

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Willis Gibson "Gibby"

INTERVIEWER: Betty Cooper

DATE: August ???

BC: This is Betty Cooper speaking and it's August 16th. I'm at the home of Mr. Willis James Gibson, 1044 - 78th Ave. S. W. in Calgary. Mr. Gibson, I'd like to start right at the beginning, your background, where you were born and when and your parents names and any member of the family. So perhaps we could begin there.

WG: I was born in Stettler, Alberta, Nov. 20th, 1920. I was the youngest and only son of James and Maggie Gibson.

BC: You had sisters?

WG: I had 2 older sisters, Nina and Catherine. Nina married Ronald Ball and my other sister, Catherine, is unmarried and living in Edmonton at this time. We lived in the village of Botha, which is some 150 miles northeast of Calgary and about 9 miles east of the town of Stettler. My father was employed with the Pruden??? Mercantile Co. in the village. The Pruden Mercantile Co. operated a general store. It was a true general store with the exception of hardware, carrying everything from pins to bright pianos. I remember later on, when they sold the last casket and that left the embalming tools unused and the made excellent play tools.

BC: Those were some of your tools when you were little to play with?

WG: I got into them, yes. Dad entered into partnership with Mr. Pruden in 1929 and a couple of years later, bought him out.

BC: So you were there for all your young years?

WG: Yes. With the exception of one year in which Dad operated a store in Innisfail. However, the bigger store I think, intrigued him and this is when he went back and bought out Mr. Pruden, bought in with Mr. Pruden rather.

BC: This would be about . . .

WG: '29.

BC: Was that before or after the Crash?

WG: Well, just at the start of the Crash. When Dad bought Mr. Pruden out, I think part of the reason was that there just wasn't enough business to support 2 families. Mr. Pruden was always very fond of china, and good china, and so he moved down to Calgary and opened Pruden's China Shop on 8th Ave. just west of Centre St. I believe it was. Which he operated until ill health forced him to retire from the business. But when Dad took over the business the Depression had just started. Botha was located in part of the province that was hit rather bad by drought. Not as bad as further east but it was still rather severe. While I wasn't old enough at that time to fully grasp I suggest, the hardships that our family and others experienced during this time, the impressions gained were lasting ones and I suspect, influenced my lifestyle to this day.

- #039 BC: Did you find for instance, did you father take things in trade when there was no money. Was it sort of, someone wanted a bold of cloth and so they gave you a ham?
- WG: There wasn't so much of that, however he did take in eggs and butter and this. Part of my job I remember, was transferring eggs from the farmers egg crates into the larger ones. I can remember eggs being down to 4 cents a dozen. Many of the farmers, well, their main cash crop I guess you would say, for several years, was their cream cheeses. During the dry years there was no wheat to speak of and the years that they did get a crop the price was such that it left very little for the farmer. The price of cattle wasn't sufficient even to send them to market.
- BC: Your schooling was also done in this small village?
- WG: Yes. I took my public and high school education in Botha.
- BC: How big was the school?
- WG: It was a consolidated school district. They had built one school room, they had moved other schools in from the rural areas. Grade 1, 2, and 3 were in one building, 4, 5, and 6 were in another, 7, 8, and 9 were in another and then the high school, 10, 11, and 12 was in one building. One teacher taught all the subjects in the respective grades. So I took all my education of Botha, with the exception, my final year, you had to take Grade 12 in Botha in 2 years in order to get all your subjects. I was perhaps a little confused and I had poorly selected my subjects and I was unable to get my grade 12 matriculation in the final year. So I attended the high school in Stettler and I completed it.
- BC: This would be in what year?
- WG: 1939.
- BC: By that time you were slipping out of the Depression. Were things a little better there or were you still. . . ?
- WG: Things were, I think you'd have to say, a little better.
- BC: How did your family finance you going to Stettler for that year?
- WG: I drove back and forth daily, there were about 4 of us in the car. I'm afraid I can't answer your question.
- BC: I thought maybe you had to board in Stettler.
- WG: No. Whether there was a special fee to attend that high school rather than the one at home, I don't know.
- BC: So then, when you were finished high school, you obviously decided to go to university. Were there many from Botha that were going on to university?
- WG: None. This is what I found very difficult. Most of my friends were farm boys and they were quitting and going to the farm. So I was the only one that year that went to university from Botha. Probably one of my better friends in my younger days, his dad ran the station in Botha and subsequently, moved to Barons. He ended up at university the same time I did so I wasn't completely alone when I got there but nearly so.
- #080 BC: What made you decide, or made your family decide that you must go to university when it wasn't necessarily the thing to do?
- WG: I've often thought of that. As my friends were quitting school I found it rather difficult to

stay on and was talking of quitting, my Dad in many instances wasn't known for his diplomacy. But I still remember this discussion, he said, son, you want to quit school now, fine, I'd hate to see it but you get . . . except that you'll probably be in the labour force for the rest of your life. Because unless you have at least your grade 12 education you're going to find things extremely difficult. Now I'd like to see you go on to university and I'll give you what financial help I can to get you there. So I mulled that over for awhile and then decided I'd like to give it a go. And I don't think I was any different than most of the children at that time, or even today. When you finish high school, what are you going to take. I felt that maths were probably my strong suit so I felt I would take engineering. Petroleum engineering rather intrigued me. Finances weren't such that I could have gone to a petroleum engineering school south of the border.

BC: What intrigued you about petroleum engineering do you think?

WG: I don't know what it was, unless it was the fact that you could the flares in Turner Valley even up in Botha, if the atmospheric conditions were just right, and there was a fair bit in the press of the activity in the oil business at Turner Valley and Wainwright and elsewhere. So I thought I would like to give it a go. When I was accepted in engineering at the University of Alberta I went up and went in to see Dean Wilson and expressed my desires for petroleum engineering. He recommended that I enroll in mining engineering as he felt it probably gave you the best background of any of the courses they had to fit into that field. However, when I found out that there were only 6 of us in the class I began to wonder if he was just trying to fill it up or if this was truly the case. However, it's interesting I think, that of the 6 that were in the class, 5 of them ended up in the producing department of the oil and gas industry.

BC: Can you remember the names of those people that were in your class, and have you kept up with them?

WG: Oh yes. As a matter of fact, many of them ended up working with Imperial. Hugh Naldrett???, Murray Hannah, Hank Bonet, and myself, we all worked for Imperial. Don Story, he was in the Army longer than most and then he joined Anglo Canadian I think it was and spent a career in the oil business. The other gentleman, Mr. Worthington, his father had been the owner and manager of Starkey Mines so he stayed in the coal business and then established a survey consulting business for the underground mines that were in the general Edmonton area, which proved a real asset and a real service to the gas and oil industry because they had to know where these old mine shafts were in their drilling program. However, Mr. Worthington passed away a number of years ago.

#129 BC: So actually, even though he was with the mines, he was really, still tangentially connected with the petroleum industry was he not?

WG: Actually yes.

BC: In those years, when you were at university, you went into university what year?

WG: In 1939, the fall of '39. Following my first year at university, of course, those that were of age were in the COTC training program as part of your schooling. Following the classes at university we spent 2 weeks at Camp Sarcee on military training. Following my first year and the military camp, I had secured employment with Brewsters in Banff,

- driving both the cars and the sight seeing buses. It was certainly a very enjoyable summer but one that perhaps, didn't broaden one's field too much as far employment afterwards.
- BC: Was there such an emphasis on it in those days, and having to have a job that was supplementing your university training?
- WG: I don't think so. Certainly in some lines, yes, and I would suggest that in 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year it became probably more important. Not only to get a better grasp of the courses that you were taking at the university but just to further your training in that field, yes.
- BC: Certainly driving around in Banff, you would see lots of outcrops and you could do a little of that kind of work, or had you gotten into geology?
- WG: Not to the point that I was examining the outcrops in any detail, no.
- BC: The first 2 years in engineering today, are the same really, for everybody. Were they at that time also?
- WG: Yes. It's not until you get into your 3rd or into your final year that you branch off into the more specific subjects of the course that you're taking.
- BC: What about some of the professors you had during your time at university, were there any of them that were particularly influential in your choice of say, the petroleum industry?
- WG: No, I think not, I think I'd made up my mind to that pretty early in the game, before I got closely associated with any of the professors. However, I had some excellent professors, both as teachers and I think, as men.
- BC: Can you think of any that have been particularly very influential to a lot of the young men of that time, who were then coming out into industry? I know it's very hard sometimes to go back into those days.
- WG: I was trying to think of the name of the dean of mining engineering, and his name has slipped me.
- BC: That wasn't the man that you went to see when you first went there?
- WG: No, that was Dean Wilson. He was an old mining man himself and a true philosopher and his advice was good common sense. I had several other instructors, George Govier who has been a driving force in the oil and gas industry. He was one of my instructors.
- BC: Was he a professor at that time or was he one of the sort of lab assistants would you say?
- WG: Well, he used to lecture on a few courses. But this was before he'd got his doctorate degree I believe, then he went back there again.
- #180 BC: What can you remember about him as a teacher?
- WG: I remember he impressed me as a very clever individual, very sharp and an excellent instructor. At least I felt that.
- BC: What was his classroom technique that you found so excellent?
- WG: Certainly it was not formal. I felt his method of presentation was not flippant but certainly on a casual vein but he got his points across very well.
- BC: When you say not formal, what form would it take then, would you sit around in a circle and discuss things?
- WG: Oh no, he followed normal classroom procedures. I don't know just how to explain it but if he had a point to make he could deviate from the book shall we say, to get the point across and response to questions or what have you.

BC: Did he have a sense of humour?

WG: Oh yes, an excellent sense of humour. And I appeared before Mr. Govier later in my career many times and he has certainly the happy faculty of getting at the facts pretty early in the game.

BC: At the end of your 2nd year, did you go back to driving bus or did you try to get a job in the industry?

WG: No. Following my 2nd year at university I had a job with Consolidated Mining and Smelting in Kimberly, the Sullivan Mine at Kimberly. This year proved to be a real learning experience. The company had a well organized program for rotating the summer students through various jobs. Certainly you didn't get an assignment on the mucking machines or the diamond drills or whatnot, but you were exposed to many of the things working in the mine. And I can still remember my first trip underground. As a student, a newcomer, you were sent to the store with a list of things you need to have including a new hard hat and new hobnail boots and a safety belt and overalls and whatnot. The first morning I was going underground I sat on one of the cars on the train that took the men into the workings and sat beside an old time underground worker. He looked at me, it was obvious I was a newcomer and he said, you know, there are enough safety hazards underground without having your cuffs on your overalls turned up. He says, you'll catch your heel in those sure as can be. So with that, he reached in his pocket and pulled out his jackknife and cut the bottom of my jeans off. Needless to say I was somewhat taken aback but I couldn't fault his reasoning. Our paths crossed several times that summer, he was a fine gentleman, and he seemed genuinely interested in how I was doing. We often concluded our little conversations with a quip that he was still had his tailoring skills if all else failed. At the end of that season I felt I could follow a career in the mining industry without too much trouble. But the oil business was still what I was after.

#237 BC: A lot of people going underground find this a very upsetting experience.

WG: No, I've been in coal mines since then and I think claustrophobia sets in there a little bit. But the Sullivan Mine at Kimberley, there was very little timbering in it and a lot of it was open stokes??? and from a mine point of view, I think, a fairly safe mine to work in.

BC: How far underground did you go, do you know?

WG: The main tunnel went into the side of the mountain and then went down from that. When I was there I think we were down, maybe 1,000' below the main drift. But it's sure extended since then.

BC: It would be kind of cold as you went down wouldn't it?

WG: No, it was drafty but the standard garb is wool underwear when you go underground, to absorb the sweat and keep from getting chills.

BC: Do you remember the name of the old miner, did you ever know his name?

WG: I suspect I did, but no, I don't remember his name.

BC: And when you were through you were ready, you really could have, had there not been a job in the petroleum you could have been quite happy with a future mining?

WG: I think so.

BC: What was it about the mining that you found intriguing?

WG: In the program that they put us through my first day underground was probably the worst in that I was given a shovel to muck out some ditches. They pushed in a 12 yard car and after 8 hours, soft and fresh out of school, I didn't have a very big pile in the car at the end of 8 hours. However, I think that was a stopgap, they didn't know quite what to do with me the first day. Then they rotated us through various jobs. I didn't get on transportation, some of the boys did. I spent quite a bit of time with the pipe gang, laying air and water lines around. Part of this job on the afternoon shift was signalling for the blasting that went on in the mine.

BC: How did they do that?

WG: You shut the air off all through the mine and then turned it back on again. This was a signal for all the miners to blast and get out of there. Then they left the air blowing all night, there was no work from 12:00 till 7 in the morning. This blew the fumes and one thing and another out, so the crews could go to work in the morning. Then I spent a fair bit of time with the engineers and the surveyors, surveying underground and also some surface surveying in conjunction with the mine workings and cap layout.

#285 BC: So it was a very good program that Consolidated mapped out for you?

WG: I thought so. I'm not too sure, later in my career, when I was involved in laying out programs, I often thought of that program and I'm sure it influenced some of my actions later on.

BC: In helping the young students get the most out of that summer experience. Very important at that juncture in your career I would think, because that's where you had to make that decision, where you were going to go. But you went back to university still anxious to proceed in the petroleum line. Now what could you take or what could you not take at the University of Alberta at that time, for the petroleum industry?

WG: In the engineering courses that they gave at that time, was civil, electrical, chemical and mining. As Dean Wilson pointed out, the mining course was probably the best general engineering course that they had.

BC: What do you feel was missing, that you might have been able to take had you gone somewhere where they had just petroleum engineering?

WG: I think our training in chemistry, the program didn't allow for the chemical schooling in the inorganic??? bases.

BC: You were able to take a fair amount of geology were you?

WG: Oh yes. We got pretty much the same geology as the geological students. They went on and specialized more than we did certainly but we had a fair bit of geology. We had electrical engineering and civil engineering, structural design, that type of thing.

End of tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

WG: . . .rather interesting and she can usually tell who's on the phone when they ask for Willis. It's either somebody, old friends from Botha, my relatives or somebody from the church.

BC: So you're Gibby to the oil patch and you're Willis to everybody else.

WG: Yes.

BC: And was your father called Gibby?

WG: No, he was Jim or James was all I ever knew him by or heard him called.

BC: You went back into university and then the next summer, which would be your last summer before graduating, where did you work that summer?

WG: While school was still on they were accepting applications, or Imperial was, for summer students for employment at Norman Wells on the Canol project. I applied for and was successful in obtaining employment. However, I had a change of heart then and decided I would join the Army in the Engineering Corps and I applied and was successful.

BC: You hadn't finished university at this point?

WG: No. Part of this program was that we would spend the summer at a cadet officers training centre. We would then be granted permission to go back and finish our final year at university and then carry on with our military career. So after having accepted this I was faced with the chore of sending a sorry letter to Mr. Link of Imperial Oil who had employed me. That caused me some concern later on in my career. So following my 3rd year in university I spent it in an officers training course with the engineers at Chilliwack, B.C. This was good training and I suggest a little military training doesn't hurt anybody, not only in their physique, their stance, but also in dealing with other people.

BC: Having to get along?

