

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Harry Carlyle

INTERVIEWER: David Finch

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Video: 04:00.55.18

DF: Today is the 28th day of February in the year 2000 and we are with Mr. Harry Carlyle at the offices of the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists in Calgary. My name is David Finch. Now, Mr. Carlyle, can you start by telling us how you came to be associated with the CSEG, when did you join and why did you join and so on?

HC: Well, the CSEG was the branch of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists and as a professional it was important to be associated with the society and the other people involved in the industry. I guess I joined in the early 50's, I can't remember the exact year. It was a great society in those days and a great association of geophysicists in the industry here.

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DF: And how did going to those meetings help you out in your career?

HC: I think the association with these people and getting to know what the facilities were that were available and the other people who could share with each other the things that needed to be done was a piece of it. Our company though, was kind of an isolated company, we had our own equipment, our own instruments, our own crews. Gulf in those days had six company crews and we contracted a dozen or more contract crews and we used them to more or less gauge our own importance. But Gulf, I think, world wide had 30 or 40 crews operating. Our headquarters were in Harmarville, just outside Pittsburgh, which was the head office of Gulf and we had a very fine laboratory in Harmarville, which we relied on very heavily for expertise and technical knowhow in the industry.

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#030 DF: When did you start getting into work on the executive of the CSEG, how did that come about?

HC: I guess everybody did what they could. I don't recall just exactly what I did prior to becoming President but I think . . . it was a nice little club, the CSEG and Gulf was an important company. I think probably because of Gulf, they selected me to become President.

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DF: Mr. Peter Bediz and Mr. Peter Savage were Presidents immediately before you.

HC: Yes. Peter Bediz ran a very fine contract company and I had lots to do with him and I=m

sure that we hired his company on a number of occasions. Peter Savage was also in the contract business too although he had started out, I believe with Shell and eventually got back into the industry as well, later on in his career, which I'm sure he'll tell you about.

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DF: Now you give credit to both of those in your annual report, the year you were President, to helping you out. How did they help you out when you were President?

HC: I guess if I had a little problem, I would phone up Peter Bediz or Pete Savage and ask them what we thought we should do, so we were sort of They were on the Board too, both of them. So it was part of talking to the committee of the Board to see what way we should proceed and things with the society.

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#050 DF: Now there were lots of committees and so on but as President, what was your role?

HC: I think my big role was representing the association in the industry, not too much in those days though and just seeing that things ran smoothly. And they did run smoothly. I think one of the things that we did was to organize a tour to Europe. I think maybe we were trying to have a good time as well as seeing our associate society, the European Association of Exploration Geophysicists, which was having their meeting in Belgium. So we thought it would be worthwhile to go and see what they were doing. I did go to that meeting. . .

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DF: So tell me about how you went about organizing that trip to Europe?

HC: I think we announced it at the meetings and Percy Smith, who was a very active person. He was head of Seismic Service Supply, which was a key supply company for the industry. Everybody went to Seismic Service for something they needed and they always got it from him. And Percy organized that I think, with a travel agent in town and Wardair and we flew to London and I think we came back from Paris. We had a week or two of visitation in the U.K.

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I recall a few of us taking a trip from London up north, into the northern parts of the area and we decided we'd go into this hotel for lunch. I think there were two cars of us and we went in and you know, you have a big breakfast in the U.K. and so we went into this hotel and it was a pretty elaborate hotel and we said to the maitre'd, we're not terribly hungry, we'd just like to have a sandwich or something and the answer was, we don't serve bits and pieces in here, out. So that was one of our experiences, we got thrown out of a nice hotel just north of London. But it was a very interesting experience and I drove around and saw some of the places where I had been during the war in Belgium before getting to Liege, where the meeting was. And the meeting was of interest but nothing significant I don't think.

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#094 DF: Now the year you were President, membership dropped, not a lot but a little bit,

why was that?

HC: It was one of these downturns and you know, when the cash flow of the company is reduced the first thing you cut back is exploration and the first thing you cut back in exploration is geophysics. The geologists hang in there. . well, they=re part of the organization. So that=s an expenditure that you can postpone or defer or whatever. These people were perhaps transferred out to other areas of the world where the activity was greater. One of the things that we found, particularly in our company was that with its great resource in geophysics, that we were a training centre for the industry. And it was always good if you=d had some experience with Gulf because you had the access to the importance of Pittsburgh. I spent several months there, they trained all their geophysicists in Pittsburgh, in Harmarville and it was a very interesting assignment.

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DF: How many geophysicists would you have been employing in the mid-early 60's?

HC: I would guess maybe 50 or 60, something like that. I really don=t know. We had a geophysicist on each crew. In those days we did dual interpretation. The crew did one and there was one done in the office as well. And at times, we had area offices. I recall when I was in Peace River, we had an interpretation office up in Peace River with a dozen or more geophysicists up there.

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DF: Was that typical at the time?

HC: Probably not. But it was certainly one of the things our company did, was to have this second interpretation. I=m sure a lot of companies relied upon the interpretation they got from the contractor as being what they would rely on.

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DF: What year were you President of this organization?

HC: I was President in 1963. A long time ago, David.

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#122 DF: Can you tell us what was going on in the industry in the early 1960's, why this downturn?

HC: There was one of these cyclical turn downs in the price of oil, probably, I don=t recall specifically, probably the Middle East is usually the focal point of the price of petroleum. I can remember, our company was the one that discovered Kuwait. At that time I think that a well would produce about 100,000 barrels a day and you would get about \$1.50 a barrel and it would cost you about 10 or 15 cents a barrel to produce it, so it was a pretty nice business. It=s hard to think of it. . the company then had to eventually become part share holder with the government of Kuwait and eventually I think it was taken over as a result of those things but our geologists discovered it. Not with geophysics.

