PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Alvin Geddes

INTERVIEWER: Susan Birley

DATE: August 1983

SB: It's August 23rd, 1983. Susan Birley interviewing Alvin Geddes at his home in Calgary. Mr. Geddes I wonder if you could just start by telling us when you were born and where?

AG: I was born in Calgary, March 7th, 1904, which was then part of the Northwest Territories.

SB: You were saying that Alberta actually became a province the next year was it?

AG: 1905. I think it was September 1st.

SB: So Alberta was actually considered the Northwest Territories.

AG: It was part of the Northwest Territories. I understand the headquarters of the Northwest Territories was in Regina at that time I think.

SB: Is that right? So then did you stay in Alberta as a child, or where did you grow up?

AG: In Alberta.

SB: And you went to school in Calgary?

AG: Yes. In 1917 we lived in Hillcrest Ave., Mount Royal. They built the [Shore Bay]??? School right across from us and in 1917 I got an infection in my heel playing hockey and it turned into empiema??? and I was in the hospital and then most of the summer I was home on the porch. In the fall the family took me, my mother and my sisters to La Hoya, California, where I spent a year at school there and came back. But with empiema back in those days, before sulfa or anything, they cut a piece out of your rib and drained it for a long time.

SB: So you'd have to be staying in the hospital then pretty well?

AG: Yes. We had the house, quite a porch on it and they had me set up downstairs with a bed and they could push it out on the porch. And the hummingbirds came around, and I used to watch these little hummingbirds around the flowers. They were very agile and dainty birds.

SB: Did you go to high school in Calgary?

AG: Well I was in public school at that time and I finished in La Hoya. I started high school at South Calgary High in Calgary, which was held, we just had grade 9 at that time and that was in King Edward School.

SB: So did you go right from school into some job or what?

AG: 9, 10, 11 and 12 were at South Calgary High School. In grade 12, on the way up I had started building a wireless transmitter and then I went from that into radio in the early days. W. W. Grant, Bill Grant had started a broadcasting station down at High River and he was going down to San Francisco to buy a new radio tube, transmitting tube, RCA 202 ???. So I asked him if he'd buy one for me and he did. He came back and I got this transmitter, I worked nights and nights and nights on it. And I couldn't get any output. I was working without much money, I was making batteries and ??? fires and instead of

instruments I used flashlight bulbs by how brightly they burned. Then I finally found out that every time I turned it on I had too much power and this was burning my bulb out. I got that corrected and then got my output.

#049 SB: So the two of you were starting off in broadcasting in a way then?
AG: In a way. I had an amateur license for HX???. Then Bill Grant went into commercial, he was in commercial then. And Gordon Love, whose firm went bankrupt, H. E. Love and Co. Ltd., in the early 30's, came in with it. But I spent too much time building radios and things and I flunked my senior high school and had to take it over.
SB: You probably enjoyed it anyway.
AG: Yes.
SB: Did you say that later on, this radio station, was it Mr. Matthews that started that later became CFCN?
AG: Bill Grant started it.
SB: Yes, Bill Grant, sorry. And that later on became CFCN?
AG: That's right. And Gordon Love was kind of the business man and Bill Grant was an expert technician. He was quite a character. He was a chain smoker and he always had the tip of his nose yellow and his fingers were yellow. And he'd work all night and he'd sleep in the daytime. I think it was a Franklin???, he had a big car and he would pay for it on time and then he wouldn't pay the payments for about 6 months and they'd repossess it and then he'd pay the whole thing up and go again. And as soon as he got it paid for he'd trade it in on another one. He went through this, he didn't have much business sense really. But he could sure build broadcasting stations and things.
SB: What year did he actually go public with the station?
AG: I'd guess somewhere around '22 or '23.
SB: Oh is that right, that early?
AG: Back in those days, we had a kind of a loose organization of amateur radio people in Calgary and we had a broadcasting set in the Noble Hotel. We'd go down and tell stories and things one night a week and take turns on this thing. And everybody was crazy on anything they could get out of the. . .
SB: Yes right. Well I guess that was the only radio station around at that time was it?
AG: Bill Grant moved his station from High River to Calgary somewhere in there. I was off at the university at that time though.
SB: What year did you go to university?
AG: 1924 I think.
SB: So what did you do in the time in between when you graduated from high school and went to university?
AG: I went to high school and then the next year I took a normal??? course. Before I got started, I wasn't really fussy about teaching and I got a job at the CPR for the summer, up at Lake Louise, as assistant food controller. That was a fine holiday that I got paid for.

#092 SB: Did you have any experience at that type of work before?
AG: No. There were 3 of us, there was the food controller and 2 assistants and we took an

inventory of the food every night, between 2 and 6 a.m. We had split shifts and we got the menus in advance from the chef and we figured how many peaches were in the Peach Melba and we had to order the food every day. It came up from Banff on the CPR. Along with it there were what they call fringe benefits. They let us ride on the railway when we had time for nothing, which was the only transportation back then. And then we had parties. They'd supply the food free. They always threatened to charge us if we ordered too much but they never did. Then when the horses weren't busy, they ran that, we could borrow the horses and go for rides. So anyway, it worked out.

SB: Sounds like a nice way to spend the summer.

AG: It sure was. And then in the fall I went off to university in Toronto.

SB: Had you decided what you wanted to take at university?

AG: Electrical engineering.

SB: Was that kind of from your background in radio broadcasting or what got you interested in that?

AG: It probably was. We had built these super hetradine??? circuits and we used to wind the coils around. They were dynamite. I think we probably got, out of the 5 watt tube, about 50 watts. We had the thing quite hot. If anything stopped oscillating the thing would all melt down. But everybody did that. And we'd get out to San Francisco and we'd get reception for Pittsburgh and things. The super hetradine circuits were outlawed later. They squealed and they ???.

SB: But in the early days they were . . .

AG: They were wide open. Sure.

SB: So you went to university. Did you do any work in the summer time?

AG: Yes. The first summer at university, I worked right through. We had a quarterly system, 3/4 was a full year and in the summer time they ran 2-6 week periods, which you could take half as many subject for twice as long. If you were taking 1 hour a day on a course, for 6 weeks you'd take 2 hours a day and do the course like that. I was ahead in some things and behind in others when I went down there. I took some tutoring over Christmas holidays and things and got permission to go ahead. Then I picked up, so I did the course in 3 years but I worked through the whole first year. Then the second or third year I worked for a drafting firm part-time. Then when I went with Westinghouse, they wanted to know anything special I could do, I sure didn't mention drafting. I didn't want to be a draftsman.

#140 SB: They'd give you all the dirty jobs I guess, if you were a draftsman.

AG: I don't know, I didn't want to take a chance.

SB: So how did you first get to work for Westinghouse?

AG: I talked to the representative around recruiting from Westinghouse Electric Manufacturing Co. in Pittsburgh and I told him I'd like to go to Hamilton. He said, they have no . . .it was a separate company, they had no jurisdiction over them. But he said, fill out the form here and I'll put in a recommendation you get transferred to Hamilton. So I did that and before I graduated I got transferred to Hamilton. So early June, 13th, 14th, something that I graduated and I just headed for Hamilton.

SB: So how was your job in Hamilton?
AG: I started out on the test. Of course, you started on low voltage test first.
SB: What were you testing?
AG: Motors and everything. We had quite a fastening there, we had steel tables, there was ??? so we could fasten the motors or anything on. We could get any voltage or frequency. Right next to us was the high voltage test where they'd have 100,000 volts, things would crash like lightning. ??? One fellow . . . this was on a Saturday. Normally they didn't have anybody extra but whenever they were operating, when the plant was shut down, they had somebody come in and work overtime and do nothing. Just stay by the switches and watch. I was picking up all the overtime I could so I was in there and this fellow made a mistake and he got his elbows on the thing and I rushed to pull the plug. Then sent for help and . . .
SB: He was getting electrocuted or something.
AG: Yes, he was. His face looked like a beet. First Aid came and took him on a stretcher. Anyway, I went to see him at the hospital and he didn't look that good but he talked to me about this and that. But afterwards he didn't remember anything about me coming, at all. He was about, as I remember, he was about the best part of a year. He had skin grafts and things and he was a piano player and he ??? get his hands back. They were all burnt, his hands and his elbows.

#187 SB: There wasn't any safely regulations in those days I guess?
AG: We worked on the thing that you just take care. We never used rubber handled pliers or anything and they had the best record of anyone in the plant. I mean, it's up to you to. . . Because if you rely on rubber handled pliers and there's a crack or anything, you've had it. So you don't, you make sure everything's right. In my own case we were working next to this high voltage and then with every . . . we worked with 110, 220 volts, stuff like that. We got kind of careless like low voltage didn't matter much. We were on direct current motors this one day and I was making this switch and I didn't bother pulling this switch. I went over with a pair of pliers, no problem and I slipped and I got my elbow on the thing. I was just frozen on there. I hollered and they cut the, you know. I was sent to the First Aid for a few hours. But after that I never took a chance on anything. That was a lesson on direct current, which is much worse than alternating current. Even at low voltages. So I got up in the high voltage test for a week, and people were coming through these doors, Keep Out, with papers and things and all this. So we decided we'd put an end to that. We had this big belt, flat belt and it generated a lot of static electricity. We fixed up a wire there with a lot of little things and picked it up and put it to this. . .there was a plate, Danger, Keep Out on the door that they. . .
SB: They'd push on that.
AG: Yes. So next when someone came over, there was a spark that had. . .he went right over backwards. Papers flew in every direction. We had no trouble with that afterwards.
SB: That's a fairly efficient way of doing it.
AG: Yes. The power of suggestion, I mean they know it's high voltage but a little spark, scared the pants right off you.

#226 SB: So you carried on working there for quite awhile did you, in Hamilton?

AG: ??? in 1937, when I went there and on August 4th I was called into the office and told my father had been killed on the ??? and I took time off for that. Then I think, the 1st of the year, I was given the job of handling rush orders up in the office, in the plant. I worked from 7:00 till 4:36 and 7 till 12 on Saturday. That came out in an even number of hours per week, 48 or something. Then in the office we started at 8 I think, till 5 and 8 till 12 on Saturdays. Saturday morning was the problem because I'd get these orders phoned in and by telegraph. On Saturday morning I'd have these orders made up as much as I could and I'd phone down to the plant, it was a little run over from the office to the plant inside. Then I'd say I'll be right down with the order and I'd give them the order number and I'd rush down. But the plant wouldn't ever do anything unless they had the orders. So I'd run down. When it got to be about quarter to 12 you couldn't get anything done hardly. This one day I had an order from, I think it was Quebec, for I don't know, about 5' or something of ??? aluminum, which is a piece of aluminum about 3" wide and about ½" thick. So I rushed down and I gave it to the fellow and he said, I can't fill it. I said, why can't you. He said, there's no work order and I said, you don't need a work order, he's got a saw there, he just cuts a few feet off. Oh, yes I do, so I was mad and I started dashing back. Coming back I ran into the plant superintendent, ???, he had a voice like a boom. And I told him and he said, just hold it son and he headed back and he bawled the heck out of him, he said, you get that ???. So he did. But I wasn't very popular with him. Because I always figured that we were working for the customer and they were paying our things. They wouldn't phone these things and all, unless they really needed them. So anyway, I was on that for awhile. Then I was put on small. . .well, washing machine motors really, 1/4 horsepower. Westinghouse was getting into the washing machine business. They had been trying and they had been out priced. Then they started making washing machine motors and they took outside bids on the parts. Because all the parts of the Westinghouse were bidding high because it was easy. So I was keeping track of how many orders we had and how far behind and all this stuff.

#304 SB: What kind of engines had they been manufacturing before that, before they got into washing machines?

AG: I don't think they made as small as 1/4 horsepower. Didn't make that size anyway. They made big ones . . .

SB: What kind of machinery would they be used for?

AG: Washing machines.

SB: I mean, before they started making washing machines, what kind of. . .

AG: All kinds of things. We made a lot of direct current motors for Ford ??? plants because you can control the speed easily with direct current motors and it's hard with alternating current motors. Motors for pumps, pumping water. . .

SB: So mostly industrial?

AG: Oh yes.

SB: And then they decided to try to go into more commercial things?

AG: They had an appliance department. Electric ranges, refrigerators, which were just starting

really.

SB: Yes, I guess electricity had just been discovered when, I can't remember my dates?

AG: I think the end of the 19th century.

SB: Yes. So probably most households in Canada didn't have electricity until the late 1920's or something.

AG: No, they didn't have . . .one of my aunts had, the best thing was the vacuum cleaner. Everybody used to, 2 or 3 times a year, put all the carpets out on the line and everybody took turns beating the devil out of them, dust flying. When you got tired somebody else would come and beat them. That's what happened back then.

End of tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

SB: So you were mentioning when Westinghouse started going into washing machine motors, what year do you think that was?

AG: 1928. No, they probably went into it in 1927, I got into it in 1928. It didn't make sense to me, I was keeping track of the cost of the motors, it was $15 and something apiece and they were selling them for $13 something. They were losing a dollar and a half or 2 dollars on every one. And we were getting more and more hours. I guess I expressed myself, but I got called in to the office of the executive vice-president, M. S. Brayden???. He said he'd heard that I'd made some comments and I said, yes. He said, well, I"ll just explain it, he said, actually, they just got started and they expected that the amount that they sold to increase, which was increasing and their costs were going down and they expected to make a profit but it might be a year or more so just be patient. I said yes sir and left and shut up.

SB: It doesn't sound like good business. So you said that you left the job with Westinghouse at that time, was that just with that department or . . .

AG: I got moved. One thing that happened there, they called for volunteers to test what's called a blooming mill motor. It's a great big motor. ??? I think too. But ??? steel rails and steel plates and stuff. So I volunteered and I was one that was accepted. To me that was wonderful. We started at 7:00 in the morning. It was what they called P&O, which was preference and overtime, ??? Steel Co. of Canada ???. So anyway we started at 7:00 in the morning and we got straight our time till 4:36, then we got time and a half and then they sent meals into us. There was quite a lot of work, they've got all these carbon brushes so they have to be fitted by hand with sandpaper. And from 4:36 to somewhere there it was time and a half, then we got on double time. And so we got the brushes straight, as I remember, about midnight or sometime afterward. And we started them up and worked on it. While they were running and all we took 1 or 2, there were about 5 as I remember, the rest just lay down flat, we'd take turns through the night, till 7 in the morning. We put in 24 hours. Then it seems to me I went home about 10 and back about 2 or something. And we went through this for several days. And then we got a bonus. I think 2 weeks was normal time and we got a bonus for every day or hour we cut off and we did it for, it seems to me, 5 or 6 days.

#065 SB: With hardly any sleep.

AG: Actually we did. If you could sleep there, I could sleep anywhere. But we were unpopular with the union, they stopped us because if you did it once they'd expect you to do it all the time but they wouldn't. I mean, it was an important situation and you handled it, right. However.

SB: Did you carry on working for Westinghouse in Hamilton up until, how long did you carry on working there?

AG: I got called in, I'd say, around the end of January 1929. I got called in to this M. S. Brayden's office and he wanted to know if I'd like to move west to Alberta and I said yes and he said, how fast can you go. So anyway, he wanted me to go and I said yes, so anyway, it ended up I left the next Wednesday. I was on the way to take over a 1 man office in Edmonton, ???. At that time you went by train, it was 4 days.

SB: From Hamilton to Edmonton?

AG: Calgary.

SB: Oh, to Calgary.

AG: Yes. And I was 2 weeks in Calgary to get to know the staff and to learn the ropes. Then right there, Monday morning, I'd say about 11:30 or so, we had an office at 320 - 8th Ave. S. W., it was right under where Westinghouse is today, on their 19th floor up above. It had been an automotive agency before Westinghouse and afterwards, in fairly recent times before they built the building Singer Sewing Machine had an office there. It was about 2 doors from Birks, with a butcher shop in between then. I was walking down ??? to the east to a restaurant and a fellow came along and slapped me on the back and said, hi, you're back and I said yes, and I looked around, it was one of my school mates. He said, what are you doing, I said, I'm just going to lunch, he said, so am I, shall we go together and I said sure. So he asked me if I had any United Oil stock I think. I said, no. He said, what stock do you have and I said, I don't have any stock. He said, who's your stockbroker, I don't have a stockbroker. So anyway he said, drop in ???, we've got an office on the way to lunch. So we went up there and he introduced me to this fellow as a manager of ??? in Edmonton and he said, you know you should buy this United Oil, it was about 25 cents a share. And you could buy it on 10% market, which means that you put down 2 ½% and if it goes up there were certain rules. Anyway, I had 2 or 3 hundred dollars cash at that time. Westinghouse gave me $500 to move and I had to pay it back on expenses. We had about several thousand shares of ??? and went off. Then on Friday the same week, I went down towards for lunch and I dropped in on this fellow and said I wanted to sell my shares. He said, you're crazy to sell them, they're going higher and higher. I said I want to sell them anyway. So anyway he said, why do you want to sell them, I said, I'm moving to Edmonton, he said, we've got an office there and we'll transfer them. I said, no, I want to sell them. So he said, if you insist, I'll have a cheque when you come back. So I went to lunch and came back and got it and was walking off towards Westinghouse and I looked at the thing and I said, they've made a mistake. So I went back and said, I think you've made a mistake. He said, I don't think so, I'll have them check. So they checked it and he said, no, that's right. So I went down and cashed the cheque and I made over $500. I made about $500 after brokerage fees and all. I

bought a car that afternoon from General Supplies, a 1928 Chev, for $500. It had 4,000 miles on it, it was a demonstrator. I left that weekend with my car for Edmonton.

#129 SB: Were a lot of people buying stock at that time?
AG: Oh yes, they were going crazy, it was the end of the roaring 20's.
SB: Right. And that was all to do with activity in Turner Valley I guess was it.
AG: Yes, all over the place. Within about a year roughly, the province of Alberta Attorney General prosecuted Ike Solloway??? and Harvey Mills, it was the largest brokerage firm in ???. They both got fined and sent to jail and the company ???. You know, for running a bucket job.
SB: What does a bucket job mean?
AG: It's where the broker, instead of buying stock, I mean a client through a broker he buys the stock, instead of buying stock, the broker doesn't buy it, he has an interest in the thing. So the broker then, wants the stock to go down so he can buy it cheap because he doesn't own it. And his objective is opposite to his client. That's why they frown upon that.
SB: So that's why he was discouraging you from selling it, because he wanted it to go up more so that he could. . .
AG: I don't know what he wanted it to do but anyway. . . I got in another deal up in Edmonton that didn't turn out so well in the fall there. We had a syndicate and we each had a third and then they got a call from more margin and we had to put up more margin by 1:00 or something and so I said, no. So the three of us met for lunch and I said no. I ended up, I said, if you want it you gamble and I'll just give you each half my shares. They made out a piece of paper that I'd give it to them. They paid more margin and lost it anyway. I lost my initial . . . And I quit, and I never lost on margin after that.
SB: I guess there were a lot of people winning and losing money then were there?
AG: Were they ever, oh yes, it was something awful. Things I couldn't understand either. To me then, the manager of Ford Co. in Calgary, they were down at 8th St. and 10th Ave., the building is still there on the northwest corner. Anyway, he was making $800 a month and Ford, most everybody got let out but he was cut to $500 a month and he shot himself. I couldn't understand how anybody making $500 a month would shoot himself. I understood it later because you get living on a level. Of course, that was a lot of money then. There were very few people making $2,000 a year. Back in those days you didn't pay income tax if your income was less than $2,000, which was most people. There'd be a few bank managers of the main banks and all would be over but most of the people weren't. Managers of certain companies would be over some.