WG: That is correct, yes. And our particular company, or platoon, were made up of 3rd yr. engineers from all across Canada. Several of them, our paths have crossed many times since and it's proved to be a real good relationship.

BC: Can you think of any of those names?

WG: Well, Wes Rabey here in town, he was on that, Don Pringle, he was in the mining business and then went into consulting, he lives in the Vancouver area now. Ron Halfiburton???, he's mine manager or mine superintendent of one of the big mining concerns in eastern Canada, I ran into him several years ago in the Royal York Hotel as a matter of fact, and we got brought up to date on what had gone on with our respective lives. But they were certainly a fine bunch to be with. With few exceptions they were all very fine people.

BC: So you went there until university started, in those days, sort of middle to end of September, didn't it?

WG: That's right. I'd had a hernia repair operations just when I'd completed my training at Chilliwack and it wasn't as, at least it didn't turn out to be just a simple operation. It drug on for quite a while so I was still kind of half under, reporting to the doctor occasionally when I got back to university. However, it's never given me any trouble since. So following my last year at university . . .well, let me back up just a bit, during my last year at university I was fairly active in the local COTC, as a one pip??? wonder wandering around.

#048 BC: Were you sort of in charge of a company?

WG: No, but a platoon type of thing. at that point in time a fellow officer, Walter Johns, who went on to become president of the University of Alberta, he had the platoon next to me.

So we became very good friends and we still meet occasionally and talk about our military career. So following the graduation exercises from the university, went down to the camp at Sarcee, as was the custom and scheduled to leave from there for Petawawa. However, prior to going to Petawawa we all had to have medicals and because of my ??? profile rating as they called it, they gave me a discharge.

BC: Was that a disappointment to you?

WG: Yes, in a way. However, the way it was explained to me by Brigadier Harvey, that my chances of seeing action were nil, my chances of getting out of Canada was very slim, I might do better if I changed to the artillery or the infantry. So a lot of what I had expected of a military career went down the drain, so I asked him at that point in time that, if this is going to be my contribution to the war effort, can I do more in industry. He said, Gibson, I hoped you would say that. So that ended my military career. From the manpower section of the Army, I've forgotten the specific name, they gave me a letter excusing me from any further military training. Which proved very helpful when you subsequently went out to seek employment.

BC: Before we just leave the university, were you not president of your class at one point?

WG: No, I was never president, I represented the class and I was active with the Engineering Student Society, I actually ran for president of that one year but I was unsuccessful. I was defeated by a very good friend and a very competent man, Harry Hole, Lockerbie and Hole. I don't know why I ever got tangled up with that in the first place.

BC: So you were very active in the university though?

WG: Yes, I guess you would say that.

BC: In organizing things, obviously that's one of the things that you had proven to yourself you could do. And the Army training might have been very helpful in that for you too.

WG: Could be.

BC: So here you are, it would be 1944?

WG: Right.

BC: Would that be September by that time, or was it earlier than that?

WG: No, this was in May.

BC: In May, oh, almost as soon as you were out of university?

WG: That is correct. The camp at Sarcee was only a 2 week duration.

BC: So in May of '44 you went out to seek your fortune?

WG: Well, I was seeking a job in the first place. Most of the oil companies had their offices in Calgary at that point in time. I still wanted to at least look towards a career in the oil industry so I came down to Calgary and started banging on doors. Got the answer, oh, nothing just now, or what we've got to offer, you can get something better I'm sure.

#090 BC: This is interesting because it was '44 when they would be very short of people you would think.

WG: Yes. Well, for example, and I always thought it was very fair, when I went to see Texaco, or McCall Frontenac I guess it was then, the man that interviewed me said, they had a job for me as a surveyor on a seismic crew. But he thought I could probably do better than that but if I couldn't within the next few days and I was interested come back and see

him. I thought that was extremely fair of him. However I was reluctant to go and get an interview with Imperial Oil, I guess this stems back from the sorry letter I'd sent them the year before.

BC: Were they quite upset about that, did you get a really stinging reply?

WG: No, no, not at all. And during the interview I didn't bring it up and they didn't, until after I'd gained employment. Then in several years I mentioned it to Mr. Link and Mr. Fornier???. No, so they hired me or offered me a job as a subsurface geologist, which isn't quite what I had in mind but at least it was a job.

BC: With subsurface geology, as a petroleum engineer, how much background would you have that would help you from your education?

WG: The geological courses that we took at university, certainly a lot of them were identifying hard rock ores and this type of thing, but we did also take some sedimentary geology. Dr. Allan, at the university at that time, whom the Allan Crown Reserves were later named after, he was a fairly strong proponent for the oil potential in Alberta. As such, the courses reflected this in part I think.

BC: So you were very fortunate, you could really take more than one branch?

WG: Yes. So anyway, when they hired me I was to be down to Turner Valley to work under a Bill Gallup, who was the geologist for Royalite at that time. Imperial was the major shareholder of Royalite then. There was a lot of drilling activity in Turner Valley in 1944. Bill did a lot of the geological work, not only for the Royalite wells that were drilling, but also for many of the competitors. He had a information exchange system in exchange for

...

BC: Was Mr. Gallup employed by Imperial?

WG: He was employed by Royalite, which was Imperial at that time, yes.

BC: But he would also, if there was another company there he'd work for them too?

WG: No, he wouldn't work for them but they would bring their samples in to Bill and he would examine them and tell them where they were. In exchange for this service, he also gathered the information.

BC: Of where they were?

WG: Yes. There wasn't the same, at least in this point in the development of Turner Valley, there wasn't the same land competitive position that there has been in other pools.

BC: Would this be because it was war time?

WG: No, I think most of the land was tied up was the principal reason.

#132 BC: How long did you work under Mr. Gallup?

WG: I was just there a month.

BC: Did you have a chance to get to know him at all?

WG: Oh yes.

BC: Tell me about Mr. Gallup, as you remember him?

WG: He had a real sense of humour, perhaps a little warped at times but a good one. While he certainly could be serious he never seemed to let things worry him too much. As far as subsurface geology is concerned, he was excellent, rated very highly. Particularly, I suggest, in the area in which he had gained all this experience. Talking to other

geologists, then and since, Bill is a very respected geologist.

BC: And you say he had a warped sense of humour, can you think of any instances that you might like to record?

WG: I don't think this is unfair, one day we were down examining some outcrops in the south end of Turner Valley, after having stopped at a couple of wells where he wanted to check their samples. We got rained out so we stopped at the Longview beer parlour on the way home and we were late getting home for dinner. I was staying in the batch in Turner Valley and Bill went home. So nothing was said, he was pretty quiet the next morning when he came to work. However, coming back from lunch he was all smiles, he said, things are picking up at our house, she even asked me to pass the butter today. His wife was a doll. So I don't know how much of that was true or just part of his gagging.

BC: Obviously a very highly respected geologist?

WG: Yes.

BC: So you were there one month?

WG: About a month I think. Then I was sent to Coalspur, which is south and west of Edson. The well had been drilling for some time and as I recall, it was down 2,000-2,500' or something when I arrived.

BC: Was there much drilling going on around Edson at that time?

WG: No. This was about the only well in the area. There was no road into Coalspur at that time, just the railroad. From Coalspur the railroad y'd, one line went up through Merko???, Cadomin, Mountain Park, Lesker, back further into the mountains, and the other line went parallel to the mountains, down to Coal Valley. These mines were all very active at that point in time. There had been a mine at Coalspur, it had burnt down a few years before. There had been one at Robb, 2 or 3 miles closer to Edson from Coalspur but the ??? on that had burnt down the year before and they were just in the throes of rebuilding it when I went in. The drilling location was just adjacent to the railroad track. They put in a special siding so everything that came in came in by rail. I think it's also interesting that the rig that was used on this hole was a steam rig. I think, probably the last steam rig that was employed in exploration drilling in western Canada, certainly for Imperial and I don't know of any other ones. They had steam rigs working on development work but not on exploration. Bunker fuel was shipped in from the Calgary refinery to fire the boilers, to fire the rig. It was a deep well, a long job. As a matter of fact, when completed and abandoned, it was the deepest well in Canada. I've forgotten the exact figures but something in excess of 12,000'.

#195 BC: And they had discovered nothing of consequence?

WG: No. They discovered some gas in the upper sands. The sands were very, very tight and just wouldn't give out any volume. I remember taking one core and putting it in a bucket of water and the next morning, this would be 8 hours after it came out of the well bore it was still blowing gas just like a pinhole in an inner tube. So while we tried to complete it, it just wasn't successful in generating an economic volume.

BC: Has there been oil or gas drilled in that area in subsequent years?

WG: Yes, I won't say in the immediate area but certainly in that general vicinity. I haven't

followed it too closely but I notice applications in the paper for pipelines running through the general Robb area, which was, as I say, only a couple of miles away. So yes, there have been. . .

BC: So the reasons for drilling were obviously sound but just. . .well, as sound as they can be.

WG: Yes and I'm sure the information gained from that well was utilized in the exploration plays by others in the general area. But the plays were deep and certainly expensive.

BC: When you say you sat on that well, in 1944, what was the routine of well sitting in 1944?

WG: You gather the cuttings as they come out of the well and examine them and chop them up and report them daily. I reported to Bill Gallup in Turner Valley, who included them with his other wells and reported them to senior management. This made it a rather tedious job. Some days there wasn't too much to do, if they weren't making hole and yet you had to be around shall we say. Perhaps I was overly conscientious, I don't know. It was a long stint, I was in there for 13 months on that well and out . . .

BC: You lived there?

WG: Right on the camp, right beside the drilling rig, yes.

BC: So I interrupted you when you were going to say how long were you in before you got out?

WG: I was in the 13 months and out twice. I got in to Edmonton once when they ran a long string of casing and I got into Edson for a weekend on another instance. As I say, perhaps I was overly conscientious.

BC: So you worked 7 days a week, 12 months of the year?

WG: That is correct, yes.

BC: How many hours a day would you be working?

WG: This was the problem. Not very many normally. You'd pick up your samples in the morning, or the drilling crews would have them laid out for you and you'd examine them and report them and back and check them once or twice during the day. You found yourself, at least I did, giving the boys a hand here and the boys a hand there.

#247 BC: Did you find you had time to really learn more about the drilling than you'd had a chance to?

WG: Certainly. And there were some excellent people on the rig. Joe Jackson was the tool push, he was very helpful. There was another gentleman by the name of Bill Pallister, he passed away here not too long ago. He used to rib you a lot, you'd get the Joe College, you know, but if you really wanted to know something and you'd get him aside so he didn't have an audience, he was certainly the man to ask. He was extremely knowledgeable. And I learned an awful lot about the drilling business. We had our fair share of problems on the well and with that you learn more and more, shall we say.

BC: What kind of problems can you remember?

WG: We got stuck in the hole. The technique we used was spotting oil, the only oil that we had was the oil that was in the tanks and the only pumps we had capable of putting up the pressure to pump it down were steam pumps. And with no way to measure the volume of oil that we pumped in very accurately. Jim Todd was the mudman on that job I remember, and as the pressure built up of course, the length of the strokes in the pump

became shorter. I was busy with my slide rule trying to calculate the number of strokes and he would come running in and adjust the efficiency factor because the strokes were getting shorter. However, it proved successful, so I guess we got the oil down there and it did its job. We ate well in the camp, as I guess you do in most camps. The groceries were all shipped in from Edson and unloaded off the train. We had excellent cooks, perhaps too good.

BC: Were these all single men then?

WG: No, I think you'd have to say most of them were married, that is the drillers, the more experienced people. Some of the younger roughnecks were single.

BC: Where did their families live then?

WG: Most of them lived in Turner Valley. The drilling crews got their long change every 2 weeks and . . .

BC: Oh, they came and went and you stayed. The one man relay team.

WG: Yes. The cooks and I and the tool push. He moved his wife and daughter up to a small house that he was able to rent. The roommate I had for that year was the welder. He was married with a young daughter and he was also able to rent a cabin in Coalspur and he moved his wife up. But that was more the exception than the rule.

#302 BC: Because Coalspur had been a mining town, which was now inactive, you'd think there'd be quite a few empty houses.

WG: There were not too many. Coalspur consisted of a railway station, a water tower, general store, and a hotel. That was about it. It was a very, very busy rail line at that point in time. They would make up trains at Coalspur, into about 100 car trains, box cars of coal and haul them out. So they had a crew stationed at Coalspur all the time that would shuttle back and forth to the various mines to get the cars down to the yards in Coalspur to haul out. They had some of the largest engines the CNR had in service at that point in time.

BC: What kind of a drilling rig were you using, was it rotary or cable?

WG: Oh no, it was rotary. It was a big rotary, steam powered.

BC: That's a long time for a rotary rig to be drilling I guess?

WG: Yes, although you look at the records of some of the early wells drilled in the Pincher Creek area and elsewhere, some of them exceeded a year.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

BC: Mr. Gibson, could we talk about, not just the work you were doing but what you did when you weren't working. You were the only subsurface geologist there and so you would sort of be on call 24 hrs. a day but you wouldn't be working 24 hrs. So what did you do with your leisure time and indeed, what did the rest of the crew do?

