

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Marjorie Gibson

INTERVIEWER: Nadine Mackenzie

DATE: January 1985

NM: This is Nadine Mackenzie speaking, I am interviewing Mrs. Marjorie Gibson. Mrs. Gibson, thank you for having accepted to participate in our project. Can you tell me when and where were you born?

MG: I was born on a farm 50 miles east of here, near a town called Standard.

NM: So you are a true Albertan.

MG: That's right.

NM: Which year was it?

MG: 1922.

NM: And your parents were farmers?

MG: Yes, my dad was a farmer and we lived out there.

NM: Where did they come from?

MG: Both mom and dad came from Iowa. Dad was a Dane, from one Danish colony to another one up here. The whole area, at that point, was I'd say, 95% Danish and mother was. . .

NM: Your grandparents came from. . . .?

MG: Denmark.

NM: And your parents met in Alberta?

MG: No, they met in Iowa. Mom was a substitute teacher in a school where some of my father's younger brothers and sisters went to school. I don't know the whole story but I know that's where they met. And he kept going back to Iowa in the wintertime and eventually married mother in 1918 and brought her up here.

#013 NM: How did she like it here?

MG: She was almost, would you say Sheldon, a rabid Canadian.

NM: Can you tell me about their farm?

MG: Dad had five quarters. He had that land assembled and purchased, that unit, by the time he married mom. It was mainly a grain farm, the livestock was for our own use.

NM: Do you still ??? today?

MG: Yes, we have it Sheldon and I.

NM: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

MG: I have one sister.

NM: So what did you do at this farm, at the beginning, were you working there or did you go to school?

MG: We went to a one room country school, which was about a mile and a half away but it ended at grade eight, and so in order for us to get high school, dad moved us into the city, because there was a high school in the neighbouring town, but with the roads and

everything in those days, it would have meant that you would have had to board there too and he didn't want us to be unsupervised and so forth. So from grade nine on the family lived in Calgary and dad commuted back and forth. For a couple of years in the summer time we went out there and then he eventually got hired help to live on the farm and cook for him and so forth.

#027 NM: Which school did you go to in Calgary.

MG: I came for junior high in Central and Crescent Heights for my high school?

NM: And did you have any summer jobs or did you help on the farm?

MG: I helped on the farm, although as I say, in high school we were back and forth on the farm. And then I went to university following high school, at U. of A., by this time you were getting into the war. One summer I worked at odd jobs in Calgary but then the last two summers, while I was at university, help was so short that I went right from university to the farm and helped my dad. During those two summers I did drive the tractors and this sort of thing.

NM: What did you study at the university?

MG: I took an arts course.

NM: Why did you choose art?

MG: I was heading for Social Work, took psychology, philosophy and this sort of stuff.

NM: And how long did you spend at the university?

MG: Three years.

NM: And what did you do after that?

MG: I went to work. Again, it was in war time and I had attended to go from U. of A. to UBC, which in those days, was the only place you could get your diploma in Social Work, following a BA. But I approached in the last couple of months, just before I finished my final year, by people in mental health work in Edmonton and asked if I would like to come on as a Social Worker, in the mental health clinics, guidance clinics they were called and be trained on the job. By that time, of course, I was going with Sheldon and the prospect of not having to leave Edmonton had certain appeal, so I did that.

NM: And then what happened?

MG: My course, I had graduated in three years, we started the same year. Sheldon took five, he was in an honours program, which was in itself four, and then he had to make up, take an extra year, to make up some high school subjects wasn't it.

SG: It was because I hadn't taken chemistry in grade twelve because I didn't like it and then I found in physics I had to have chemistry so I had a year in cultural arts before I got into my honours physics program.

MG: I like to claim it was because he was much slower than I but. . . So I worked for those two years, you see as a Social Worker and then when he graduated we married. He graduated on . . . I keep getting this mixed up, was it a Tuesday?

SG: Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>.

MG: And we were married the following Saturday on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

#056 NM: Did you get married in Edmonton?

MG: No, in Calgary. And by this time, we had thought he was going to be in the army you see, because the war was still on, but by this time, things had changed. I guess the military could see the end of the war coming up so he was in the . . . what do they call it . . . the COTC in university so he was released from that and so he accepted the job with Imperial. So suddenly instead of going to Kingston as we had thought we were going to, he had the job with Imperial and was heading for seismic work. Now, we knew what this was because he had been working for . . . what, two summers I think, Sheldon, while we were engaged.

NM: So you knew what you were in for?

MG: Absolutely. That's not entirely true. I knew what we were in for, but the locale changed. He promised me that we were going to see the world. . . but he said, oh these crews know . . . and it was true what he told me, work up here in the summertime and then work in the southern states in the wintertime. This is what we thought we would be doing, but lo and behold the year he joined they decided to work full time in Canada.

NM: So after getting married, you moved where?

MG: Well, we married on the 19<sup>th</sup> and we had a few days before he had to report to work. But he reported to work in Saskatchewan, in Saskatoon. We went by train of course, we didn't own a car, we didn't own anything, we had very little money. The crew was working at Davidson, Saskatchewan and that was where we went. I have no difficulty remembering when we got there because it was the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, it happened to be my 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. I'm just a month and a little bit younger than Sheldon so I had caught up with him and we were in a funny little hotel in Davidson. We went back there last year and had supper on the way to Saskatoon. We were hunting in this small town for something to live in and you know, small prairie towns, they are not set up with rental accommodation and you just scrounged around and finally. . . I think we may have got there on the 28<sup>th</sup>, I know we had at least one day of unsuccessful search and on my birthday we found a little house, a one room house with a lean to on the back. Nothing in it of course. Absolutely nothing.

#087 NM: And you took it?

MG: Took it and were delighted, yes. It was on the street that faced, parallel to the railroad tracks and when you came out the front door, the front door was right on the street and it had those funny false fronts. If you turned left in a short time you came to the hotel, where the beer parlor and all was, of course, and if you turned right, a little distance was the blacksmith shop and if you came out the front door and went up the alley you came to the town pump where we got water.

NM: So you had no running water in the house?

MG: Oh no. We begged, borrowed and scrounged furniture. I think we got a bed from the mayor and a coal oil stove. I was used to living in the country and cooking on a coal stove, wood coal stove, or in the city and cooking with electricity or gas. But have you ever tried to cook on a coal oil stove, an invention of the devil.

NM: This stove was for heating the house and. . . ?

MG: Well, it wouldn't heat anything, it was for cooking. It had an oven, a portable oven you

could set up on top of the burners if you wanted to bake but it was old and falling apart and in order to get enough heat in the oven to bake anything I had to pile magazines on top of it to keep my heat in. But that wasn't my biggest problem. Sheldon got up in the morning and put his clothes on and went off to work of course, and it was a very cold spring. For two weeks at least, into June, it was cold and I was just about froze to death in that house. I'd stay in bed as long as I could until the sun got up, hoping that would warm things up a bit you know. We finally got a two burner hotplate and I would set it in the middle of the room and plug it in to give some heat. Can you remember what we paid for that. . .our rent on that place. . . how much, \$10. . and I'm sure our electric bill must have matched our rent.

#111 NM: How big was this house, one or two bedrooms or. . ?