#182 SB: So that was in the late 20's and then shortly after, the Depression struck.
AG: The Depression hit in October of '29. The Westinghouse office in Calgary had Stan Fraser, he was in charge of the service department, he was an engineer. And he was an awfully nice fellow and an excellent engineer. He shot himself and nobody knew why, there didn't seem to be any financial trouble or anything. I thought he was an awfully nice fellow. He had a complaining wife though but that wouldn't be enough.

SB: Did it affect Westinghouse's operations that much then when the Depression struck? Did they have to cut back a lot?

AG: Oh yes. Engineering almost became nil. There was 2 of us, Gordon Finch and myself, he was an engineer senior to me. We went to Westinghouse and said that they didn't have an appliance distributor because ??? Co. had gone bankrupt and we would handle it and any engineering too. We had a room in the stairway down in the basement with a lot of boxes and junk laying. We cleaned that out and put linoleum over the floor and made a showroom out of it. We took turns, I think about 3 months and we handled all of southern Alberta, I think from Red Deer and across south and into B.C. as far as Cranbrook and Kimberly, the Crow down there.

SB: Did you travel by road?

AG: That's what we did. We were some of the early travellers by car. Most of them went by train. They'd be hardware or something and they'd stop and go wherever, and then catch the next train off to the next place and so forth. We couldn't live that way. So we drove. We had flat tires, the tires were terrible and the roads, they were just trails. Some had gravel on and ruts and everything. In the winter time there were not cleared and we didn't have any car heaters then, nor did we have windshield wipers on the outside. We'd got windshield wipers that you worked by hand. Of course at the time they had this outfit at Winnipeg built the car heaters, and they operated in the States in Minneapolis. When I travelled I had 2 gasoline tanks. Gasoline was a problem because you could only buy gasoline at garages and they were only open in the day time, we needed them at night often. So I had 2 gasoline tanks and 2 spare tires. Because you couldn't go anywhere with one, you'd be stopped for the day all the time. And if you had 2 I mean, you'd change it and go till your second one went and then limp to a garage.

#253 SB: Even the garage stations would probably be almost a day's drive apart would you say or were they closer than that?

AG: They were not that frequent in parts of it. Parts of the territory you would kind of hesitate to go unless you had a source of gasoline.

SB: And I guess if it was raining it would be really miserable travelling as well.

AG: I had a coupe originally and then a sedan afterwards. You took a chance in the winter when the storms came up too, to not get your car stuck in Lethbridge or someplace.

SB: Yes, or somewhere in between and having to walk.

AG: Yes.

SB: So how did the business go when you were travelling around. Was there still enough to keep the company going?

AG: Yes, we had not too bad up the #2 Highway now, but up along between Calgary and Red Deer and Calgary and Fort Macleod. Then down in, well, there's Picture Butte and Raymond and Cardston, the irrigated sections, then you wouldn't find anything between there and Medicine Hat. Then on the way back between Medicine Hat and Brooks, which was another irrigated section and there was Tilley down there irrigated too, and up to Calgary. Actually, I didn't go past . . . I want to say Drumheller but what's the one past there. . . there's railway. . . Hanna. There was a railway divisional point, which. . . until,

I believe it was 1937 and things are looking a little better crop wise and everything and I decided that I hadn't gone over that thing in the last 7 years and maybe I should. So I took a trip and I went up through Drumheller and Hanna and Youngstown and along and cut across. But Youngstown was just a ghost town. I mean, you could see where it had been, buildings were boarded up and weeds and stuff growing in the streets. And Cereal, it had been a good town in the 20's and the government had moved a lot of them in to around Olds and Didsbury and places, where they had moisture and they got hay and all and they could graze ??? and cattle some. But they had nothing at Cereal. I was surprised though. I was in this drugstore that used to be ??? there and listened to these fellows. They were against these fellows for moving out and they said, nobody is going to make me move out. I couldn't understand why they'd want to stay, there was nothing. I was cutting across and I got lost and I came to a farm and they had a crop about 3 or 4, you could cut it with a lawnmower practically, out in head. They had some chickens and that's all they had. 2 little girls.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

AG: I stayed there for the night, I paid $1 at the hotels a night, all of them except for the Marquis, the Marquis was a dollar and a half. It was a better hotel. All I got out of that trip was expenses. ??? Triangle, in the Dustbowl.

SB: No one could afford anything yet.

AG: No. They didn't know what was going on, they liked to talk to somebody, no newspaper, no radio.

SB: It must have been quite an experience for them, if they lived through it. When did things start to improve again?

AG: They were starting in '37 I think, then '38.

SB: Had there been oil exploration going on through the 30's? What was happening, say, down in Turner Valley?

AG: Yes, there was. This National Supply Co. I went with, they moved in to Alberta in 1924. They had an office here in the ??? building. They started in Canada I believe, in 1904, down around Sarnia, Petrolia, was the name of the town down there you know, somewhere down there. Then they built a store here in 1927.

SB: In Calgary?

AG: Calgary. Down at the corner of 8th St. and 10th Ave. at the CPR tracks. They had some land in Okotoks with a house that they used as an office down there in 1943.

SB: When did you actually leave Westinghouse and go with National Supply?

AG: November 1st, 1943.

SB: So you stayed with Westinghouse all the way through the 30's?

AG: Yes. And my health improved, I was told I would probably get in pretty good shape if I watched myself for about 5 years, if I got a cold or anything I was to go to a doctor, that I would probably outgrow it which I did.

SB: Oh yes, you mentioned before, in 1937 was it. . .?

AG: '38.
SB: '38 you got rheumatic fever. And then you weren't able to continue working as a salesman anymore.
AG: I didn't travel anymore, I used to work from the office. And around town.
SB: Did you have any reason for leaving Westinghouse or did it just seem like . . .?
AG: Partly boredom. Because we were real busy when the war broke out, for 2 or 3 years, with all the airport deals and transformers and switching for them and whatnot. Everything was rush, rush, rush. And then it all kind of petered off or quit, they had got them all. That was one thing. Then the other thing of course, was the salary question. Under the I think it was technical personnel commission, your salary was frozen. I think your job was frozen too.

#049 SB: No promotions.
AG: No. And the company couldn't change it, it was a government thing. So I wasn't getting much to do or anything and I was about climbing the walls. It gets very boring coming in if you don't have a lot of work. It's a lot better being far too busy.
SB: Than shuffling papers.
AG: Yes. And after you are slow for awhile and things speed up you can't speed up immediately. The whole staff can't speed up, it takes them a week or 10 days or 2 weeks to get going again. You know what I mean. You get used to dragging.
SB: You can't do things in twice the time.
AG: No, you can't. And when you're busy and make a lot of decisions quickly I think you make them just as well usually, as you do when you drag them out.
SB: So in 1943 how did you meet someone from National Supply, how did you end up getting hired by them?
AG: Actually, it was through, what's his name, Bill Anderson, of the Calgary Power. He mentioned it to me. So I had a talk with Tommy ???, who was the manager of National Supply at the time. Then there was the paper work and stuff to do and it went through and that was that.
SB: So what was your first job with National Supply?
AG: They put me down here, order clerk, quotation clerk, sales engineer, assistant store manager. They put me down as that at the beginning. I was doing a little bit of everything and also I was learning.
SB: Learning about the oil industry?
AG: Oh yes. What they called . . .[oil field salesman]??? was Russ Wilson at that time. Whenever there was something needed to go out to some well in Turner Valley or something and he was off somewhere else I would volunteer myself and take it. And I would stay an hour or so and ask questions, why do you do this, why do you do that. Mostly the fellows were very good. I don't know how else you learn.

#085 SB: There wasn't any real training that you could go through?
AG: No.
SB: You mentioned also that you knew Bob Brown Sr., who worked for Calgary Power. He

was involved with Turner Valley, well that was the 1930's I guess. Had you come across him when you were working for Westinghouse? [tape stopped] So you had a few stories that you'd heard about Bob Brown.

AG: Well yes, because he was the head of the city of Calgary, electric light and street railway department. He also was in the oil business with Turner Valley Royalties, I think ???, ??? and Brown. He had an electric light plant at Bassano. There was an engineer with the CPR, eastern irrigation district lived at Strathmore, I think his name was Shelby, and our manager at the Westinghouse, Mac McEwan told me that down there they had a hilarious debate down there at the hotel and resolved that England will have a Catholic king when the Catholics appoint a Protestant pope. Shelby was a Catholic and Bob Brown was a Protestant. According to accounts it was hilarious. Another time down there, Bob Brown came down and one of the fellows was lying on the bed with a stomach ache so Bob Brown went out and borrowed a doctor's kit, went up and he used a stethoscope and was introduced as Dr. Brown and said, this is very serious and had the man take off his clothes off. They put a sheet over him and he got 4 fellows to carry the brass bed down the stairs, very carefully, not to move him, it was very serious, they had to get him to the hospital. They were on their way out the door when the manager of the hotel came in and said, what's going on here. They said, well Dr. Brown has to get this man. . . he said, Dr. Brown my eye, get him back upstairs. So they did and he wouldn't let Bob Brown in the hotel for several months after that. Then there was another time when several were driving out to Drumheller with Bob Brown and they had an open bottle in the car and the Mounties were coming down the road. So Bob stopped the car and he said to one fellow, get out and hide this in the trees here. So he did and the Mounties, they were going to go by him and he honked the horn and they came over and he said, see that fellow pretending to relieve himself over in the trees, he's actually hiding a bottle. So they went over and found he was and they arrested him. They went into the hotel in Drumheller and had a drink and then Bob went down and bailed him out. Next day he paid the fine.

SB: Just as a practical joke.

AG: That's right. Bob Brown was really not mean at all, he was quite a practical joker. He actually in the 30's, paid some of the men to gauge tanks and all and he would make work for them rather than give them charity, which he was a very excellent man.

#136 SB: During the 30's was there actually Prohibition or was it just sort of, you weren't allowed to drink in public places?

AG: I forget, I didn't pay that much attention. I think was, you couldn't have a bottle in the car, only in your hotel room or in your home. You could have it in your suitcase when you were moving from one business to another.

SB: More or less the same as now?

AG: Yes.

SB: So when you went down to Turner Valley was there still that much activity going on? I guess it was a pretty lively place was it?

AG: Oh yes it was. There were all the little towns along there, there was Turner Valley, Black Diamond, Royalties, Little New York and Little Chicago, all along the place.

SB: And what kind of houses did people live in, the people that were working on the rigs, were there camps for them?

AG: I don't think there were camps too much except out of the way places. And the camps there were weren't very good. They had cracks in the walls and things. It's not like now at all. The heating was very rudimentary.

SB: What did they do for entertainment in those days, you know, the people that were living in these little towns, did they have a movie theatre or anything?

AG: You know, I don't remember any movie theatres down there. There was in at Okotoks. They also had quite a hockey team, Okotoks Oilers I think they were . . . Turner Valley Oilers I think they were called.

SB: So I guess a lot of the people used to get involved with sports and community. . .?

AG: Yes.

SB: So you were working for National Supply then, going down and selling rig equipment, or what kind of things were you selling?

AG: I was mostly interested in rigs and drilling equipment. We had production equipment too back then. ???, often called pumping jacks and ??? pumps.

SB: Were they diesel operated rigs then, or steam operated?

AG: Originally they were all steam rigs. Originally, this is before I started there, they were cable tool which has a big weight that goes up and down and you bale muck out with a baler. Then they had steam engines, rotary rigs. A rotary rigs has a bit that goes around and you pump mud down and the mud brings the cuttings up, it's a continuous process.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2
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Tape 3 Side 1

SB: It's August 31st, 1983. Susan Birley interviewing Alvin Geddes in his home in Calgary. Mr. Geddes I wonder if we could just carry on with when you first started working for National Supply. I wonder if you could tell us a bit about the size of the company and who the other people were working there at that time?

AG: In November 1943, when I came with National Supply, we had what they called a store. It was quite a large warehouse, you could drive trucks into it and we had cranes. One corner of it was separated as an office. Then there was a store there too. The manager, he was called the store manager, was Tommy Revver??? at that time. He'd been in Calgary since 1924. Then there was Fred Phillips and he, his father was called Tiny Phillips and he had been drilling and part owner of a machine shop back in Medicine Hat in the early 1900's. We had 3 Irish people there that were quite interesting. There was Marge Brady and Margaret Kane and John Sweeney. Some of the repartee that came out of that was really good. Then Russ Wilson was the field salesman.

SB: And did you just have the one field salesman then or were there more?

AG: Yes, there was just one. Things were not really that active. Most of the work was around

Turner Valley with steam operated rigs. There was some exploration going around Princess, around Taber outside of Lethbridge and around Lloydminster and Vermillion.

SB: So the field salesman would travel, did he have a truck and he would travel out to each of those areas?

AG: No, travel by car.

SB: And did you have extra equipment warehouses in each of those locations?

AG: No. We had one warehouse which was, you might say, unoccupied, in Okotoks. Actually it was a house set up with an office and some supplies in it and we had a yard there where we carried pipe and all for Turner Valley.

#039 SB: So how would you usually get the supplies from say, the office was in Calgary was it, how would you get the supplies from Calgary to one of the locations?

AG: A lot of it was shipped by express, by rail, some by truck.

SB: So there was pretty good transportation links between most of the places?

AG: Oh yes. Calgary was kind of a transportation hub. Stuff went out of there in every direction.

SB: What was your job when you were working at National Supply at that time, what was your first, what were the duties of your job at that time?

AG: At the time I was listed as an order clerk, quotation clerk, sales engineer and assistant store manager. I had all those things.

SB: So you did a bit of everything.

AG: Yes.

SB: Then did you get promoted after awhile?

AG: Yes. Got promoted the next year, October, to store manager. And at that time things were very quiet. They had asked me if I would be store manager and field salesman and I said no. I said, I'll be one or the other but I don't think I can handle both because I'll be down in Taber or something when I should be here in Calgary and you get pulled both ways. So okay, they said, you're store manager so I was.

SB: So you continued on as store manager until what time?

AG: Till August 1st, 1947, when I became field salesman.

SB: When you were store manager you were still in the same basic field though, Lloydminster . . .?

AG: It was a different ball of wax because in the meantime the Leduc field had come in. I spent a week or maybe 10 days in Stettler in around those years, buying a building to put a store in there. We'd had a store going, building at Edmonton, and I spent some time there.

SB: Trying to get it going I guess.

AG: Yes. So actually we started almost right away and we built a Quonset hut which we were going to use eventually for mud storage with sacks of aqua-gel and dettonite and other ??? chemicals. We partitioned off a section of that for a store, used it temporarily as a store until the main store got built, which was finished in 1948. About the time that store got finished I was made district manager. A district is more than one store so there was 2 stores then, Calgary and Edmonton.

#082 SB: Did you build up your staff a bit more when Leduc came in?

AG: We certainly did. We built a big store there. Incidentally, we leased the land from the Canadian National Railway and we were building the store on CNR trackage, on the south side, the side nearest Calgary, of Edmonton. There were 2 little lots that the CNR didn't own that we wanted. So I went up to the real estate agent and found out who owned these lots, went up to see both of them about buying them. All I did was go up to one and say, how much do you want for this lot and he said, $100 and I said, sold. So I bought that one. I went over and saw the other and he wanted $150 so I said, yes, so I bought that. Turned in a report on that and I got a letter back saying what an astute bargainer I was. I had bought it so cheap and all I'd done was give them just what they asked for and get along about other business which I was busy with.

SB: Do you remember the exact address of the store out there? Or about where it would be in the present city?

AG: The exact address I don't know but you come in to Edmonton I think, on 104th St. It would be over, there's a trackage at 103rd St. . . .every time I go by 104th St. I can see the building, we had a great big sign along the peak of it.

SB: So the building is still standing?

AG: Oh yes. The National Supply's ??? has been replaced, it's been sold.

SB: So when you first came into Leduc, you were the salesman then, do you remember how many of the different wells you were going to, you were servicing?

AG: You say, when I first came into Leduc?

SB: Yes, well, when you started as field salesman, when Leduc came in, did you go to many of the major companies drilling rigs, like Atlantic 3 or any of those ones?

AG: Yes. Actually, I was up at Imperial Leduc #1 just shortly after it came in. I was, I think, on the way back from Lloydminster. But back in those days we were operating with pre-war cars. I mean, the military got all the cars and cars were not being manufactured. Then the same was true of tires. We had a priority and we were allowed to drive from Calgary to Lloydminster but we were not allowed to drive from Calgary to Edmonton. however if we were going to Lloydminster and coming through Edmonton then we could make calls along, which is what we did. Because Edmonton was a spread out place and there was no way you could get around without a car. But anyway, the tires, I had knobby tires on the back and the knobs all wore off and the rubber all wore off. We had a high priority on tires but we still couldn't get any tires. Finally I got 2 tires, new tires and they were made of, I think ??? rubber. I probably put all these new tires on the back, and took the old worn ones off and started off for Lloydminster. I got about 40 miles out of Calgary and the rubber all came off, like a banana skin off a banana. Here I was down on the treads.

#138 SB: Had they just been retreaded or was that just the way they were made?

AG: No, they were . . .natural rubber supply had been cut off in the war and this was the beginning of synthetic rubber. It wasn't any good at all. It wasn't even staying on.

SB: Did you have any other shortages in the supply business because of the war?

AG: We got nothing but shortages really. There were an awful lot of make-do and some of the things we made.
SB: Did you do any other machinery shops, local machinery shops?
AG: Yes we did.
SB: Can you remember the names of some of the machinery shops that were around at that time?
AG: ??? Machinery was the main one. They'd been an oilfield machine shop, they started off in Turner Valley. They moved into Calgary on Macleod Trail, about a block off Macleod Trail.
SB: And what kind of equipment could you get them to make?
AG: All kinds of things. We had along there somewhere, we had a pumping unit come in that was supposed to have a stand on it. It came in without this stand, and also, I got hold of an oilfield welder that had been working up on the Alaska Highway and we made the whole stand and all and everything, made it fit. Painted it all and sent it out and away it went.
SB: Did most of your equipment come in from the States or were . . .
AG: Yes.
SB: Were there any Canadian manufacturers?
AG: Very little as a matter of fact, in Canada at that time. There wasn't enough of a market and nobody had to make anything because you could sell anything they could make in their own markets anyway. So that's the way it was.
SB: Who were some of the suppliers that you had, say for bits? You mentioned you were getting your bits from Hughes Tool Co.
AG: There was Hughes Tool and then there was Reid Roller Bit Co. I think there was Smith Bits then too.
SB: And they were all coming in from the States?
AG: Yes.
SB: So how about other types of things, like I don't know, drill pipe, were you selling that as well?
AG: Yes. Drill pipe we had to get in from the mills in the States. Casing, tubing, all the tubes they supplied us, except line pipe. Line pipe is you might say, ordinary pipe, like you have in a house, pipe for water and things.