WG: You've got to remember I guess, there would be one crew working and one crew sleeping, at least part of the time. The other one had the leisure time. I did some big game hunting, that is excellent big game hunting area and I was extremely fortunate. Charlie Beck, one of the cat head men took me under his wing and I must confess, what little I

- know about big game hunting I've learned from Charlie. He was not only an excellent shot but also an excellent hunter. You didn't use aftershave lotion if you were going hunting, for example.
- BC: This was so the animals wouldn't be able to smell the perfume. Could they just smell the ordinary sort of smell of the human?
- WG: You get that and you look in some of the sports magazines recently where you can buy skunk oil to put on your boots to obliterate your odour as you walk through the grass. We never got that sophisticated. But he also, I remember, mentioned that very often you can get game by just sitting still rather than working your legs off. They're curious and if you sit out in an opening they'll come to see what it is but you have to be still you know.
- BC: So you would sit there in an open field?
- WG: Well, on a hillside normally. But not too long, unless you saw game in the area that were showing some interest in you and then you would. I must confess, I was never able to get a shot as a result of that approach.
- BC: You'd have nice fresh meat then?
- WG: Yes, but it's agin the law to serve wild game in a camp. And Mr. Joe Jackson, the tool push was extremely strict in this regard. He wouldn't even allow the cooks to cook it for the men that brought it in. If they wanted a deer steak they could go in after hours and cook their own deer steak. He was very strict on that score.
- BC: Why was it illegal?
- WG: I think they were afraid that they would go out and just shoot off the wild game to feed the camp. I did have excellent elk stew though, with a logging camp not too far from there on one occasion.
- BC: What month did you go in to Coalspur?
- WG: It would be in the latter part of July or mid July I guess.
- BC: You surely came out for Christmas?
- WG: No, no.
- BC: You had Christmas in camp?
- WG: Christmas in camp.
- BC: What was it like to have Christmas in camp in 1944?
- WG: Turkeys and cranberries just like we would get at home. It was just like another day really. The cook tried hard to spruce it up a little bit you know, turkey and plum pudding, we didn't normally have plum pudding.
- BC: No presents under the tree though?
- WG: Oh no, no.
- BC: Was there a tree?
- WG: No, I don't think there was even a tree.
- #039 BC: So you came out in June, that would be June '45 that you came back out?
- WG: June. . . I think more August perhaps.
- BC: Oh, that long.
- WG: Yes, and then I took some vacation.
- BC: This would be '45, the war would have been over, VJ Day would have happened. Where

- did you go on your vacation, just as an aside, having been up in the bush for so long?
- WG: I don't really remember. Certainly I went home, and my folks, in my final year at university, they had moved from Botha into Edmonton, which was excellent as far as I was concerned. I was able to stay at home my last year at university and then, working in the general excellent Edmonton area a lot afterwards, I had a home base and a home cooked meal. Mother could do that laundry an awful lot better than the Chinaman, you know.
- BC: Where did you go after, that was your first well and that was a pretty long spell?
- WG: Then I went from there to a well that they were drilling just out of Nordegg, at Stolberg. This was a diesel rig and I sat on that one. It was much the same type of formation, you know, ??? drilling. I was on this one about 11 months I guess. It also was a deep well. However. . .
- BC: Was it a success?
- WG: No. It was just a little bit like the Coalspur well. However, interestingly enough, you don't go too far away today until you find that it is an active play area.
- BC: Isn't that interesting, it was just that little bit off?
- WG: I don't know whether you'd say that little bit, perhaps even the whole structure, but you know, it was an active area to be in. When we were at Stolberg, Shell were drilling a well north and a little bit west of Nordegg. It was also a deep well, I just don't recall the outcome of theirs. I can't think it was successful or it would have been precipitated more action sooner.
- BC: Were the same people on your crew there that had been up in Coalspur?
- WG: Pretty much. There was a different crew of course, spudded it in and were drilling because it also was well underway when I transferred down there. But most of the crew from Coalspur moved down and into the Stolberg area and the crew that was on, then went on elsewhere.
- BC: And after 11 months there, you were well sitting again. This was not really what you had thought of doing when you went into petroleum engineering?
- WG: No, that is correct. Mr. Jack Webb, who was head of Imperial's exploration at that point in time in Calgary, he paid a visit to Coalspur. I acquainted him with the fact that I would like to get a transfer into engineering so he asked me if I would consent to sit on the Stolberg well at least for part of it, in that they didn't have a replacement for me but he would see what he would do to get me transferred. Well, I sat there for quite a while and they did, they replaced me.
- #080 BC: Who replaced you, who came in?
- WG: A chap by the name of Barney Clare. He sat on the well. Alec Bland was also in for awhile and then I was relieved from there and I went out into the engineering end of it, into the Viking Kinsella, Provost plains area, where they had an active program drilling for gas. Barney Clare that carried on, that rig then moved from there up north and west of Hinton, to a muskeg location as it was called, and he went up and sat on that well.
- BC: You were happy to get out of there.
- WG: I was, yes. Firstly, I'd taken engineering and I wanted to work in engineering rather than

- geology. I just felt that I couldn't see myself making a career of that.
- BC: What position did you say Mr. Webb held at this time?
- WG: Chief geologist or exploration manager, I'm not sure which, exploration manager I think.
- BC: Interesting that he would come out and sit and talk to you about your career in the field. Imperial was pretty personal then in those days.
- WG: Yes, he was in with Mr. Wheeler, who was in the Jersey organization at that point in time, and they actually went out of there by way of horse for Coalspur down to Nordegg and out that way. But Mr. Webb, he was a true authority on foothills geology. He had written many, many papers on it and he was very familiar with it. Hence he was familiar with packing horses through the foothills.
- BC: Isn't that interesting. What was your impression of Mr. Webb, what can you remember about him?
- WG: Very competent in geology, a prince of a man.
- BC: When you say he's a prince of a man, in what way?
- WG: He was very approachable, fair as the day is long and as I say, very competent. He subsequently left Imperial and went with another company and did very well. But no, I think everybody spoke very highly of Mr. Webb.
- BC: And that was your first introduction to him?
- WG: I'd met him just casually.
- BC: When you moved away from Nordegg, you went up into . . .
- WG: Brighton, Kinsella, Provost.
- BC: Yes, what were you doing then, as an engineer?
- WG: It was covering drill stem test of the wells, present on casing jobs or abandonment jobs. Also running a lot of pressure surveys, of the wells that had been drilled earlier and were capped at the time.
- BC: Was this routine to run pressure surveys when they'd been capped or was this something that, with your being there, they could then do?
- WG: No, I did it and did it in conjunction with Pat Patterson of the gas company. The gas company's acreage in the Viking Kinsella area and Imperial's acreage was interspersed. And of course, gas will migrate between leases and this was an effort to get an assessment of the pressures throughout the entire reservoir.
- #124 BC: As a result of that, were there any changes made in legislation?
- WG: No, I don't think there was changes made in legislation but Imperial sold their assets, their interest in the area, to the gas company. Imperial had certainly, an exploration program but their efforts to find oil up until this point had been pretty slim. As I understand it, they'd given themselves a few years to continue to explore for oil and then they would have to abandon it and they were looking at these gas reserves to make gasoline out of gas, a synthetic process. That was the object of developing these gas reserves, both here and at Provost. However, Leduc came along a few years later and changed the whole complex.
- BC: Not too far after, this was '45, '46 you were sitting at . . .
- WG: Yes.

BC: Were you involved at all, in that work to see if it was possible to liquefy the gas?

WG: No. That was all a refinery process. Actually, I didn't know anything about it until several years later, when Mr. Taylor told me. Actually, after Leduc. When I was working in the Viking, Kinsella area and down there, I also, they had me come down to Calgary and I spent a month or two in Calgary here working for Mr. Charlie Visser, who was Imperial's drilling superintendent at that time. I guess you'd have to say one of the greats in the Canadian drilling industry. So I worked, I guess you would say, as a clerk in the office with him for awhile.

BC: That would have been quite an experience for you?

WG: It was. I'd known Mr. Visser from field operations and one thing and another but to work with him, it truly was, yes.

BC: Tell me about Mr. Visser?

WG: He grew up I guess you'd say, in the hard knocks. I remember him telling me the story once, that when his parents arrived here he was wearing wooden shoes. He said he took a lot of abuse about that for awhile until these little friends that used to ridicule him found out they are awfully hard. He used to take them off and use them as clubs you know. But he was a very hard worker, as most people in the drilling department, you know, hours are long at times, weather is tough and he certainly understood that. He was an extremely fair man to work for. I remember one humorous little item, I'd acquired a room in a basement on 6th Ave. and maybe 4th St. W. at that point in time, of course it's long gone. Down in the basement and it was dark and I slept in so when I was leaving the office about 5:00 that day I excused myself and told Charlie, I'd better go buy an alarm clock, I slept in this morning. He just put his arm around my shoulder and he said, a little sleep never hurt anybody. He was a tremendous man, he was an extremely competent well man also from all reports, and certainly my experience. All the tool pushers that worked for him had the utmost respect.

#171 BC: When you say he was competent as a well man, what does that mean?

WG: Well, he was a good driller. Cautious, he wouldn't take a risk if it endangered the well at all, you know, it might take a little longer but we'll do it the safe way.

BC: He had obviously been drilling for many years so he would have come through the cable tool to the rotary.

WG: Yes, I think all his experience was in Turner Valley area.

BC: This was quite a thing for some of the drillers, to change from one to another.

WG: I would suspect so, yes.

BC: You never found him, he never discussed it at all?

WG: No.

BC: So as his assistant, what did you do? You were in the office for awhile then were you?

WG: Yes. With Imperial taking reports, the company was operating 6 or 7 rigs throughout the province at that time and they always used to check in, file their reports. He'd have little jobs for you occasionally but. . .

BC: Where were Imperial's offices at that time?

WG: At this time in time the offices were where the Bay parkade is now. It had a service

- station under one side of it there, on 6th Ave. I guess, and the balance of it, it was a 2 or 3 storey building I guess.
- BC: Quite a few old oil companies were sort of along there, I think BA Oil was not too far, near the corner, were they at that time?
- WG: I don't remember.
- BC: How long were you working in town?
- WG: Just a matter of months, a month or two.
- BC: It would be a pretty lonely job. Fine for you as a bachelor but you wouldn't get much chance to meet any girls.
- WG: No, they kept you too busy.
- BC: But you did, well, we haven't come to, you were married in '49.
- WG: Yes.
- BC: Where did your wife come from?
- WG: She came from Gadsby, which was the little village about 9 miles east of Botha, so I knew her in public school days, or junior high school days shall we say.
- BC: So had you gone together . . . ?
- WG: A couple, three times, yes, during school days.
- BC: And when did you meet again?
- WG: She moved to Edmonton in the early 40's I guess, and worked in Edmonton. Actually, her and her mother and her sister and her grandmother lived within a couple of blocks of where my parents lived in Edmonton. So we used to see them occasionally.
- BC: So you were really friends from childhood?
- WG: That's right, yes.
- BC: But it wasn't till '49 that you were settled enough that you could. . .
- WG: I could afford a wife.
- BC: What were you earning at that time? In '46 say, here you were in the office downtown.
- WG: I don't know but I remember, I started employment at \$185 a month and when I was working in Coalspur, the only person that I more made money than, was the cook's helper. So I began to wonder, what about all this university education. My first increase was \$15 a month. I'm sure I got an increase when I transferred to engineering but I don't recall, maybe \$250 a month, I don't know.
- #224 BC: The pay wasn't that great?
- WG: No, no. However, you're living in a camp so you know.
- BC: Did you have to pay so much to live in the camp?
- WG: Not at that time, no.
- BC: You could just put your money right in the bank almost?
- WG: Well, yes.
- BC: Except for running a car and whatever, if you smoked or things like that.
- WG: Yes. Well, of course, no point of having a car in the bush.
- BC: They often talk about how the people, when they would go and do today I guess, they would save their money and then they'd come out and they'd spend it every time they hit town. Now you didn't hit town very often but did you find, were you one that went on

sort of a spending spree for a few days?

WG: No, no, I would think not. I know exactly what you mean, I've been associated with some that have done just that. No, I was trying to save some money. I'm not saying we didn't go on a party certainly, but not the splurge where you spend it all.

BC: Yes, and then they're broke so they have to go back to the bush. These would be some of the people making more money than you I'm sure, the roustabout on the rigs was making more. . .

WG: On our rigs I didn't see that particularly. Most of them were married men or a lot of them were married men, and sending money home to families. And they'd been in the business for, some of them, a long time, so they weren't . . .

BC: They'd also had some poor time. As you say, your years in the 30's influenced what you did with the money when you did finally get any.

WG: I remember the drilling crews, when I was in Coalspur, talking about the status or the conditions in Turner Valley during the 30's, where they would allocate the jobs 2 days per week per man, trying to spread it around to keep them all eating. They were very complimentary of management's efforts in this regard, otherwise some of them would have just gone hungry.

BC: Interesting that, where today, it's layoffs and no one is doing that. Instead of people saying, let's all work 3 days a week and everyone keep working.

WG: You'll find some companies, I think, are doing that.

BC: But the onus has to be also, on the employee to say they'll do it. That's what I mean, they've not quite been accepted. You were in the Provost area and you were also in the Leduc area were you not?

WG: Well yes. I was working, as I say, in the Viking, Kinsella, Provost area. About this time Imperial had some leases in the Lloydminster area, which they were facing drilling commitments. So in the winter I guess, of '46, '47, I was sent up to Lloydminster, to try and get a feel as to how the operators worked there with this heavy viscous oil in cold weather. I made some contacts and some good friends, but it got so horribly cold they just shut down. At 35 below, you just couldn't handle the oil. While I was at Provost I had a call from Mr. Vern Taylor informing me that I better come on into Edmonton and go out and help at Leduc #1 as it was about ready to come on for production tests. So I then packed up my assignment in Lloydminster and moved in to . . .

#286 BC: So you were there for the Leduc discovery?

WG: Yes.

BC: Tell me about it?

WG: Needless to say a big thrill. I'd been chasing hardly able wells and dry wildcats up till this point in time, and beginning to wonder if I'd married up with a right vocation. I got there when drilling was complete and they were testing it.

BC: When would that be?

WG: This was in February of '47. My job was to assist in putting in the production facilities to take the thing. It was quite interesting, and I thought, so uncharacteristic of Imperial Oil. They were so confident that they'd invited government officials and the press out and

they would have the well come in at 3:00 in the afternoon or whatever it was. Well, it didn't quite work that way in that the line that they were using to swab, it broke, so they had to splice it and hence, this delayed everything a bit. But there was quite a crowd gathered. It put on a bit of a show for them but the real show came after they'd all got tired and went home. We had it to the flare and it was blowing its typical smoke rings. As I say, it was quite a thrill. Then of course, came the problem of getting rid of the oil and getting it in a tank.

BC: This was your headache?

WG: Well, I got involved in part, yes. We used to truck it in to Leduc and load it into tank cars and they shipped it from there. So you'd load up your tank car and go down and deliver it down at the station. You think back and you think of the safety standards that were employed then. We'd just throw the hose from the truck into the tank car and pump it off, shut down when a train went by, that type of thing. However, it wasn't too long, the volume didn't get too great, until Valley Pipeline people, which were the people that ran the pipeline in Turner Valley at that point in time, they came up and took charge of this and put in proper tanks and loading racks and one thing and another.

#336 BC: There's been so much said about, and written about Leduc, the discovery well, from the fact that Imperial just kind of kept drilling because they had a little bit more time on their hands to drill. And yet, from what you say, they had a pretty good idea of where they were?

WG: No, and certainly I wasn't involved in any of the geological or managements decisions on the location or whatnot. But I don't know whether that comment that you made is truly founded, certainly not in Leduc 1.

BC: As I say, there have been those kinds of stories though, haven't there?

WG: Well, in the Leduc 2 well, the formation that was productive in Leduc 1 was non-productive at Leduc 2 and they drilled on down and this is when they found the lower horizon. But I think that's typical in any oil field. Even in Turner Valley, in the last few years, they were drilling wells right through the productive horizons down into, trying to catch deeper horizons. And there have been, I suggest some in Leduc, that have done the same thing, as there have in other pools.

BC: How many days were you down in Leduc. . .

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

WG: . . .more experienced than I. He was the man that put the well head on, he missed the bringing in of the well because he was working all night putting the well head together and he went to get some sleep. But he's the one that did that kind of work really. I was working on such things on subsequent wells but I was not on that well, no.

BC: Pretty exciting for you, your career was pretty young in the oil patch, to be there at the beginning of something.

WG: Yes, it certainly was, and I've often thought back, and things that happened immediately

following it.

BC: Such as?

WG: Well, I guess there were 2 or 3 wells drilled but Vern Hunter was the tool push. He was living in a hotel room in the Leduc Hotel at this point in time and that was also his office. After this well came in I remember, George Clouckee???, coming up and asking me what the status of the well was. He was out trying to buy some acreage around there and he didn't want to buy something that was a pig in a poke. I thought it was extremely fair of him but I was a little reluctant to answer the question, then he spotted Vern Hunter, whom he had known for years and I quietly walked away. I let Mr. Hunter field that question. And certainly, the town of Leduc had its growing pains as a result of the influx of the industry.

BC: Were you then, stationed at Leduc for some time?