MG: Oh no, one room. One room would be no bigger than our living room, about that. It had a bed in it and a table and there was a crude work bench in the corner. I did like most of the people did in those days, we made furniture. You knew you were going to move, you couldn't afford to buy things so the challenge was to make it as livable as you could. Cap??? boxes, which were good sturdy wooden boxes were used for everything. You stacked them up and screwed them together and put a little cloth curtain on the front to make cupboards. You turned them upside down in the middle of the room and put a cloth over them for a coffee table. You packed in them when you moved.

NM: That was very practical.

MG: Oh sure. Here's perhaps the first example of the sort of thing you ran into. You were viewed in these small towns was sort of mixed emotions. People were a little skeptical, a little standoffish, you know, these queer people arriving in a crew and what were they like and there was a little bit of apprehension perhaps. But at the same time their inclination was to be warm and friendly. I can remember I was trying to fix up this place and there was a knock at the door and here was the postmistress and she said, you're not going to live in a place without curtains and I know you can't afford to buy them, I've gone through my trunks and here are curtains, when you move, give them back.

NM: That was very nice.

MG: Yes. This sort of thing happened.

NM: So were you feeling very lonely when your husband was going to work all day long?

MG: I suppose the way . . . getting married in itself is a big step and an adjustment and you're away where you don't know anyone. I didn't at that point, know anybody on the crew. We had gone around and made the acquaintance of the other couples. . .scared, maybe, more than lonely. But there was certainly. . time did not hang heavy on your hands. You went down the alley to get water, you carried water in, you carried water out, you washed clothes by hand, there was no refrigerator so you went and got your groceries every day. And then, right from the start, we made a point to get to know the other wives. I had two parties in that little place, rounded up the wives.

#144 NM: Because you are all in the same situation.

MG: Yes. And then of course, I had never cooked and to try to put a meal together. It would

take me all day to trying to figure out how to make the stove work and what I could cook on the ruddy thing you know. I hadn't been married a week, we hadn't been keeping house a week, when Sheldon brought our first guest home, a young chap who was working on the crew, unmarried, and you know, the Chinese restaurants in the little towns left a lot to be desired. He brought Roy home for dinner, so Roy was my first dinner guest, Roy Baillie. He was with Imperial until, he retired when we did.

NM: How long did you stay in Davidson, in this house?

MG: I can't remember how long we stayed. Because there were other things that happened that were upsetting. I think it was less than a month after we got there, Sheldon started to get ill and eventually he was so weak he couldn't get out of bed and walk across the room unaided and the local doctor who'd been there since the day he graduated and at that point was in middle age, I don't think had had a refresher course since he left university. He diagnosed one thing after another. Well, to shorten the story, it eventually turned out that Sheldon had infectious mononucleosis. But this was just in the days when it had first been diagnosed as a separate disease and this doctor of course, didn't know it. I didn't know, I had this husband who was sick and weak and this doctor was treating him for heaven know what, having me get hypos. So eventually Sheldon got his clothes on and I helped him walk down to that hotel I mentioned. We phoned a doctor he knew in Regina and got on the train and went in there and this doctor, who was a friend of the family, just laughed when he saw him. He said, you've got mononucleosis and he said, the good thing is, you'll never die from it, the bad thing is, you'll probably wish you would. Marge, you'll get it too. Well, he was wrong on that one. But the end result was, we ended up, after Sheldon was in Grey Nuns hospital for awhile, going home to his home in Lethbridge and staying for part of the summer until he recovered sufficiently so that we could rejoin the crew, which we did at Kerrobert, Saskatchewan.

#178 NM: So then you moved?

MG: Yes, we moved. . well, I had to pack the stuff up because Sheldon was weak and leave it in Davidson and then get him home to Lethbridge and then when the crew moved to Kerrobert, we joined them there, sent for our stuff and started another search for a house, found another empty house and took up our relationships with the crew again. We weren't in Kerrobert there very long. We joined the crew shortly before the end of their period there and we moved to Wainwright.

SG: Sorry, on Kerrobert, there was that point of the grocery dealer who automatically opened charge accounts for anybody on the crew that came in, which we all felt was an act of. . .

MG: And another example of the sort of thing you ran into. Again, we were . . .there was only one grocery store in that town as I recall, because we looked out one day, just after we moved in and here was the grocer and his wife coming down the step to our house that we rented, carrying a whole assortment of things and this wife said, I know you're going to need things. And she had a couple of wash basins full of odds and sods of cooking things and just, household things that she thought would make. . . .

NM: Was she giving that to you as a present?

MG: Yes, she said, use them while you're here.

NM: Very nice.

MG: We did carry with us of course, the minimum of things. When we married we packed all our wedding presents and left them home, apart from the Belik??? tea set that I've told you about. That I took with me because I wanted something pretty. But we had the minimum of what we'd need in bedding and cooking utensils and all this sort of thing. But to have extras was great. So we went off to Wainwright. Wainwright was a military town, there was an army camp outside of there and again, housing was tight. By this time I was beginning to think I was an old hand at it. And Sheldon's other call that time had to go out in the field, and Fran Chapman and I, another wife, started scrounging around and we found a two room suite in the basement of a house, it looked out a tiny little window and just outside that window, across the driveway, was a garage that had been converted into a little apartment. You see people there were used to army people so there were a few more rental things. Fran took the garage and I took the basement suite. I would get up on a chair and talk out the window to her. She would sit on the stoop of her door and we had a great time, the two of us. I figured I really had it made in that place. There was a tap down the hallway and an indoor toilet, which we shared with two other people that lived in little suites in that basement. It was just like a rabbit warren, people were crowded into every corner you know. And again, completely empty. I remember Fran and I. . somebody said that someone was selling some furniture off, so I went to this place and bought a Winnipeg couch, I think they were called, funny little thing. It's like a single bed only with a back on it and . . . a pad on the sitting area and a pad on the back.

#230 NM: Why is it called a Winnipeg couch?

MG: I have no idea. But it served as a couch in our living room and I covered it with material that I bought.

SG: Didn't it make into a double bed.

MG: It could make into a bed, yes.

NM: So that was very practical.

MG: And then we . . . I can't remember where we got the bed that we had in the . . . the bedroom kitchen was combined and then we had this little separate living room.

SG: You cooked with natural gas.

MG: I cooked with natural gas, a stove, a gas stove. No oven control at all on it, of course, you just turned it on and hoped. But the bed I remember, the mattress was so saggy. . .it went down quite a long way. Sheldon didn't weigh quite as much then as he does now. But he built a long box about that high and almost the length of the bed to shove under the bed that I could put linens and things in, because there was no place to put things. And he built a work bench in the kitchen, a nice high one, with a shelf on it. It was all rough wood but still. I can remember, mom and dad came up to visit us and dad was a big heavy man and he got into this bed and said, oh god, what's under this bed. He made it sag so much we had to pull the storage box out from underneath the bed and put it in the middle of the room. Again, the first while you were very busy, making the place . . getting it homey you know. And Fran and I, Fran was a new wife too, she'd been married the same month we were and we were trying to figure out. . . her stove in her little house had the

same problem. Gas stove, gas oven but no controls. Finally we found a book that told you, you put flour on a cookie sheet and put it in the oven, then you turn on the gas 1/4 turn say, and you'd time the length of time it took for that flour to get brown and this would give you the approximate temperature of the oven you see. And then you'd turn it up higher and put fresh flour in and see how long it took to get brown, to a certain level of brownness and that would give you the temperature. So you made your own little chart and then you hoped.

