigs so the personnel stayed pretty well the same. But we changed, as I remember, no I believe I'm correct, we transferred our total retirement benefits into another plan at that time. Operating as Brinkerhoff Brothers, which is another company really. But that company did not have the two sisters in it, it was a company that was, we'll say Zach 70, Sonny 15 and me 15%. And we left the two girls out because it's sort of a gambling deal and they were also. . . .and we incorporated after my father died, in '63, we incorporated the Brinkerhoff Drilling Co. Inc. down in the States. The partnership had to be on the death of a partner you've got to redo it, so we incorporated the company. And it was decided that the girls shouldn't be in such a risky business as far as common stocks are concerned so they and my mother had preferred shares in that company. So anyway that's the way it was and we were that same deal down there, Zach 70, Sonny 15 and me 15. And that company as I said earlier was sold in '77.

#042 Susan: You mentioned also sometimes Zach would get equipment in sales, like equipment that had been stressed and rebuilt or something.

Bob: Oh god, he would chase these sales all over the U.S. and Canada. Of course, in the early days most of them were in the U.S. because there weren't that many rigs up here. But later they had some distress sales up here and he had a man in Casper who was an expert on checking equipment and if he liked a rig, he'd get him on the phone real quick and he'd get out and get with his truck and he'd go and check the bearings and the integral part of this stuff to be sure it was okay. You know, if you've got something that's just been worn out you don't want it. You're buying somebody else's trouble then.

Susan: And you were also involved in the Pembina field.

Bob: We were with Stanlon, later. . . they had 2 or 3 names, Pan Canadian.

Susan: Amoco, was that. . .

Bob: Amoco now, yes. I guess we must have drilled 60 or 70 wells, 2 or 3 rigs running constantly.

#055 Susan: Who was your major competition at that time?

Bob: General Petroleums, I'd say the Seaman boys, Neighbour Drilling, Billy Day was here for

awhile, he wasn't much competition though. He just did mostly day work for Phillips. I don't know whether that should be repeated or not but that's what he did, he enjoyed day work because there's no liability. He didn't really have to work fast and hard, he just got his pay cheque every day. That's where you just rent the equipment out at a daily rate. But maybe that shouldn't be repeated. That was a family owned company, Ralph Rush from Dallas was the guy, he was a wonderful fellow, he's the guy that owned that company up here. Some of these names escape me as far as company names.

Susan: How about Commonwealth, are they. . . .

Bob: Oh yes, Commonwealth. There was Regent Drilling of course, you remember Paul Boland???, and any number of companies. We had a good group of contractors I think. They were pretty stable as far as, nobody was going under and they weren't getting rich either, they were plugging along.

#069 Susan: And you were involved with the formation of CAODC, can you. . . .?

Bob: Yes, I was a Director of that, I never did serve as a President. CODC. It turned out to be a good organization, it was good for everybody concerned because they did a lot of work on the statistical stuff that they could do. Everybody would furnish certain information and we could see how well we could drill. Were we as efficient maybe, as somebody else and if there was some new systems that we should hear about we got that information to them so it was a good thing. It was not exactly a protective group even though we aired some of our feelings about people who were cutting prices and working for nothing you might say.

Susan: How were prices in the early 50's?

Bob: We thought at the time that they were just reasonable but we found out when the prices went way down that if we could just drill as fast then as we did later that we could have made a lot more money. So you know, practice makes perfect, you do better as time goes on. There were better bits, different methods, we got into much more drill collar weight and stabilized strings and . . . oh, it's a lot of technical stuff, of course, it made the industry more efficient.

#085 Susan: And what basis was the contract on?

Bob: Footage mostly. It was at that time, yeah, through those days. And much later on in the 70's when rigs got scarce and everybody wanted a rig, it went to day work, to a daily rental. You just kind of. . .now there was some footage work but it was not as tough a deal. In other words you could relax a little bit, sleep at night.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

Susan: It's December 4th and I wonder if today we could carry on talking about the different clients that Brinkerhoff Drilling worked for in fields in Alberta.