#183 SB: What was that used for on the rigs?
AG: There was quite a lot of it used for pumping oil from wells to tanks and places. And then there were more and more pipelines used line pipe.
SB: Were you supplying the pipeline companies as well, with anything?
AG: Yes. We supplied everyone pretty much because National Supply had some of the big steel mills and we made seamless pipe too, which is what they wanted for drill pipe. Welded pipe.
SB: Who were the major competitors that you had with National Supply?
AG: As far as the oilfield business went, Oilwell Supply was one of them, which is U.S. Steel. Then was it Amsco??? back then I think, now Continental Amsco was a big competitor in

oilfield machinery. They were the main ones I guess.

SB: And I don't know, was Canadian Superior, did you mention? The company that Don Wilkin was working for?

AG: He was with Oilwell Supply.

SB: So let's see, you were working around for all the major companies and almost all of them had to come to for something at some time I guess?

AG: Certain companies had their preferences. I guess it will always be that way. Some people prefer Fords and some like Chevs.

SB: So when you were working up in Edmonton, did the type of equipment change much over the time you were working from when you first started? Did you come across any new inventions or anything like that?

AG: There were a lot of changes took place over a period of time but it was not, I don't think, because of location around Edmonton so much as the steam rigs got replaced with power rigs as they call them. Very much like railways, the steam engines gave way to diesel engines. When we got the power rigs they got unitized we called but steam rigs they've got all the bits and pieces and a lot of plumbing to put it together and everything. The power rigs were in units more, more work done at the factory. Went through mechanical clutches first, then the air clutches and then we went to torque converters and finally to diesel electric. There were great changes in the equipment we used.

#238 SB: Was it hard to convince some people to change over from one type of equipment to the next?

AG: It always is.

SB: And was that your job, to try to convince them that it was a better deal?

AG: Yes, I guess so. And then the instrumentation that we had, that came along. The drillers and pushers and all were very definitely against it first. They liked to make a judgement of their own and that was it. Ralph Binning, who was the president I believe, of General Petroleums later, he told me that when they had the first weight indicator demonstrated, they came up and put it on and showed how they could tell the amount of weight on the bit on that thing. He was very polite to the engineer that came and did it and all and then after he left he took a cement sack and put it over the thing and he said, that's for that, we know how to drill. But I guess Ralph had changed his mind quite a bit later and they did an excellent job of instrumentation. But you got where you could . . .the weight on the bit made an awful difference in the efficiency and the life of the bit in the first place. Then the joints of drill pipe which connected the screw together and having the amount of torque, which is [the twisting part]??? correct on them gives far greater life than if they don't have it. So we got where we could measure that. The amount of the weight on the bit ??? put on drill collars which are large, heavy pieces of pretty solid steel, the bottom rung was in the drill pipe, which tends to bend and buckle ??? the sharp knife way inside the hole. And all these things got done, it got to where you could figure the amount of horsepower and how much jet you would get from a pump and everything under certain conditions. And more and more people became believers as time went along. So by the time I was through with a thing like that, they'd come and ask you, what should I do on

this and you'd figure it out and tell them.

SB: So had most of these things come in by the time of, well, around the time of Turner Valley, or did they come in later, in the 40's and 50's?

AG: They came in later. Most of them.

#295 SB: So in Turner Valley, when your company was servicing, it was still mostly just changing over to diesel or. . .?

AG: Turner Valley was kind of outstanding in this, in that it was probably the last stronghold of steam rigs. Because it had almost free gas and free water, free fuel and free water. Steam rigs require a lot of both. It's just like the steam engines, they had to service them every 200 miles about, ??? and have water and all that, the steam blowing off in the stations that you see is was just water going to waste. Whereas, you can take a diesel engine and run it coast to coast with no service, just like a bus. The same with the power drilling rig.

SB: Did National Supply itself, do any research or did they develop any of the new equipment?

AG: Who?

SB: Did National Supply have any kind of research wing?

AG: Oh yes they did, you bet. And they did a lot of things. They built the drilling rig, designed and built it that drilled the deepest well in the world, which was . . .I think it was around 25,000'.

SB: Where was that?

AG: Down at Wyoming. The rig I think, came up here, it was owned by Superior Oil ???, came up here after drilling that well. They were precision drillers. You had to be, if they put the brakes on too fast they told me, at 25,000' and they did this 2 or 3 times just to prove it, then the drill pipe will stretch and it will come back in waves. And then one wave going down will hit one coming back and then the pipe will break. And they did that 2 or 3 times then they had to fish the pipe out. Then after that they never did it again. They just wanted to prove that you can't do it, then when they found that out no one would have any part of it from then on.

SB: It would take quite awhile fishing something that was that deep too I guess?

AG: Yes, ??? time. Depends how lucky you are.

End of tape.

Tape 3 Side 2

SB: So you were still working, in the war years, still going out into the field and keeping track of all the drilling that was going on and supplying them. Do you remember what happened around the time that the war ended?

AG: Yes, I do. About that time, I mean I was working in the city quite a bit but I was also spreading out to other places. On August 14th, 1945, which was a Tuesday, I'd driven down to Lethbridge and picked up an executive of the ??? Pump Co. from Los Nietos, California, which was the pumps we handled and checked him into the Marquis Hotel

and we then drove east to Taber, which is 30 or 40 miles and then south to Conrad. It's a little place, I don't think it's on the map. There was a Conrad field that was mostly operated by the California Standard Co. It was a hot dusty day and we were heading south of Taber and a lot of cars were going north. They were all waving and cheering and yelling as they went by and we wondered what was going on. We kept on going in the dust and then a car came along and slowed down and we slowed down. We asked him what was going on and it turned out to the manager of California Standard, John Galloway. He said the well was ??? and he said that he'd just declared I think it was, a 2 day holiday, and they were shutting the whole field down. So as soon as we got a place to turn around we turned around and drove back to Taber and by the time I got back to Taber the place was just jammed and there were lines up to the liquor store. So we turned and we drove into Lethbridge and there was pandemonium by the time we got to Lethbridge. So we pulled in to a restaurant and everybody was yelling and cheering and we finally got something to eat. Some of the people disconnected the juke box and took it out in the middle of the street but it wouldn't play because it wasn't connected to anything. So we went to bed in the hotel and then next morning I put him on the plane back to Los Angeles.

#047 SB: You didn't get any work done.

AG: We got breakfast but the hotel wouldn't serve breakfast to anybody except their own customers. Then I started out to drive to Calgary but I circled around Lethbridge and all the gasoline stations were closed. I drove on and I got pretty low by the time I got to Fort Macleod. I didn't know what to do, you couldn't eat, you couldn't do anything. So then I saw a gasoline station ahead and there was a couple of taxis down there so I pulled in behind 2 taxis and he filled the 2 taxis up and then he said, the station is closed. I said, keep it open for me and I gave him $5. So he did, he filled me up and I drove back to Calgary. I got back to Calgary and everything was just in celebration, particularly down in Chinatown so I went down there and there was thousands and thousands of people. The Chinese were shooting off fireworks that evening and they were giving away chocolate bars and things down in Chinatown. The ??? people, they crumpled over their gardens and things and pushed fences in. So I was able to buy 2 loaves of bread somewhere on the way home. My family was up in Edmonton. Get home and find enough to live on for a few days until things settled down and places were opened again.

SB: So that was in 1945. Did a lot of people come back and start looking for work in the oilfields, did you notice that many people trying to find work then?

AG: There didn't seem to be the problem that there had been in previous wars. Nearly everybody had an agreement or something, that they'd take them back at their old salary or job. Most of them found something else that they liked better.

SB: So in the days before Leduc who were some of the different drilling contractors that actually made it, you know, lasted for a long time?

AG: There was quite a bit of time back then I spent travelling to Lloydminster and Vermillion and down the other way to Lethbridge area and out to Brooks and area there, where there was some operations going on. One of the ones that I ran into in Lloydminster was

Charlie Mills. In the beginning I understand, Charlie Mills teamed up with Russell Shaw. Russell Shaw was a tremendous salesman and a great promiser and I understand that they were drilling a well in the vicinity of Lloydminster and Charlie Mills was doing the work and Russell Shaw was raising the money. Charlie Mills got word that Russell Shaw in Saskatchewan had raised $4,000 and was on his way home. About 2 days later he got a note from Saskatoon saying, send more money for expenses. So Charlie got in touch with him to see what happened and on the way home Russell Shaw had put on a party and taken one floor of the Bessbur??? Hotel and ended up with his $4,000 gone and somewhat in debt. So they got that straightened out and Charlie Mills and Russell Shaw parted company for some reasons. Charlie Mills's operations grew and he kept a room all the time in the Wales Hotel in Calgary. He kept his books in his hip pocket and we gave him quite a bit of credit. Every time he was in Calgary he'd phone me from the Wales Hotel and say, come over at the end of the day. I'd come over and have a list of what he owed us and so he'd say how much and I'd say so much and then he'd write a cheque for it and we'd square off. Our credit department was after me all the time, it said that I was giving Charlie Mills too much credit without enough collateral. But anyway I thought his operation was pretty good and I figured he was really honest. But I was after him from time to time about not having his books and things better organized and he kept promising to do it. Finally he came along and said he was going to do it. This was I believe, in 1948 and at this time he hired a man by the name of Smith, who was a banker in Lloydminster, as a vice-president in charge of finances. Then he had hired Alec Bailey, who at that time was head of the land department at Husky Oil and before that had been with the Alberta government Conservation Board, hired him to be the vice-president in charge of operations. They both had given notice and resigned from their companies. So Charlie Mills phoned me from the Wales Hotel and I went over and this time he wouldn't have a drink, his stomach hurt. I told him he should see a doctor and he said, he didn't have time. He gave me a cheque for what he owed and I left him and a few days or a week later I heard he'd died. He'd had an acute appendicitis and had an operation. This left both Smith and Alec Bailey without a job because they'd both been replaced.

#140 SB: What was the name of his company?

AG: Charlie Mills company was Northern Development Co. Ltd. So Alec Bailey told me that he had talked to the representative of the trust company, after Charlie Mills will was read which said to put the 2 vice-presidents into position. Then the representative trust company told him that there was nothing personal about it but the trust company's attitude always, was to follow the wishes of the beneficiary, which in this case was Mrs. Mills. She didn't apparently, trust Alec Bailey and so Alec Bailey said, rather than cause any trouble I'll just turn in a letter of resignation, which he did. And I presume they both resigned. Following this there was Paul Bowlen???, he had an office in Calgary and he had been in drilling operations in Lloydminster and he met Alec Bailey and told Alec that he told him that he had an extra desk in his office and a telephone and he could use that as a headquarters if he liked. Which Alec did and he kind of free-lanced for awhile, then later formed Bailey-Selbourne Oil Co. Ltd. Somewhere along here Paul Bowlen paid, I

believe, $500,000 for Northern Development Co. Ltd. At that time I heard from a number of people and they all said that Paul Bowlen was out of his mind to pay that much. In talking to Paul Bowlen recently he said, he thought everybody thought he was crazy, it kind of looked a little but he said he came out of the thing all right, fine. And Mrs. ??? was happy with the deal.

SB: I understand you ran into Len Clark, you said in 1946, would you like to just go through that?

AG: As I remember it, it was in December and it was probably around the middle of the month. I was on the street and I ran into Len Clark in the daytime, probably early afternoon. He wanted me to come in and have a beer and I said, no, I'm a working man and I don't drink in the daytime. He said, this is a special occasion, I want to talk to you. So finally I went in and he told me that he was certainly mad at Shell Oil Co. and they had decided to abandon the operations in Alberta and move their operations to Nova Scotia. He said, they had a lease on 3 quarter sections in Leduc and they're going to drop them and the amount of money it would take was just peanuts, you or I could carry that for another year. And Imperial Oil is drilling a well nearby and they should at least take a free ride and sit and wait and see what happens. I don't want to work for any company as stupid as that so I've quit. So anyway, it turned out on February that Imperial Leduc #1 came in and sometime after that, as I remember it, that Western Minerals had picked up the leases and they had sold their lease to Imperial Oil for $200,000 plus a 15% royalty. On all production and also, Imperial agreed to keep a rig drilling on the wells until the land was all drilled up. And that completely financed Western Minerals and they never looked back after that.

#212 SB: So there were a lot of opportunities for people if they wanted to gamble at the right time there was always a chance that they could get their money back and more.

AG: Oh yes there was. There was a lot that lost too.

SB: I wonder if you'd like to mention your encounters with Frank and George McMahon, they were another pair of people that knew when to gamble and take risks?

AG: When I first came with National one of the things that I was asked to do, Newell and Chandler had been one of the major drilling contractors and they were in difficult financial condition. Apparently they were drilling some wells for Pacific Petroleum. National Supply had a line of credit set up on each well, which was guaranteed by Pacific Petroleums. After this was used up, if they wanted any extra supplies I was to call on either Frank or George McMahon and ask them if it would be all right to give them any extra and how much they would guarantee. Usually they would come in and they'd have to have 1 or 2 more rock bits, which we handled, in order to finish the well. So I would have the staff at National go ahead and process the thing but not give it to them until I had phoned and was given approval. Then I would hightail it over to the McMahon's office and I would go up to Frank McMahon's secretary and tell her, this is very urgent, I have to see him for a minute right away. So she'd go into a meeting or something and tell him and he'd come out and I'd quickly tell my little story. He'd say, that's okay, give them 2

rock bits. I'd say, can I borrow your phone from the secretary and phone back and say, give it to them, come back and then initial the thing. These were always readily dispatched and well handled and we never had any trouble.

SB: Can you remember what the price of a rock bit would have been at that time, were they in the thousands?

AG: In the hundreds I think.

SB: And how many would you usually go through, could you say, I guess it depended on the formations would it, when you were drilling a well?

AG: They used a lot more than they do now, for the depth of the well. Depends of course, on the depth and the place of the well but probably 15-20, something like that. Some more, some less.

#265 SB: You set up a lot of people that first started in the oil industry, you probably sold them their first rigs. Can you remember any of those, any people that really became big companies later on?

AG: Yes, there's a lot that we did. Most of them were after Leduc. That's when the flurry came and the shortage of rigs. Actually before Leduc things were very quiet. Most of the drilling contractors rigs were idle. It wasn't until after Leduc, which of course, opened a whole new field, first around Edmonton and then spread northwest and southeast down there. Then it spread into Saskatchewan and up into the north and all over western Canada.

SB: You were mentioning that some drillers were better organized than others. I think you mentioned Lloyd McCallum??? for instance like that.

AG: Some of the drillers or pushers were certainly. An awful lot of them waited until things really broke down and then there was a panic. There was a lot of it back in those days. Lloyd McCallum, who I first knew as a driller with Commonwealth, back in the mid 40's, always impressed me as being very well organized. He would tell me when I would be out and see him that he was going to overhaul the swivel or something and would we have swivel packing and things. And we were always ready for things that happened. Not chasing them after they'd already occurred.

SB: So when you started working in Leduc, when Imperial Leduc came in it brought about quite a few changes in the oil patch after that. Would you like to go into a bit about your involvement with Leduc?

AG: Before this, Imperial Oil and their subsidiary, Royalite Oil Co. Ltd. were involved. Royalite Oil Co. Ltd. were not 100% subsidiary of Imperial but they were controlled by Imperial and they had done nearly all their work in Turner Valley with steam rigs. Their drilling superintendent was named Floyd Walker and at this time Imperial Oil had a drilling superintendent called Charlie Visser. Imperial Oil had a National 100 power rig, rated at 10,000' and stripped??? with 3 Superior BTD-6 diesel engines. Somehow at the beginning, Imperial was going to drill a well at Stolburg, which is about a station or 2 this side of Nordegg. There came some argument with the minority shareholders of Royalite Oil Co. It was said that they had made their money . . .

End of tape.

Tape 4 Side 1

AG: In Turner Valley and they didn't want it to dissipate in exploration drilling in other places. Because of that, the Imperial rig was already moved in and on the way and it ended up with Imperial's power rig being drilled by Floyd Walker and his steam drilling crew. None of which had any use for power rigs whatsoever. So in the first few thousand feet we got nothing but complaints on the rig. So then I was asked if I would go and try and straighten the situation out, there was something obviously wrong. As I remember, it was the spring of the year and the countryside was soaking wet. So I drove out to Red Deer, had a flat tire, got that fixed and drove out to Rocky Mountain House. Took a look around and decided there was no way I was going to drive any farther west on the roads that were then, which had no pavement and hadn't been touched since the war started. So I just parked my car and went down and bought a ticket on the railway and phoned out to Stolburg well and said I would be there on the next train, would they come and get me. So I went out and they did, they came down and they got me and we went back. I tried to explain to each of the drillers on the 3 towers. What they were doing, they were revving the engines up full blast and then throwing the clutches in and the whole mast and everything would just shimmy and shake and everything. I was telling them to slow them down and throw the clutches in and let them pick up. They said, oh those spark plug rigs won't do it, they'll stall. So I went around all the 3 and I didn't make any headway, then I went around and I got one of the drillers to slow down 10% and se if it stalled. It didn't stall and I finally got them all down 10%, then I got them another 10% and so forth. It took a week. So we finally got that straightened out. But anyway, one of the things about there was, I was staying at the camp there and the meals, the steaks would overflow the plates and everything. They had a cook called Rosie and every time I'd ask for a smaller plate of something, so I'd only been there a few days and the tool pusher came over and said, how are you feeling. I said, fine, and he said, the cook tells me you're off your appetite. I said, I just can't eat like these fellows do. So anyway, that ended up fine and then at another rig about 2 or 3 years later I ran into this Rosie, she'd married by that time and she just took one look at me and said, are you feeling better now. So there was a switch going on and right there I changed sides. Because I'd been on the side of the steam engineers, the steam rigs. They said they were smoother and warmer and more comfortable, which is true. But somebody up there told me that Imperial had drilled a well about the same time with a steam rig up near Edson, to about the same depth. It was a National rig too. And that because it was up in the coal branch up there they had ordered automatic coal firing equipment and after they had ordered it, they ran a check and they found that in spite of the fact they were in the coal branch it was still cheaper to drill with oil. So they never did use it. Anyway, somebody told me those 2 wells, they were approximately the same size, that the steam rig needed about 9 times as much fuel oil as the power rig. So driving back to Calgary I decided that whether it's smoother, whether it's warmer, it's not economical and it's not going to be. And that changed my thinking. I got back to Calgary and sometime later I asked at Imperial if that was true,

they said it used a little more than 9 times more. That confirmed it.

#059 SB: You were mentioning that you knew Ted Link who was an Imperial geologist, quite well. Did you want to recount some of the stories you heard about him?

AG: I knew Ted Link fairly well and he had a great sense of humour. I knew him slightly before I got into the oil business because he lived up fairly close to our house at the time and he had 2 young boys were somewhat the age of my sons and would be over at our place at times and get rounded up by their father. I heard that Ted Link was at a conference in Toronto on the future of Imperial Oil. They had been drilling a lot of dry holes for a number of years, they had not had great success. He had given a speech there in which he said that if they would continue their exploration at the same level for 5 years that he would guarantee them a major oilfield. I heard that one of the other geologists there afterward said, you're crazy Ted, there's no way you can guarantee a major oilfield. He said, what I've done is guarantee us a job for 5 years.

SB: It turned out they made it anyway.

AG: It turned out very well anyway, yes it did.

SB: You were also mentioning that he masqueraded as Premier William Aberhart once.