#269 NM: But you didn't have any accidents with it?

MG: No. There were some things cooked faster than we expected and so forth. By this time I was close friends with Mary Hockela??? as well, who, they had been on the crew when we joined it. Thanksgiving came and the crew was going on a picnic and Mary and I offered to cook pumpkin pies. We had never cooked pumpkin pies in our lives, either one of us but we cooked pumpkin pies for the whole crew. And . . . funny things. . . Fran and I . . . of course, neither couple had much money, we were just starting work, just out of university, the same for Carl, he was just out of the army. And we did our own washing, we had washboards, you know. . . sheets we sent out because we couldn't handle them. But it would take you most of the day, to heat the water, and wash on the washboard and hang it out, carry your water in and out and so forth. We would get quite a satisfaction, the two of us, from all this line of washing hanging on the line, it represented a fair amount of energy and a lot of raw knuckles. But one of the things we had to contend with was these southern wives on the crew. There were wives that had come up with their husbands from the southern states you see, they were horrified. It was sort of an affront, they didn't feel it was seemly somehow that we were doing this kind of work. They sent everything out, everything, it just wasn't proper. I don't know whether we were a threat to them or it was just a different attitude. However, I became close friends with one of these southern gals, her husband was a Party Chief. And you started to run into the politics of living in a small group. The necessity of getting along with everybody was quite obvious, you had to. If you were moving around, your whole happiness really, depended on having a harmonious group. And sure, you might like some people better than others, or be more naturally drawn but you couldn't afford the luxury of not getting along. And we were all well indoctrinated with a horror story of a crew in the south, remember that. We had never been on that crew but it was well know in the industry, where they had so much dissension that eventually the company actually stepped in and insisted that the employees send all their wives home until . . . they were not supposed to come back until they could have a group. . . because the men were fighting with one another at work because their wives were fighting at home and so forth.

NM: Did you come across any wife who very depressed or could not take this type of life?

MG: I can't remember any. Probably there were always people who complained some and there were some who left. There were some marriages that broke up. I don't know whether that was from the kind of life or whether it would have anyway, you know.

NM: This is the end of the tape.

## Tape 1 Side 2

NM: So what about social life, did you meet and have tea in the afternoon or play cards in the evening or do things like that?

MG: Yes, there was a fair amount of socializing. As I told you about Fran and I visiting out the window and from her door. Ernestine would come over and we would go down and do our shopping together. There was a fair amount of . . . when you moved into a new community and you brought your community with you. So you started with friendships in that community the oil community that were well established. Many of us, in every community that we moved in, looked for other people. It was, we felt, almost instinctively, a healthy thing. Sheldon and I joined churches in every community we moved into and would make friends there. We found the merchants friendly. At Wainwright for example I remember. . . the hardware store, the Macleod's that was it and they were kind, they would have us in for dinner, so this was nice. But we couldn't have managed the life without the society, without the friendship of the crew. It became sort of like an extended family Nadine. You knew everybody's foibles and you . . . I can remember it took a lot of diplomacy, a lot of forbearance not to rail at one wife from the south who was so southern and so slow and I felt, so spoiled. And she thought I was such a primitive person, I'm sure, we were poles apart and yet we were in the same kettle. Undoubtedly friendships formed in those years that lasted a lifetime. It's very, very valuable. While occasionally you were drawn more to one person than another and within the group you would have special friendships, if you had a coffee party or get together you would invite anybody that would come. There was very little exclusion. If you were with some of your special friends. . . you know, Fran and I would laugh together at what we considered some of the idiosyncracies of the southerners. But I'm telling you, did we ever close ranks if some of the outsiders, the town people criticized any of us. One example I remember was in a town called Milleta???, in southern Manitoba and I can't remember what the problem was but some problem arose between some of the crew members and one of the stores and they felt that they had been very badly treated. This spread all among the crew and we all, I don't think any of us spent another cent in that store. That would be enough to make itself felt because these crews brought a lot of money in you know. The business of moving in a community. . . as I say, Sheldon and I did becoming part of our church community and then. . . you know, they'd come home and. . . in those days there were a fair amount of sudden moves, for one reason or another. Sheldon would come clattering down the steps in the middle of the afternoon and I would think, what's he home for, I bet I know. He'd come in and say, we're moving and we have to be on the road by tomorrow morning. Maybe it was to get to some area before someone else, or ahead of road ban or there would be some hush, hush aspect of it and you'd rush around and pay bills and start to pack frantically. I can remember this happening at Wainwright. The opinion was we would be there for quite awhile and suddenly Sheldon came home and we had to be on the road by morning. I can remember

after we got pretty well packed, saying we've got to say good bye to the Wieland's. He was the old minister in the church where we went and we went over there and knocked on their door and said, we're moving. The disappointment and sadness in their face, they had become fond of us and they hated to see us go and she made us a cup of tea. And as we were leaving she said, just a minute and she scurried frantically around the house, hunting for something she could give us and she came back with a fancy candle and she said, here. I carried that crazy candle for a long time.

#052 NM: So where did you go then, after Wainwright?

MG: I think Leduc. There was another scramble. The whole crew hits town and everybody spreads out, hunting for something to live in. We ended up getting two rooms above the train station. Mr. Knox was the station agent and they rented out two rooms upstairs. And by now it was second nature, you furnished it as best you could. That room had a little better. . .had some furniture in it. And they were delightful people, the Knox's, we liked it very much. We weren't there very long. But you know, I would have to go down and ask Mr. Knox whether the mail train had come through, to know whether I should to the post office or not. You'd get so you wouldn't even hear the trains.

NM: You mean you'd get so accustomed to them, really.

MG: Well, they'd come in, but somehow you were just so used to the trains. That was quite a pleasant stay. The next place we went to, I remember very well, because it was Winfield. It was a tiny little town out to the west of Leduc somewhere and we weren't going to be there for a long time and not many of the wives moved. Certainly those with kids didn't. I think I was the only wife that went to Winfield and it was such a small town that when the crew hit there, about the only place they could find to live was the local nursing home and she at the time, didn't have any patients. So she put the crew boys in the dormitory, the ward upstairs and she looked at the two of us and said, well, you can have the maternity room. There was nobody having babies so we had the maternity room. We ate in restaurants there, it was a real short term. The funny things you remember, the restaurant was awful I remember that and Sheldon was always hungry in those days and he'd order one plate and sit there and look at it sort of unhappily. And then he'd give up and order another one, and I learned to take dessert whether I wanted it or not and he'd eat mine. We were there when he got flu one time, he was susceptible to the flu and would be sick for two or three days and run a fever. Again, I didn't know much about treating people, but I remember my dad always gave people hot toddies, when they . . .put a little bit of liquor in a glass, and some sugar and lemon and fill it up with hot water. He said, it would make you perspire and break the fever and so forth. So Sheldon was so sick this one night, and I thought I'll make him a hot toddy, maybe that will make him feel better. The thing is, I hadn't a clue, we had done very little drinking in those days, and I hadn't a clue how much. I filled the glass half full with liquor and sugar and hot water. Well, I knocked him out is what I did. He drank it down and just passed out, didn't know another thing until morning. And perspire, we were sharing a double bed of course, and he just literally was soaking wet, an hour and a half later he was snoring, out cold drenched and I was scared to death, he's going to catch cold. It was the middle of the

night, I couldn't wake up the woman who ran the place and say may I have dry sheets. I got dry pyjamas out and got him enough conscious to sit up and got these dry pyjamas on him and then I thought, what am I going to do. So I rolled him over to my side of the bed that was dry and crawled in that wet side myself. I thought that had to be absolute devotion. But he lived, but I don't think it was because of my hot toddy.