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DF: No. How so?

HC: It was an obvious huge surface structure. But they did do geophysics and detailed it

subsequently but it was found by geological means.

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DF: So I don't understand that, isn't Kuwait, like a big desert or something, what did they see?

HC: What did the original geologists see? I guess in looking at the vast amount of desert, you can look at a vast source of oil by looking at the geology on the periphery. I'm not familiar with all that but I do know that Ralph Rhodes was the geologist that discovered Kuwait.

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#146 DF: Anything else from your time as President or on the executive?

HC: One thing that we did when I was President that I recall, and this was indicative of the cooperation in industry. The government. . . incidentally we did a lot of work with the government, keeping in contact with what they were doing and they likewise looking at what we were doing. They decided to blow up Ripple Rock, which is in the Straits of Georgia in British Columbia, because it was a hazard to shipping. We thought that this explosion could give information on the basin that we were in, so we arranged for all the crews in Alberta and Saskatchewan to record this explosion at 11:00 in the morning. And they ran their tape and got the reverberation, from the basement, from Ripple Rock. And that's the kind of thing. . . that we worked very well with the government.

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DF: So explain, the explosion was at Ripple Rock, off the west coast of Vancouver Island and where were these crews.

HC: In Alberta and Saskatchewan, scattered around, wherever they had an assignment with the oil industry.

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DF: How big was the explosion?

HC: It was many tons, I don't recall. But it blasted off this igneous rock, it was a huge explosion.

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DF: And all the crews got something off of it.

HC: Oh yes. And we collected the data in here and had it interpreted and provided to the federal government.

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DF: Amazing. What did you find?

HC: I don't know. I'm sure they got some indications of the depth of the sedimentary basin in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Video #04:14.10.10

#171 DF: Tell us about how you got Tuzo Wilson to come and be the lecturer?

HC: Well, of course, in our association, as a company and as a society, we kept in close contact with the university professors and geophysics. The University of Toronto was pre-eminent in geophysical studies in Canada and Tuzo Wilson was a well known person. I visited him on occasion and asked him to be our annual speaker. Incidentally we did have an annual public lecture in those days, at the Jubilee Auditorium and provided the speaker for it and invited the public, it was a gratuitous affair for the public to try and encourage people=s interest in the geophysical industry. As a consequence, as a gratuity to Tuzo, we had a painter in Calgary paint Mount Tuzo, which is on the shore of Moraine Lake and is named after his mother, who was an early explorer in that area. So it was a very fine occasion.

Video: 04:15.19.15

DF: So he was the speaker at your annual public lecture.

HC: Yes.

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DF: Yes, not at your annual meeting.

HC: No, no, at the public lecture.

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DF: Tell me how. . . I know those drew many thousands, it would fill the Jubilee wouldn=t it. And what would he have been talking about that would have attracted so much public attention.

HC: He would be talking about the earth and he would describe how the mountains were formed and that kind of thing, of interest to the people in this area. It=s a very fascinating piece of the world, this part of Canada.

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DF: I had the privilege of meeting him, he=s best known for plate tectonics, isn=t he? And would he have been talking about that?

HC: I=m sure he would, yes.

Video: 04:16.02.27

#195 DF: The CSEG has always been one of the smaller societies but a very important one. Would you care to reflect on that, why are the other associations bigger?

HC: I guess there are more geologists than geophysicists I guess.

Video: 04:16.22.01

DF: More engineers?

HC: That=s right. But eventually the Association of Professional Engineers began . . . finally recognized the importance of geophysics and geology and they now have to be registered with the association, which in the early days they did not have to be. So it has advanced and they=ve become important.

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DF: Any other stories from the year you were President or when you served on the executive?

HC: No, I can't think of any David.

Video: 04:16.53.17

DF: Come on you must know some stories from the Doodle Bug Tournament?

HC: I was not a golfer in those days. I didn't have time to golf. As a matter of fact I didn't have time to do much else than to do my daily work in Calgary. I later learned that my superiors were critical of me for working on the weekends because I would work in the office during the week and go out in the field on the weekends. So I was pretty busy in those days and worked these things in just as I could. But I was not a golfer, but I did go to the Doodle Bug Golf Tournament and enjoyed it very much, the social life and walked around and saw the golfers. I didn't take up that game until after I retired and I'm still not a very good golfer. Probably the second worst golfer in the world and they haven't found the other guy.

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#220 DF: That's good. What else happens at the Doodle Bug Golf Tournament if you don't golf? How did you entertain yourself?

HC: By going out, they had a field. . .you know, the 9th hole or 10th hole and go out there and see the people and visit around and look at the park and that sort of thing. There was always a very fine social evening and I enjoyed that, it was a nice social occasion and still goes on and I'm sure it's still important. And a lot of our own people were there and we just made sure that they got the time off to go and enjoy themselves.

Video: 04:18.39.22

DF: When the SEG came to town, were you ever involved in those events?

HC; No I really wasn't to any great extent David, no.

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DF: Anything else you would like to say about the CSEG?

HC: Well, I think it's an important association and I follow it. My association with it these days is, once a year, we get together and have a little visit and lunch and I enjoy seeing some of these people. In my retirement I really don't have time to do much CSEG work.

Video: 04:19.18.26

DF: You've been retired since 1985, what has kept you busy?

HC: I don't know how I had time to go to work. A lot of things that you put off doing. I've had a few trips and I'm enjoying myself. There are additional obligations which keep me busy. I appreciate talking to you.

Video: 04:19.44.02

DF: Okay, on behalf of the CSEG, I'd like to thank you so very much for coming out and taking the time to meet with us today and allow us to record your recollections. Thank you very much.

HC: It's my pleasure to be here and all the best to you and to the CSEG. Thank you David.