AG: Oh yes, I think you could get a story from Don Mackenzie. The story was that back in 1935, that Aberhart and Manning were going around and giving speeches all over the province on Social Credit. Travel at that time was mainly by rail. Ted Link and Don Mackenzie were coming down the coal branch, I believe from up around Edson, to Cadomin. The train going down the coal branch there would stop for quite awhile at each of the little towns and they'd load and unload. As a joke Ted Link started making little speeches as Aberhart and Don Mackenzie as Manning. The word was sent ahead on the telegraph along there so as they got to each little town the crowds got bigger and the applause got more, and by the time they got down to Cadomin they had a real big crowd and they were up by the hotel and the hotel manager got hold of them and said, we've got to stop this right now. So he took them out the back in a car and whisked them off to someplace else.

SB: I guess they'd have been lynched if anyone had realized who they really were eh?

AG: That's right.

SB: So at the time of Leduc then, were there more drilling contractors after that, like, did everybody start getting in to the oil business after Leduc came in?

AG: There was an awful lot moved up from the States and new ones started here. An awful lot of them didn't really last that long.

SB: You were saying that there were several reasons for a company to survive?

AG: I was saying that we used to figure out that it required 3 qualities to be a successful drilling contractor. One is to be a good hole man, being able to do a job in drilling. Second is to be a businessman and handle the financial end of it and third is to be a salesman and sell the contracts. Unless you're set up 3 ways it's likely you won't survive the dips in the business. It's an up and down business at the best of times.

#118 SB: September 7th, 1983. This is the third interview with Alvin Geddes in his home in

Calgary. Mr. Geddes I wonder if you could tell us how National Supply did after Leduc came in, I guess operations speeded up quite a lot?

AG: At that time, which was 1947, we had some people come back from the war and we hired some around that time. We sent most of the staff from the Calgary store we had then to Edmonton, to start the Edmonton store. We built, in 1947, a Quonset hut to be used ultimately as a mud storage yard. We started to build a store on 2 stories and it was quite a sizable store. The people, in the meantime, we used the Quonset hut, a section in which we made an office in the corner and we carried oilwell drilling supplies in there on a temporary basis. At the beginning Margaret Kane left for Edmonton, we had a field man that had come back from the war by the name of Bernie Stewart and we sent him up to Edmonton. The people that were experienced almost at all, we were able to get 2 engineers from the American company, there was Bob Borden and Len Lee, which were a big help to us. At that time too, so that we could try and get the mileage on the boys faster, we hired 2 university graduates from the University of Alberta. That would be in the term ending 1948, about May I believe. We followed that with 2 a year for a number of years, having to go to universities almost across Canada before we finished..

#160 SB: So you had a training program developed to introduce these new people to it?

AG: Yes. These university graduates, we put them on a years training program where we paid them a salary and expenses and we divided, I believe, in 6 week sections and we sent them to different factories, down in Pittsburgh in the factories that made the drill pipe casing. Then we'd send them to different oilfields in Oklahoma, in the Rocky Mountains. We'd send them to a factory in Toledo, at that time they made pumping units and flush pumps. And to factories in Torrence, California, which made oilwell drilling rigs, swivels and rotary tables and things. And put them in ??? department for awhile, in a section of the accounting department and so forth. Then at the end of a year they would come back to National Supply Co. Ltd. and we'd start them out somewhere here.

SB: And would they start as salesmen then, when they came back or what would their job usually be?

AG: Actually wherever we would figure they could do the best. Bob Borden left us somewhere along the line and he went with Peter Bawden Drilling first and then with S&P Drilling. Len Lee, we were about to transfer him to Regina, in charge of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba district that had developed by that time but in the meantime, head office gave him a better job to go to South America, which he did. Last I heard he was president of Gardner-Denver Co. in the United States.

SB: So as far as the company went you were expanding your business and setting up new stores and things like that to keep up with the trend in exploration in the oilfields. Where were some of the other stores that you developed?

AG: We had one in Stettler. I remember going up there and I spent about a week or 10 days looking for a place to buy. One of the places that was for sale and we were kind of interested in was owned by the Catholic Church. But it became apparent that it was going to bog down in red tape and take forever to work out. So I ended up buying a hardware store on main street which we transformed into a supply store. We built a store at Drayton

Valley. In the beginning the boys called it Dreadful Valley. Certainly the road in there was just gosh-awful to say the least. First time I saw it there was a kind of general store and a gas station and about 2 other kind of ramshackle buildings and that was the town. You have to remember though, back at the end of the war there no pavement. There hadn't been anything done in the war years and then, as I remember, just before the war, there was 60 miles of pavement in Alberta. They had an experimental 30 miles out somewhere around Morley, on the Banff highway and about 30 miles on the Calgary-Edmonton road, up around Wetaskiwin. That was done with tar sands and it rapidly become full of holes and all that tore your tires to pieces. It was worse than the rest of the unpaved roads. There were potholes and there was washboard, dust, always you were driving through either dust or mud and it was pretty awful. The road into Drayton Valley, they had a tremendous number of accidents on that road. They put pretty low speed limits and a lot of Mounties on that highway but there were quite a number killed. You were in woods and turns and twists and you couldn't see what was coming. And people were going along that 50-60 miles an hour and they'd come around a corner and they'd just write off 2 cars every time they hit.

#245 SB: What were some of the other locations in Alberta?

AG: There was Whitecourt and Redwater I guess. Then we went into Saskatchewan. I believe the first in Saskatchewan was Swift Current. We built a temporary store, which could be moved in about 1 or 2 days, out of steel. It ended up I think, about 30' wide and 60' long or something. We had it at Weyburn for awhile and then discoveries were coming in around Estevan so we moved it to Estevan and we built a permanent store at Estevan. We moved the temporary store to Virden, Manitoba.

SB: Was that an original idea then, was it the first kind of trailer that was used?

AG: Yes. Actually it was built by Barber??? Machine Co. and pretty well designed by Bob Borden.

SB: They didn't have any camps that they used trailers in those days, or did that come later on?

AG: Not so much. We certainly didn't. Some of the employees did, yes, and we probably gave them some assistance in those. But mostly they found living space. The drilling rigs, they used to do that too pretty well. As they got into more remote, and away from towns and cities and things, then there became a change in attitude where, on remote locations, why, living would be supplied. Which was usually trailers. Then from that, the next step was that they went to a 12 hour days you might say, tours is what they called it in the oil patch. They supplied better and better trailers, which are pretty luxurious now. And excellent meals and so forth. But anyway they, I believe, worked about 12 hours a day for around roughly 2 weeks and then they'd get a week off back home. And the company moved them back and forth to some designated central location. That's pretty much ???. In the north, in Alberta, it was Edmonton was the place they got moved to and where they'd come back from. It worked out better all the way around. Because, in the first place, the working 8 hour tours, the fellows got bushed and they got very mean and they'd pretty nearly bite their pals ears off and all. With 12 hours a day, they didn't have that

much extra time to fill in. They had movies and things and games, and they got along well. Then the company could offset expenses of moving them all somewhat, by the fact that they had, say there were 5 normally on a tour, instead of 15 they were paying 10. So they made a saving on labour, although I guess they have to fill in the week with some people when they're away too.

#323 SB: So I guess with all those new stores you had to find a new way of getting around to all the locations in a fairly quick time, short time?

AG: Yes. Wes Burns was division manager. We went from a store to a district and from a district then, to a division and he became the division manager and I became the division sales manager. We were agitating, both of us, for an airplane and we got turned down pretty religiously.

End of tape.

Tape 4 Side 2
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Tape 5 Side 1

AG: They said that no other division in the company had an airplane. Our answer of course was, no other division had the problems we had, the area, the space, to cover that any other division had. So eventually they bought an airplane, a Cessna 195, and a pilot and we got around a lot better.

SB: So you'd be going out in the field then would you, in the plane and checking each of the locations? Is that what your job was to begin with?

AG: No. Actually, you have to spend a certain amount of time, in any company, with the people out in the small branches. I mean, they all feel practically, that they're doing all the work and the people in the head office are having all the fun and making all the money. In order to keep the morale up, for one thing you have to go around and I think that's important. But then the other thing is, is in order for you to understand what their problems are and everything you've got to get out too. Because oftentimes, when you find out what they're doing under the circumstances you finally come to the conclusion that if you were in the same position you'd do the same thing yourself. So you get converted. And usually there's so much going on between you and the head office and your factories and things, that you don't feel that you have time to get out to the boondocks and so forth. But you have to do that in order to have a successful organization. And you have to have very close communications between yourself and the field, particularly in an area like this. Alberta itself is about the same square miles as Texas, which is the largest state in the United States. And then Saskatchewan it gets bigger, and Manitoba, and then we had part of B.C. there to cover.

#032 SB: So how did you keep track of what was going on in the field?

AG: We set up a communication system. In other words we made up a form where we'd have

each of the salesmen, I believe we had about 9, make a daily report on this form. The only problem with that was that the salesmen wouldn't make the reports out. They figured we were snooping on them and we dropped it for awhile. Then we came back to it and we redefined the form and we changed the name to daily information report and we got it to work. We'd get these reports in, my secretary would take these in the mail every morning and she's pick out what she thought were the important things and type them up on a piece of paper. So we'd have one of those every day. I had stressed that people, the salesmen, shouldn't guess at things, to phone in. Information is probably as close as the phone, if I couldn't get them the answer I'd try and get it. I'd phone our factories or whatever it took. You can't give answers either, unless you know what's going on all over the place. You could spend a few minutes going over this daily information report list every day and you'd have kind of a broad idea what was going on and when your head office asked you, you'd be able to answer them too.

SB: So would you kind of play between what was going on according to your bulletins and any new technology that was coming out? You know, would you try to anticipate what type of equipment was going to be needed and try to develop something that would fit that need?

AG: We sure tried to develop them and we tried to have it too. We had quite a time there after, I'd say about probably 1952. There was quite a boom going on in drilling rigs and all and equipment was hard to get. We laid in a stock of different sizes of pipe that we could get and drilling rigs and masts. I know we gave one 36 General Motors engines I think. I was up in the store in Edmonton, which was our big store and the store manager said he figured he'd need these so I said we'll order them. A General Motors salesmen came in and he said, can I give him the order and I said, sure. This was in the fall and we wanted them by May. They'd send some in January, some in February or something. So anyway, he came back to see me, he said, is that a firm order, I said, sure it is and I'll just put my name on it just to prove it. And we got all those engines in and engines were a very scarce thing that year. We had I think, 5 complete drilling rigs, 7 or 8 slush pumps, engines, masts, we had the whole thing. After spring break-up came we sold it, practically all. But in the meantime we were continually getting phone calls every day from Pittsburgh saying, your inventory is too high, our machine shows you've got too much and we want a complete report. I said, I'm too busy right now, as soon as I can I will. This went on and our division manager used to laugh like anything about it. Anyway, finally, after spring break-up we ran shifts there to load this material out, from dawn till dusk. We wouldn't load anything at night because we didn't think it was safe except under daylight. Trucks were lined up and we were loading them, we had cranes and everything else. When we finally got them all out, I sent a report of what we had left. So they came back and said, that's a good job. No more complaints.

#092 SB: I guess was your competition growing steadily during that period as well?

AG: The competition was certainly growing, yes. There were only a few that handled a complete line pretty well, which we did. What we didn't make ourselves we bought from somebody and we could supply a complete rig, ready to go.

SB: You had a couple of women working for you as well, did they fit in well into the whole system?

AG: Excellently, yes. Margaret Kane was transferred up to Edmonton, I'd say about when they opened that Quonset hut, it would be 1947. But she only stayed a few months and she didn't like it so we asked Marge Brady and she said she would and she went and she did an excellent job. And she enjoyed the hustle and the bustle and she trained a lot of the new hands. She didn't want to be a manager though. There are people like that. She was an excellent secretary and all, and did excellent work and just bubbled with enthusiasm. But if you gave her too big a pile it would kind of get her down and she'd break down and cry. So you'd give her so much, when she'd get some of that cleared off you'd give her some more, you know what I mean.

SB: What about a couple of the other people, you mentioned 2 different George's that were working for you?

AG: Oh yes, George Manson was the assistant sales manager and then we had George Stephenson start off in the Calgary store. George Stephenson was, and still is, quite an entertainer. He plays piano, he sings and he plays the guitar and so forth and he's got quite a sense of humour. One of the real funny things that I thought was, we were in the airplane, George Manson and I and the pilot. I think we were coming back from. . . Estevan probably. George Stephenson was, at that time, store manager at Swift Current. So we put in at Swift Current and we were out at George Stephenson's house there and we had a couple of drinks and then George Manson asked George Stephenson, he said, how do you like it here George. Stephenson said, this is wonderful, the best place I've ever been, you know, I love to shoot and this is a great country for ducks and things. As a matter of fact, this house is the proper location for ducks, there's a slough over that way that they go on and then there's a field over there where they eat and they fly right over this house back and forth from the slough to the field. And they got into a discussion and they finally had a $5 bet that George said, I'll bet right now in the dark here I can fire up there and get a duck. So anyway, they get out in front of this house, there was a kind of white light over the doorway and black as the ace of spades up above. So George Stephenson says, I'll show you George and then he fired a couple of shots up there, down come 2 ducks. George Manson says, George I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it and just then another duck comes down and hits him in the chest. George Stephenson says, gee whiz, that duck must have been flying high. What happened was, he'd asked the pilot, he said, I've got a couple of ducks in the trunk of my car behind the house, you go over when I give the signal and he says, throw a couple of them over the house. The pilot threw 2 over and then there was another one so he reached in and took it and threw it too.

#153 SB: They might not have ever figured it out if he hadn't thrown the third one.

AG: That's right.

SB: So around that same time there were a lot of companies that were starting up and later on, made a fortune, or the man behind them made a fortune. You were mentioning Western Minerals, how they got started with Eric Harvie, did you want to go into how much you know about how they began?

AG: Eric Harvie started out with Western Minerals Ltd. I believe. He was a lawyer in Calgary and he had some time in the past, had done some legal work for a syndicate from England that got mineral rights from, I believe Leduc through to the Saskatchewan border. It was 1 or 2 I think, sections, per township. They got these mineral rights because they were going to build a railway across. They never paid Eric Harvie for the legal work he did and they gave him these mineral rights as compensation. Eric Harvie I believe, tried to sell the mineral rights and he couldn't get takers. Then he had leased some to Shell Oil Co. and after they dropped the leases they went drilling on their own. Now, following Leduc, the year after, Imperial Oil brought in Imperial Redwater #1. Eric Harvie had a section there and I was asked at that time to make a quotation for all the equipment for 16 wells on a section for that land, including the pipe and the pumping units, sucker rods and Christmas trees and so forth, which I did. Then they gave National Supply the order for all of it except, I think, the down well pumps, which he said he had promised to Barlow. Which is what he was called them, C. B. Barlow I think. We had carloads and carloads of equipment come in. He later told me that at that time there was, I don't think, any conservation or limit on the production from Redwater. And they were pretty productive wells. But he told me later that the production had paid for all the equipment for the 16 wells before they had got the last well drilled. So it was a very fine payout there. Nobody had very much money back in the beginnings of this. I remember taking Eric Harvie to lunch at ??? Drugstore, in the Lancaster building, right on the corner of 8th Ave. and 2nd St. They had quite a counter there, the marble top and we would have hamburgers there and talk things over. Then his companies, Western Minerals and Western Leaseholds and he had a half interest I think, in ??? Plateau Ltd. and several other companies, did very well. Actually they came out, I don't know how true it was but, I think it was either Life or Time magazine came out with an article that Eric Harvie made more money the previous year than the province of Alberta did. That could or could not be true. But one time we were having lunch and he told me in confidence that he had been offered $10 million to sell his companies. And I said, Eric are you going to sell them and he said, no. He said, I don't know whether they're worth $10 million, more or less but regardless of how much they're worth I don't think I'll ever go short on a meal or anything and I like to hunt birds in the fall and I'll be doing that. He said, if I did sell, what would I do, I enjoy working for this, I'd have to find something else to do and I'm not going to do it. So he stayed and it became worth very much more than that. I'll also say that I remember Western Minerals and Eric Harvie was in Manitoba shooting pheasant I think, their season opened a little earlier than it did in Alberta. The boys at the office in Calgary, they could lose a million or two pretty easily or something, and they were trying to get hold of him. They spent all day trying to get him on the phone, they finally got him at night, at a hotel or some place there. And Eric said something like this, he said, I'm glad you called, I've got something very important I want you to really look after, the weather has been wonderful here, the shooting is good and I've got so many pheasants that I'm sending by air express to Calgary so meet that and get them and get them in a deep freeze as fast as they get there. Thanks for calling, goodbye. And that was that.

#262 SB: He didn't worry about saving the million?

AG: No, when he went on vacation he was on vacation. And he let the other fellows go bird hunting and all too. He was an excellent man and an excellent attitude I thought. He had actually participated in, I think, some 60 or 70 dry holes before he made a success. So he wasn't a Johnny-come-lately in business at all.

SB: Another person that started out around that time was Neil McQueen with Central Leduc Co., do you want to just mention what you know about his beginnings?

AG: Yes, let me get back to . . . Ernie McLean was the manger of the main branch of the Royal Bank of Canada in Calgary, at the corner of 8th Ave. and Centre St. Ernie told me that back in the Depression days there was a convention on at the Palliser Hotel, I think it was the Alberta Wheat Pool, and this convention ended just after a luncheon. At the end all the people at the convention got some kind of a dividend cheque. So Ernie McLean got up and announced that in order to help those people that wanted to cash their cheques and all, that he'd open the branch for an hour at 4:00, which he did. This was a Saturday afternoon and 8th Ave. was fairly busy and the first thing you knew there were line-ups at the bank and Ernie McLean was calling on his other branches to send money in the back door and calling on other banks to lend the bank cash. He told the tellers to count everything three times and be as slow as they could. They had quite a time I guess, getting the bank closed at 5:00. The rumour had been out all over the place that the Bank of Montreal had gone bankrupt. So he told me about this and he had a very great attitude towards oil people and handled a lot of oil company accounts. We knew at National Supply that the majority of our payments came in Royal Bank cheques. I think within about a week of the discovery at Leduc Ernie McLean was up there with a new manager for a new bank there and they had rented a store on the main street. They had put signs up, they had all the forms and they'd opened the Royal Bank of Canada at Leduc at that time.

#327 SB: Was that the first bank in town?

AG: I don't know about that, it was the first Royal Bank in the area. I'm sure there would be a bank there of some kind.

SB: So he was opening it up for the benefit of the oil people mostly?

AG: And the benefit of the Royal Bank too.

SB: So Neil McQueen was one of his first customers was he?

AG: I think Ernie told me, it was either Ernie or Neil McQueen told me that he had some acreage, I think a section and he needed $10,000. He phoned Ernie at Calgary to borrow $10,000 and Ernie told him that he'd lend him $10,000 on this deal provided that he would promise that when this deal was over with he'd return the loan and not keep it as a permanent loan, which he did. Then Neil McQueen got into a deal with the British American Oil Co. that . . .

End of tape.

Tape 5 Side 2

AG: That I found it hard to believe but British American needed oil for their refinery and they made a deal that they would pay the expenses of drilling a well in return for the rights to buy the oil at the market price plus an interest in the acreage. Neil McQueen's geologist wanted one location and the British American wanted another so they took the British American's location and they drilled the well and it was a dry hole. In this agreement was a clause that they had the option to drill a second in case the first well was dry, an option to the second well. I believe British American would pay half if they were told about this within 30 days. Neil McQueen told them that he would drill another well, they thought he was bluffing and he went ahead and drilled the well anyway and he got 3 oil wells. British American got nothing out of the whole thing, the tail end.