#096 NM: Did he get cured with that?

MG: Well, he got better.

SG: I probably would have anyway.

MG: Probably would have. So we went into Edmonton, that was for our first anniversary and we stayed at St. Stephen's College, where Sheldon had roomed as a student for five years when he went to university and he had to have blood tests done, he was still having blood tests for the mononucleosis. I can remember a funny thing about that too, our friend said, oh these poor kids, knocking around out in the boon docks and three families in a row asked us out to dinner that weekend and each one of them must have thought, we'll give them something they can't get out in these little restaurants, roast lamb. Now, roast lamb is fine but it's not common here, is it you know. And the third night we walked into Ruth and Ralph Shrag's??? place whom we knew very well, he was a psychiatrist for whom I had worked and we opened the door and I smelled lamb, I just looked at Sheldon and the two of us just roared. We had roast lamb again. It was shortly after that, that we ended up moving back to Edmonton. This was just after the war and housing was desperate and they said, you can't get something to live in but we did. We went to the emergency housing bureau and got sent to a place, the Keith's were their name and again, we had two rooms upstairs, three rooms that's right. A bedroom and another bedroom fixed up as a living room and another bedroom fixed up as a kitchen. No sink or anything, we shared a bathroom. About this time I went back to work because the lady who had replaced me had quit and it just so happened I was there and they needed someone, so I worked for about a year. Now of course, it was slightly different, the crew was spread all around in a big city but we still kept in touch, we still had our coffee parties. By now this one was having a baby and that one was having a baby. I remember a new chap joined the crew and the fellows were out sometimes and would only get back weekends, not a lot with Sheldon but a bit. And I remember I had the young wife of one of the crew members stay with me because she had come from the Isle of Mann, I believe and had just no sooner hit Edmonton, than her husband was off to the bush. Then in the spring of '49 I guess it was, we moved to Mrs. Boyd's place. . . was it '49 that Ralph was born. . . '47. By this time I knew I was pregnant and we were hunting for a place that was a little more of an actual apartment or suite and we got one.

#133 SG: Sorry, have you got your story about when you had your pregnancy. . . ?

MG: No and that really should go in too, because we had decided that we wanted a child. Our parents were horrified you know, they kept hoping that we wouldn't have any family until we quote, settled down. Well, we had no idea when we'd settle down, so when we got to

the point when we wanted a family. . . and besides, people on the crew had babies, we knew this, you just made things different. So we decided to have a baby but I didn't get pregnant quite as soon as I wanted to and was getting a little upset about this. Finally went to the doctor and after a few tests, I was pretty sure I was pregnant, went back to have this pregnancy confirmed and the doctor said, yes indeed I was pregnant. I was so excited. At this point the crew office was in downtown Edmonton, just about two or three blocks from the doctor's office. I thought Sheldon would be back in about now so I hightailed it over to the area where the crew office was to try to tell him that we were having a baby. Everybody was running around like a chicken with their head cut off and I couldn't get his attention, I couldn't get anybody else's attention. Not that I was going to tell anybody else, but what had happened was, Leduc #1 had come in and everybody was running around with little bottles full of black oil. So eventually I got Sheldon and he shifted his attention from the oil to the new arrival. But I can remember going home in a streetcar with him that day and he had his little bottle of oil from Leduc #1, which we somehow in all the moves have lost. So we moved into Mrs. Boyd's place and it was lovely. We had an honest to goodness suite with a bedroom and a kitchen and a living room and a bath and an icebox no less, that I had to learn not to let the pan run over. In due course, in the fall of '47, Ralph was born and he was baptized in the chapel of St. Stephen's College, where Sheldon had lived for so many years and he was baptized by Reverend Wieland from Wainwright. He by this time had retired and was in Edmonton and he baptized Ralph. By this point we were experiencing another thing, that I think is more a part of oil wives lives now than it may have been then and this was the business of Sheldon moving so often with the crews, that he was out all week and in on the weekend. Moving with your husband and the crews, there are difficult aspects to it, but I think it is not as difficult and not as disrupting as that business. You wait all week for them to come home and plan everything to have a perfect weekend, which of course, can't be perfect and then suddenly it's over and gone. We never operated too well on that. We really liked it far better, even if your living accommodation was far better, our personal life seemed to work much better if the two of us were together. It was also difficult, until Ralph was six months old this went on, it was so quiet when he just there with me that when Sheldon would come home, even the opening of a newspaper would startle him so that he'd cry. Horrible. When he was just short of a year we were moved again, and this time it was up to Grande Prairie, up to the north country. Well, funny. Again, the hunt for accommodation. We found a funny little house. It had started out, when Grande Prairie was very small as a one room shack, and then somebody had built another room on to the back of that and then another room on the back of that. So to get to any room, there were no hallways, you came into the living room and walked through the dining room, into the kitchen and into a bedroom. The kitchen was at the back so there was . . . yes the living room, the bedroom, the dining room and the kitchen. It had no foundation and it was banked up with brick around the outside which came very close to the base of the windows, a coal stove. It wasn't in good repair, the wall paper hung off, there was a little lean-to on one side of one of the rooms, where we put Ralph's cot. In the fall when the weather started to get cold, the mice just came in as if the doors were open. And of

course, it got cold outside so the mice just came in. I can remember going in Ralph's room and nailing the wallpaper back up on the wall, thinking it might at least slow the mice down. We would put poison out at night when Ralph was in bed and then go around and pick up all the dead mice in the morning before he got up. I can remember putting my slipper on and running into a dead mouse. But it was not a bad house. Again, a lady whose daughter had married a seismic chap lived a few blocks away and she let me do my washing at her place.

#212 NM: Because you had babies and you had more washing.

MG: Oh yes, more washing. Then while we were there actually, we got our first washing machine. I think my folks had it when they replaced one. And this was just great to have your own washing machine. No running water still of course. And you are up in the north country now and it's very cold. We had a great time in Peace River. I can remember the fowl suppers, the crews would get together and go up. . around the north country, the communities would put on what they called fowl suppers, chicken or turkey, as a fund raising business. And we would go 3 or 4 cars of the young people, we were all young to these various communities and take in these dinners. You could have as much as you want. And we'd go to the dances and we'd have company parties. We had a lot of fun. I remember once, Sheldon was off visiting a crew, he was Party Chief by then and we had a terrible cold snap and our heating was a coal stove in the kitchen and a coal stove in the living room and a pipe came up and wandered through one wall and then into the other. Well, I wasn't that expert at banking a fire at night, you get the fire going and then you put on coal, enough to last for a while but you have to shut down the damper, so that it burns slowly because. . .and I didn't get it right. Ralph was asleep and I finally decided I had to go to bed and I tried to bank the stove for the night, only it all took off and I had about 3 times as much coal in that little pot-bellied stove as I should have put in. Before I could turn around Nadine, it was red hot and the pipe that wandered through the wall, one wall and then around through another was getting red hot and the paper was smoking.

#243 NM: You could have started the whole house on fire.