Bob: As I said before I think we mostly worked for the major companies. There's a lot of good reasons for that, if you can satisfy those people, they have more work to do mostly, primarily. And they normally pay. . .they're pretty fair about prices. If you have a little bad luck, they kind of make it up for you in some way. As long as you do them a good job I think they prefer to deal with not too many different contractors. Your equipment is very important to them, in some cases they specify what they want, what they expect on pump horse power and they're very fussy about drill pipe, that the stuff has been properly x-rayed for any damage or anything like that so you won't have any parting of the pipe in the hole and all that. We did an awful lot of work for Texaco who were very good people to work with and were very reasonable and who had lots of work in those days. I know, we drilled a well at Calmar for them, this was early in the Leduc days and made a discovery there and then we went down to Bonnie Glen and made a discovery on that field and we had the drill pipe starting out of the hole on a blow out and we caught it. It was being a wildcat, we were into it before we knew it. So we were fortunate there. We drilled Wizard Lake, which was another field for Texaco. Anyway I guess you might say each time that you make a wildcat discovery they step out, you might say your next well still is a wildcat if they're trying to see how far it extends. Eventually you get into the infield drilling which is maybe more than one well, maybe several wells. So you get kind of a multiple contract for that. We found them very consistently good to work for, Imperial was the same way. We did lots of work for Gulf. As we had mentioned maybe, Kelly Gibson, he became very primary with us, Big Valley and Stettler in that area down there. We enjoyed working for Shell, we did a lot of work for Shell in the days when Paul Carsky??? was the head honcho here. They loved to experiment with jet bits and lots more horse power. Their engineers liked to tell you how to drill and we found it a little difficult at times because most of our boys were country boys that were farmers and they grew up the old fashioned way on drilling and they didn't always agree with some of these new methods. But if it was a day work job and they were paying us so much an hour and they paid for the bits, that was all right. If the well cost a lot more, that was their cost rather than ours.

#038 Susan: They did a lot of work in difficult formations too did they not?

Bob: They did. They drilled a lot of crooked holes stuff and foothills. And of course, they got these fabulous discoveries way down in Waterton that are now, quite. . .unbelievable gas discoveries they have down there. They'll be there producing that way after we're gone I guess.

Susan: So most of your contracts were deep hole drilling, you specialized in bigger rigs and didn't bother much with shallow holes.

Bob: We had rigs that were okay for 6,000 feet and on down. We didn't do much in the 3,000 foot category after Redwater. Of course, it was a shallow field to start with. But we did have rigs, the T-20's, they were economic at 3,000 feet down to maybe 6,000 feet.

Susan: Do you remember what the deepest hole was that had been drilled say, when you first started and how it progressed.

Bob: I know we drilled below 14,000 feet. In the big rig category we had a couple that were really heavy duty deep hole rigs. And we used special drill pipe and we had special casing programs for those kind of wells. They were generally really, wildcat wells. The really deep ones were wildcat wells. But specifically at this time it's hard for me to recall much detail about that. I remember we drilled up in the Grizzly area of northwestern Alberta and northeast B.C. and it's really a fierce area to drill. Everything is slanted sideways and it's very difficult to keep your bit straight in the hole and keep from getting stuck. But anyway that's all behind us now and it all worked out I guess.

#060 Susan: Where had you established offices, Brinkerhoff started out in Calgary was it?

Bob: We started in Calgary and we stayed in Calgary the whole time. We eventually ended up at the Bentall Building on the 2nd floor, we had about 3,000 square feet there. And that's now the Amoco building on 7th and 4th street. And we remained there until we sold out. And then our buyers stayed there also. And as far as I know, it may be that Challenger is still there, I don't know. I rather doubt it, there lease was going to expire and I'm sure Amoco wanted to take all the space they could get.

Susan: Were you involved at all, I remember in Fort St. John they had an oil appreciation day, where Brinkerhoff Drilling went in and drilled a rig downtown Fort St. John. Do you remember that?

Bob: Yes, I do. I sure do. My brother Zach was probably more active in that than I was because he came up for that. He and the mayor, they got to be buddies. That was a very interesting. . . we kind of felt. . . we had a yard there. And it was kind of a separate little organization up there from the Edmonton and we had separate responsibilities. Fort St. John was responsible direct to Calgary and to Denver and Edmonton the same. So there wasn't that much . . . because it was a different, the problems were different, the situation was different, the people were different. The drilling was a little different, it was lighter equipment, all of it.

#079 Susan: But they actually set up the rig and drilled as they would out in the field, they actually drilled in town there, as far as you know?

Bob: I think they did. As I recall I think it was a dummy drilling deal like. . . ??? . . in the school there, they take those kids there and they got a hole drilled and they rig the rig up and they go on this hole and they drill it and they come out and they run their casing in and they pull it out and it's . . . I think it was just an education thing mostly.

Susan: So in 1967 you sold out. Could you go through the circumstances around that?