WG: Well, yes. I was on the completion of Leduc 1 and then they sent me into Norman Wells on a pressure survey assignment of the wells up there. I was back, that only lasted about a month and then I was back for the completion of 2 and 3.

BC: And were you still as an understudy at those 2?

WG: I think it's always a growing process. On these, certainly I took a more active part on heading them up and getting them on production.

BC: Who else do you remember from that group that were there, besides Mr. Taylor and . . .?

WG: There was of course, Charlie Visser was around and a lot of the drilling people. Mr. Laberge, I don't know whether he'd been involved in the geophysical activity that went through there preceding this. Don Mackenzie.

BC: Could you tell me anything about Mr. Taylor, did you have much to do with him, then or subsequently?

WG: Yes. He was I guess you would call him, the assistant manager in Turner Valley when I was there, at least this was where I first knew him. He was in charge of the engineering and I guess, production side of the business. When I got transferred from the geological to the engineering, he was the man I answered to and took my direction from. So this covered the Viking, Kinsella, Provost . . .

BC: What was he like as a boss, as a manager?

WG: He's a prince of a man really, and very fair. Very understanding.

#040 BC: Had he been in the business quite a long time when you came along?

WG: Yes. He'd started out I guess, with the Conservation Board and went from there then, to join with Royalite.

BC: Can you think of any incidents, any anecdotes, that revolve around Mr. Taylor?

WG: I remember, I was given the job of acidizing one of the wells in the Viking, Kinsella pool. This was somewhat of a last resort I think, because it was a sand formation and shaley, and I didn't think very limey. I was surprised. But anyway, I'd never even seen an acid job before in my life. So I drew up my program very carefully and then I thought, I'd better touch base with it so I called Mr. Taylor and went over my program. He said, that sounds fine to me but he said, you've been on them before haven't you. I said, no, I haven't even seen one. But I had some excellent advice on drawing up the program, a

chap by the name of Ted Linn, who was a truck driver and he did a lot of the trucking for Haliburton, they were on it. He was the man who brought the acid up and I think, Percy Davis was driving the truck and he was an old and very competent hand. So I got some assistance from them, I must confess, in drawing up the program and checking my calculations. But he was. . . well, I'd met him earlier, he was up at Coalspur when I was on that job, he came up there when the running of the casing and one thing and another, which was more engineering. I really wasn't involved with it but I certainly got some exposure. He was at Stolberg again, I think he was up there when they, again, they got stuck in the hole.

BC: Why do you think he called you to come in to Leduc, was that in your area?

WG: Not particularly but, well, certainly it was in my area, yes, but I think you've got to recall, the staff was pretty limited at that point in time.

BC: There wouldn't be too many people in the engineering department you mean?

WG: No.

BC: How many would there be? Your boss and you?

WG: Pretty near that. There were others but they were engaged with Royalite in Turner Valley at that point in time. A lot of them were transferred shortly after the discovery of Leduc, into Imperial's organization to cope with the new problems that they were facing.

BC: So tell me about Norman Wells. This is rather interesting being as you mentioned that you almost went up there, and then went into the Army, and Ted Link was the one who hired you and you subsequently had to say, sorry I'm not coming. When you went up to Norman Wells, did this kind of bring back any memories to you or to Imperial?

WG: No, I don't think so. Firstly I had never been to Norman Wells until the first trip in. I didn't quite know what I was getting in to. The superintendent up there at that point in time was a chap by the name of MacKinnon, small in stature. Always wore English riding breeches and had been up there for years and years and years.

#082 BC: What was his first name, or do you remember?

WG: Ronald MacKinnon. He'd been in the transportation department I believe, for Royalite at one point in time, prior to his assignment up there. He was well established there before the Canol project came along. He had a little tower and a little activity. I remember Charlie Visser telling me, before we go up, he said, he's a fine gentleman but he'll want you to know he's boss. So my first trip in, we went in with CP Air. We had to overnight at Fort Simpson because of darkness and they didn't have lights on the runways up there at that point in time. When I got into Norman Wells I was billeted in Mr. MacKinnon's house, or part of it. One bedroom was the liquor room for the camp and this type of thing, so I had a bed set up in the kitchen. The air crew had their bed set up in the living room and then there was another chap on permanent staff who slept there also. And Mr. MacKinnon was out, he was down to Toronto. So I concluded my survey, and of course, the planes only came in every 2 weeks at that point in time. Mr. MacKinnon came in on the plane that I was going out on. I'd never met the gentleman but he got word to me that he would like to see me. So I went down, this was after dinner and I was leaving the next morning, or planning on it. He asked me how the survey went so I told him fine, I had

everything with the exception of one specific well. On this one I couldn't get my instruments down, the tubing there were waxed off. He said, oh, that's too bad, that was the one that Toronto was specifically asking about. So I said, I'm sorry, I didn't think it that important but if they want it I'll get it for them. He said, how will you do that, I said, we'll have to circulate hot oil and clean up the wax and get it. He said, you'll miss your flight and I said, certainly, but if I was set up here to get the information I better get what they want. Which I did do, but I'm not certain to this day whether Toronto really wanted that information or whether Mr. MacKinnon was just wanting to let me know who was boss in the place. But he was there for a few years after that prior to his retirement and we got along fine, but I at least showed him the courtesy of laying out my work program before I started and reporting to him afterward. He said, well, you know, I don't know anything about this anyway. But I can't blame him, it's probably a short coming on my part on the initial one.

BC: But interesting isn't it, because it's something you never will know but I think you read him right from what you'd said.

WG: Although a little gentleman, and he was small in stature, he told me he's come out of there by dog team on 2 different occasions, from Norman Wells to Fort McMurray.

#126 BC: That would take a few days. Isn't that amazing. Did he do it because he had to or because he wanted to?

WG: I don't know. But he was in there in the 20's, so transportation was probably hard to come by.

BC: Yes, the plane wouldn't be landing every 2 weeks.

WG: No, if there was one.

BC: There wouldn't be one at all. Did you have an occasion to meet and get to know Ted Link?

WG: Yes. I met him a few times while he was still with Imperial. Later in my career, when I was in Toronto he was down there and I had occasion to meet him socially a few times.

BC: You mentioned earlier that the fact that you had said, sorry, but I'm going in the Army, you felt might have had something to do with your career in later years, or might have reflected a little.

WG: If I left that impression, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to but I've wondered if they would wonder how reliable I was if I accepted the job once and then within weeks said, look, I've got something better, I'm leaving. But I'm sure that in hindsight, that at that point in time there were a lot of people joining the Army and leaving employment and there were no ill feelings as a result of it.

BC: With Mr. Link, what can you tell me about Ted Link as you knew him?

WG: Chiefly he was a character. A very sharp character, brilliant, but his mannerisms would . . . well, not his mannerisms, just pranks he would pull you know.

BC: Can you think of any that you could record or that you heard of?

WG: This is one I'd heard of, I wasn't involved in this one specifically but when he was at Norman Wells he had occasion to be in Edmonton with 2 or 3 of his boys. They were in the Selkirk Hotel, which used to be on the corner of 101st St. and Jasper I believe. They

had a very good restaurant there. So they sat down and the waitress brought the menu and he said, you know, we've had meat, meat, meat, you don't happen to have any crabs do you. She said, I don't know, just a minute I'll see and with that she went back to see the chef. She came back and she said, yes, we do have some. He said, itchy darn things aren't they, I'll have a t-bone steak. That type of prank all the time.

BC: You didn't ever work with him directly though?

WG: No. I worked under his department but never directly with Mr. Link, no.

BC: When you came back from Norman Wells, you were there for a month and then what happened?

WG: Then back to Leduc for the completion of 2 and 3, and this would be on into the fall, then I got sent back to Norman Wells for another survey, 6 months later or whatever.

#169 BC: Did you get out in 2 weeks that time?

WG: I think probably, yes. Then back to Leduc and worked, by this time they'd built an office in the town of Leduc, on the west side of town and we worked out of there. I remember being on such wells as Leduc 6 and Leduc 12.

BC: By this time had they given you a title, you came in as a petroleum engineer but as it broadened, were you still called a petroleum engineer?

WG: Yes, I would think so. Then the following spring I got sent back into Norman Wells again, for another survey and I just got out when they informed me that they were getting tired of sending me back and forth, that I was being assigned to Norman Wells for a year. So as I'd, in my reports recommended many things I thought should be done, so they said, get up there and do them.

BC: So this would be in 1948?

WG: Yes. So I spent '48 in Norman Wells and came out in the summer, spring of 1949. At that point in time there were 3 wells completed in the Redwater oilfield. I was assigned to Redwater as the district petroleum engineer.

BC: Let's just back up, before we get into Redwater, when you went up to Norman Wells you said you had recommended a number of things be done, what were some of the things that you thought should be done and did do?

WG: A lot of it was just tidying up the production facilities. The field there, because of the permafrost, all the lines were just laying on the surface. To keep the oil so that it would flow they were traced with steam lines, which didn't work very well, it used a lot of steam. We found that we could produce the oil through the lines, even in the winter time, without the steam tracing. So this meant some, certainly, realignment of a lot of the production facilities.

BC: You really modernized it quite a lot then.

WG: I don't know as we modernized it all that much, except we took off a lot of equipment that was really not necessary. We didn't make any real major changes I wouldn't think.

BC: With the Canol project, there have been many comments on it since, did you hear much about it when you went up there, that it was wasteful, that it was good, whatever?

WG: I think when you get into any project of that size that you have to undertake on a crash basis, you will always be able to find inefficiencies that were built into it. My association

with it was after the project was complete, everybody was anxious to get out of there and certainly, it wasn't mothballed, if you like, the way I suspect, it could have been. On the other hand, what would you do with the equipment. The ownership of the equipment was in doubt. I know the year I went in there, 1948, and the Canol project closed in 1945, it was just that year that Imperial assumed responsibility and ownership for a lot of the equipment that was on the other side of the river, over on Base Canol. Prior to this time, most of it, or at least a lot of it, had been stole.

#223 BC: It sat there until someone came along and moved it out?

WG: Yes. In 1948 Imperial put men over on that side. Of course, the only period that you really needed to worry about was navigational season, which runs from May 24th to Nov. 11th more or less.

BC: That was to keep them from stealing anymore?

WG: Yes.

BC: What was left on that other side?

WG: Well, on the right adjacent, not just on top of the bank, there was a cabin and a few buildings. This was the general's cabin, it was just a log cabin but it was kind of made as home base for the crew that were stationed up there. Back 6 miles maybe, 3 miles, there were a lot of warehouses and an airstrip, where they had a lot of their caterpillar parts and all this sort of stuff.

BC: They were still there?

WG: They were still there, yes. I remember I was involved when we disposed of a lot of it. A lot of it was parts for these old Army 6 x 6's you used to see around, they quit making but there were parts there. A lot of them had been taken, a lot of them had been just played with and thrown around so that you really had to know your equipment to be able to identify them. We sold a bunch of that.

BC: Where did you sell it, did you ship it out somewhere?

WG: No, no, a chap came in and bid on it and offered a price. He crated it and shipped it out.

BC: Where would he ship it to?

WG: To Edmonton.

BC: They say that bulldozers and that sort of thing were just pushed over the side and buried, you hear these kind of stories. Either at the Canol project or in the Alaska Highway, which was being built in conjunction.

WG: I don't know whether they'd be pushed over and buried. Certainly there were a lot of them left in the bone yards. And I'm sure, in time, if they got in the way, they would be buried. Again, a lot of them were well worn and certainly didn't justify the cost of shipping them out.

BC: Do you think some did justify the cost of shipping them out?

WG: Oh yes. And some of them were shipped out too.

BC: In retrospect, do you agree with those people that say, it was a wasteful project, or not?

WG: No. I think you've got to recognize that it was a war time project. We were expecting the Japanese to come through the Aleutians at any time. Oil is very vital to any military force and they were successful in moving oil across to Whitehorse.

BC: How much oil did they move, did you ever hear how much?

WG: No. Well, I'm sure I did but there was certainly not very much. But in hindsight, it was probably a bad decision to ever embark on the project. But had it gone the other way, certainly a different tale could be told.

BC: Because of the push there, do you feel that whatever is to be discovered in that area has been discovered?

WG: Oh no, I don't think so. Certainly there were several wells drilled around Norman Wells during the Canol project, a few subsequent to it, that haven't yielded commercial oil. I would suggest, once the line is built down the Mackenzie, that there's a lot of sedimentary basin that you'll look at again. Whereas before you couldn't even justify the thought of moving in because you couldn't see it ever getting to market.

#286 BC: So one of the things that the Canol project did then, was prove the feasibility of expanding Norman Wells?

WG: Expanding Norman Wells is something that's come up in fairly recent years. I think that technology is developed largely as a result of the work that has gone on the ice conditions in the Beaufort Sea.

BC: So it would have happened regardless?

WG: Would have been expanded?

BC: Yes.

WG: Yes, perhaps. I'm sure the technology is away over my head. As I recall that mighty Mackenzie during break-up, it will just move anything ahead of it. But I'm sure they know what they're doing.

End of tape.

Tape 3 Side 1

BC: As we start talking today, I thought that it would be a good idea to give you a chance to go into more detail on the Norman Wells and some of the adventures there. We moved in and out of there a little too rapidly I think, and you have some good stories. So perhaps you could start and just talk about some of the time there.

WG: My stay in Norman Wells, I guess particularly the year I spent in there, that was 1948, things at times appeared to drag but when you look back a lot of things happened. Not only within the camp itself, in improvements, at least I think we made improvements in our operations. But more the outside activities. Oh, all associated with work and it was certainly my first, and I guess my only experience with a diver. There were pipelines that connected the islands to the mainland and we had used them to take the crude that was produced on the islands, to bring it to the mainland. However, these were lines that were put in during the Canol project. The single line that was remaining in service, from Goose Island across to the mainland, developed a leak midstream. So the exercise was to see if we could get down and put a clamp on the pipe and keep it serviceable. The diver was brought in and with pumping compressed air into the line we were able to pick up where the leak was and we snagged it with an anchor and had a tie to the line itself. That

previous spring the ice had also broken this line on the shore at Goose Island. However, this one was a relatively easy one to get hold of and clamp off so that we could see if we could repair the one in midstream. We had a barge anchored out above the pipeline and the diver came in and made several attempts to get down. The current was so swift he was unable to get down. He worked harder at it too, than I would. First of all, he went down with his diving helmet and full suit on, with some 450 lb. of weight I guess, but he would just get down a short distance below the surface and it would pull him free from the line we had anchored to the pipe and he would bob up at the end of his tether. Then he tried just a straight wetsuit with a helmet, thinking maybe he could hang on to the line better and see the condition of the pipe. But here again, he was unable to get down in the rapid current so we had to abandon that project. To my knowledge, that was probably the first diver attempt that far north. At least, certainly it was the first for Imperial. Another instance, in mid summer we were working out on the islands and I noticed one of our boats heading across to the other side, where there was the base camp for Camp Canol. From Camp Canol there was an old road that was built during the Canol project, south and west, out as far as the Carkachou??? River. The bridge was gone there so that was as far as you could drive. It seems there was a party from Seattle, that were checking the pipeline with the thought towards purchasing it and lifting it for salvage. Pipe at that time, was in short supply. They started from the Whitehorse end and if they hadn't reported in, in a week, from Norman Wells, they were obviously in trouble. It was 10 days before the word came through to Norman Wells. So the Mountie went out, he thought he would go as far as the Carkachou, and see if there was any sign of them. He located this one gentleman who was pretty dazed, laying on the side of the road. He was unable to go any further so they brought him in to the hospital in Norman Wells and then organized a search party to go out looking for the other people. The search party was made up of some of the old timers in the north, our chief mechanic and one thing and another. We took them out as far as the Carkachou, and with a few 7 gallon kegs of gasoline, finally got them across the Carkachou River in a small outboard boat. They were successful in getting some old abandoned equipment going, got a sleigh that they had used during the Canol project, and went upstream. They finally contacted the rest of the party and they brought them back out. They sure had no business being up there. One of them had a heart condition, the other one had to have his lungs pumped out every 10 days and he was already a week overdue. However, they all came out safely.