MG: I was scared and I thought the chimney would be on fire. And would you believe, it was a little house, but I crawled up on the fence, up on the top of the roof to look down that chimney to make sure the chimney wasn't on fire. Threw salt on the fire, sat up the rest of the night so I could at least get Ralph out if it caught fire. And the other memories. We bathed in a round tub of course, what else. And Sheldon didn't fit very well in a round tub, so we put the water in the tub and a chair beside the tub and he would sit on the chair with his feet in the tub and have a bath. He was in the kitchen one day and I heard this plaintive cry, just sort of desperation, Marge, I went out here and one of our neighbours, a doctor had a very precocious four year old. And she was on the banked up dirt outside the kitchen window, with her elbows on the outside sill, watching Sheldon taking his bath, with great . . . She thought this was great and Sheldon felt completely helpless. We moved from there to McLennan and I think it was in November. . .something, it was cold, I know.

SG: It was December I think, just before Christmas.

MG: I was very glad to get out of that house, I never liked it after that heater episode. The one we got in McLennan, we rented from a little woman who had become widowed, a little French-Canadian woman. Some people there, some of our friends were just in one room in that town, like the Remple's, but we were lucky and got a little house. It was much more imposing than the one we had just lived in, it had a proper living room and a little dining room and a bedroom off the living room and a bedroom off the dining room and a kitchen. But honestly, I don't think they'd ever heard of insulation in those days. There was a pot-bellied stove again, in the dining room, which was the central room and an oil burning coal stove and then in a dugout, under the kitchen, was another pot-bellied stove that you could light if it got really cold. Well, it got 50 below most of that month. And the oil that went in the oil burning stove, it was in a tank outside, in a barrel and you'd dip it up and get the oil.

SG: Turn the spigot.

MG: Turn the spigot on . . . the barrel was lying this way you see, and turn the spigot on and fill your container with oil and take it in and fill the kitchen stove. The oil got so thick it would almost not run out. Sheldon would have to get up every two hours, all night long, to stoke the stoves, the pot-bellied stoves. Even then, I finally moved Ralph out of his bedroom, which was the first bedroom and into ours, when I went in to get the milk, which I kept on the floor by the window in his room and it had frozen. It was so cold that really, we didn't take a proper bath for weeks. Water was a problem in that town. Water was always a problem. You were always buying water or carrying water or carrying it out, but McLennan water was a real problem. The local water was so bad, it couldn't be used, so water was brought in by train tank. One time, this was. . . McLennan, I should have said, was either French-Canadian or railway people. And the railway people in general, were Anglo-Saxon and the rest of the community was French. The water train came in one day, the train with the tanks on it and somebody forgot to fill them with water, so the town didn't have any water. We had just about . . . you couldn't melt the snow very well to use it because it was sort of a central . . . divisional point. . . were they doing repair work on the trains there. At least there was so much soot in the air that the snow got dirty and you couldn't . . .

#315 NM: So you couldn't use that.

MG: You couldn't use it and it was very hard to get a clean wash too because when you hung it out, you got soot on it. But you'd wait til it was dry and shake it and hope that it would go off. Another young wife and I did our washing together. Can you imagine doing a week's washing for two families, each of which consisted of a husband and wife and a baby, because they had a baby too, with one wash machine full of water. We put all of her clothes and all of my clothes through on one tub of water and one tub of rinse water, that's all we had. We had a real crisis that time that the water didn't come in. We got down, as I said, to deciding whether I was going to wash one more diaper or boil potatoes and the diapers won out.

NM: This is the end of the tape.

## Tape 2 Side 1

MG: Besides the problems that I think of in McLennan, in that little house. . . well, it seems like, for example, the kitchen floor was so cold that when snow was tracked in I had to sweep it up because it wouldn't melt. And yet Ralph never had a cold.

NM: A healthy little boy.

MG: And I remember things such as, a knock at the door again, and here was a middle-aged lady, who said, now look, in this town there's only two things to do, drink or curl and you're far too nice to drink so why don't you curl. I said, Mrs. Jones, I have no idea how to curl, she said, that's fine, I'll teach you. You get the other young wives on the crew and we'll find them places on the curling rinks. Now, this was a town that was fanatically engaged in curling life. It was their social life, it was their main interest. I didn't realize until years later what a kind thing she had done. She herself was one of the leading curlers and she made me a lead on her team. It weakened her team, there's no way she would have taken, normally, a green curler like that. Any one of the wives who wanted to curl were given a spot on rinks. You know, you don't forget things like that.

NM: Kindness, really.

MG: Yes. And I can remember the older French gentleman, I loved him because I would take Ralph out on an apple box nailed on a sled and this one old man especially, here I was, walking along, pulling a baby on a sled but did he call me Madame, no, oh no. And there was a huge, really a large Catholic cathedral across the way from us but we were Protestant and we went a block further to the smallest United Church I've ever been in, tiny little church. But you had a very small congregation because by far the majority of the people in the town were Catholic. This was another thing of course, that perhaps made it a little easier for us, because we are normally affiliated with a church and this is part of our life, it gave us one more entry into a community that broke down the barriers a little faster. It shouldn't be an indication of what you are, but nevertheless the fact that you showed up in church made people a little less apprehensive at meeting you. So by this time, we were beginning to become aware of some problems of moving with children in that Ralph's reaction, he was a happy kid wherever we were. But as soon as. . . we got to the point where we had to leave his crib up til the very last thing. We never took it down until everything else was packed, because he didn't seem to mind the packing or anything, didn't get upset, until that crib came down. He had associated that crib with his security and as soon as the crib was taken down and in to pieces and packed, one of us had to carry him, we couldn't put him down. If we were going to take that crib apart, we had to carry him. And so we were beginning to look around to see what could we do to make life more stable for Ralph. One other thing I'll tell you, before we leave McLennan. . . and I'm not following our whole route, it's just that when I go back to these towns where we lived, it brings the memories back of the things that happened there. This was still in the days when the company did not pay for your moving, you did all your moving

yourself. So you packed everything yourself and you moved by yourself and I got very expert at packing and this Belik china that I carried around and had tea parties with on cap boxes, is quite fragile stuff and I had a barrel that I packed it in. When we were leaving McLennan, the dray man came to pick up our stuff to take it to the train, it was being shipped by train to the next place. And I watched him as he left our house and going down the street and dropped my barrel of Belik off the back of the dray. However it survived, there wasn't a piece broken.

#049 NM: That proves you are a very good packer.

MG: Yes, I had learned. We moved to Edmonton, back to Edmonton this time and this time we got a house. We were in north Edmonton, it was a nice house. I remember it well and a lot of the crew members were in the same area. It was again, back to the business of the husbands being gone during the week and so the wives stuck together even more.

NM: Was it at this time that the Oil Wives Association was started?

MG: I don't know, I don't really know.

NM: It was started in Edmonton.

MG: It could have been. I don't know but I'm guessing it was started by wives of employees who were in the office, in the cities. Because those of us moving around could certainly never count on being anyplace like that. It was about this time, too, that we were wanting to have another baby and we realized that Ralph had certain apprehensions about his locale changing all the time. One of the things that made it easier for children, was that while the outside location changed, in general the people around them didn't.

NM: So they had their friends.