Bob: Actually in effect what we did, through farmouts and all we had acquired some

production, primarily in the Medicine River area which is west of Red Deer. It became sufficiently important that we had Jim Atkinson, that was in charge of our oil and gas and we also had a separate little company called Taurus Oil Company and he had more of an interest in that than he did in the Brinkerhoff. But he was looking after Brinkerhoff too because he was on a salary and it got to the point where some of the oil companies were wanting to purchase the production and we thought if we could make a pretty good deal for it we could sure pay off all our debts and have some money in the bank. So we put it out for bid and Sun Ray DX purchased. They purchased our shares and we bought back the rigs which they didn't want. We kept all of our yards and our land. They essentially took nothing except production. And that worked out for them, it worked out for us. Sun Ray and Sun were really bidding pretty neck to neck on this thing and Sun Ray was the best bidder and we accepted their offer. And the funny thing is before we got all the papers signed, Sun had purchased Sun Ray. So it all went in the same pot anyway. So we started Brinkerhoff Brothers and that was the company, we had a couple of rigs already running in that name and the company was set up before the sale, so Brinkerhoff Brothers which I think had two rigs suddenly had 22 rigs. And we operated under that name until we sold out in January 1973.

#106 Susan: And in the late 60's, early 70's, were you going into areas that you hadn't worked in before, like up the sub-Arctic or Arctic? Did you do any work up there?

Bob: I had never felt that . . . we had been in the Northwest Territories on the odd wildcat out of Fort Nelson, you know those roads up through that country in the winter. But we never did stay up there. We punched a few holes. . . if they weren't successful we. . . I remember Pink Mountain, we drilled there for Amoco, which was a rather difficult area to drill. But it's just an extension of the north as far as we were concerned. It was nothing like it would be, like the Beaufort of something like that.

Susan: So you're still more or less in the Alberta basin at that time?

Bob: Yes. We worked for awhile in Saskatchewan. We worked as you know in B.C. Never did cut a hole in Manitoba. I guess that covers it.

Susan: Well that's where the majors would have been concentrating anyway I guess. And then how did Brinkerhoff brothers get along, you still carried on the same kind of activities as Brinkerhoff Drilling?

Bob: We got along fine. We were I guess, fortunate in selling at the time when things were booming. That was the case in '73. I'm getting a little ahead of the story but in 1975 my brother Zach contacted me and said, you know there's some rigs that our purchasers have that they would like to sell to us on a reasonable basis. He said, I'm going to check them out. The end of this story was that we purchased I think, six rigs off of them. In the name of Baltic Drilling??? we set it up and that was our last, that was the tailgate as far as the drilling companies were concerned. And we did make a good buy on it. We had bank financing plus some equity money we put into it and we operated until we sold out in 1980. So that's the end of the drilling story.

#133 Susan: Were there any employees that you thought were really good that you kept

through all those mergers or through all those. . . .?

Bob: Oh yes, we did. We had very little turnover in this company. In fact, I felt that they were pretty well looked after even after we'd completely left the business. The majority of the people went with the sale in '73 and continued with that group, Upper Canada Resources??? which became Turbo. And some of those people, since turbo has had some problems, have branched out into other drilling companies. Some of them successful, some not so successful. As you know in recent years, some of those new companies didn't . . . because times weren't that great you know.

Susan: Do you remember any names of some of the real old time employees?

Bob: Oh yes. John Blackenhorn???, he was in my office, he came up in '50 and he was a contract's man and I think I mentioned earlier, Tip Moroney's??? boy, Jerry Moroney. He was real good in our office. We had a young chap who had worked with us through the years and he didn't go in for the purchase. . . the sale of '73 and he kind of took a sabbatical, his name's Ron Hayes??? and he came to work for us when we first started Baltic and we were glad to have him because we had our accountant and we had my secretary and we had myself and we had our field people which was Jack Banks in Edmonton. So that worked out real well.

#153 Susan: How about any tool pushers or drillers that stayed with the company a long time, do you remember any of them?

Bob: Yes, you may have me across the barrel a bit on names right now. If I had something to review. . . any specific names on the field level people other than supervisors.

Susan: And so you carried on then with the new company, Baltic Drilling, were their activities similar. . . ?

Bob: Now they were a little different. This was a company that. . . we worked for some of these more modern. . . Canadian Hunter, some of the more recent independents. We were busy, quite busy. We were very fortunate. When we bought these rigs in '75 things were slowed down again so you make a pretty good deal on your buy and if you sell when things are really going you make a good sale and that's really what happened. In '67 and '73 and in '75 when we bought in and in '80 when we sold.

Susan: And did you change your focus, like were you still drilling in the same kind of conditions and areas with Baltic?

Bob: Well, we did not have a bunch of real big rigs. We had some medium depth rigs. And the company made money, it paid it's debts back pretty quickly so I think it was successful.