SB: They didn't get any production out of any of the wells?

AG: No.

#027 SB: You knew quite a few people that were working at Canadian Superior too, you came across through your work, would you like to mention a few of them?

AG: Canadian Superior Oil Ltd. is a subsidiary of Superior Oil of California which was founded by Bill Keck Sr. Often called Kill-em Keck. Ted Link told me he was down in California and he wanted to talk to Bill Keck and he went up to his office and there were several people waiting. He went up to Bill Keck's secretary and she said that he had quite a number of appointments, it would be awhile. So Ted Link said, just take him a little message, she said, who would I say it's from, he said, McGilicutty. She looked kind of surprised and she said, what will I say it's about, he said, about a dog. She looked more surprised. He said, just take it in so she took it in and he waited about a minute and Bill Keck appeared in the door and said, come on in Ted you son-of-a-gun and he went. Superior Oil of California had drilled the world's deepest well in Wyoming. It was drilled with a National Supply model 160 rig, designed to drill past 20,000', which it did. The crew from this well came up to Calgary and drilled up around Stettler, and then they drilled some wells up around Edmonton. Barney Barnett was the vice-president of Canadian Superior Oil in charge of operations and ??? Lawson was in charge of their land operations. The operations were under John Cody who was the vice-president of Superior Oil of California. We were up at the hotel, I believe the Macdonald Hotel in Edmonton and Barney Barnett and John Cody came up, had a couple of drinks and conversation. John Cody said, let's wrestle. Next thing I know they take their coats off and push all the furniture back and they go wrestling around the floor. They have a wrestling match then they call it off and put their coats on and go back to normal. There was one time there Bernie Sturrick???, was up there, a field man, and he had invited Barney Barnett to some thing - they had several people come to this. Barnett said that he wouldn't be able to come, he was going to some place else out of town. So Bernie had the part started and the phone rang. He said, horse feathers, then there was a little more conversation and he said another thing like that. The next thing we knew Bernie said, yes Mr. Barnett, I believe you're Mr. Barnett, come on up Mr. Barnett. In a little while Barney Barnett came up, his other date had been called off and he came over. Then they were drilling a

well up north of Edmonton and they had a pusher who was known as Windy Williams. John Cody, the vice-president of California, was up there with Barney Barnett and they went out and looked the operation over. Just before this, at the Edmonton store, they had a rush call for a Christmas tree and they boys had assembled and tested the Christmas tree in our plant there at Edmonton. But some of the pipes they had used were red and some of them were silver, valves and things. Usually, after the got everything tested and all the painted everything National blue. But anyway, there was a rush for this, the truck was waiting so they put it on the truck and went out and put it on the well. Then, as they were driving away, John Cody said to Barney Barnett, since when have we been painting our Christmas trees red and silver. Barney said, we haven't been doing it, he said, well that one was red and silver, Barney said, yes it was. So he said, I'll have that fixed. So anyway he called and Bob Borden was doing out and he blistered him about turning out a Christmas tree of red and silver when their Christmas trees on their rigs and all, were National blue. So he said, I'll fix that Mr. Barnett, I'll fix that right now. So anyway, he got a little can of blue paint and a paint brush and he went out and he painted the whole Christmas tree all National blue. Next morning he gets a phone call from Barney Barnett who said, I thought you were going to fix that Christmas tree, he said, I did Mr. Barnett. He said, I just had a report it's red and silver. So he said, I'll go and check it Mr. Barnett, so he takes his little blue can of paint and his brush and out he goes and it's red and silver so he paints it all blue again. Then next day the same thing. This went on for about 4 days. Every night before he started work he'd go out there and repaint that Christmas tree. So finally Barney was up there and looked at it and he got it when it was blue and it's never changed colour afterwards. Sometime later Barney Barnett said, that was a wonderful Christmas tree, he had noticed no signs of corrosion on it whatsoever.

#123 SB: They didn't figure out who was doing the changing the colour again?

AG: I think they had a pretty good idea. They were excellent people to deal with. They were very precise in what they wanted and you do the best to satisfy them. And if you aren't able to do it you tell them right quick and they usually can figure some other way to get the job done.

SB: You mentioned that you made a special unit for them in 1950, a pumping unit, they needed on that was twice the horse power or something like that?

AG: You're talking about the Model 160 rig to drill 20,000'. Yes, but anyway, they spent at least 2 years developing a rig to drill that deeply. A bigger draw works, a bigger slush pump and they had stronger drill pipe, because it got to the point where the drill pipe would come apart from its own weight when you get it too deep. One of the things was a slush pump. The C-350 was the biggest slush pump made up to that time, 350 hydraulic horse power. They figured they needed one about twice that. The slush pump, C-350, weighted about 4,200 lbs. and in order to have a pump within the weight they could carry on highways, the highway width and weight, it was impractical to double the size of it or the weight of it. They got the engineers working on it and they came up with a divided opinion. Half of them thought it would be necessary to make a slush pump in 2 pieces, the power end of the gears and all and the hydraulic end and would go together. The other

half figured that was impractical because it would not be possible to get perfect alignment in the field. You could do it in the factory or in a machine shop probably but not as the field operation. So the National Supply Co. took all the ones that were for a divided pump and set them to work designing a divided pump. And the ones that figured it had to be done in 1 piece, they put them together and said, now you figure one that we can live with in 1 piece. So they came up with 2 different designs but the 1 piece had got the weight of theirs down to 5,200 lb. about, where it was practical and it was the one that was used, the Model E-700. 700 horsepower instead of 350.

SB: You also had quite a lot of dealings with Imperial when you were working as sales manager I guess. Would you like to just mention some of the encounters you had with them?

End of tape.

Tape 6 Side 1

SB: You were mentioning before that when people would go to Edmonton you would have to share a room often, if you knew somebody was in town that had a room you could call them up and share the space for the night if you were stuck.

AG: We did that an awful lot. Usually you could go up on short notice and then you'd find a room to stay. You'd phone anybody you could think of. One of the places I used to stay, there was an AMA camp there, that's what it was called back then. I don't know how much connection it had with them because it was quite a fair sized camp. There was another one called the Rooster Rest, nearby on the south side, that was one. You'd get a room and you'd nearly always have 2 beds in a room, then somebody would phone you and say, do you have space to stay tonight, I don't have a room and if you had an extra bed you'd say sure. So he'd come over and join you. And you'd do the same to them, I mean, you'd phone and find somebody that had an extra bed and it was all you could do of course, to sleep. You were working in the daytime. So it worked out quite well. And competitors and everybody were quite friendly with each other. You didn't back off phoning your competitor in these things.

#032 SB: That was about the time of Atlantic 3, you had the chance to witness that first hand. Would you like to go into what how it appeared to you?

AG: I was real busy at that time. I'll back up a little. . .it would be 1948 in the early spring. Actually the frost was in the ground when that went wild, I'm going to guess February. I'm pretty sure that General Petroleums drilled the well. I heard about this at the time and the well was blowing wild. There were several things happened at that time that led up to this. There were some places that there was gas coming up in the ground. There was one story about there was an outhouse, and there were a lot of them around there, but somebody went in to use the outhouse and he lit a cigarette and the outhouse blew all over the sky ??? in the middle. And there was a farm near there and there was gas coming up through a water well, I think. I'm pretty sure General Petroleums moved the family into a hotel ??? in town, on that account. What had happened was that the gas was

spreading in, say, the water sands. It was being contained in most places by the frost in the ground, which would probably be up there, 8' or so deep. Then, when the frost came out in the spring this gas started bubbling up all kinds of places. I went off to the International Petroleum Exposition at Tulsa, which was in May. When I was down there I was amazed really, at the amount of publicity being given to this Atlantic 3 wild well in Alberta, and the number of questions that I got about it. At that stage I really didn't know very many answers. So along there somewhere, the Alberta Oil and Gas Conservation Board put in an edict that every operator drilling in the Leduc field had to completely shut off their wells for a period of so many hours. They all did that except Atlantic #3 who were unable to close their wells down. And then because they couldn't do that, the Conservation Board took over the Atlantic 3 well to close it and contain it. I don't know whether they appointed or hired, Tip Maroney and Charlie Visser, who were lent to them by Imperial Oil, to close Atlantic #3 well. They went to work on it, it was quite a job they had. I believe in the meantime they shut all the other wells down anyway and pumped oil, and the

#085 oil that . . . they fixed the pipe on to the. . .drill pipe I think it was, where the oil would flow out and they would use it. And they would sell the oil and then the Conservation Board would get the money from this which they would make a distribution of later, and pay the expenses. But Tip Maroney and Charlie Visser were up in Edmonton, at I think, the Grand Hotel, or they were in Leduc at the well. And working on this pretty steadily. And then we had a drilling rig on order with Imperial and there were a couple of questions I had to ask, find out from Charlie Visser and I couldn't get hold of him. At that time when I was busy I had a suitcase packed in the office all the time and this particular day I had it in the car. Now I had intended going to Edmonton the next day and I heard Charlie Visser was in town so I went over there and I got to see Charlie and I started to talk and asked questions and he got a call. Then he called his secretary and he called the head of transportation and then he said to me, things were quiet when I left, had been but things have broken out at Atlantic 3. I put my car in the garage to have some repairs done and it's not available to go and the transportation department can't get me transportation. My secretary is seeing what he can do. I said, Charlie, if you want a ride, I've got a car, I've got my suitcase packed and I was going to Edmonton anyway, why don't we just step out and go. So he said, that's fine, so he phoned the transportation department and said, he was fixed to go, and he told his secretary and we went down and we got in the car. We started out and I was going a little fast and I seen a car coming along behind me and I thought it was the police shadowing me or something. It was up around Crossfield. We went over a little rise in the road about then and I took a turn to the right and pulled into a farmer's driveway behind some trees and saw this car go sailing by. Then I backed out and away I went. So we drove right out to the well and we parked in the parking lot there. They were charging 50 cents apiece for cars parking on this, the owner of the land. We went out on, I guess you'd call them sidewalks, but they were wooden slats across and they were all fastened to cables. Everything was kind of spongy and there was oil and gas bubbling up and there was a strong smell of hydrogen sulphide and you knew that one spark and you'd had it. We were checked by the RCMP, no

cigarettes or matches were allowed in there. And went out and while Charlie was talking business there I was looking around. Everywhere I looked I saw this, it didn't look like the world was solvent at all. Everything was wiggling, the mast and everything, and oil was running down and they had little dips and things and they were pumping it out of there. So we got through and I drove him back to the Grand Hotel in Edmonton. Now I got the questions on the way answered. Then about that day or the next day a friend of mine phoned up and he said, gosh Al, you're a fast driver, I was trying to catch up with you on the way to Edmonton and I was driving like the wind all the way and I never did see you again.

#141 SB: You mentioned there was also a secondary recovery out of there with shallow pumping units.

AG: After they got the well shut in and all, we sold a lot of very small pumping units, they looked like little toys. I think it was the farmer there, I don't know, maybe it was an oil company, but they had little engines and they drilled a lot of little wells around there, I think 50-100' or something, and they were pumping away. They pumped the oil out of the water sands.

SB: So in the 1950's there was a change in the attitude of the companies, people became more business like. But I guess there were still some personalities that would affect the entire company that were still kind of running things on their own eh?

AG: Oh yes there were. Some were more conservative and some were more adventuresome shall we say. Of course, we had Canadian companies that operated in Australia and different places in the world and still do.

SB: When did your position change, you were in district manager in 1948. . .

AG: 1950. The man that had been sales manager left and I was asked at that time if I would be division sales manager temporarily. I said yes. I stayed there for 6 years. So it always reminds me of the old saying, they say there's nothing as permanent as a temporary job.

SB: And that was still based in Calgary was it?

AG: Yes. It was a most interesting 6 years too. Because I was always one to check things personally to a certain extent. By that time oil drilling had gone up the Peace River country and over into Saskatchewan and Manitoba and there was a lot of territory to check occasionally. Then we ran into quite a few, shall I say, new situations and unusual drilling situations, which meant going even farther afield. We ran some experimental things too and some didn't work out.

#185 SB: You were mentioning that different specialized companies started up, did that affect National's sales at all, or did you begin limiting the line of products that you had? For instance, mud sales companies and bit sales companies, did they take away a lot of your business?

AG: Undoubtedly they took away some but anyway, they were ??? mud sales was what we were handling ??? and bits were usually Hughes and Reid and then there was Smith. They all went out on their own. But most parts of a rig and all like that were National made. We made our spare engines back then but we would buy Caterpillar or General Motors or

what have you, if people wanted them, and put them on the rigs.

SB: So you worked up until 1956 as sales manager, and then what was your position after that?

AG: Assistant division manager.

SB: Did that change your line of work very much?

AG: I was off the direct sales so much and I got some into the personnel, which I wouldn't really prefer. I liked other people to handle the personnel and I'd handle the equipment. Then 1961 I was a sales engineer on drilling equipment, from there on till '66.

SB: During that time, well, I guess that was in 1955 you went to the Powerama??? Conference in the States. Did you want to mention a bit about that?

AG: Yes. I went down to Powerama show at Soldier's Field in Chicago, which was put on by General Motors in, I believe, the summer of 1955. The Powerama show was put on I think, by 7 divisions of General Motors. I've been told the cost was $8 million putting that on. It was all the General Motors divisions except the automotive. Each division felt that the automotive division was getting all the publicity and they would put this Powerama show on to show what they were doing I guess. It was a tremendous show I thought. They had a bunch of trained elephants and things they put on in the evening. In the daytime too I believe. But this place was all set up with grass and trees and rocks and boulders and things in the morning and then these power and equipment. . . they had Euclid, at that time, Power division, similar to Caterpillars, earth movers, and they would run a road right through. Just move the trees and the boulders and everything else. They had some roads that were done by elephants, move the trees and all. Then by nightfall there would be a road all through everything. Then there would be another gang come in by night and they would tear all these roads out and put all the lawns and the trees and boulders back and the next morning they'd be back again. And they did that every day for
#260 several days. As far as we were concerned there were 2 National drilling rigs there. There was a new National Model 110 and there was a smaller rig. They operated this big rig in the daytime. They had a crew from Texas brought in to operate it and they ran into trouble with the labour union in Chicago. These masts are similar to a derrick except the derrick, you build it up from the ground and the mast, it goes together in pieces on the ground and then it erects itself. The crews put these masts together and then they string the lights on them and all and then the whole thing goes up and it's together. Then the crew down there, when they started to do this, then the unions said they had to put the lights up and they had to check this, I think it was a diesel electric rig. They had the mast up and then they went to put the lights on with the cranes. They put the lights on up to 60' I think, on the National one and ???. Then they said, that's as high as they worked. That was the first thing. Then the next thing happened, when they got all ready to open up, they were running behind and then the electricians said they had to have a master electrician or something come over and check it before they could operate it. So he came over. He said he couldn't check it until they got an electrician so they had to wait and they got an electrician. Then he couldn't until he had an electricians helper and they waited and they got him. So then they asked him, is that electric motor okay and he said yes, and then he said that to the electrician and then the electrician said it to the master electrician.

So he said, now you can operate it. One of the crew was mad by this time and he went over and he went over and he punched him right in the nose. He said, you SOB. Then the crew just beat the living heck out of the 3 of them. So somebody got things quieted down quickly and they took the crew in cars and they drove them out to some place in Illinois and flew them back to Texas. The rig was again, delayed a day or so.

End of tape.

Tape 6 Side 2

SB: September 12th, 1983. This is the 4th interview with Alvin Geddes. Mr. Geddes, we were talking about drilling contractors in the last interview. You got to know quite a few of the tool pushers and drilling superintendents quite well, could you just explain first of all, how much power each of them had and how that changed over the years?

AG: In the early days things were much more informal. The tool pushers had major power in the purchasing and the decisions of what equipment they would use. Most of the contractors would have a president and executives, which would look after the sales of drilling wells and also the finances. Then the equipment and the drilling came under the tool push and so forth. After Leduc these companies nearly all expanded and even the new ones that were formed were formed with a president and then a good tool pusher for the drilling and field operations. But with the course of time and as the companies got bigger they got better organized and much more of the decisions and the purchasing were made at head office with the head office staff, the purchasing department and less of it was done in the field. They also, where a company had 5 or 6 or 10 or 12 rigs, tended to standardize a lot of their equipment. Where in the early days one rig would be buying one type of equipment and another, another and so forth. It was more difficult to switch from rig to rig.

#028 SB: And so the drilling superintendent took on more of an important role later on, they were kind of the liaison between the tool push and the company head office?

AG: Yes, they certainly did. We have some exceptions. Cantex Drilling had Dick Harris as a manager and he was a character of his own. He would tell his rigs what to do and he would be at the rig when there was a crisis. I know one case he had a steam rig and they were operating with coal and they had coal in the gunny sack bags. It was all wet and mud was deep and all and they couldn't get the coal trucks in nearby. So he said, you boys come and carry this coal and so he went and got a bag of coal and he led the parade. He carried it all through the mud and the slush and all and they went around and back through the mud and so forth. He didn't back off doing what he asked the boys to do. One time he lined the boys up and said, now all the boys with tall boots step forward. They stepped forward and he said, now you get down and tramp through the mud and you boys with the short boots, you get in and help them. Floyd Welch was a drilling superintendent for Royalite, a subsidiary of Imperial, with a lot of equipment and a yard in Turner Valley, told how he got a phone call from Dick Harris. Dick Harris said, Floyd, do you have swivel I could borrow. Floyd said, yes, Dick I believe I have and he said, and Floyd,

do you have a rotary machine I could borrow and Floyd said, yes, I think I have. And Floyd, do you have a travelling box I could borrow, Floyd said, yes, I believe I have. He said, what are you doing Dick, are you putting together a new rig and Dick said, no, our driller ran into the crown. Floyd said, how in the world did that happen Dick. He said, Floyd, I'm afraid we'll never know, he doesn't work for us anymore.

SB: He didn't give him a second chance.

AG: No, he wouldn't give anybody a second chance.

SB: Was there a lot of borrowing that would go on between. . .?

AG: There was a lot, yes, and everybody had come through the war and right after the war everything was so short, everybody borrowed back and forth. Pipe was pretty scarce and hard to get. We would arrange with somebody that needed pipe for a well, we would get the pipe on order but it would be maybe 2 or 3 months late and we would have an agreement with somebody who had the pipe, that they could borrow it. And then replace it out of the pipe on order, would be diverted. They worked out very well, they would have so many joints of pipe that they'd borrow it. Because pipe joints were not all the same length the footage and the price would be a little different. Then they'd have an agreement there that the party that was doing the borrowing would either pay at a certain rate per foot for the extra or get credit for a difference if it was short.

#081 SB: So were there some other tool pushes that you can remember that were kind of characters?