MG: And even the adults, you see, were the same. They came a little bit more to associate home with being, not a location, but a community. So we were thinking what could you do. Still it was a very short time after the war, house trailers as we know them now, weren't available in Canada. You couldn't pay the duty to bring them across the line, that was too much. So we decided to have a house trailer built, by the same firm that built portable trailers for camps. We did this. It was. . . I'll have to check the dimensions with Sheldon, but I think 28' long. It had a bedroom with an extra long double bed in one end and a little bedroom at the other end for Ralph, with a corridor and a built-in toilet off of that. Now it wasn't a flush toilet. We didn't have running water in those days, but there was a door that opened from the outside so you could remove a toilet pail you see, and you wouldn't have to take it through the trailer. Then there was a galley kitchen, with a U-shaped kitchen on one side and on the other side, built-in cupboards that would hold a water barrel and all the things that we knew we would need in small towns. And a refrigerator. And then a small living room. So you had a bedroom at each end and then a small living room, this galley kitchen and the storage area and then the children's bedroom. Well, it turned out to be children, because about this time I was pregnant again. Oh that trailer, you can imagine, after moving around and it seems. . . every place you moved into, Nadine, you scrubbed top to bottom. Places that were available were dirty and they weren't often meant to be lived in. So I had scrubbed things and tried to make things attractive, visually pleasant and comfortable. And to move into that trailer that was

clean and attractive and insulated and forced air heating, an oil heater with a blower. And to know that even though we moved, we'd have the same thing to live in, no more packing, well, essentially none, it was just heaven. It was just so . . . that's the plus side. The other side of the story is that you have to learn to live in a trailer. We're two big people and you're right on top of one another the whole time you know. People wonder now, you know, at least you hear the young generation, how in the world could you keep busy, putting your time, just keeping house. I'm sure after some of the things I've told you now, you can see, I had no shortage of things to do.

#097 NM: That's right, because you didn't have the facilities we have nowadays.

MG: No, you were living really, in reasonable primitive conditions. Even in the trailer it was amusing, everything. . we had planned it down to the last inch. Sheldon is nothing if not a planner and I knew what, by now very well, what was essential. Every little square inch was used. If there was a place under a cupboard that you couldn't get at, you could reach it from another room in the trailer, so you had a trap door, because you needed storage space for everything. That's fine. But to get anything, you had to move something else, always. And then in winter time, we found that things would frost up where there wasn't air circulation. So when the weather got below a certain temperature, every day, the first part of my day was going around with an electric plug in heater with a fan on it, to blow hot air into the places that had to be defrosted. To do a washing for example, I had a little . . . like an apartment or trailer washer that took one sheet at a time. I'd get up at 5:00, I had filled a boiler with water on the stove from my barrel the night before. It was a 3 burner propane stove, beautiful stove, with an oven control that worked. But I'd get up and I found I could set this boiler on the stove to heat the water, sort of at an angle and leave just enough space to put a small coffee pot for breakfast. But I had to get up at 5:00 to start the heat to heat this water and then make breakfast and get Sheldon off and then do the washing one sheet at a time. Then you'd take it outside and hang it up to freeze in the wintertime. And then you'd bring it in, a few articles at a time, on a line over the oil heater to dry. And of course, there would be also times when the seismic records. . have you ever seen any of the old seismic records, long strips of film really, they'd have to be dried. I'd have diapers and seismic records drying over the stove.

#122 NM: How did you move this trailer?

MG: It was so heavy, it had to be pulled by truck. One of the water trucks that belonged to the drillers, were contracted to move our trailer when we moved from one place to the other.

NM: What about how to find a place to put a trailer?

MG: Well, you'd go and find a vacant lot in a town and rent it.

NM: Was that difficult?

MG: No, the town's were usually quite happy to cooperate and things like that. But we had to dig a slush pit. We didn't carry water out, I had an honest to god sink, but of course, there was no place for the water to go, so you would run a pipe outside and you would dig a slush pit. Behind every trailer there would be a slush pit. Trailer kids, the crew kids, learned very quickly to avoid the slush pits. I can remember they were a bit of a problem

when the weather got very cold and water instead of soaking right away, would congeal a bit. It was all right maybe, when it froze solid and then it just sort of spread out, but when it was just congealed a wee bit I can remember hearing this scream of anguish. Ralph had walked around the corner of the trailer and had stepped in. . . he was about 2 ½ and had stepped into the slush pit and gone down to his little neck and clambered out and of course, was covered in all that sludge. I stood there and looked at him and thought, what am I going to do with him and despite the temperature I stripped him outside and just left the stuff and brought him in. The episode, the fun and furor of emptying that darn toilet pail. It would get full and another trailer had exactly the same kind of set up. So Sheldon and Alec, each one would sit on the front of the car, holding this pail of refuse and one of their friends would drive the car and they'd drive out to someplace where they could dump it. And Jerry said he always had such an urge to stop the car suddenly and dump them but he was afraid they'd kill him, literally. About this time too, when we moved into the trailer that our second baby was coming. As the time approached, we had the crib and we got a youth bed built that was exactly the same size as this crib of Ralph's and had doweling put. . . posters on the end of the youth bed and doweling from that fit from the poster of the youth bed, up into the foot of the crib, so it held them together. So we had a double decker situation. The baby up top, in the crib and Ralph below in the youth bed. That worked well, fortunately we were out before the third one arrived, I'm not quite sure. . . although there was friends of ours who had six children before they moved out of the trailer. I can remember when Lorna was born in Stettler, the hospital was in sight of the lot where we had our trailer parked and I was in the sunroom one day. Two of the local ladies, one was in the hospital, and the other was visiting, they didn't know me and they were talking about the oil crews in the town. They could see our trailer and one said, people live in those trailers and they live in them all year round. Then the other one said, oh yes, but they don't have children. There I was having had our second child. I can remember other things. Lorna walked early, so did Ralph, but before she was a year old and Sheldon always played with the kids a lot, he was just instinctive with them. And I'd be cooking dinner in this little u-shaped kitchen and here behind me is the corridor that ran from one end. . . and on this side is my refrigerator and everything. So I'm working in the kitchen area and over here and Sheldon and the kids are playing up and down in this corridor. Their favourite game was that he'd stand at one end and they'd stand at the other and they'd run towards one another and he would lift his legs just as they got together and they would duck and run under and then they'd turn around and come back and here I'm working across. I can remember feeding a family of five people as well as ourselves, in that trailer. You fed a lot of people, because you were coming and going, there were not the places to eat, business was conducted at odd hours.

#184 NM: So your trailer was put into good use.