#174 Susan: I was wondering, looking back over the drilling industry, what do you think are some of the biggest improvements that have been made in the technology that have really made things speed up?

Bob: Well, I think there's been a great improvements in the components, that is the actual derricks we'll say. I think the drill pipe is about as good as you could ever expect it to be, the pumping equipment. There's been some expertise gone into electrical motors for drilling, you know, diesel powered but drilling electrically and it's a very popular. . . it's a rather expensive approach but it's very popular and it's very successful. I think people

have learned a lot.

Susan: I guess mud programs are something that's really changed.

Bob: Oh yes of course, that's right. The mud programs are very important. That was always extremely important. Of course, in the old days, if we wanted to make a fast hole, we just drilled with water til we had to mud up. If it was something that might blow out we had to weight up a little bit.

#191 Susan: What about blow out preventers, were they very popular before . . . ?

Bob: Oh yes. They're a bit more sophisticated than they were but they were always very important. And had to be. I don't know what would happen if we ever tried to operate without them.

Susan: I guess especially when you are working in really deep holes, is there more danger of blow outs or. . . ?

Bob: Oh yes. In an area you don't know very much about, you can get high pressure, low volume stuff that just wants to blow, bang, just like that. We had a blow out in Montana, with the company down there in eastern Montana and oh, they felt so lucky because it didn't catch on fire and they finally got control of it. It turned out to be an ??? well, you could hold a match to it and it wouldn't burn.

#203 Susan: Were you involved at all with Atlantic 3, anywhere in that area when it was. . . well that was. . . ?

Bob: That was just before we came up here. But that was the thing that kind of kicked off the whole story in Western Canada. Have you been told that?

Susan: Yes. It brought publicity.

Bob: They didn't dream I don't think, anybody felt that there was that type of production. Because I know that there had been an awful lot of work just these shallow wells, had been drilling all over the place and this was reef, this was something exciting. And it really came in. Everybody has seen those pictures, it was fantastic.

Susan: I was wondering, you were involved, we mentioned the CAODC, we were just looking through the roster of the Petroleum Club, are there any comments you'd like to make about any of the people in there that you haven't talked about already?

Bob: It was sort of a hodge podge of people. When I was in the chair kind of going through that activity, we always had at least one lawyer. And we had a judge, Jimmy Cairns???, he loved the Petroleum Club and he was a great cigar smoker and we always passed cigars and I'd always take one for him. Most of the other fellows did too. And he didn't necessarily want to turn down a drink. You don't get paid to serve on that Board but at least you have good food and good drink and lots of good times. He was an outstanding person. We had a difficult time getting a legal opinion from him because he always said he was an attorney and he was a judge, he was not allowed to give opinions. We said, well what are you doing on the Board Jimmy. He said, well if you won't quote me I'll tell you what I think about this. So he was head of the legal committee so we did pick his brain a little bit. The club, it's one of the few clubs that I ever belonged to that's made money. It's a money making club. They start scratching their heads, what they're going to

spend their next dollar for, what they're going to do you know.

#237 Susan: And I guess at that time it was really the start of the whole industry.

Bob: That's where an awful lot of deals were made there, across the table. It was always a luncheon club, it wouldn't make a dime at night. Even though they had affairs going on at night, good food and entertainment but it was very difficult for them to compete with . . . their noon. . . I was over there today, it's not near as crowded today as it was last week but it may be there's a reason for that. But some days you just can't even get a seat at noon.

Susan: Do you think it's as popular then as it was in the 50's?

Bob: I think maybe not quite. I think maybe your waiting time to be a member is not as long as it was then. Oh, not the 50's. I'm talking about the 70's. Oh, the 50's, gosh. . . I think people just had lunch there every day in the oil industry. That's where they had lunch. If the lunch wasn't good they would fire the guy and get a new chef. It had to be good.

#254 Susan: Are there any other things you'd like to mention?

Bob: You know, I don't think so. I was just one small cog in this thing. And there are an awful lot of people that you'll probably never hear from at all that are gone away or moved away or something. I know one thing, we trained an awful lot of Canadians that are working all over the world in the oil business, in every phase of it. And they turned out to be excellent workers. Our field hands were better here than I think they were in the States because they were farm boys and they knew work and they enjoyed making a buck for it. I don't think that their dads ever paid them much on the farm if anything, and here they had a chance to make a dollar and they really could work. And they knew how to weld, they knew how to do everything. So I really think . . . I'll put the Canadian drilling industry up against anybody anywhere. So I guess that's it.

Susan: Yes. Thanks for participating.