#060 BC: It was touch and go you would think though, wouldn't you?

WG: Yes. The Air Force were in there at that time, flying, taking aerial photographs, and they used to take off bright and early to get their photographs taken before the haze developed. They would be back in by 3:00 in the afternoon or thereabouts so they were our contact with them. They used to drop supplies and let us know how they were making out. So there were a lot of tales came out of that one. One for example, the Air Force came back and they kept reporting the signals were all okay, but there was always one man short. This chap had run a spike through his foot at about the start of the project so they abandoned him and whenever he heard the plane come he would run and hide so that they

couldn't see him. I asked Charlie afterward, weren't you afraid of blood poisoning. Oh no, he said, I knew what to do with blood poisoning. He'd had an experience several years before down in the Fort Simpson area. He'd been catching his winter supply of dog food, fish and taking one of them out of the net, he'd got snagged a little bit on the hand. So he'd been in to get his winter rations at Fort Simpson and got back and it kept getting worst. But both the Mackenzie and the Peale were running full of ice at that time so he knew he couldn't get back in so he said, I just took my knife and cut it and slit it and then squeezed my arm down and squeezed all that red stuff out. So he said, I wasn't worried about blood poisoning. Typical way of the north.

BC: This is one thing I think you would have found up there, the ability to cope.

WG: Oh yes. They certainly could.

BC: Did it help you, as you developed through the rest of your life, having had that opportunity?

WG: Yes, I'm sure it has. How you put an example on it I really don't know. It just tells you, you just don't give up if things don't go right. Improvise, do something else.

BC: And I'm sure that sort of thing, in your line of work, as an engineer, would be very important.

WG: Yes, I think so. In the operational phase, certainly. There were other old timers up there. Another gentleman who had been there for years and years and years, that is, lived in the north was a chap by the name of Hammer??? Nelson Hammer.

BC: That's quite a handle.

WG: Right. He was a Norwegian. I first heard of him, well, that's not right I knew him before but my first assignment in Norman Wells, I got in and found I had to come back to Calgary to get some more files and one thing and another. I went back in on the Imperial airplane and it was a flight that was being used by a bunch of Imperial's marketing and manufacturing executives from Toronto. They stopped to examine Imperial's facilities at Waterways at that time, and we went to have lunch in the hotel. I got to talking to a chap that was an assistant to the agent there, who had previously worked in the Churchill area. He asked me if I knew Hammer and I said, yes. He said that in his assignments in Churchill he ran the post office and Hammer had just gone back to Oslo. On his return or shortly after his return a bunch of mail came for him, including some pictures which showed Hammer addressing the Oslo Rotary Club, complete with tuxedo and sash. He was a very well educated man in many ways, he could argue Egyptian history, played the stock market but he was one that could certainly also, improvise in the field. Another gentleman up there, Angus Sherwood, he and his wife and he had several children up that way, raised in the north, he was a U.S. Marine in the first great war and his wife was an Australian nurse. They met overseas and I think neither one of them went home. They established home in the north country.

#115 BC: Isn't that interesting? Sort of a neutral ground.

WG: He was running sawmills in Fort Simpson and trapping. He was a prince of a man, very knowledgeable and very level headed. As a matter of fact, he was a member of the Explorers Club of New York.

BC: That's a very prestigious club.

WG: Yes. I think they have a limited membership of 200 or something like that. So he was, on one occasion, down addressing them on life in the north. He ran the post office up there, when I was there, he ran the post office and he ran the liquor store and was father advisor to many of us up there at that time. In the late fall of '48, ice was starting to run I guess, in the winter. I know I and another one of the chaps had been out checking the wells on the islands to make sure that they were secure until we could get back over on the ice. Coming back I noticed one of our other boats going up stream. This rather surprised me because we were going to take the boats out of the water in the next day. But it seems they had an emergency call from the . . .

BC: Ranger station, something like that?

WG: It was the tower for the Signal Corps. An Indian family had camped about 12 miles upstream from Norman Wells and he was busy gathering in his winter supply of fish to feed his dogs. On the way down to check his nets from his camp he turned the dogs loose. A couple of the younger children were out playing and the dogs turned on them, one of them.

BC: They normally would never have the dogs loose?

WG: No. He just thought he would take them down and water them and the kids were out playing in the bush somewhere and the dog got them. The other one of course, screamed and the mother ran out with a gun and shot the dog then asked the other little girl, who was about 10 yrs. old, gave her the rifle and told her to go up to the transmitter tower for the Signal Corps, which was in between Norman Wells and their camp, but about 5 miles removed from their place, to phone in for help. So she accomplished this and the boat that was going down included the doctor and several other of the staff. They brought this young Indian boy back into the hospital. He was rather badly chewed up, his face and his arms and hands.

#152 BC: How old a child would he be?

WG: I would say, 7, 8, somewhere in that range. But Dr. Delaney, who was the doctor there said he put in about 280 stitches I think, altogether, to put him back together again. He'd been partially scalped, well, his face was chewed up pretty badly. Then he was airlifted out the next day to the Cansell??? Hospital in Edmonton. He is now back working at Norman Wells, a big strapping good looking man. The only scars that I could notice as a result of it in later years, was his hair growth is a little patchy.

BC: It never did all fill in again?

WG: No.

BC: Of course, in those days, they wouldn't transplant.

WG: They certainly hadn't anyway.

BC: I'm sorry, you have some other old-timers that you . . .

WG: No.

BC: There's one point that you had mentioned to me before we started to tape, about the end of the season and the . . .

WG: It was more the shipping season I would suggest, the navigational season. That was a

pretty hectic place in the camp. It really didn't affect my operations all that much but the poor accountant and some of the refinery personnel were sure busy. Not only were the supplies coming in for the camp that they had to unload and store but more particularly, I guess, was the product that was going out, the refined product. A lot of this went out by barge load, that was relatively simple to handle but there was also a lot of barrel movement, which required a lot of handling and a lot of . . .

BC: When you say barge, it wouldn't be put in barrels and put in a barge and floated down or up?

WG: Some of it would but a lot of them, the barge itself was an oiler tanker.

BC: That's what I wondered, yes.

WG: So they would very often fill that with oil or whatever, a portion of it, and then put the barrels on top.

BC: Would they cover that so that impurities didn't get in once it was in there?

WG: Oh yes, the barge would be sealed on top. And they were all pushed up and down the river of course. Yes, there was a lot of product that moved as far as Yellowknife and El Dorado and Great Bear Lake and on down river to Aklavik. But as I say, in hindsight, it was a very interesting summer.

BC: I've got a little note here about communications with the Army Signal Corps.

WG: Yes. At that point in time, the Signal Corps, Engineers, they maintained a transmitter at Norman Wells, which they operated 24 hrs. a day. All messages coming out of the north, that is north of Norman Wells and I don't know how far it went east and west, all was relayed through this particular station. So there was a group of people there that certainly contributed to the community. Late in '48 the Royal Canadian Engineers came in and built some housing accommodation for some of the staff. Prior to this it had all been just males and single people. Which, they built 2 or 3 nice houses, according to their. . . would no doubt change the staff and I'm sure, with the advances in communications in the north, I'm not sure that this is even operating, I would be very surprised to see it.

#203 BC: Is that right, isn't that interesting. We've talked a lot about Norman Wells but we've never really described it physically. Can you talk about the islands. They're very vivid in your mind but I wonder, if for those who might not know, if you can just give us a geographical description, is that asking too much?

WG: No. Norman Wells is located on the north, or northeast bank of the Mackenzie River. The history of it goes way back. There are seeps and even to this day, you can see little gas bubbles breaking out on the water on a calm day. This seep was actually reported by Mackenzie when he made his initial trip down the Mackenzie River. There's a little creek that comes in there, Bosworth Creek. I won't get into the political ramifications of leasing and one thing and another, simply because I don't know them. But I do know that Imperial went in there, I think about 1920 and drilled a cable tool well on the bank of the river, some 700' if my memory is correct, and they encountered gas. Later, they went in and drilled a second well and drilled it deeper. The first well was completed in shales, that overly the reef. It was just gas that was escaping from the reef up into the shales is what they found. Well, the second well went down deeper, into the reef itself. In the 20's

sometime I guess, they put in a little still up there and generated some fuel that was sold up and down the river. I think this was primarily just a summer operation. Well then, with the discovery there and they'd also drilled some wells out on the island, I don't know how many but I remember, there was Bear Island 1 I remember, that was a dry hole, although it did produce some gas. I don't think ever commercially. The Canol project was hinged, or hung around the oil possibilities, or oil potential at Norman Wells. The updip edge of the reef, which was a Devonian reef, was on the mainland right where the camp was and then the downdip, or the flank edges of it, that still contained oil, were out under 2 islands that were in the river.

#244 BC: So the river would be pretty wide to accommodate these islands?

WG: Yes. From bank to bank, the river would be about 4 miles across I would suggest. Not all water. And the islands would be a good mile between the mainland and the islands and then on the other side of the islands there would another narrower channel.

BC: The islands, would there be trees on the islands at all?

WG: Oh yes. The most upstream island, Bear Island, on the north end of that there were a lot of trees, poplar trees. Goose Island, on the north end of that again, there was trees but vegetation wasn't nearly as heavy and the strict upstream end of that island was more of a sandspit that had built up. The ice in the break-up used to override it rather badly, which necessitated that all our well heads were below ground level and we had them timbered over to keep the well heads from getting broken off by ice and one thing and another.

BC: I guess that was the big problem up there?

WG: It was. In the summer time, initially, we pumped it across via the pipeline. When that went out we just couldn't justify another line so we used to barge it across in the summertime and in the wintertime we would, after the ice had firmed up, we would lay a line on top of the ice and pipeline it across.

BC: Now you say you barged it across, you say that very casually, it must be more than just putting barrels in a barge.

WG: No, this barge was one that was specially designed for this. I forget how much it carried, maybe 500 barrels of crude. We'd pump that in and bring it across and pump it out at the other side. This was actually started after I left. Interestingly enough, they had a retired priest that was the chap that ran the barge for a year or two.

BC: Isn't that interesting.

WG: I have many fond memories going back to Norman Wells.

#283 BC: I have a little star here about coming back with some people from Toronto.

WG: They're the ones I went into Norman Wells with, they were marketing and manufacturing department heads and staff. I enjoyed that trip very much and they kind of took me under their wing and I saw a lot of things that I wouldn't have seen for some time. They went to Waterways, Fort Smith and then into Yellowknife. We overnighted in Yellowknife and had a tour of the mines. They had a reception that evening for the local businessmen. Incidentally, Grant McEwan was along on that trip. He wasn't particularly interested in going down in the mine but he wandered around town in his love for the soil. He was the

guest speaker and he was commenting on the productivity of the soil that he had found, quite an interesting evening. We went from there to Norman Wells and then they were going over to El Dorado, which was operating on the south side of Great Bear Lake. We went over in a wheeled aircraft and landed at Sawmill Bay, on the northwest side, then they were ferried across in a small pontoon plane. It was a very interesting visit, and certainly the only time I was ever there. I don't think the mine is operating anymore. Another interesting, always an interesting thing, about every second Friday, a CP Air plane would come in, it had the mail contract in that area at the time. Norman Wells was the last strip that they could land on wheeled aircraft and they would arrive Friday. Part of the contract was that they would deliver mail to Fort Norman and to Aklavik. So they would take off in a small plane, either on pontoons in the summertime or skis in the wintertime and go down to Fort Norman and leave the mail and then fly to Inuvik, which was about 300 miles down river. The contract also provided that they had to have 1 day to answer their mail. So they overnighted there. The crew of the DC-3, which was the common plane at the time, was in from Friday to Tuesday. I met some very interesting crew members, Grant McConeky, he came in on one trip, he's president of CP Air. Sandy Tweed, he flew out of Norman Wells for a few years, and then he went on to the big planes on the Orient run. Unfortunately he was lost in a plane crash on approach to Anchorage. And another one that I enjoyed very much, he also, he was their chief test pilot and he was taking a run to Tokyo and he was lost on one of the flights in Tokyo.

BC: Can you remember what his name was?

WG: No, I can't unfortunately.

BC: That's all right.

End of tape.

Tape 3 Side 2

BC: Before we move you out of Norman Wells and into Redwater, are there any other things that you can think of? I have a couple of other little comments here, Army Signal Corps and the Army Engineers.

WG: Yes, well, the Signal Corps as I mentioned, ran the communications in the north and the Engineers, when they were in building more houses at Norman Wells, they also went down and built a number of houses at Fort Norman. Just why, I don't know. But they got caught down there late in the fall and were worried that they were going to get stranded there until freeze up, until they could get in and fly them out. So they chartered a local chap with a boat to bring them down river to Norman Wells. On the way down they had a tremendous tailwind and it was dark and they ended up ramming the boat they had up on one of these islands, which is a little bit like Goose Island I spoke of a moment ago, kind of a great big sandspit, especially towards the flow of the current. They put the boat so far up that they couldn't get it back off again. So and they had no communications on the boat of course, so he laced a couple of 45 gallon drums together and climbed on top with a paddle and was headed for Norman Wells. He was yelling as he went by Norman Wells because he couldn't direct the barrels into shore. So they sent a boat out and pulled him in

and then sent a larger vessel down and pulled his boat off the sandbar and brought the rest of the crew in. So it had a happy ending but it could have been rather a tough winter for some of those chaps, sitting on the island.

BC: You have to know quite a little about how to handle yourself in an emergency up there don't you?

WG: Oh yes. Certainly, you don't have the facilities that you have outside. You have to improvise and be . . . well, just able to look after yourself. When you think of some of the trappers and that sort of stuff, that are out for weeks on end, out in the cold weather, how they survive, but they seem to do very well.

#038 BC: This would be a very good post education for you out there.