AG: I remember very definitely about Dick Harris too, he phoned me, we closed at 5:00 and he phoned me pretty close to 5 and wanted to know if we had 20' of inch and a half, quadruple chain. I said yes, he said, just stay there. So he came over and he had a big car and he jammed the brakes on and the gravel went flying. I had this chain ready and he signed the bill for it, put it in his car and away he went. Then sometime after dinner I get a phone call from Leduc, it was Dick Harris and he said, Al, do you have 20' of inch and a quarter quadruple chain. I said, yes, Dick we have. He said, meet me at the store in about 2 hours. So I did and I had this all ready. So he comes back with the inch and a half chain and he signed the sheet for the inch and a quarter. I said, what happened Dick, just as a matter of conversation. He said, well, the tool pushed that used to work for us can't measure. I probably would tell this too. I took a trip just a short time after the discovery of oil at the Pembina field. Drayton Valley was kind of the headquarters at that time and the roads out there were terrible. This was in February and it was mild and melting. I was up in Edmonton and finished about Friday night and I asked somebody that had been out there if I could drive out there. It was cut with these seismic cuts, where the seismic cut right straight through. He said, yes, I'm sure you could do it but don't ever drive anywhere that you can't get back from because you'll be stuck there. So the next morning I went out through these seismic cuts and when I came to a hill that I couldn't make I got turned around and went back and tried another one and another one. Every mile or two they were scored there like that. I finally got down a road and across an ice bridge. I ended up down at a little town in the afternoon, on the Lacombe-Blind Man's Valley Road, up through ??? Rimbey ???. So I went in and Dick Harris was in this little hotel

there and quite a few, apparently of his crew were having a drink there. So I joined Dick. One of these of the crew came over and was a little noisy so Dick told him to go and sit down. So he did and then he came back and he did this 2 or 3 times and Dick said, I told you to go and sit down. So the next thing, he gets up and he just wrestles him right down to the floor, now he said, you go and sit down and he did. Dick wasn't as big as this other fellow but somebody told me he was a wrestler in his youth and he might have been too. So he came back and just carried on the conversation with me, not concerned.

#137 SB: So at National, around that time, you were becoming district manager, is that right?

AG: I need to find out where I am here. Yes, I'm pretty sure I was district manager at that time. ???, there was one store. We had built the second store right after Leduc and we became a district and I had this district office in the Calgary store. From there on we opened a lot of stores over the west and eventually became a division. At that time we were a district and we didn't have a separate district office though.

SB: So you managed to move out into your own office after working in the same office as the store was it, or the other office manager?

AG: We set up a store manager, which was Bill Thompson. Then we had a district office there which a lot of our district office time was spent working out things that were going on in Edmonton, which was a far busier place than Calgary was at that time. We had problems there with everything at Edmonton to start with. Calgary was oil minded and Edmonton was anything but oil minded. As a matter of fact we had a division credit manager from Casper came over, went up to get a room at the Macdonald Hotel. He told the clerk we were oil people and he said, we probably won't have a room for you. He was quite crushed.

#166 SB: He was used to being treated like royalty in the States I guess?

AG: Yes. But anyway, in Calgary things got done quite properly. One thing, we handled Crane fittings. Some of them we purchased from Crane Canada Ltd. and then some, if we didn't have them we would buy them from the local Crane Co. So if we got an order for Carne fittings for Leduc or something, we could ship it the same day and we found out very soon the fastest way to get it there was by truck. They would truck it up overnight and deliver it the next day. Then we put in this supply in Edmonton but then they complained about the Crane Ltd. in Edmonton. They would be short of something and they would phone them and then they couldn't even find out whether Crane Ltd. had them or not. So they'd turn around and phone us at Calgary and we would tell them. Or if we didn't have them, we'd get it from Crane Ltd. Calgary and put it up and they'd get it the next day. Crane Ltd. in Edmonton took 2 or 3 days and we would get it to them in 1 day from Calgary. So the Crane manager from Edmonton came down to see and he complained that we were giving all the business to the Calgary store. We said, we giving all the service. So we got that straightened out. Then we had trouble with the telegraph service. Telegrams came in to Calgary and back in those days they were delivered by a little boy on a bicycle. In Edmonton they came in to the main office, which was downtown and

they'd give the little boy a whole pile of telegrams and he'd spend the morning bicycling around the north side and all, and stop for lunch and come over and maybe get them in the afternoon. So the boys were complaining about the slow delivery on telegrams. So I asked them, you've got CN, you've got CP, which gives you the faster service. They said, not much difference, CP probably does. I said, just cut the CN off. We sent an awful lot of telegrams, we had a big telegraph account, one of the biggest they told me. So eventually CN sent a man out from Winnipeg to find out why Edmonton was being cut off and I said, because they don't give service. He said, you know the way it is up there, I said yes, but there's enough people in the south side of Edmonton, far more than any other place you've got around where you've got telegraph offices and things. So that stayed for quite awhile and then finally they came to us and said that they had a proposition. If it was satisfactory with us they would put a teletype machine in our office and they would, both CP and CN teletypes could come in to that or go out of that. And no charge to us if that was satisfactory. I said, sure it is so we got a teletype machine for telegrams. We had a teletype machine too, for the messages between stores and things. It was quite awhile before we could get to the factories in the United States and all, our offices, because teletype in Canada was run by the provincial telephone system and in the United States it was run by the American Express or something that was connected to the railways. And they were not on speaking terms with each other.

#236 SB: That wouldn't have helped things.

AG: No.

SB: So there were a lot of problems getting the public to accept the oil industry as something that would benefit them I guess. Was the general attitude that there wasn't really much future in it, that it wasn't going to last or something?

AG: That's exactly right. Shortly after Imperial Leduc #1 came in I was up there and I wound up in Leduc at an Imperial service station for gasoline. I was at the end of a long line of cars and trucks. You worked up and you worked up, finally got up. The owner of this service station was giving me gas and he was complaining like anything you know, he was so busy and he couldn't keep his books and get his work done. I said, you're just crazy, why don't you hire little boys to pour the gas in the cars and trucks and all, you're just sitting on a gold mine here and you operate the business. Oh he said, I couldn't do that, a few months and this will all be over with. I said, I'll just bet you that in 2 years you won't even know the boundaries of the field. So other people moved in and cashed in on it and a lot of the people that lived there just got pushed aside. And actually, the reason that Calgary became the oil centre was . . . there were 3 reasons but one was certainly that the Calgary people were very oil minded. They'd gone through a tremendous boom in 1914, ??? I guess, and then they had Turner Valley for years and they were all attuned to it, and the Edmonton people were not at all. Then the second thing, there was a difference. Calgary had, I understand the cities were fairly close to the same size, Calgary had I think over twice the number of hotel rooms Edmonton had. I was told at that time that the Calgary Palliser had as many hotel rooms as the top 3 hotels in Edmonton together. The reason for that too was, Calgary was ranching country primarily and

Edmonton was farming country. Furthermore, Edmonton had a much larger foreign population than Calgary and it also had much larger government employees. I was told back then that about 1/3 of the people in Edmonton worked for one or the other government, either the Dominion or the provincial or the school boards or the civic. And all those things added up. Ranchers come into town and they stay at hotels, farmers come in and they tend to use boarding houses and things, which I did in Edmonton myself. That was what they did and what you had to do. Then, the people in Calgary, a lot of them were Americans and Scottish, are not as conservative as farmers are up there. And they're not as conservative as the government employees, they're more take a chance people. I worked for Westinghouse for I guess, a year and something, up in Edmonton and when I was up there I was used to making quotations and all and they'd say, I'll look at it and come back, and come back a couple of times or something, and I got to expect that. I got moved down to Calgary and I'd come in and make a quotation on something and he'd say, just give me a minute, and he'd say, I'll take it or I don't want it. I was getting fast decisions down here compared to Edmonton. I think that's the reason that after the discovery of Leduc in Edmonton's back yard, nearly all the companies were formed by people from Calgary.

#322 SB: They knew an opportunity when they saw it I guess. They'd jump on it.

AG: Yes. But there's on further thing too. A lot of people were sent up by companies from the United States and it was almost impossible for them to get hotel rooms in Edmonton. They would probably get a hotel room at the Palliser or something, so they would live in Calgary for 2 or 3 weeks and commute to Edmonton, then write a report. But when they wrote the report, by the time they got around to doing this, they kind of felt at home in Calgary. Then they got thinking, now they're probably going to send somebody, it might be me. And they preferred Calgary by this time and they nearly all recommended Calgary. The one major company that didn't was Gulf, they set up in Edmonton. They moved to Calgary in, I'd say, '67, about there. They finally joined the rest.

End of tape.

Tape 7 Side 1

AG: So they delayed about a day or more before they got another crew in from Texas before they went on.

SB: I guess that's one reason why unions wouldn't be too appropriate in the oil patch, you'd never get anything completed.

AG: I don't think they've ever been popular. They might in the refineries or something I guess, but not the drilling end. The drilling superintendent of the Imperial Oil Co., Charlie Visser was down there, as was Bill Oakes, their master mechanic. They looked the rigs over very carefully and before we left to come home we all went to this Sunrama??? movie theatre, which was quite spectacular. It was 70 mm. film and they had a big wide semi-circular screen all around the sides and a number of sound cameras from all different angles. It was quite expensive and didn't become popular, largely for that reason

I think.

SB: So was it an advantage to you to have the drilling rigs on display there, did you get many sales as a result of that trip?

AG: I'm pretty sure we got one to Imperial Oil. Because in early 1956 we sold a drilling rig to Imperial Oil, almost like the big rig there, National 112, with a big mast and big engines and everything.

SB: You were mentioning that the large operating companies decided after awhile to sell their own rigs instead of owning them. What was the reasoning behind that?

AG: Actually, the drilling contractors could drill cheaper than the operating companies for a couple of reasons. One is, drilling contractors tend to be drilling most of the time with their rigs for somebody or other. The operating companies get kind of ties into their own operations which have flat spots in them a lot. Then the operating companies tend to be more conservative, they carry more equipment and things, than the drilling contractor normally does. There were a number that had drilling rigs, were in the drilling categories in the earlier days and now there are very few.

#040 SB: You also mentioned, a lot of the drilling contractors made sure that their equipment was in excellent condition and would keep up with the latest equipment so that they didn't have any breakdowns. Has that trend continued on for very long?

AG: Yes it did. A lot of them have their own shops and they're continually pulling a rig in whenever they get a chance and redoing the whole thing to turn it out looking and running like new.

SB: So by the end of the 1950's had things changed that much, I guess they had changed a lot but looking back on the period that you had been working, did you see any obvious changes that you had taken place just over the 1950's in the, I guess, the general atmosphere of the oilfield?

AG: In the early days it was far more informal and a lot more verbal things than came later. In the early days you'd make a deal and you'd go over what they would do and what you would do and you'd shake hands and that was it. Then latterly, I mean, it had to be all written out and checked by the legal department and everything. It was a lot easier in the early days to communicate with people, either on the phone or call on them. As they got bigger you needed appointments and such. They got broken down into more departments and you had to be sure that whatever you were going to discuss went to the right department. That almost was inevitable because where, in the early days, drilling contractors would have just a few rigs, then he'd get up where he's got 10 or 15, 20 or 30. It changes the whole atmosphere of things.

SB: Did you feel that there was more excitement about what the oilfield could bring in the 1940's or in the 1950's? Like, had things sort of calmed down where people kind of knew what to expect in the 50's or was there still a lot of excitement about . . .?

AG: There was a lot of excitement and all. But the thing was better organized, there was less running around after you were in trouble and trying to do something about it and patch it up. And more anticipating things, I guess you'd call it preventative medicine.

SB: Were professional opinions, like from geologists and engineers and things, were they gradually being accepted more or respected more than when things first started out?

AG: I'd say there was a very, very definite trend. In the early days a lot of people didn't think very much of engineers or probably geologists. Latterly though, they certainly did and they'd ask you, what will happen if I do this.

#080 SB: They realized that it made a difference eh, instead of trying blindly I guess.

AG: In the drilling rig you see, originally, the drilling rig had a little light plant that would only be 3 or 5 kilowatts. And it was just lights. They had these ones that were built on the rig and they were direct current and they operated very much like the train lights do, which operate on the current and the little light plants on the cars runs off the axle of the thing, which is indirectly powered by the engine that pulls the train. Then they got going for bigger light plants. And then separate light plants. When they went to separate light plants they went to alternating current, which is what you use in the house, instead of direct current which runs off a battery in the car. The separate light plants had a little engine that drove them. Originally I believe, they were nearly all run by gasoline. That wasn't really a very good idea because the rigs were nearly all run with diesel. So it meant carrying a different type of fuel for the light plants. Plus the fact that, because they could use the gasoline to drive a car I think, the fuel for the light plants evaporated quite readily. And you estimate how much it would take and they'd take a lot more than that. But anyway, then the switch came to using diesel engines, small diesel engines for light plants. And they got bigger and bigger and bigger. Then eventually, got very big light plants and then a lot of the little engines that used to be around for little pumps, water pumps and shale shakers and things were replaced by electric motors which ran the bigger ones, which made the thing more fool proof. Because if you've got a lot of little individual engines there's always some of them not starting or something happening. So they got bigger and bigger. Then we got around to the diesel-electric, where the diesel engines produce electricity that runs the drilling and the pumps and things. Then we got a little past that, starting off with the northern rigs which we called the one energy concept. We'd have them so those plants would supply the heat and the power for cooking on the camps and the whole thing. There's always controversy whenever you start changing things but anyway, that turned out very well because it automatically adjusted itself from winter to summer. Because you have this diesel-electric plants in the drilling rigs and then over a way, you have your camp separated by a fair distance. If any explosion occurs it won't get to the camp at all, or fire or anything else. Then when it's cold, let's say 50 below or something, everything is going full blast. We used the heat off the diesel engines to heat the rig. On a diesel engine roughly a third of the energy and the fuel comes out as power and about a third comes out as heat from the radiator and about a third goes out the exhaust, up the stack. So the third coming out the radiator was used to heat the rig. In some of them we ran the engines without radiators and then we put heaters over there that acted as radiators where we wanted the heat to go. You can move things. Then, when it's all going full blast with the rig like that, it's putting out a lot of electricity and it's putting out a lot of heat through the radiator. Well, in the summer time when it's warm,

you're not putting out, you don't have a heat call in the camp and all. But things aren't going full blast, you aren't putting out a lot of heat on the rig either. So at that time you don't need it, you don't get it, when you need it you get it automatically. It just works itself.

#157 SB: I guess as exploration started going further north you had to develop new techniques to be able to compensate for the extreme cold. You were mentioning the Peale Plateau Ltd. for instance. What were some of the changes that you had to make for the equipment, the considerations that you had to make . . .?

AG: What they did at the Peale Plateau, they developed a sleigh that carried a pretty fair load and they hooked these sleighs together and hauled them with caterpillars on winter roads. They were a long way from any kind of a road up there. I think they operated out of Dawson City pretty well.

SB: Did they have any trouble with the rig components itself, anything freezing up or. . .?

AG: I don't believe so. Back in those days too, I think they used steam boilers for heat. That was the traditional way right along. I would also say that these rigs I'm talking about, you had what they called an advance camp along with the other camp. Then there was a camp that had a smaller diesel engine and then there were a little smaller kitchen and ??? So that when they moved to another location they would send this advance camp out so they could start up. And when they started moving from this main rig there, they would move over and there would be people to receive. They would just set it up, it would be in the place that it's going to be. And it's an emergency camp too and so forth. Then as they got more and more over they'd send more and more men over and then they'd send one of the main engines over to give them more heat and more living spaces, until finally, they'd all be over there.

#197 SB: I guess by the 1960's there were a lot of people that were more or less veterans of the whole early stages. You were mentioning that in 1964 you had the Golden Anniversary of Oil that you played a major part in helping to organize. Did you want to go into that now? Did you want to mention how the project got started maybe, first of all?

AG: Yes. As I remember, it was early in 1964 and there were a few of us over in the Petroleum Club. The conversation came up, as it had several times, somebody should do something about the Golden Jubilee of the discovery of oil in Turner Valley in 1914. This got kicked around and then somebody said, it doesn't look like anybody is, why don't we do it. That was kind of decided and somehow I got nominated or elected or something, in the very near future too, because we were short of time, to call a meeting and see if something could be started. So I called a meeting for a few days, got a room at the Petroleum Club. I can't remember all who were there, but anyway, it ended up that I was elected or appointed or something, to be general chairman of the deal. We were to get 1 representative each of 7 petroleum associations, which we did. Because of a shortage of time we hit on a date right quick of the 22nd of May. May 14th was the date of discovery of oil in Turner Valley but I think it was the Board or Trade put on a banquet to commemorate this on the 23rd of May in 1914. So we picked the date right close to that.

During the course of working on this we got hold of 3 people that had contact with the original Turner Valley discovery. One was Mr. Frank Coutts, who had worked for 3 years on the original well, which was called Calgary Petroleum Products #1 well and was generally referred to as the Dingman #1 well. In 1914 he had a team of ??? Perchons???, which he paid $600 for and he hauled all the equipment into the well and he hauled the products away from the well, covering a period of 3 years. The second one was Mrs. Martin Hovis???, who was the wife of the chief driller, who was Mrs. F. E. Bilkovich??? of Black Diamond in 1964. The third one was Mrs. Charles Emsley of Edmonton, who had played at the dinner celebrating the discovery of oil on May 23rd, 1914. Her name then was Miss May Rankin. This discovery well was drilled by the Calgary Petroleum Products and was Calgary Petroleum Products #1 well. The 3 people in the Calgary Petroleum Products were William Elder, A. W. Dingman, and W. S. Harron. According to Mr. Frank Coutts, there were 2 drillers and 2 tool dressers. According to Frank Coutts, the chief driller was Marty Hovis, assistant driller Bob Brown, and the tool dresser were Elders and Marty Luther. They all worked a 24 hour day, 7 days a week. They changed towers at 12 noon and at 12 midnight. The temperature, according to the accounts in the Herald, on May 17th, were 70 degrees high and 45 degrees low. The report from the people were, it was a hot day on the 14th when the well came in. Mrs. Hovis, wife of the chief driller Hovis, arrived in Turner Valley by train shortly after May 14th, 1914 and they set up a home near the well. We ran a dry cleaning business she said, a school and all sorts of things like that. Martin worked 12 hour shifts, alternating with assistant driller Bob Brown. One of the amusing features of the well she said, was the overnight erection of a number of restaurants and refreshment stands along the road leading to the well. Nearly every visitor bought a bottle of pop and if he did not drink it he emptied it on the ground, so he could fill it up with the remarkable gasoline product of the well then take it back to Calgary to show his friends.

End of tape.