MG: Oh yes. And it was sort of the . . . especially when Sheldon was during most of this time as Party Chief, it was the off hours business meeting place too. They worked shift sometimes with the crews. When we moved. . the most famous move I can remember was when Lorna was two months old and we moved from Stettler to Melita, Manitoba. We

had to go down into the States, to avoid road ban and we got to . . . oh there was trouble with some of the units losing motors and so we got to caravan. There was a certain excitement about it too, of course. I was driving our personal car, with Ralph, who was less than three, and Lorna, who was about two months. Another wife had traveled with me to carry Lorna. Sheldon drove the company car and our trailer was pulled by a water truck. The wives and . . . maybe ten vehicles would go in a group and we set off. Then we got separated from most of the men driving the units, because of this problem with the motor in one of the trucks. So we were traveling on alone and we would travel 2 or 3 cars together. Sheldon was trying to catch up with us to bring us the money because he had the American money. All sorts of things happened. The first night out, the doctor in Stettler had given me some phenobarb for Lorna because she was restless at night and he knew I would need my sleep. Lorna turned out to be one of the babies who acted the reverse way and she stayed awake all night. Then driving along on the road and Jean Handy sitting beside me, holding Lorna and Ralph in the back seat and we were hassled. Of course, when you look back on it, we were fairly young and they couldn't see the baby in the arms of Jean and they couldn't see the little fellow in the back seat and as far as they were concerned, here were just two young women traveling by themselves. One of the men driving some of the wives, was just a few cars behind, but they didn't realize we were together and so they started to hassle us. They would drive ahead of us and then slow down until we had to pass and then they'd speed up and get in front of us and do this again and wave at us as they went. I got furious and I said to Jean, hang on. After it had gone on for awhile, I was passing this fellow and I pulled in front of him and I slammed on my brakes, slowed down so fast that he had no choice but to either hit me or slam on the brakes and stop. At this point, I jumped out. Well, while this was going on, unbeknownst to him, Herb Sinclair had been watching this and was just getting irate but what could he do. But as soon as he saw what I did, he pulled up behind the fellow and so these two young fellows. . . I came from one way and Herb came from the other and by the time we finished talking to those fellows, they pulled out and took off and we didn't see any more of them. We got down to the point where we had a meeting in one of the motels and threw in all of our American money into one pot and said, that's what we've got to eat with until Sheldon catches up with us. But that night he reached us by phone and the next day he got to us. That was a fantastic trip, it really was. I was trying to remember, I guess that's always the end of the one sort of episode. I divide our life into when we were moving with the crews and the second was when we moved from the crews into the office and it was different. But that crew life, I've mentioned the sort of extended family feeling and the . . . esprit d' corps eh. There was the sharing of problems. If a woman got sick, one of the rest of us took the kids or took care of them. You were never alone. There were difficulties and there was isolation and there were lots of things, but there were these other compensating things. And we knew what we were going into, as you mentioned in the beginning. In those days you said, ten years in the field. We were lucky in a way, we were out of the field before that, because of the acceleration of the oil industry at that time. But when I say to people that we've moved 25 times in our married life, the usual reaction is amazement and horror and that does make it sound as bad as it is. But there

- were very good sides to it. I wouldn't have missed any of that. When we
- #265 And even with the children, there was almost a shared parenthood. We often parked our trailers all in one big lot, just like a circus crew.
- SG: Did you mention where they were in Melita and in Brandon.
- MG: No. In Melita and Brandon and Shoal Lake, we were in . . in Melita it was a community park wasn't it.
- SG: Well, it was just an open area, it was a half a block of so.
- MG: In Brandon, it was summertime, it was in an outdoor skating rink. That was great, because we had the bathrooms and so forth. And we had a fence all the way around it, kept the little kids in. That was very nice. Then when we lived in Shoal Lake, we were in the fairgrounds, it wasn't fair time and we were in the fairgrounds. That again was good because there were open sheds where they had exhibits, like a back and a roof and we could put clotheslines under there and a place to store things. That was also good.
- SG: That was where they had the flat rate. . or we had a flat rate on electrical power and we had a very fine . . it was an outhouse toilet there but we had a fine one, insulated it with cardboard on the inside and put an electric heater, so it was a . .
- #289 NM: Very luxurious.
- SG: Very luxurious, cozy facility.
- MG: As a matter of fact when we went to leave the crew, it was a real wrench. Sheldon was promoted, it was just after Christmas, to supervisor I guess and we were moving from Shoal Lake, Manitoba to Peace River. I had hardly anticipated what a wrench it would be. It was like leaving your family you know. It was very, very difficult. You learned to appreciate people of all different backgrounds. Really, you know, how do you pick your friends, similar interests, often similar social background, educational level, all these things. When you're thrown together that way you don't. People came from all walks of life, some had education, some didn't some were from the country, some were raised in the city, some were from the south, some were Canadians.
- SG: All Canadian on the crew.
- MG: Yes, except in Wainwright where we had the southern girls. If you were going to be happy in that life you had to take people as they were and learn to appreciate them for what they were. You also had to use your head. I found, almost immediately, I could not talk about, for example, the fact that . . of the work I had done. Why? Because I had gone to university to get training to be in that job and as soon as I discussed anything about this you could feel a barrier go up because I happened to be the only one of this whole group who had been to university. Therefore that subject was just taboo. You had to be smart enough to realize that. But for the depth of friendships you couldn't match it. I can remember one poor little wife who had . . the family had wanted a baby so badly and they had been married 7 or 8 years and one thing after another. . they hadn't been able to conceive. They both parented all the kids in our crew. Finally she went to another doctor in Shoal Lake who gave her some hope and lo and behold it became apparent that she might be pregnant.
- NM: This is the end of the tape.

## Tape 2 Side 2

MG: Perhaps this incident illustrate best of any I could use the family type feeling that developed. In every trailer in that courtyard, the fellows would come home from work and one of the first things they would say to their wife, has Phyl got sick yet. We just collectively had our fingers crossed, hoping that this was not another disappointment. And well, indeed she did have two lovely girls eventually. So we left the crews with much sadness and headed out. And this brings one more incident I must tell you because we were moving from Shoal Lake, Manitoba to Peace River and it was in the dead of winter, with two little kids. Lorna by now was almost a year and Ralph in the back seat and it was bitterly cold. We got to Regina, it was 30 below, about 30 mile an hour wind blowing. The next morning when we got up and headed off, coming this way, Sheldon phoned the bus station, yes now problem, the roads were open, the buses were going through. But it was blowing and snowing and the roads then were not built up the way they are now and as we headed west the snow got thicker and thicker, coming down and on the roads and the wind was blowing and I was just petrified. We came around a corner and down into a little low spot and the snow came right up, as I recall, to the top of the car. We had been watching the train tracks and we were paralleling them and we had seen a train stop back a bit, a freight train, so Sheldon grabbed a coral coloured sweater of mine, headed out through. . it was about from here to across the street, to the train tracks, through some very deep snow, got there. And you know, it was so cold, it would just take your breath away. Well, we had all the clothes . . . everything in the car, so I started to put on as much extra clothing as I could and told the kids to be quiet and not cry. As soon as I got the clothes on I went out to spell him off and we did this. He went back to get warm. It wasn't . . . within 3/4 of an hour I suppose. . .

SG: It wasn't very long.