WG: Yes, it certainly was. One of the assignments that summer I remember, was to abandon Goose Island #2. It was right more or less in the refinery yard. There was an Imperial crew in, they were moving a rig out so they rigged up one of the single sparred masts that was up there, it had been used during the Canol project that, could pull the tubing and it wasn't able to pull it. A packer had been set and it had hung up on perforations I guess. Bill West, who was our heavy equipment operator, he said he'd help them so he brought his cherry picker over and the two of them were able to get it out. So we at least had the tubing out of the hole and then came the project of abandoning it. It was leaking from around the surface pipe. So we decided to perforate and pump cement in and get it. There was still some equipment from the service companies, left there from the Canol project. We had an old Haliburton gun and some line. There was a cementing unit there. So we sent out and got some powder and bullets for the guns and undertook to perforate the casing. We accomplished this but it wasn't without incident and one that I'm not very proud of. We didn't have any instruments to test the circuitry as we were loading this gun so I fabricated one and tested it many times without any incident. However, as we had the gun in the vice loading it, one of the bullets went off. Jim Brown, who was the welder up there, he lost some fingers. I got away pretty lucky, I got some of his fingernail blown into my face and the bullet went through the peak of my cap. It certainly scared us. However the next morning I got up and loaded the rest of them myself and we put some of the line to shoot it on an old truck winch and lowered it in. We didn't have a selective firing device so we had to fire them all at once and we used an electric welder to fire them. Then we pumped the cement in and I was quite proud, I thought we had a good seal, but talking to some of the engineers that have been up there since, it wasn't a roaring success. But he said, don't feel bad, we've squeezed it off 3 times since and it's still leaking. That was one of the things that marred my experience at Norman Wells.

BC: Overall though, it was a very good experience for you in learning to cope with almost anything in life.

WG: I don't know, it certainly makes a person grow up a lot faster.

BC: Now can we move into Redwater?

WG: Yes.

BC: Just before we do, you went into Redwater in 1949 and that is the year you were married.

WG: That is correct.

BC: Were you married before . . .

WG: Oh, I was married in 1950.

BC: All right. Can I just, while we're stopped and I'll get your married statistics too, your wife's maiden name?

WG: Was Margaret Allen.

BC: And where was she from?

WG: She was from Edmonton at this time but she was from Gadsby, which was a little village 8 miles east of where I grew up. So I knew her in school days, as a matter of fact, we even dated a time or two then. But our paths seemed to go their separate ways, although we maintained pretty close contact. When I was in Edmonton going to university she was there and again, we had a date or two. We used to keep relatively close contact with one another.

#085 BC: Was she going to university, what was she studying?

WG: No, she didn't go to university when she went up there. She went working for the, I think the Wheat Acreage Review Board, to start with and then in the employment office.

BC: You have a family?

WG: Yes, we have 2, we have a girl and a boy. They're both married and both living in Calgary and I have one grandchild.

BC: Could we have their names to just put on the record, I think it's important?

WG: Carrie was our daughter, she married Ted Stack from Edmonton and they're living in Calgary. Our son, Kim, he married a girl that he met while he was attending Olds Agricultural College, Vickie, they are also living in Calgary.

BC: And which has the grandchild?

WG: Our daughter. We're kind of in the 3 corners of the city, we're in the southwest, our daughter and her husband are in the southeast about as far as you can get. Well, that's not right because they're not in Midnapore area, and our son and his wife, they live up in the northeast so it's quite an area.

BC: Very nice to have them all in the same city though, you're very lucky. All right, let's look at Redwater, you were first there as the district petroleum engineer. What were your duties, it was more than just overseeing?

WG: I guess my duties at that time were tied up with the drilling and the production phase of the business. Redwater, a small town, some 35, 40, 50 miles northeast of Edmonton, a little farming community, primarily a Ukrainian extraction, although not completely. It just wasn't a town that was geared to accept the influx of a lot of drilling people. It didn't have the facilities. I guess one example of that would be the telephone communications. There were 2 lines from Redwater to Edmonton, you had access to 2 lines. The switchboard was in the little grocery store and they had a couple of telephone booths there. So it was a pretty hectic place in the mornings as the drilling contractors, the supply people, the other contractors were in phoning in their reports so there was always quite a line-up there.

BC: There wasn't any opportunity to get a phone at all?

WG: They came in surprisingly fast but you know, there was a period there when it was pretty

hectic. And the roads of course, left a lot to be desired. The movement of the heavy oil field equipment around didn't help them a bit.

BC: So did this cause problems with the little town like that, not geared for the oil industry and having you go through their oiled streets in the town and mucking them all up?

WG: They weren't oiled to start with.

BC: They weren't even oiled?

WG: They were dirt streets. I'm sure it did, but they were really a fine bunch of people and they rolled with the punches very well. Sure, there were some that were trouble dealing with. I guess I can give you one example, the hotel just shortly before I arrived there, it burnt down. With it went probably the only eating place in town. The people that owned the hotel, within a very, very short period of time they had acquired one of these old Army shacks, 20 or 30 feet wide and 60' long. They set up a restaurant in there. And real service, you didn't have much selection in your meals but there was lots of it and wholesome. I remember a little later on I was working in the office there, I went over for a sandwich was all I felt like for lunch. I got there just before the big rush for the noon meal and they asked me if I would mind coming back later in that there were people that were hungry coming in. So I said, no, I think that's fair enough. As I say, I was involved in the drilling and the production and the transportation of crude. Things fell into place it seemed, much simpler than the early days in Leduc.

#138 BC: You'd learned a lot in 2 years then?

WG: Yes, and I think there was more manpower made readily available to us. For example, while we had to handle the trucking of the oil the Imperial pipe people that were up there, they'd built a loading rack and they looked after billing cars out and getting cars and one thing and another. We had enough trouble with the trucks. While I'm on that I might just mention that we felt that we were paying way too much for these trucks to haul the oil. They were getting, I think 13 cents a barrel and we jewed them down to 11. Then one day it rained and not a single trucker showed up. So I remember on one of my reviews in Calgary on our progress I was lamenting this fact. Mr. Mackenzie, who was the manager then, he said, Gib, we've elected not to get into the trucking business so we've elected to hire our trucks. So he said, you've got to remember that they've got to make a profit to stay in business to service you tomorrow. Which I thought was a pretty good lesson because we had them down, in hindsight, to the point that they just couldn't afford to tear up their truck or whatnot. So we went back up to 13, if I'm not mistaken it ended up at 15 cents a barrel and we had very good trucking service after that.

BC: This was Mr. Don Mackenzie was it?

WG: Yes. Imperial went in early in the game and this was something I had nothing to do with. They purchased a bunch of land on the north side of the village of Redwater. And laid out a town site, that is a residential area. There was no thought of putting up any businesses or anything like that. Within weeks they'd moved in an office, bunkhouse accommodation, which was the old Army H-hut type. 2 wings was for bunkhouse and the other 2 were for the offices. I was in the one of the wings, I guess there would maybe be 20 of us in one, side by side. An oil stove in the middle which a little gentleman used to

come in and fill up with oil once or twice during the night, depending on how cold it was. They had toilet facilities installed but the water, you couldn't drink it so we drank bottled water that was brought out from Edmonton. They also put up a smaller building to accommodate 3 or 4 girls that were working in the office for us. That's where we spent the winter of '49. But while all this was going on they were busy constructing some proper bunkhouses, 2 to a room type with a lounge in the middle. Also constructed a very adequate field office for us and warehouse type racks, one thing and another. So it was a lot easier and with this went better communications. Even in the army prefab we had better telephones, we even had Telex ties. So we weren't completely isolated. And along with this, they were also starting work on the town site for the married people that would be coming in. To accomplish this they had to lay their sewer lines, their water lines. And their water lines, they got their water from the North Saskatchewan River some 12 miles away.

#187 BC: So it would be better water then?

WG: Yes.

BC: How many people were they building this residential area to accommodate?

WG: They showed a lot of foresight I thought, when they laid out the town. Very inefficient at the time, they only built on every second lot in the town. There was a marked sameness in a lot of the houses. The thinking at that time, and it certainly proved to be the case, other people that move into the community, they will build in between, they will have different style homes so you won't get the sameness and the cost of building then will be simply a tie to the utilities. And they also drilled a couple of gas wells, this was in the Viking gas and it had been penetrated on the discovery well and they knew it was there and it was sweet. So they drilled a couple of gas wells and had gas. So by the spring or relatively early summer of '50 we had all the amenities of home, gas, lights, water, sewer. So about this time I decided to get married.

BC: Sure, now there was somewhere where your wife could come and stay.

WG: Yes, so we got married in August and started to work on a house and built a house in Redwater. Prior to it being completed we had rented a home temporarily in Edmonton and we moved out in December. The work in Redwater, the development side of it was pretty straight forward, although we were sure busy. Redwater was a rather easy pool to develop, relatively shallow, 3,000' plus, no gas cap. There was an underlying water but a thick pay zone and usually some pretty good porosity. So the wells were drilled fast. In our heyday we were drilling and completing a well, just about 1 week per rig. There were some problem areas. One, in some sections of the field there was shallow gas that gave us trouble, even setting surface pipe. We had a few blow on us there but no major ones.

BC: I think it's interesting how you are so casually about it, we had some blow on us. Blow on us is not necessarily a nice experience is it?

WG: No, it certainly isn't but I guess what you knew was that you weren't into another Atlantic 3. This was just some surface shallow gas, there couldn't be a big volume. I'm not saying there wasn't a hazard there, there certainly was. There probably could have been enough gas to burn the rig down if it got away, that type of thing. But it was relatively low

pressure. Some of the edge wells of course, gave you completion problems as you got near the feathered out edge and the water was lying underneath. This was particularly true I guess, on the eastern edge where there seemed to be some vertical fracturing and we had trouble keeping the water out as we completed the wells.

#237 BC: This would be very challenging for you, as the engineer then wouldn't it?

WG: Yes, it was, to try to lay out a program and make sure that we were completing them the best we could.

BC: It was different than the Leduc field, as far as difficulty was concerned?

WG: Well yes, Leduc was deeper, it was higher pressure. It was sweet gas whereas this was sour, which boasts some problems. But Leduc had a gas cap overlying about a 35' layer of oil, and then below that, water. It is more, you have to get your casing through the gas cap and into the oil and get a good seat without going so deep you're into the water. So it was both touchy, shall we say, and a little deeper and higher pressure.

BC: Who was working with you, do you remember the names of the people that were working with you at that time? You would be, at that time, first the district petroleum engineer?

WG: Yes, and then later on, Maurice Paulsen at that time, was the district engineer and I was the district petroleum engineer and Jack Harvey was the district civil engineer. After about a year this was switched around. Maurice Paulsen was transferred to Calgary, and I was made the district engineer. Jack Harvey, I think he went to Devon at about the same time as the district engineer over there. We had quite a staff, and I feel, some very competent people. The district superintendent that came into Redwater initially was George Bannantine. His prior experience had been with the Jersey or Exxon organization, more on the worldwide scene. He'd just had rather a bad experience in Hungary, he was picked up over there by the Communists and given a bad time. However he finally escaped. So Redwater was his first assignment.

BC: Was he from there originally, was he a Hungarian?

WG: No, he was from St. Lewis.

BC: He'd been over there sort of on assignment was he?

WG: Yes. He'd been in Cuba before that and several other places. His background was certainly drilling and production. But as he told me shortly after he arrived in Redwater, he said, I don't know how much help I'm going to be in the day to day operations, I've spent most of my career, the last 10 years, in the courthouse. One thing or another you know, on some of these foreign assignments because he was the 2 IC for the whole operation. His dealings were government level rather than operational level. But he was sure a good man to have around. I remember on one occasion we were reviewing our costs and with this come manpower and overtime. We had an awful lot of overtime he seemed to think. He said, you know, all that overtime tells us one of two things, either we haven't got enough people or we're running an inefficient shop. One or the other because he said, we shouldn't be working that much overtime.

#300 BC: So what was the decision as to what was the cause?

WG: We didn't have enough people.

BC: That was nice to know isn't it?

WG: Yes. So he went to bat for us and we got more people. You can never eliminate overtime in an active development area, you just have to have it. But not as much as we were having.

BC: And sometimes the people working there want the overtime, they'll say, no, we can manage, give us another couple of hours because they're getting double pay and sometimes triple pay.

WG: Yes, but a few weeks of that at 12 and 14 hrs. a day, wears thin.

BC: I'm sure it would. And your efficiency goes down after so many hours on. . .

WG: Yes.

BC: All right, who else was there besides Mr. Bannantine. Perhaps you should talk a little about Mr. Paulsen.

WG: Yes, Mr. Paulsen, he was the gentleman I mentioned as far as Leduc was concerned that set up that. He came in and then he was the district engineer for awhile and then he moved down in to Calgary as the division petroleum engineer. When I went to Calgary subsequently, I took his position there. I can think of a lot of the people that were there, Murray Hannah, Jack Turner, Jim Henderson, Ken Oakley, Don Weatherburg, I mentioned Jack Harvey. Lee Constable, he was there as the assistant production superintendent. Bernard Jeffries was in the accounting end of it, Lauder Nowers was the personnel manager. Harry Robertson was there in construction.

BC: When you say personnel manager, that would indicate you had a big operation.

WG: Oh yes.

BC: He did the hiring up there, actually in Redwater?

WG: A lot of it, yes. I remember one instance, this was when we were in the army prefab and we were short of field people. But we didn't have any place to put them, no accommodations. So he brought these 4 chaps in for me to interview. It really wasn't my responsibility, Bill Cousins was the production superintendent but he was out so he brought them in to see me. I was quite impressed with them but I said, but we've got no accommodation for you. That's no problem, we can get our own accommodation. So we ended up hiring them and they all turned out excellent. But what they did then, they were 4 farm boys from Gibbons, a little ways away. So they went home then and snaffled on to one of their dad's granaries and pulled it up and set it up on the edge of town and that's what they lived in until they got accommodations.

BC: Do you remember the names of any of those chaps?

WG: Yes. Brian Toner, he I think, is production manager in Calgary here now. Harold Hood, if I'm not mistaken he's retired, Lorne Sprague, last I saw of him he was running the Red Deer operations, foreman there and . . . I can see the man but his name slips me.

BC: That's all right. If we get the name we'll put it into the record a little later.

End of tape.

Tape 4 Side 1

BC: Let's go on about the accommodation.

WG: There were several people, I'm not thinking so many of them that worked for Imperial,

but probably some and that worked for other companies in the field and supply companies that had moved little shacks in to get a roof over their head so they could be close to the work. This was one of the problems that we had later on, of course, they were heated by oil and an oil stove is a dangerous thing so there were always several fires over there. We had a fire truck for our use and it was called out on many of these occasions. I don't think there was ever anybody hurt there but by the time the fire truck got there the building was pretty well gone.

BC: You mentioned also, Mr. Jack Harvey. Can you remember any incidents connected with Mr. Harvey?

WG: Harvey was quite a hunter and a very good civil engineer I might add. He was the one that was involved, to a very large degree, with laying out the town site and getting it going and getting our office buildings up. Along with all the other work, it was the civil engineers that were responsible for the designing more or less, well, constructing of our field facilities. So they were building tanks and laying pipelines and building roads.

BC: Sound almost like an engineering corps in an army that you had to have.

WG: Well, that is correct yes. And it was quite interesting, you know, everybody was so horribly busy that nobody complained if somebody else did some of their work. It wasn't till things got a little slacker later on that, well, he's got no business doing that, that's my job. But when you're working hard enough you're going to have to get somebody else to run with some of it. Jack went on into Calgary and then on down to Toronto. He is retired now.

BC: He was in Toronto when you were there was he?

WG: No. He came down after I left.

BC: I'm sorry I sort of interrupted some of your dialogue on Redwater.

WG: There's a lot of people. Can I take a break and get a picture of the gang and I'll just run over some of the names.