Tape 7 Side 2

AG: The Golden Anniversary committee, which consisted of representative of 7 associations, plus myself as general chairman, we had Art Smith as coordinator. We held several meetings. One of the early ones had a lot of controversy over where to hold it and the price. The price was set at $3.50 and in checking quickly for a place, the Palliser would hold 500. A number of us didn't think that was big enough and we could get the Corral for the 22nd for $1,000. Some thought that was too many, we wouldn't get anything like that and some of us thought we would. Anyway, that won and we booked the Corral for the 22nd of May. Each of the members of the committee had a specific function to do. Eddie Laborde handled the tickets and finances and Spi Langston was the information on the well and equipment. Our first objective was to hold this without any deficit. The second was that we would donate any surplus funds we had to the establishment of a replica of the well, to Heritage Park. Incidentally, collect on location of as much equipment similar to the original Turner Valley well as we could locate. While we had set this up we'd had a kind of brochure in the works. We had some of the stories and stuff

kind of ready and we were threatened with a lawsuit that some of that wasn't right. So we had another stormy meeting over that, whether we should go ahead anyway. It was decided we wouldn't. So we substituted a little oilwell derrick, with 4 sides, the story of 4 main fields up until that time in gold and black to set up on the tables. We ordered 1,000 of those. Later, I called the editor of the Herald and asked to see him and I showed him this material and he was kind of busy and he said, just leave it. So then he called me back in a few days and he'd apparently read it. He said, they'd be glad to do it, he said, they couldn't pay for it. I said, we didn't want to be paid, he said, it's all right to use, I said, sure. Then about a week or 10 days I think, before the 22nd he called me and said, we'd
#050 like to have about 2,000 copies of the paper put out as a duplicate of 1914. I said sure, so anyway he did this and then they also lent us enough newspaper boy carrier bags and the Desk and Derrick Club girls went as paperboys and during the evening they spread the papers around. On the program we got Mrs. Charles Hemsley, of Edmonton, to play the violin. She had been a concert violinist and she had played at the dinner in 1914. She was Miss May Rankin at that time. She'd come out from, I think it was Toronto, to play for the Calgary Symphony Orchestra, which she did for a year. Then the Calgary Symphony Orchestra overspent, I understand mainly by bringing in high priced musicians from New York and went bankrupt. Then she was given this job, hired for that, in 1914. We brought in this Frank Coutts, who we were advised by somebody that he was living up near Harmattan and I went up and called at Frank and his wife. He was in poor health so we arranged to bring him in the day of the Anniversary Dinner and he was there. We were going to take him back home the next day but during the evening he got tired and he wanted to go back that night. So we got somebody to take him back and then come back to Calgary. The guest speaker of the evening was Leonard Brockington, who had been the city solicitor of Calgary and had been a partner of R. B. Bennett, who was subsequently Prime Minister of Canada. Leonard Brockington, I was told, had a habit of coming in late in the mornings and R. B. Bennett was very precise. He bawled Leonard Brockington out quite a few times. Leonard Brockington was an excellent speaker, one of the top in Canada. Anyway he had a good comeback but R. B. Bennett called him in one day and said, they had an arrangement for all the summer vacation schedule of everybody bu Leonard Brockington. He said, what are your arrangements for vacation, he said, I just decided I'd take 15 minutes every morning. He was moved to Ontario and amongst other
#103 things, he wrote Mackenzie King's speeches, over a period of time. He was not in good health when he got here, he had some difficulty eating. My son, who was a young lawyer at that time, law student I guess, he helped him eat. He had arthritis I believe it is, in his hand or something. But he did an excellent job and got quite a standing ovation. R. A. Brown, at that time of I believe, Home Oil Co. had a moving picture made of the Home Oil Co. and it ended up he had ???. Unfortunately I was never able to see the picture, I was never available when they showed it. At the early part, when the committee was working it appeared that we were going to be pretty deeply in the hole. Ticket sales were very poor. I spent quite a bit of time on ticket sales as well. I spoke in Calgary, we got other people to speak, we had a sales office in Turner Valley, we had them in Red Deer and Edmonton and Calgary and so forth. As I always say in any group, there are those that

say that we just face doom and gloom and we had them. We had these meetings and kept plugging at it then pretty close to a week before, it started to turn around. Sales started to really move up. The problem then became, not how to sell the tickets but how to handle the people. The refreshments in the Corral at that time, had to be handled by the Stampede. We were told that they could handle 1,000 and then, after we came down, ticket sales started heading for the 1,000 point. We had a meeting of our executive every morning at 7:30 in a room up in the Palliser. One thing we didn't want to do is stop the
#150 ticket sales or have anybody come in from Victoria or Turner Valley or something, and not be able to get to it. So I was down practically every day negotiating with the restaurant. They said they couldn't go past 1,000, then they said, they could go 1,200. In the meantime we shut down all the ticket sales outlets except one in Edmonton and one in Calgary so we'd get a daily report on where we stood. We went up to 1,200. Then they didn't have enough table wear, knives and forks and all, could they rent them, they didn't have enough facilities, could they get some other restaurant to do it and then bring it in hot and they finish it. We went up to 1,200 and 1,400 and there wasn't enough table room. We put tables all up where the chairs are in the Stampede. But anyway, every morning we had this report on where things were and a discussion and decisions. Along there, as the crowd increased, we increased the security. We had 12 off duty policemen, to 18 and so forth. Finally, on the night we went somewhere over 1,700 and they told us it was one of the biggest sit down dinners ever held in Calgary. When we finally got all the bills paid and all the money in, we wrote a letter to J. B. Cross as the chairman of the Heritage Park Society and sent them a cheque for $3,099.04 with a request that, if possible, to use the money to put up a replica of the Dingman #1 original well. We also had a picture of the original well. We also advised them where they could get parts of drilling rigs possibly, which they did, and that's there today. On September 24th we got an acknowledgement that they were moving that direction.

#196 SB: So that was quite an accomplishment.
End of tape.

Tape 8 Side 1

SB: This is October 18th and it's the 4th interview with Alvin Geddes. Mr. Geddes I wonder if you'd like to mention some of the people that you started in the drilling business by financing them through National Supply Co.?

AG: Particularly after Leduc, we had a tremendous number of people wanting to be drilling contractors and we had a credit department which decided each case on its merits. In general, we judged on ??? climate, we figured that if we financed anybody they should be able to pay for it out of earnings. If for any reason we had to repossess it, it was a very serious error and mistake. We did not run to that very many times. We would also take into consideration the person who generally was president and running the business, and the ability to sell their services, which was very necessary. And a capable and experienced supervisor to make sure the operations were well done. An example of that of course, is

quite a spectacular success was Peter Bawden, who had been managing a lumber company up around Grande Prairie and had bought a couple of trucks and was trucking, I believe oilfield mud, and I think, even groceries and all, to drilling sites up there. Came into Edmonton in early 1952 and wanted to buy a drilling rig. He ended up by lining up with Hank Zutz??? for a drilling superintendent, who was a very capable man. And he purchased a National P-32 drilling rig, which was set up and ready to drill in July of that year. Got his first contract at the end of September that year and started Bawden Drilling, which became a worldwide drilling company. I believe, drilling in Australia and Spitsbergen, which is the farthest northern well at that time, and Winter Harbour, Indonesia and in the United States. They purchased a drilling contractor, Brown Drilling, in California and branched out from that. Another one was, an operator came up, Orville Metheney???, with the Robertson and Metheney Drilling Co. They had a very poor credit record when they came up here. Orville Metheney lived out with his wife in a trailer at the Seismic Service Supple property for a few years. But Orville Metheney impressed me as being a very honest and capable man. Robertson, the senior owner, was an unreliable type. So this company was working on a cash sale without any credit and on the basis that Orville would see that we got paid, I got a credit set up for $1,000 so he could buy the odd rock bit or something. As that worked out we gradually increased it until Orville Metheney bought Robertson out and the company eventually became Cascade Drilling and did very well. Norm Gustafson was another one. He came down from I believe, Alaska where he'd been working on some gold mining I believe it was. He got himself a good drilling superintendent and started out with 1 drilling rig. He sold his gold interests and put them into oilwell drilling. Gustafson Drilling increased and became a very stable and excellent drilling contractor.

#072 SB: Are there any other people that you'd like to mention that you worked with at National Supply?

AG: Back in 1949 we had a young manager worked with us for a couple of years, by the name of Jim Stark. He was doing very well and he came to me to ask if a well up the Ghost River, which had been drilled with cable tools to I believe, 8 or 9 thousand feet, was being deepened with rotary be General Petroleums. They had a Christmas tree on it for a working pressure of about 2,000 lb. per square inch and they were running into some higher gas pressures. They wanted to know if it would be good for 3,000 lb. per square inch. I said no, they needed a tree that was rated for 3,000 lb. So they said, would it be possible to change and I said yes. Then they asked me if we would supervise the changeover and said, yes we would. So we started off early one morning in October and we got out to the well about 8:00. The tool pusher, who I had known in the past, took me aside and said that, was I really serious about changing this and I said, yes I was. He said, you're not an employee, therefore you're not covered by Workman's Compensation, so you can't go down below to the floor. I said, okay, so he said, I'll introduce you and leave you with it. So he called the crew and told them what I was going to do and said that they were to do everything I said, but I was not to go below the floor. He said that he would be in the hotel in Cochrane when he was needed. So we started out. We welded a piece of

casing on to the casing we had to get more height. In those days they had about half of the weight of the casing stood on the cement on the bottom, the other half was suspended in this well head. We stretched the pipe a little to get the ??? loose and we had trouble and it developed that the cable tool hole was crooked. We had the rig up a block and tackle and pull it over sideways to the mast. The handles broke off the slips, we had to weld new handles on, so we worked at that all day and into the night. At this time Jack Dallas, who was with Oxsana??? Oils at the time, apparently had some interest in the well. He was very nervous and chain smoked. After dark he took me over to the farmhouse he'd rented there and he had every ashtray in the place filled with cigarette butts. He paced from room to room and said how much it meant to him if this worked and so forth. So anyway, we worked through the night and finally they got everything under control about around noon the next day. We phoned the pusher in the hotel room in Cochrane and he came out and shook my hand and we took off back to Calgary. It was a beautiful, sunny, dry day. I drove home, the family was all out and went straight to bed. The next thing I knew I woke up, it was 7:00 and I thought it was 7:00 in the morning. Because there was snow all over everything. I had an appointment that night so I phoned and said I'd be a little bit late. Had a shower and changed and went down and finished the day off. That's the way that things were in those days too.

SB: So how many hours did it take you to put that Christmas tree in?

AG: Around 30 hours.

SB: That wouldn't be too usual I guess.

AG: No. We didn't figure it was going to be that long.

#133 SB: It's November 22nd, 1983. Mr. Geddes I wonder if you'd like to mention one of the projects that you worked on for Imperial while you were still with National?

AG: Yes. In 1956, which was shortly after we were at the General Motors Powerama Show, Imperial bought a Model 110 National rig similar to the one at the Powerama show, only not diesel electric. They sent it to drill a well near Tangent, in the Peace River country. I went up on the Northern Alberta Railway. I remember I left Edmonton about 5 or 6:00. It was bitter cold and we arrived at Falher about 3 am. I got off and could see the hotel about 1 ½ blocks away and every car or truck on the streets, and there were a lot of them, was running with clouds of exhaust steam all over the place.

SB: Did you know what temperature it was then?

AG: I didn't know but I found out next day it was around 70 below. I walked a block and a half to the hotel and sat in the small lobby for a little bit because I was practically frozen with that little walk. Then I went and got my key hanging on the board, and went to bed. I was sent up to help start the 3 engines and it was around 70 degrees Fahrenheit below zero, so we put warm water in one of the engines and ran steam in to keep it warm and later we heated engine oil, because it was all practically solid and wouldn't even pour, and put it in. We watched it for 2 or 3 hours, till we got it warmed enough, and then started it. We had no trouble getting it started and we kept it running all night. Next day we started the second engine and on the third day we started the third engine. It got continually better for us as time went along because the 3 engines were all in the same

structure, building. The first engine we started was tending to heat the structure for the other engines. It was a bitterly cold job though, that was.

SB: Were the rigs closed in then, or were they open?

AG: No, the rig was open. They were just putting it together.

SB: That must have been hard for the people working on the rig too then.

AG: Yes, it was. I was doing a little work and then rushing back in one of the Imperial Oil cars and warming up and rushing out again, and back in. Actually, I'm going to mention here, about this northern work. The efficiency of everything goes down as the temperature goes down. I used to use a rough formula that the efficiency dropped 1 ½ degrees per degree Fahrenheit below zero. Somebody said that isn't right because at 65 below, efficiency is zero and I said, that's about right too. But actually, this is something you have to take into account. The Eskimo dogs, they will not work below about 50 below. You can beat them or what you want and they still won't. They'll burrow into the snow and they'll wait till it gets a little warmer and off the go again. So they know enough too, to quit before they freeze to death.

#184 SB: Do you have any other stories about coping with cold weather conditions?

AG: We had an exceptionally cold winter in 1950-'51. At that time our company cars of National Supply could be either Ford or Chev or Plymouth and specifications allowed for a standard heater only. This winter it seemed to be about 55 below zero Fahrenheit in Edmonton and you could turn your heater on to defrost and when you could see you'd get practically no heat. Or you could turn it on to heat and you'd get the heat but you couldn't see. I got a lot of complaints from the staff, justifiable ones too I thought. And I took it up with our division manager in Casper, phoned him quite a number of times and he said, no, that was the rule and that was the way it would have to be. Then I got word that he was flying up to Edmonton and he wanted me to go up and meet him and go around and see some of the main customers.

SB: And what was his name?

AG: Pete Gillespie, they called him Bear Tracks, because he had big feet. So the field man, Bernie Sturrick??? was driving us around, and I suggested to Bernie to make sure that the defroster was on on the car so we could see. So we did a little driving around and Pete got complaining about the cold and we were taking him in some place to get warm 2 or 3 times. So finally, we went some place for lunch and in the course of the meal he said, you know, this is a very bitter climate you have up here, I've never seen anything as bad. I think that we need better heaters in the cars. So I said, that's fine Pete, we'll see that that's taken care of. I said, excuse me and I went to the phone and passed the word. Some of the boys had got, about that afternoon, 2 heaters in their cars. But anyway within a very short time they had either 2 heaters per car or they had a deluxe heater in where they had a standard before and things were improved.

SB: I guess he couldn't imagine how bad it was being down in Wyoming?

AG: Yes, he could too because it's real tough down in Wyoming too.

#223 SB: As a drilling engineer, I guess you were able to see changes in drilling rigs and

equipment that took place over the years. Would you like to run through the changes that you saw?

AG: Actually, in one of these files Imperial looked up there, I suggested to Scoville Murray, that we could possibly use some of the waste heat from the engines for heating in these northern rigs. Then I got a call from Imperial and they said, would you like to take that a little further. This was maybe 6 months or something afterwards, but I think that was the start of it. So I checked through with the, I think ??? company, that I heard had some. They hadn't much experience with rigs but they had with others and then I've got letters in there where I wrote Caterpillar and said we were thinking of this and the type of engines that we had, would they have any objections to doing that. They wrote back and said, no, you go right ahead, we wouldn't object to you using our engines that way. So I mean, we kind of cleared the thing and then eventually we did, right.

SB: You used the waste heat to heat the drilling rigs?

AG: Heat the drilling rigs, yes.

SB: That hadn't been thought of before I guess, because they didn't need to heat them?

AG: Well, I wouldn't say that but I don't think it was up here. Because after I got into the thing a way I found out there was 1 or 2 rigs in ??? I think, up in Alaska, had been experimenting with it.

SB: So I guess it was an idea that a lot of people were working on at the same time?

AG: Yes. But eventually, we pretty well got on what we called the . . . what did we call that, I haven't got the words right now. But to get away from the steam boilers, which always on the northern rigs you took 2 because if a boiler broke down they'd be in terrible shape if they didn't have a back-up. But with the 3 engine thing, you're going to be running 1 engine all the time anyway, and you've got 2 back-ups for 1 you might say.

SB: In case something goes wrong.

AG: Yes.

#272 SB: That's good. Did you want to go through now, the different types of drilling rigs that were used at the time?

AG: In the early days of oilwell drilling cable tool drilling rigs were used. First with hemp or similar rope and later with steel cable. At the time Alberta's first producing oilwell was drilled in 1914, there were 2 men on a tour, which is the oilfield name for a shift. A driller and a bit dresser, and 2-12 hour tours per day, 7 days a week. In 1943 most of the drilling was in Turner Valley field and was done by rotary rigs driven by steam engines. In the rotary rigs the drilling is done by a rotary bit with teeth on it. The bit is fastened to the drill pipe and revolved by turning the drill pipe. This bit grinds the rock or shale into chips, which are continually brought to the surface by pumping mud down through the drill pipe, which lifts the rock cuttings to the surface, where they are separated from the mud and the mud is pumped down the drill pipe again. The requirements of a rotary drilling rig are 1) to locate the drill pipe so that bits can drill the rock, 2) to pump the mud down through the drill pipe and 3) to be able to lift the drill pipe out of the hole to change worn out bits. In cold temperatures it's necessary to keep the water and mud from freezing up and also the men. To be competitive a rig must be able to be moved in a fairly

fast time, from one location to another, often a great many miles away. A great many rigs in 1943 used steel derricks. These were built from the ground up by rig builders, using steel angle sections and were about 90'-136' high. A jackknife cantilever mast was being introduced, which was assembled lying on the ground by the rig crew and raised by the drilling rig. This eventually replaced the derrick. When I joined the National Supply Co. in 1943 exploration drilling was increasing outside the Turner Valley area, to the area around Lloydminster, around Brooks and around Taber. Steam driven rigs were not efficient for this. they took too much time to dismantle and to rig up. They were too inefficient in fuel and they required enormous amounts of good water. National Supply designed and produced what they called, a Model 50 consolidated rig, which is a rig designed to drill to 5,000', powered by 2 Walker-Shaw diesel engines and also a Model C-150 power pump to deliver 150 hydraulic horsepower. This was done I guess, in 1937. Experience showed this rig was very conservatively rated and was converted to air crutches in 1950 as the Model 50A. At one time, many more National 50's were in operation in the world than any other rig model. The machinery, power plant pumps, ??? etc. that it required to drill an oilwell is commonly called a rig. The many tons of equipment required have generally been put together in loads of a size and weight that can be moved in a truck.

End of tape.

Tape 8 Side 2

AG: Lately there are some exceptions to this. There are 3 major uses of power on a drilling rig, all done through a pipe. Power to ??? the pipe, power to hoist the pipe and power to pump drilling mud down through the pipe. To supply the power required on the rig it nearly always takes several engines. These are connected together in what is called a drive group. The original power rigs that replaced the steam rig, like the National 50, originally had 2 engines coupled together with V belt drives. A V belt drive to a suss pump and a chain drive to the hoist or draw works as it's called. Later the drive group went to high speed chain, clutches changed from mechanical to air operated and then to fluid couplings or torque converters. The larger rigs went to diesel electric rigs. Originally there were lighting plants on rigs, they were only for lights. These were 3-5 kilowatt and numerous small gasoline engines ran auxiliary equipment such as, shale shakers that separate the cuttings from the drilling mud, water pumps, air compressors etc. Drilling locations spread out northwest and southeast of Edmonton and later up to the Peace River country and over into Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Along about this time too, they started putting on bigger and bigger light plants, and running more of the auxiliary equipment with electric motors which did away with a lot of the miscellaneous small gasoline motors which were awfully hard to service and keep going. From 3-5 kilowatts we got up to 150, 250, 350 kilowatt light plants on the larger rigs in the final, and everything pretty well ran electrically. Also, where you originally had gasoline for the small engines, diesel for the main engines and then you had propane or fuel oil for heating, we got down to running everything on diesel fuel. This simplified things an

awful lot because as long as you had any diesel fuel you could run anything or cook anything and so forth. Then also, the chances of fire are a lot less with diesel fuel than they are with gasoline around the place. Gasoline kind of seemed to evaporate. Some of the crew probably used some for riding back and forth and so forth, so diesel became much more efficient.