MG: It wasn't a freight train that came by, the freight train it turned out, was waiting for the passenger car train to come by. Sheldon waved frantically and I think that was one of the worst moments of my life because the train went right on by. I didn't realize that it takes a while to stop a train. The end of the train was probably 1/4 mile past us before the train got stopped. The train man came walking back in this terrible wind and cold and by this time we had bundled the kids up and gone . . . waiting, back to the track. The train man took Lorna from me, she weighed 30 pounds stripped and she had all her clothes, everything I could put on her and Sheldon carried Ralph. By the time we got down to the train, they had to help me on, they had to help the trainman on. And then we went on to the next town, Sheldon got off and stayed, I stayed on the train and went to Lethbridge where his mother was. But I was just shaking. It was that terrible apprehension, knowing that these kids might freeze to death. There were bonspeilers on the train, had been to a bonspeil and drinking of course, and one of them came down and looked at me and said, here, drink this and it was a paper cup full of straight whisky but it did help. Sheldon went up to Peace River ahead of us and within about a month there were apartments being built, but they weren't ready so we decided to move up anyhow. I was in my folks

house here, perfectly comfortable, but the kids missed their dad, it's not good, so we decided to move. The only thing we could get was one room. An old house had been converted into a rooming house and we had what had been the living room and I carried my water from the kitchen and so forth. It was terrible. The four of us were in this one room. We had a sheet hung up on a rope to curtain off an area so the kids could sleep. But it was only until this apartment block was finished and we would have our very first, brand new spanking apartment. Well, there were fellows in from the north, chaps who worked in the bush and there's this one fellow who was sitting in behind the stove when I would go get the water and he looked pretty miserable, I didn't know. It turned out he had mumps. Well, I came down with mumps. And then the kids and then Sheldon. What a performance, it was quite a way to end up our nomadic life. Eventually the kids and I recovered, and Sheldon, it took him a long time. The apartment was ready and I said to the doctor, who had been calling on us regularly, do you think I can safely move Sheldon. I can remember him sitting, looking around this place we had been living in, he said, well, there may be a certain risk but if it were me I'd do it. So we moved. I went over and got the furniture in. And we had bought some furniture before we moved ut, our first furniture. So I put the bed up and I didn't know anything about putting the bed up, box springs and all. I didn't know you put the slats underneath the box spring you know. So Sheldon. . I got dressed and I drove him over and he was very weak and got into the bed and the mattress fell through. However living in that apartment was great. It was, as I say, our very first modern efficient apartment and we thoroughly enjoyed it. It was also the first place Lorna had ever lived in with running water and she would stand beside the toilet, this little year old and flush it and watch it.

#066 NM: It was like a game.

MG: Yes. And Ralph made close friends with the little Metis boys across the way and picked up some language that he had never heard before. I made perhaps a mistake here, in that it was the first place, Sheldon had moved out of the field, into the crew and I thought we'll be here for years. And I guess for the first time I really let myself feel that this was home. I was teaching in the Sunday School there, I had very close friends with people who were resident in the town. I loved the north country. You look out the window and see 12' Davis' monument up on top of the hill. I really loved it there. And people were interesting in the north country and the people who came in and out on business, and again, you fed them all because the restaurants weren't much. Sheldon was gone a lot, but the kids were a little older and it wasn't as bad. I can remember one time I was doing the washing and Sheldon had gone down to the river to take off, the plane took off from the river. You got to the point where you could hear the sound when the plane broke from the water, there would be that lift when it would take off. So I knew his plane had gone and I turned around and there he was. I said, I heard your plane leave. What had happened was, yes, but somebody had forgot to put a cap on the oil tank and as the plane went up, it's oil came back and they were lucky to get down. And there were exciting things. I can remember leaving to drive home for Christmas and Ralph looking back at the town as we went up the hill and saying, too bad, I liked that town. It never occurred to him that . . in

his experience whenever we left, we were leaving. Eventually our stay there was cut much shorter than expected. When Sheldon came home and said, we were leaving, I think it was the first time, maybe the only time that I sat down and cried. Because I had let it feel like home. So then that brought us to Edmonton, to the third sort of phase. Because first there was the field, then there was being up in Peace River and then from now on, we were in Edmonton or Calgary. And we were 8 years in Edmonton, then 8 years in Calgary, 5 years back in Edmonton and then moved back here. But never again did I feel, until this last move back here, I thought aha, this is it, we're going to be in one place for the rest of our life and we probably will. The 8 years in Edmonton, again were great years and oddly enough, it was sort of like the crew, because we moved into Edmonton, about the time. . the area we lived in was literally full of Imperial Oil people, all young. . .

#099 NM: So you found again, old friends.

MG: Yes. And that was the end of that. Because when we moved down here, from the rest of the time, people were more spread out. But again, a lot of your social life was with the Imperial Oil people. What else would be of interest. I thought of maybe an overview before we close. Like most things, this life has had a lot of pluses and minuses, far more pluses than minuses, but there are both sides of it. Most of us knew in advance what kind of a life we were going into, in the crew and what kind of a life the crews in the oil industry would demand. And we also knew what it gave, the security, the good life if you will, for ourselves and the kids, the opportunities. And you made your choice and you paid the price. We never saw any. . in fact, I think there was a fair feeling of impatience with people who sympathized with you or people within the industry, the few who did, who complained. And I don't really feel, in my generation, in this industry, there was much feeling of being hard done by. There was that, as I have mentioned the esprit de corps, the extended family feeling, call it what you will, it was very real. And it certainly was an enriching factor in our lives. Also perhaps in this type of life, and I'm speaking now from the wife's point of view, there were less doubts about the value of our contribution to the family unit. It was very easy to see, when you were moving in the crews, even when we were moving back and forth, but especially in those early days, the value we made to the comfort and security. Life was very lonely and almost harsh for the unmarried fellows who were moving around. We didn't doubt that what we were doing was important and I think this is something that a lot of young women who get married now do.

#126 NM: You have something to feel proud about.

MG: Yes. It was difficult and we knew it was difficult and we had a lot of fun doing it. That's the other thing, there was a certain excitement. Maybe you have to be a type, but there was a certain excitement about it. It was never dull. If you were in a horrible place, you knew you were going to move. If you were in a good place you enjoyed it because you were going to move.

NM: So your life was not monotonous at all.

MG: Oh lord, no. Especially if you were enjoying it where you were, the downside of it was

that you hated it when you had to leave. There was always that regret when you had to leave. I'll tell you a little story about that. Sheldon doesn't really like some of the things he does, but he, so often, would come in and say, sit down and then tell me, we were moving, we were leaving our nice house. Our first house we owned in Edmonton, and moving down here and this sort of thing. We had been down here just a few years and he came in one day and said, sit down. I said, oh I thought I was going to die you know, because I thought, we're going to move. No we weren't going to move, he had bought me a string of pearls. He said, I've always wanted to do this. That wasn't what I thought he was going to do. I thought something unexpected had happened and we were going to move. The downside of this life. . .well, you have to admit, you constantly coped with the pain of being uprooted. There's an instinctive desire, somehow, in most people to have roots and to be in one place and it is painful. You either had to open up and make friendships wherever you were or you didn't feel as if you belonged anywhere. And when you did this, you immediately then, made yourself vulnerable to the pain of moving away. There was another thing, as the children got older, there was always a bit of worry about whether you were making life more difficult for them because they had to adapt. But we have come to the conclusion that that also has had its upside, that the kids have learned things that probably have compensated for what they have paid. But there was that worry. It's easier after it's over, to see. Then perhaps only one other thing, and that would be as the children grew and I had more time and I moved out into other things. I had a sideline interest of mine, in teaching in biblical studies and I would just get my niche built up and be thoroughly interested and engrossed in the things I was doing and Sheldon's career would make it necessary to move. Now, there's no point saying that isn't a sacrifice, it is, because then you have to leave something that you have put part of yourself into and move. But why were you doing it, it was because it benefitted the family as a whole, but this was the price you paid. In Edmonton I became very involved in social work in the Boyle??? Street again, and in teaching. Again, when we moved down here I had to leave that and start all over again. So sure, there's a price but as a conclusion, would I change it, would I do anything else, heavens no.

NM: You've had a very interesting life.

MG: Very interesting, very satisfying and fun. I think that's the thing, fun. We've enjoyed it, haven't we Sheldon.