#027 BC: Of course, excellent idea. . . All right, could you just identify this picture.

WG: This picture was taken, it would be the Christmas of 1950 I believe, in the lounge area of our new bunkhouse. No, I'm sorry this would be in the office building but we were having a Christmas party complete with turkey sandwiches etc. I'll just run through here and name off those that I can. I think I can get most of them. Bernard Jeffries, he was in accounting; Bill Smith was our landman; Ralph Flanders in production; Rod McDaniels, engineering, Ed Cutland, engineering, Ron Sheer, engineering, Julius Ebsinger, he was in engineering; Lauder Nowers, he was personnel manager; Bennie Haukhausen, engineering; Eric Connor, engineering; George Bannantine, he was our production superintendent; Harry Robertson, he was our transportation and construction; Red Shatford was our geologist; Bill Cousins, he was our production superintendent; Bert Macdonald, our production foreman; Bud Kelly, our drilling superintendent; Millard Van der Griff, production foreman; Norm Wright, production foreman; Jack Turner, engineering; I think that's Bob Francis there, Jim Henderson, both engineering; Doug Amos, production; Billie Vandusen production; Stu Bernard, he was in accounting; Stan Pooler, he ran our warehouse; Hughie Mackenzie was in production; Ken Oakley,

engineering; Cy Cormack, he was on production. Incidentally, he was the production foreman when I was in Norman Wells. And MacRae, he was on production also I believe, and myself. That's the gang that was party at . . .

BC: There were quite a few engineers it seems.

WG: Yes.

BC: Now why were there so many engineers?

WG: Just the work that was to be done. You noted there was only one geologist. He played an important part and Reg was an excellent one for field development but it was just the pace of the work that was going on at that point in time. Most of our work was conducted by contractor so we don't have too many operating pipeline crews or that sort of stuff. But these are the chaps that had to supervise them and lay out the work for them.

BC: That's really what these were then, these were supervisors as things were getting ready?

WG: Yes, or design work. Certainly there are some missing from here, Murray Hanna and Jack Turner, they were in the petroleum engineering section there. Lee Constable, who was the assistant superintendent, he was living in Edmonton at that point in time, he could have been away on holidays or out on business.

#065 BC: When you say that they were mapping out the town site, did you just do that on your own, on your own lease property or how did you get to be mapping out a town site?

WG: I had nothing to do with that and I don't know how. All I know is, it went together faster than it could possibly go together today. The initial accommodation would have been a piece of cake today, you phone up Mr. Atco and you've got a camp there. But we didn't have a Mr. Atco so we had to do it ourselves. As far as the town site is concerned, when you look at what they did, they laid out a town site. It was no doubt surveyed and registered, they laid about a 12 mile water line to the river, took water out of the North Saskatchewan River mind you. Drilled some gas wells and put in gas and a sewer system, you couldn't do that under 5 years today with the bureaucratic system.

BC: How long did it take you?

WG: Just months.

BC: Was this town site all by itself there?

WG: No, it was right bordering, just to the north of the village of Redwater. It was subsequently turned over to the village and they manage it now.

BC: In designing this, you would have to incorporate schools and hospitals or not?

WG: No, that was left to the village. But there is schools there now and there's a hospital there now. the auxiliary services when we were first in Redwater were kind of non-existent but it wasn't too long till there were supply stores there. In 1950 the Alberta Government Telephones opened a switchboard office there. The Royal Bank moved out, it set up shop first in the front of one of the garages there. Put his safe back in one office and worked off the desk till they got their little building put up. The Bank of Commerce was in there, a little restaurant went in aside from the one that was adjacent to the hotel they built the Nest??? Deck, which was the coffee shop concept and then they built on to it, a place for parties or what have you , you know. Then there was another one that was run by some

Chinese folks that ran a real good restaurant. So the auxiliary services moved in pretty quickly.

BC: And looking at the town site, it was designed not just for single men, it was designed so families could come in, this was the reason for having it moved so quickly?

WG: Yes, in order to get our staff settled. And other things went along too. In 1950 we were playing baseball. You know, land was set aside, of course, it doesn't take much to grade down a baseball diamond. But in the winter of 1950 we were curling. They'd put up a 4 sheet curling rink. Now this was a community effort, not only from our employees but also townspeople, but mainly the oil people.

BC: But who financed it mainly?

WG: They had formed a little executive and we went on the scrounge and got money from this company and money from that company and contributions from here and there.

#106 BC: Most of the contractors would be touched I would think.

WG: Yes, and the oil companies were touched in various degrees. So it was paid for when it was complete as a matter of fact.

BC: Is it still around?

WG: It caught fire and burnt down after I left, but it's been rebuilt and the design changed a little bit. So it's quite an active rink right now.

BC: When you were there, for Imperial, how many other companies were around, were you the major?

WG: Yes. When Imperial made the discovery in Redwater, they had land under reservation then you could convert to lease. The only, I think, the only freehold land in that area was some land that was owned by the CPR and some land that was owned by Western Minerals. This is by virtue of old land grants that they received years ago. The Western Minerals acreage, Imperial undertook a contract to develop that for them, which we did do and we got in on production and they set up their own operating group. But the government changed their ground rules a little bit at this point in time as far as lease selection was concerned and the biggest lease block that they could take out was a 3 mile square and the best they could do was corner, or they had to leave a mile corridor in between these blocks. So the first few wells that were drilled in the pool along this trend were to determine just where the trend runs, to enable them to make the most intelligent lease selection. Which they did do, basically they took their 3 square mile blocks and cornered it, which seemed to run pretty well up the field. The field ran on a northwest, southeast direction, generally. Then the land . . .

BC: You couldn't take leases out on everything though, you had to . . .

WG: No, you had to give it back. So then the land that was turned back was put up for bid on Crown bid, and Imperial elected not to bid on any of that acreage that I know of. But this is where then, other companies came in and bid on this acreage and then became participants in the pool. Imperial was still the dominant operator in the pool but there were others that acquired a pretty good position too.

BC: So this land, now you had your Imperial houses, were they building town sites too?

WG: No. The local Conservation Board, they built a couple of houses in there to house their

staff. And others, I think maybe Gulf built one in there, but others have come in later. Interestingly some of the business people built in there, some retired farmers have moved in, this type of thing. I'm sure there are vacant lots there now but there are still. . . it's pretty well built up and the trees that were planted at that time are now big trees. It's quite an attractive area.

- #148 BC: I'm sure it is. This was your first experience of course, with building a town from the bald prairie.
- WG: Yes. And as I said awhile ago, I really had nothing to do with it. I was so busy out in the oilfields that this was. . .
- BC: Right. But that would be part of your overall responsibility was to worry about it, if it . . .
- WG: Well, I say I had nothing to do with it. Certainly we were in on various reviews and your comments were welcome and one thing and another but I had no direct responsibility to see that the work was done is what I'm saying.
- BC: No, I don't know if we've finished with your anecdotes on Redwater, I don't think we have. There were 1 or 2 other things you wanted to mention.
- WG: No, I think that covers it pretty well. I mentioned a while back that Mr. Bannantine was our production superintendent. He got transferred to Calgary and Mr. Vern Hunter came out as his replacement.
- BC: What year was that?
- WG: This would be in 1950.
- BC: Can you remember any incidents with Mr. Vern Hunter that you could share?
- WG: I'd known Mr. Hunter for a long time.
- BC: You knew him before he came up?
- WG: Oh yes. He was a tool push for Imperial, I knew him out in the Viking, Kinsella, Provost area, he was the tool push on Leduc 1 and on several wells in that area so I knew him. He and his wife and 2 boys, as a matter of fact, our house was right next door to theirs in Redwater. So we used to see a fair bit of them at that time.
- BC: Tell me about Mr. Hunter.
- WG: He liked to joke, if you know what I mean. His career in the oil patch went way back to the early days in Turner Valley. Imperial had an exploration play in Saskatchewan in the early 40's, he was in on that. I don't think he went to Norman Wells or did, yes, I guess maybe he was up on part of the Canol project. He was certainly a drilling man and well, he knew all those in the drilling industry, shall we say. So he was the field superintendent when I left there and later on he was transferred over to Regina as the field superintendent when I spent some time over there.
- BC: So you worked together in 2 places with him then?
- WG: Well, yes, and then out on wildcat locations.
- BC: Right. Can you think of any incidents when you were working together anywhere, whether it was out on the wildcats or in Redwater or Regina?
- WG: Well. . .
- #191 BC: I'm putting you on the spot a bit.

- WG: No, I can think of several but I don't know as they really make much of a story if you know what I mean.
- BC: Well, we can maybe come back to him too, you know, just at the end, when we're finished our interview. You were district engineer for Redwater. Could you just define the difference between the district petroleum engineer and the district engineer?
- WG: The district petroleum engineer, they have responsibility for, shall we say, the drilling, the production, reservoir engineering, that type of thing. The district civil engineer has the responsibility for the construction, the surveying, the road building, one thing and another. And then the district engineer, these two, the district civil and the district petroleum, answer to him.
- BC: Right. So then, after you were made the district engineer and you were just there a year and then you came back into Calgary.
- WG: Right.
- BC: And you became, this was a bigger district of course.
- WG: Well, it's the division. It included Leduc, Norman Wells, everything in western Canada. I came back in here as a division petroleum engineer. Now, certainly it encompassed a bigger area and the type of work that you were responsible for differed. You got away from the day to day operations and the details of designing a casing string or whatever, and you were looking at, or supposed to be looking at the broader aspects. Here, most of our reservoir engineering for example, was done in the Calgary office at that time, I guess virtually all of it. There were some excellent people on reservoir engineering, Don Lougheed, Rod McDaniels, Art Dane and a bunch of them. So the job was to try to coordinate their work, coordinate the work that our drilling engineers were doing and trying to work together with our drilling department. Production facilities, and to try to standardize some of the equipment we were using, this type of thing. It entailed making presentations to the Energy Resources Conservation Board as it's now known, for permits for various things. Allowables, and what have you. That took up a fair bit of time. You were also worried about budgets and various reviews with management on various topics, on how the program was going. Whether we needed more wells or whether we had too many wells in our budget, this type of thing.
- #234 BC: How difficult is this for someone like yourself, with the background you had in engineering and the doing and the supervising of the actual casing etc. and then you come in and you are dealing at, arm's length I guess, is as good a way as...?
- WG: Well, there's certainly a tendency to put your fingers where they ought not to be, if you know what I mean. Having spent so much time in the day to day operations it's difficult not to tell them how to do it, or try to tell them how to do it when you really have no business. If they ask you for advice that's fine, or if you can see where they're obviously doing something that you don't agree with then you have to stand up and be counted, you know.
- BC: Did you find this a difficult transition? Do you think it is something that is difficult or not, for engineers and geologists who then become administrators?
- WG: Well, yes, and I think you can be an awfully fine technical man and a very poor

administrator, do you know what I mean. So you have to work at it. I don't know how good a job I did but I enjoyed the work.

BC: That's interesting that you say you enjoyed the work, because sometimes you find people who are moving into that, they realize it's a step up in their career but it isn't really as enjoyable. If you say what's the most enjoyable part of your life, it won't be that.

WG: Yes. One of the things that I'm sure, made it easier, not only for me but the other technical people, we got quite a lecture, again, from Don Mackenzie, early in the game. I don't know how often he'd given this lecture. It wasn't a lecture, just a talk of course, but . . . that under no circumstances, when you're on the witness stand or wherever, were you to perjure your professional standing for the benefit of the company. In other words, if that's the way you believe technically, that's the way it is and we'll live with it. So that kind of takes a load off your mind when you're on there, you know you don't need to worry about what effect is this going to have on the company if that's the way you sincerely believe it to be that way, you . . .

BC: So you can make a decision on your professional knowledge, not trying to second guess the fellow upstairs.

WG: That's right. And that wasn't always the case, I felt, at some of those hearings. I felt sorry for some of them there because and I felt that the Conservation Board that were hearing it were very patient. Trying to get his point across and still not perjure himself, you know what I mean. I think he was told what to say rather than, you know.

#278 BC: Did you have to appear before the Conservation Board very often?

WG: Several times, yes.

BC: In what connections?

WG: On allowables, reserves, this sort of stuff. Although most of this really was done by the technical people that did the job. I appeared on a few of them and I think we smartened up a little later and put on a panel, in other words, maybe 3 experts. This chap would answer the things that he was a specialist in, rather than having 1 guy try to do it all. And it worked out pretty good. Another assignment that I got that I've often thought back on, one I got sent out recruiting new engineers. That job is done much more professionally now than it was at that point in time.

BC: How did you go about it in your day?

WG: I asked Dave Gustaffason, who was the chief engineer at that time when he gave me this assignment, I said, my gosh Dave, I haven't hired . . . well, I had, I'd hired a few before that but I hadn't gone out to the universities and recruited as it were. He said, the only advice I can give you is don't hire anybody that you don't think you could work for. Because some day you're going to be working for some of them. And Don Mackenzie, he happened to walk in the office so he said, kind of jokingly, yes, and hire all those farm boys you can get from Saskatchewan because they're not afraid to work. So with that guidance I took off on the recruiting trail.

BC: And where would you go to recruit, to the universities?

WG: Yes. This particular year I went to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

BC: These would be for summer jobs or for graduate students?

- WG: At this point in time it was just for graduate students.
BC: And how many would you be looking for?
WG: I think I was looking for 6 or something like that.
BC: What year would this be?
WG: This would be in 1951 or '52 I guess.
BC: And was the business requiring a big expansion of your department?
WG: If 6 is big, I guess so, yes.
BC: That's quite an expansion isn't it?
WG: Of course, that wasn't just for my department, this was for the whole western Canadian operations.

#320 BC: Now I'll try not to interrupt you as you recall your time as the division petroleum engineer in Calgary.

WG: As I mentioned earlier, a fair bit of time was with reviews to management. It included, whether it should have or not, it also included operating costs and how we're stacking up with what we said we would get when we presented the budget and always, invariably, there are changes made in the budget dictated for other reasons. Short of cash or whatever. So it's not uncommon to say, we're going to cut our budget 10%, what are you going to cut out. So then it means a reassessment of what you had in there and establish priorities on it. Also, as division petroleum engineer I was placed on the technical committee of the Canadian Petroleum Association. I was on that one year and then was chairman of it the second year I guess.

BC: Can I just stop there?

Tape 4 Side 2

WG: The Canadian Petroleum Association was set up by the various major operating companies in the western provinces. It was free to all but I think some of the more junior companies felt that the majors were not speaking for them so they subsequently formed their own, the Independent Petroleum Association. But in the Petroleum Association they set up various committees to deal with specific problems, such as a land committee, law committee, whatever. And they had the technical committee, which was set up to look after the technical problems associated with the oil and gas development. A lot of companies were represented on that. I remember this particular year, regulations was a subject that was near and dear to all of us. There was a sub-committee of the committee, which I was part of. We went to Saskatchewan to review their regulations and their proposed regulations. They didn't really have much in the way of regulations at that point in time. I remember Bob Harrison, he was chairman of the Canadian Petroleum Association, chairman, he was the manager I guess you'd call it. And Johnny Balachie was the secretary. They came with us and myself and there would be I'm sure, an exploration man along but I can't think who he was. We went and reviewed the regulations that Saskatchewan were proposing to put out, passed comments on them. We also went down to Ottawa, to review with the federal government, their proposed

regulations for the oil and gas industry. The Ottawa one was, I felt we did more good there perhaps, in getting some changes, in that they didn't really have anybody on staff down there that was working on this, that had any experience at all in the oil and gas industry. Most of it was in the mining end of it. They proved to be very easy to work with. When we would tell them that they needed to strengthen their regulations here but you don't need that much control there, they went along with it.