#052 SB: How long did you continue with National?
AG: Up until the spring on 1966.
SB: And then you formed your own consulting company?
AG: Yes. Originally I was doing consulting work under my own name, Alvin P. Geddes, professional engineer. Then in 1968 I formed Geddes Engineering Ltd. for the engineering work and I also formed a company, Oilfield Personnel Canada Ltd. Both this Oilfield Personnel and Geddes Engineering were up and down, which is the way the oil patch always is. It worked out quite well until they were both at a peak at the same time and then I got swamped. So I backed off the Oilfield Personnel. But in the meantime, I was doing considerable work for Sonatrack???, which is the national oil company of Algeria. We would put in ads and screen the people and tell the applicants, then they would send people over to make the deal. It was quite interesting. We had sent quite a number and then we had another lot going and then there was a change in the attitude of the government somehow, which delayed things. So I dropped that and went strictly into engineering because the engineering business was picking up and carried on from there.
SB: Before we go on are there any other projects that you worked on for National that you'd like to mention?
AG: In the early days we had an awful lot of trouble with the Customs department. Most of the things were either cleared at Coutts that came in by truck, or at Calgary, car loads, or Edmonton. The staff at Customs were not conversant with oilfield equipment and we would find that for example, the Kelly hose would come into Calgary duty free and at Coutts they'd charge duty and excise tax on it. We didn't know what our costs were, nobody did. So when I was down at the head office I had told them that I would set up, shall I say, a book that listed what items should pay customs and excise tax and what ones should be free. Then we were in a great boom then, and I never could find time to do it. They kept after me so finally one day I decided that if something was going to have to be done and I was going to have to do it, I'd have to get out of the office at Calgary. So I called my secretary and told her what I was going to do and said, I'll let you know how to get in touch with me but don't tell anybody else. I'll probably be gone a week. So I took the necessary material in a car and went and drove up to Edmonton and checked into the Mayfair Hotel on Jasper Ave. The reason I picked the Mayfair was that they had car parking in the basement and a lot of people recognized my car and I thought it best to have that hidden away. So I started working on this, then I would phone my secretary every morning, then I would tell her, she'd have a list of things, I'd tell her what to do with them and then if something had to be handled I would phone or do it myself. So anyway, then I went to drive over to the store on the south side and check in with them,

anything that needed to be done and then drive back to the hotel and get to work. It took me about 10 days but I got this thing finally done and then we got it typed up and I gave copies of it to the Customs people at Calgary and at Edmonton and at Coutts. Also the main customs man at Calgary, I got him a copy of the composite catalogue which had pictures of everything. That became accepted by Customs and everybody as being the way it was ??? our competitors or what have you, so we standardized on our prices that way.

#117 SB: So it made it a lot easier to know what your costs were going to be for ordering your equipment?

AG: Oh yes. The pricing department were in a mess before that, and after that, they'd just look up their duty free and away they'd go. Of course, the customers that bought it, they had a stamp that they put on each order and the wording was something like, we certify that this is to be used for drilling and production of oil, something like that. Somebody signed each of those, that's the way it worked.

SB: So when you started on your own as an engineering consultant, I guess you were recognized as one of the top engineers in the field. Would you like to mention, I think it was with Imperial that you said they asked you to be more or less a consultant at one of their conferences?

AG: Yes. I got a phone call in October of 1968 from Scoville Murray, who was head of the drilling department at Imperial at that time. He asked me if I would come up to Edmonton for a day. They were having a conference on the future of drilling equipment. They would pay me a consulting fee and all expenses and give a short talk and answer questions. I said yes, I would. I was quite thrilled with this because at that time Imperial was the largest company in Canada. So I left Calgary, went up on the early morning airbus, took a taxi up to Imperial's office and reported to Scov Murray's secretary. She said, Mr. Geddes, we've been expecting you. So she introduced me to somebody and he took me in a room and he said, you can just get yourself a little acquainted with this, this is all confidential though. He had charts all over the walls and all, of what their profit was and what their drilling was and this, that and the other thing. I asked him, is it all right if I make notes of this and he said, that's quite all right, make notes but this has all got to be confidential. I said, yes but he said, we have the utmost confidence in you. So I made some notes and then I think, it started at 10:00 so I listened in the morning to the discussions. We went off about 12 for lunch and we had lunch and came back and I was on at 2:00, for half an hour, 2-2:30. So I decided I'd speak about 10 minutes and then answer questions, which I did. It was a good suggestion because they used the whole 20 minutes of questions and answers. So I was really quite thrilled to be given that opportunity to discuss things with them.

SB: Was it a training conference for Imperial employees?

AG: No. The conference was for studying the policies of Imperial. There were drilling equipment people, some engineers and geologists and so forth, management there.

SB: So it was quite a significant meeting then?

AG: Yes, it was.

#175 SB: It's November 24th today. Mr. Geddes, I wonder if we could talk about some of the more interesting or significant projects that you worked on while you were consulting engineering?

AG: Among the last number of projects I had, over the 16 years from the time I left National Supply in 1966, till the time I started winding the business up in 1982, some of the projects stand out, I believe, definitely in my mind. Such as, in February 1968 I received a contract to appraise the value of a total of 55 drilling rigs belonging to Commonwealth Drilling Ltd., General Petroleums Ltd., and Mordean??? Drilling Co. Ltd. As well as equipment in yards at Edmonton, Calgary and a number of field yards. These were spread from Saskatchewan to the Arctic and the job was too big for me. So I sub-contracted some of it to Les Bray of Industrial Energy. Another was in 1969 when I worked with Commonwealth to design what we called Operation FIR, a fly-in rig. This was designed to drill with hard rock mine drillers, diamond drills and use mining rods and casing instead of drill pipe. The size and the weight to be reduced so it could all be flown in an Otter airplane, in 2,000 lb. loads. Commonwealth bought a hard rock diamond bit mining rig and hired the crew to help to bring about a successful lightweight rig for drilling exploratory holes in the Arctic. This rig was built and turned out to be unsuccessful, due to drilling problems in the sedimentary rock formations where oil and gas are found, rather than the igneous rocks which are the type where minerals are found. In the igneous rocks they could drill with straight water, they had no problems with the blow out preventors or anything like that.

SB: So the people working with the hard rock mining probably weren't familiar with the problems of mining for oil and gas.

AG: That is right and things didn't work out. Another interesting case to me was in 1972 when I was approached by Upper Canada Resources and asked to do an evaluation of Brinkerhoff Brothers Ltd. rigs. And my estimates of the prospects for oil and gas drilling and prices for the next 5 years.

#217 SB: Can you sort of summarize, was it a good estimate?

AG: It turned out to be very good for the first year, and then OPEC knocked it into a loop. Incidentally, Upper Canada Resources were very pleased and they wrote me with a report and they purchased Brinkerhoff and things worked out for them well, even though I had projected price increases but OPEC countries made the increases far out of what I had projected. Then in February 1977, on a Thursday afternoon I got a long distance telephone call from W. J. Cummer in Bermuda. Bill Cummer was president of Westburn??? International Drilling Ltd. and he wanted to know if I would be available and interested in doing an evaluation of the rigs around the world. I asked if I could take my wife. He said there were some places my wife Joan, couldn't go but in the main, he would say yes. I said I was interested and he said to call up Westburn's Calgary office at 9:00 on Monday. So we worked things out, probably roughly by noon, although it took the rest of the week to get it written up. We got our shots, Joan needed a new passport, we got that and in a couple of weeks we left on Canadian Pacific Airway from Vancouver for

Hong Kong and Singapore, where Joan stayed. She and the Westburn manager's wife had a grand time with a chauffeur driven car, while her husband was in Jakarta and the superintendent and I were in KMT, which is Kassan??? Marine Terminal, about 10 miles from an Indonesian city called Sorong, which is an airport about 2,060 miles east of Singapore. The name of that Sorong and sarong is something like a skirt.

#259 SB: Yes, that the men wear.

AG: Yes. We were in dense jungle there, which is a tropical rainforest with no roads. Everything went by helicopter. Men, building, rigs, bulldozers, everything. I had a large number of helicopters, smaller ones for personnel and the crew went to the rigs in the morning and the change of crew went out and they brought the crew back, 6:00 in the morning and back at night. To me it was intensely interesting because there were these trees with tremendous big trunks, I guess they'd be 30-40' high and then all these other vines and everything, some of the vines would be woody and they'd stand about as thick as a man's arm. And there was no way that you could walk through the jungle. In fact, the only way that you could get any kind of a road or anything was to saw or hack their way through it and they couldn't afford it because if they built a road they'd have to have a crew continuously there, cutting back. Otherwise in a matter of weeks the jungle would take the road over and it became too expensive. When they were going to drill a well the geologist somehow would pick a spot and they would send a helicopter with a couple of men with, I think, axes and chainsaws, and they'd let them down on a ladder to the tops of the trees. They would cut branches off of the thing and cut their way down. When they got down to the ground then they would start cutting the trees down. When they got enough space there they would send a bulldozer in in pieces, with helicopters and put it together and start pushing stuff around. When they got enough space they'd make a helipad, that would be the first thing, and the helicopters could land and unload. They got a tremendous number of, I'll call them logs, these places, and it was all sloppy, because of the amount of rain I guess. They would lay all these logs across the area where the thing was going to go and then they would bring in, mostly sand and seashells and stuff, from the ocean by the helicopter and spread it around. Then they'd usually put another layer of logs crosswise and more of this sand stuff. Then they would start moving the rig in and set it up and then after the well was completed, they would leave the helipad there, move the rig out. So they had a lot of helipads around, besides the rigs, so if a storm came up the pilot would just put his helicopter down where the rig was or any helipad there and wait till the storm was over. They usually didn't last very long, half an hour or something. It would pour cats and dogs when it did and then move on. It was a beautifully handled situation. I seemed to have a pretty high priority. The crew had the highest, they had to go out and take the crew changes out, the personnel. But we would phone up and say we wanted to go to rig #3 or whatever it was and the man with the helicopter would say, be at pad #4 at 6:30, 6:45 whatever it was. We'd go down there and there would be a helicopter waiting and it would just take you off.

#350 SB: It must have been an expensive operation with all the helicopters and everything

else.

AG: Yes, it was. They had quite a big kind of Quonset building and they had a whole machine shop for helicopters mainly. They had helicopter mechanics, they always had helicopters in there being overhauled or checked or something.

End of tape.

Tape 9 Side 1

AG: When we got into Algiers we went to the hotel and the room clerk told us there was no Madame Geddes in the hotel. So we got hold of the manager and he confirmed that, they had no record of a Madame Geddes in the hotel. So we drove to the manager's house and phoned and Joan said, I'm in the hotel here, why didn't you call in. I said, we did but they told us that you were not there. She said, don't pay any attention to them, just come on back and come right to the room, I'm in room 238. Just so you don't get lost take the elevator to the 6th floor, I'm on the 6th floor, which I did and there she was. We had trouble when we tried to leave. I think it's mainly due to bureaucracy that they have so much over in a country like that. We tried for a reservation back to Rome, which we had a ticket for but they said that it would be at least 10 days before we could get a reservation to Rome. So then we asked for Paris and they said yes, so we got a reservation for Paris the next day. In the morning we were all packed and about ready to go when a phone call came. Somebody speaking French and I didn't understand very much so I kept asking him to phone Westburn. He said, that was impossible, that's a word I heard a lot of. Then I finally got the phone number and I phoned Westburn and they got in touch with them and they phoned me and said, the problem was, they told him that they couldn't give us a ticket to Paris unless we got a teletype from Canadian Pacific Airlines at Montreal saying it was okay because the ticket showed from Algiers to Rome. Then we tried to check out of the hotel. Westburn tried to pay the bill and that was impossible because it wasn't their room. So I tried and that was impossible, it wasn't my room either. So we had to get hold of Joan and get her to pay the bill. We got out and we went to the airport and talked to them at the airport and everything was impossible there too, so we went over to Air France. The fellow just grinned and said, are they giving you a hard time, I said yes, they are, what can I do. I said, if we can get a reservation for a plane to Paris, he said, I can arrange that, you're going to miss the flight to Athens and end up at the wrong airport, at ??? instead of Charles de Gaulle Airport. We took it anyway, but before I could get out of the country they checked this money. I turned up with exactly the same amount of money as I had coming in. So then they asked me, you've been here for a couple of weeks, how did you live. I said, Westburn has paid all the bills, which was true. Then they didn't seem to believe me but it ended up I had to get an affidavit, sign an affidavit and get police approval to leave the country. So we finally got out of there. We went then to Athens and from there on to Abadan??? and ??? in Iran. At that time Iran was one of the biggest oil producers in the world, about 6 million barrels a day as I remember it. There were 4 rigs there and that was a different type of country too. When we left Iran we went back to Athens and we tried to figure a way to get to South Africa that was reasonably

safe. There were a lot of disturbances in South Africa. The travel agent said the best ways to go was either take Olympic Airlines, it stopped at Kenya and then to South Africa or take British Airlines, which would mean going to Portugal, the Canary Islands and down. So we took the Olympic Airlines. There was a lot of animosity towards the South African Airlines and things. As a matter of fact, we were told not to say we were going to South Africa when we were in Algeria. So we didn't, we said we were going back to Athens.

#066 And that was that. The number of rigs involved was, about 3 helicopter rigs in Indonesia and 4 large drilling rigs in Algeria and 4 large drilling rigs in Iran. Those rigs were, in a lot of ways, different from our rigs in Canada, because they were built to dissipate heat instead of produce heat. For hot weather. In reviewing the oil industry, or drilling over the 39 years I was actually engaged in it, from 1943 to 1982, firstly the physical conditions. In 1943 and for several years, roads were in terrible shape, virtually no pavement and full of potholes, dust and mud. Cars and tires were worn out and patched. There were no civilian cars manufactured in the war years. Speeds were low, by law and by road conditions. I believe the maximum by law was 40 and the road to Edmonton went through all the little towns. Balzac, Airdrie, Crossfield, Carstairs, Didsbury, Olds, Bowden, Innisfail, Penhold. Each town had its 15 or 20 mile speed limit, which they enforced. It took at least 7 hours to drive from Calgary to Edmonton and flat tires were common. Then drilling rigs were changing from steam operated to power rigs, which were mostly diesel engines. But many drilling contractors used converted steam rigs, which were heavy and awkward. The clutches were dental clutches, they had teeth and it took a knack to operate these without shaking the daylights out of the equipment. Engines were mostly diesel and low speed. Blow out preventors were mechanically operated. In the early days most of the financing of a major amount, such as the purchase of a drilling rig, was done by the supply companies. And for the 23 years I was with the National Supply Co. we charged 6% annum interest rate, or ½ of 1% a month. I believe it was in the early 70's that inflation interest rates and prices took over. Through the years roads improved, the drilling rigs became more compact, better engineered, with air clutches, higher speed lighter engines, high speed chain drives, automatic drillers, excellent instrumentation with better rock bits, better drill pipe and much better drilling personnel. Blowout preventors were greatly improved and operated by pressurized fluid and from remote control points.

#101 SB: You were mentioning the change in blowout preventors from a mechanical operation to automatic. Did that pose many problems in those days?

AG: It certainly did because when you had to stay right by the well, to close the blowout preventor, when the blowout is taking place, most people elected to remove themselves from the vicinity pretty quickly and let her blow. So it made quite a lot of difference. The change to torque converters and fluid couplings to high speed chains and all, made a lot more efficient and smoother rigs. Torque converters take the power from the engine and put it out in either torque or speed. Torque is the twisting power of anything. When I started with National, I was told that in the late 30's the estimated cost of complete National power rigs were the model number, plus 100, times a thousand. Where the

model number 50 would be $150,000, the model 75 would $175,000, etc. In 1970 the cost of rigs, for equipment debt rating were about $500,000 for the replacement of the 50. And in 1982 ran about $2.25 million, for this size, or about 15 times. Of course, the rigs were not the same. They are better rigs now and with a great many improvements but they cost about 15 times as much for a rig to drill about the same depth.

SB: Looking back over your career, were there any periods that you enjoyed more than others?

AG: Actually, in 1972, when I closed my downtown office and set up an office in the basement, from then on it was a lot better for me. One of the things was, to quite a large extent, I was able to do what I liked to do. The other part of it was that I've always been used to an up and down business and I rather like that too, rather than a 9 to 5. When I had my own business if things got quiet I just took off. Joan and I just went somewhere for a day or so or something. When things are busy I worked overtime and so forth, and got it done. That I like too. I tended to get more and more of the, shall I say, straight engineering jobs over the last few years, where originally I was doing large rigs and small rigs and service rigs. Then I found it was taking too much of somebody's time, either mine or the customers, to keep up with the changes, on all of those things. And we were in quite a changing period during the 70's, where we used to have firm prices for at least a year or two. As a matter of fact, the old Composite catalogues, a lot of the manufacturers published their prices in there. They would supply things at that price for 2 years but with inflation they stopped. It became, instead of having prices change once a year they might change in January or June or something else. Then you couldn't get any firm quotations on anything, or firm prices those were available on delivery and so forth. Then supplies got difficult of equipment, to get what you wanted and so forth. So I stopped doing service rigs and then latterly I stopped with the small rigs and stayed with the large rigs, which became more and more the diesel electric rigs. Electric rigs I liked and most people didn't. So that was because I started as an electrical engineer, and had experience with Westinghouse I'm sure. But I could figure horsepower electrically or mechanically, either way and see how it balanced and so forth.

#167 SB: Do you feel that the influence of OPEC was one of the major events that changed the industry?

AG: It was. OPEC certainly did and then the moves of the government following. The way things look today, I would say there's certainly a better than 50% chance we're going to have another upset like there was in '73 by OPEC. The situation seems to be deteriorating in the Middle East. I would not think it would be as bad as it was before because that area doesn't control as much of the world's supply of oil now as it did then. But it will be quite severe anyway. They are, from my experience over there, they're kind of . . .all those Middle East people are basically, what's the name for it, just a minute here. . .

SB: Tribal or something.

AG: Semolites???. According to the bible, the sons of Shem. But they are quite volatile people that don't really, readily live in peace. I would think that things will deteriorate over there. They are also, as are most African countries, I think, are mostly straight

dictatorships. There's a boss man that controls what happens most every place. It depends what kind of a man he is what happens.

SB: What kind of mood he's in.

AG: Yes.

SB: So they're not very easy to negotiate with?

AG: No, they aren't really.

SB: Before we sign off are there any other comments you'd like to make on your industry or your career?

AG: I don't know as there are really . . . we're always going to require energy here, particularly in a cold country like Canada, we've got a heating load that they don't have in the tropics as I found out. As well as other things. We have oil, we have gas, we have tremendous amounts of coal, and hydro. Although I think that most of the good hydro-sites are expensive, they're way up on the Nahanni River or someplace away from the people, where the juice is and it's expensive to transport the power down. Dams are expensive to build, they take a long time, just like it takes a long time to develop a field. A major field, possibly, 10 years or so.

#217 SB: So do you feel that the oil and gas industry will survive, say, past 1990 in Alberta?

AG: I think so, yes. The amount of drilling in Alberta per square mile has been much lower than in the United States areas. I feel sure that there will be an awful lot more discoveries. And of course, the price situation of oil has a lot to do with it. When the price of the oil is to the company, or the one that finds oil, is fairly low they tend to drill shallow wells. The deep ones, they don't go for the 50 billion and over wells, because the odds aren't that they'll make out in the long run. The law of supply and demand, as things get scarcer, they always get more expensive. No matter what it is. There will be problems down the line with oil and with coal and all too, with the acid rain and things, that will have to be met. Of course, you can remove the hydrogen sulphide from oil. It's pretty difficult to do it from coal.

SB: Well, I think you've had a very interesting career and I'd like to thank you for participating in our project.

AG: Sure. Fine.