#038 BC: Can you think of any specific regulations that were changed?

WG: One of them, I remember that they had a hard time understanding, once you've taken out a lease in an area, or reservation, primarily for exploration work, in the mining game that's yours and nobody else can trespass on it. So why on earth would you allow somebody else to run geophysical line over your property. They had a hard time understanding that. Another thing was their casing program. I don't think they fully understood the principle of the casing and why you would insist on surface casing being down into hard rock so many feet and cemented and all this sort of stuff. These were the type of things that we told them they had to tighten up their regulations on.

BC: Who had made whatever regulations there were in the first place?

WG: This was the Ottawa staff, which I said, they were very competent people I'm sure, in their own field but their own field was mining.

BC: So they wouldn't have any idea.

WG: The only experience they had really, in drilling, I guess would be the core drills they used in the mining industry. Of course, all that drilling is virtually all in hard rock.

BC: And they hadn't had any regulations that came out of the earlier drilling in southern Ontario?

WG: No, that would be under the Ontario government itself.

BC: Oh, not under federal?

WG: No.

BC: Why would that be, that it's under Ontario and yours is under federal?

WG: The mineral rights are under the province you see. Looking at the federal regulations we were looking at drilling in the Northwest Territories and that type of thing.

BC: Ah, now we have that cleared, okay. The regulations, any changes in regulations in Alberta, you would be working with the Alberta government?

WG: That's correct, yes.

BC: And were there any particular problems with Alberta that you were concerned with at that time?

WG: Oh, things would come up from time to time but the people on staff at the Conservation Board here in Alberta, they were people that had had a lot of experience, going back to Turner Valley and before.

BC: Were you involved with Mr. Kerr at all, through the . . .

WG: Aubrey Kerr? Yes. Aubrey Kerr was the geologist in Leduc when I was working there. While you speak of Mr. Kerr I remember, shortly after the discovery of Leduc, if I may interject this at this point.

BC: Certainly.

WG: There was a big Imperial contingent moved in to Edmonton and it was made up by the Jersey board and the president of Humble. So they were having an industry luncheon and then they were going to meet the press and meet the government officials, this type of thing. That was certainly not in my league. So the president of Humble, I'm sure it was the president of Humble and I can't think of his name, Morgan rings in mind but I'm not sure, and another gentleman and they felt. . . they're not even from the Jersey board so they have no place in this press interview and one thing and another. So we were to take them for a drive out to the Leduc field. So I was driving with one of the gentlemen and Aubrey in the back seat with the other. But it had rained, and of course, there was no way that we could get out there or thought it prudent to attempt to go out. However, we went for a drive down the highway to Leduc and back. I've often thought of this, this gentleman, he was sure thinking in different terms than I. I remember one of his comments, what's going to happen to the economy of Alberta and the economy of Canada if this area, the general Edmonton area, develops into an area where they're producing half a million barrels a day. I thought, you stupid old goat. I'd been chasing dry holes for so long and so we got 2 or 3 hundred barrels ????. But I guess, him thinking that way was why he was where he was eh, president of the Humble organization. But it sure developed into that. If I had more knowledge of the subject, I still don't know how I could have answered it. I remember another funny instance about that point in time. Bernie Stareck??? was telling me this, he was with National Supply. The president of National Supply Co. came up to Edmonton. I don't know whether they'd opened a store then or not but anyway, he was billeted at the King Edward Hotel and was going around seeing some of the development, talking to some people. Bernie took him for lunch to the Macdonald and this chap said, you know Bernie, I'm really not complaining about my accommodation at the King Edward, it's excellent, but this is obviously the #1 hotel in town, why am I not staying here. Well he said, I tried but I just couldn't get you in. So he said, well, you just don't know how so he went and saw the manager, introduced himself, president of National Supply Co. one of the world's largest companies supplying equipment to the oilfield and we expect to be doing a lot of business up this way. The manager turned and looked at him and said, sir, you're just the type of people we don't want in this hotel. He was relieved of his hotel responsibilities a few months after that but that was the attitude he had. He just couldn't differentiate I guess, between the drunken roughneck. . .

#100 BC: From Calgary, you then moved in to Regina, in a different capacity.

WG: Yes, I went back into Regina as the assistant production division manager. Mr. Constable was the division manager at that time and Mr. Des Beck was over there, he was the manager but his background was exploration. Things were starting to happen in Regina at that point in time as a result of some of their exploration activity. They had production in Wapella, east Saskatchewan, a little in Virden, Manitoba, a few out in the Smiley area, up in the Kindersley section of the province and again, in southeastern Saskatchewan. So we decided to move in a production operation, engineering plus production management. So I went over there in that capacity and interestingly enough, a lot of people that I had

worked with in Redwater, because it was pretty fully developed and they didn't need all the staff there, they were also transferred to Regina. So there was a lot of people that I'd worked with previously. Here again, you were supposedly more directing the work and organizing it rather than getting involved in the physical work. Oh, but the problems were the same, the drilling, the supply lines weren't well established in Saskatchewan.

BC: Supply lines for materials to come in?

WG: Right. The oil that was produced was trucked and moved by rail until they got pipelines in to service the areas.

BC: Were you involved with the pipeline development?

WG: Not really, no. In the Smiley area for example, Charlie Hayes, who went on to be with Gulf and you would know I guess, he was working there and he laid a pipeline into the Smiley area. I guess our involvement there, and it was the way Charlie worked, he'd come and reviewed his proposals with us, can you live with this, this is what I'm applying for. And certainly we had no quarrels with it.

BC: Was there a lot of this working together in those earlier days?

WG: Yes. In the exploration side of the business there's certainly stiff competition. But once the land has been established, who owns what, there's a lot of cooperation. You don't always agree certainly. I might say one example of that, getting back to Redwater again for just a minute, it was obvious that they were going to have to have facilities to dispose of produced salt water. So at that time they formed a company, the Redwater Water Disposal Co. in which the various operators in the field had shares in proportion to their equity in the field. They had calls made on them for cash to put into facilities. And a third party operated that company.

#144 BC: How did they dispose of the salt water?

WG: By injecting it back into the ground again, below the oil horizon. In Redwater today, they're producing something like 3/4 of a million barrels of salt water every day. So it's a big operation, to gather it and put it back in the ground again.

BC: Does this sort of recycle, keep coming back at all do you think?

WG: It will in time, yes. But what they're attempting to do there and in other areas of course, is putting it far enough removed from the oil-water interface so that that particular salt water won't come back. But it could do, or certainly it'll replace other water that will come. In a lot of those fields you've got to accept that you're going to handle an awful lot of water to get the oil. But that's an example of industry cooperation. It's also particularly important or noticeable??? if you get in a bind. In drilling for example, if you're in a bind, any piece of equipment that another contractor has, it's yours, this type of thing. So you get a lot of cooperation within them. Some areas, and I guess it's dealing with interpretive information, is where you may have your differences and not be able to get together.

BC: So you were assistant division production manager there for one year?

WG: Yes. Here we set up offices in Smiley, set up an organization to run it there, similar set-ups were made in southeastern Saskatchewan and as the work loads shifted, so did our office have to shift. At one time we had one in Alida. Well, Alida was kind of the end of the road and there wasn't too much immediate production in the area so it was transferred

down to Carnduff.

BC: And did you transfer up and down or were you stationed in Regina?

WG: No, I was stationed in Regina all the time. We did move some people down to Estevan, just to keep them closer to their work, ones that were spending most of their time travelling back and forth, you know what I mean.

BC: At that time, as you say, the work was starting to expand in Saskatchewan. So there would be again, this influx of people, not just Imperial people but all the other companies moving out there too. So were you once again, faced with housing problems?

WG: Yes. We were fortunate when we moved to Regina for example, although housing was fairly tight there was some new ones went up and we were able to acquire a new little 2 storey box which satisfied our requirements very well. In Estevan, we had arranged to have some houses built. In Carnduff we went the camp route to a degree but there were also some residences set up there.

BC: The trailer hadn't come in, the mobile home?

WG: No, not to that extent.

BC: This was in '54, '55.

WG: Yes. But operating in Regina, just by virtue of the spread out nature of our operations, posed new problems in that regard. Communications and some of those Saskatchewan winters can be pretty rough. Transportation wise, snow drifting, this type of thing. But it seemed to take shape pretty quickly.

#195 BC: Were there particular engineering problems that you would encounter there on the flat, that you might not have encountered to the same extent in Leduc or Redwater?

WG: No, I don't think so. You're getting down into southeastern Saskatchewan and you're not in the bald headed prairie. You're getting into a kind of semi-parkland to a degree. No, the problems were much the same. I think in Saskatchewan we had more field, they were smaller so hence you had more edge well problems you know. We encountered salt water, so that was a problem that had to be overcome, arranged for disposal. Early in the game, although it was after I left, they had to put in a gas gathering system and a gas plant there to handle the produced gas.

BC: I have a note, just going back a bit, was the Devon gas plant?

WG: No.

BC: Were you involved in that, I just had a note to ask you that?

WG: No. I never did work in Devon, they were building the town site and the office in Devon but we were still working out of Leduc when I got assigned to Norman Wells. So I never did work in the Devon town or out of the office.

BC: Right, I hadn't thought so but I just had the note there. In the designing of the gas plant, did you have anything to do with that part at all?

WG: No, that was something where I had no technical expertise at all.

BC: It takes a special kind of engineer for that?

WG: That is correct.

BC: You mentioned Mr. Constable, and Mr. Beck, could you just tell me a little about them?

Mr. Constable worked with you?

WG: Yes, he started in the oil field in Turner Valley and he worked in the real early days, on the pipe crews and in the office. He was working with Valley Pipe when Leduc was discovered then he transferred from that to Imperial and was active for a while in materials, inventory, control, this type of thing. Then he came out to Redwater as assistant production superintendent. While he had no great background as far as the drilling and production operations were concerned, he was excellent in the accounting side of the business, the records. He certainly wasn't exposed to it very long till he became very knowledgeable in the drilling and production side of the business too. But he'd never had any experience in that side of the business. Mr. Beck was an exploration individual. \

#237 BC: What was his position in Regina?

WG: He was exploration manager and then when they coordinated it, he stayed on as division manager for awhile, then he was replaced by Mr. Hunter from Redwater. So I worked with him again there. You'll note, I guess, in my resume there, where I was assistant to the division manager, which is really a staff job. You used to still stay fairly close to the production operations, you got involved in coordinating budgets between exploration and production and all that sort of stuff. One of my assignments I remember, we'd outgrown our office space, which was leased, and we'd made arrangements to add to the building. So that was one of the babies that was thrown to me and one that can be horribly time consuming.

BC: Also to decide how much office space for each person.

WG: Well that, yes, and then what's the floor plan split up and this type of thing.

BC: I think that would probably be one of the biggest headaches because nobody would be happy with the space you gave them.

WG: That could be.

BC: They want a window and you gave them, they want 2 and you give them 1.

WG: Yes.

BC: When you became assistant to the division manager, this was Mr. Beck?

WG: No, Mr. Hunter.

BC: And you held that position for again, just a year. You moved very quickly from one position to another, did you not?

WG: They were filling some gaps I guess, yes.

BC: It was expanding rather rapidly and you obviously had the versatility to be able to fill in. So that one year, in '55, what changes did it make in what you were doing, from assistant division manager?

WG: I don't know, I must confess I probable kept closer ties to production than I should have. But I was exposed a little more to the exploration side of the picture. Perhaps some government contacts occasionally, this type of thing.

BC: This was more a position to expand your knowledge of the company, training, would you think?

WG: I don't know, in hindsight it could have been, yes.

BC: Then they moved you out of the prairies, in 1956. Now '56, was one of those funny years in the oil business anyway wasn't it?

WG: Yes, a little bit. There were changes on the horizon in many places, yes.

BC: Could you tell me about going down to Toronto. You were operations advisor for producing in Toronto, that's a big mouthful.

WG: Yes. I think to understand Imperial's organization at that time. The manager of the producing department was in Toronto. He had a relatively small staff, I was the operations advisor. My counterpart, there was an exploration advisor, there was a man that handled land contracts because a lot of our contracts had to go there to be executed. And there was a small technical staff. They also ran a drafting department in Toronto, which was used by other departments within the company. The eastern Canada exploration play was also located in Toronto. And that was about the staff. So my responsibility was to keep abreast of what was going on in the production side of the business, in western Canada. Don McGregor, who was my counterpart in exploration, he was keeping abreast of the exploration efforts and reporting to, initially, Don Mackenzie, who was the manager down there, and keeping him abreast of what was going on. It also entailed making various presentations to the general operations council and sitting on it. I'm sorry, I missed one rather key person there, there was a producing advisor, Mr. Gordon Colpitts. He was the chief advisor to Mr. Mackenzie and we worked under him.

#314 BC: What was his last name again.

WG: Colpitts.

BC: Colpitts, yes, I knew the name, I just wanted to make sure it was right on my tape.

WG: The work down there also entailed a lot of, shall we say, inter-departmental, company committees. There were so very few people in our department that I seemed to get more than my fair share of them. Thinking of safety committees, ??? committees, any number of them.

BC: Did you feel that having all this power stationed in Toronto made it difficult? When you were there, could you see where there were problems as far as the exploration and the producing out on the prairies was concerned, with that distance?

WG: It certainly made a lot of delays but I think you've also got to recognize that whoever was the division manager in western Canada, he carried a lot of weight if you know what I mean. And I'm sure, a lot of the decisions were made on telephones directly to the manager in Toronto without coming up through our way. Both Don and I, we used to make frequent trips to the west, we used to accompany the western people when they were having their budget reviews to get a feel as to what their program was going to be and this type of thing. I certainly had some reservations when we were transferred to Toronto, being a couple of prairie kids. And I was there longer than I anticipated on being but we got to rather enjoy Toronto. We adjusted our lifestyle. I'm happy I got transferred back west, I prefer to live in the west than Toronto but we could have lived there I'm sure.

End of tape.

Tape 5 Side 1

- BC: As we start talking today Mr. Gibson, I think we just, we really finished up your sojourn in Regina, although at the very end of our interview, perhaps you might like to go through and highlight some of the specific problems or highlight throughout so we get a kind of round-up. But you went to Toronto as operations advisor and this is what we started to talk about last time.
- WG: Imperial's producing management was in Toronto, although there was a relatively small staff. The manager was there and the producing advisor. And under him, there was the exploration advisor, an operations advisor and a gentleman that looked after the land details contracts, that type of thing, and a few other clerks and what have you. But it was really a small organization. My responsibility to the producing advisor and to the manager was to keep abreast of the producing operations in as far as it affected drilling and production. So it was a fairly routine job in many ways. It entailed several trips to the west, to keep informed. I attended such things as budget reviews in which their plays are up and also reviews of operating costs.
- BC: You were the liaison man between west and central Canada?
- WG: That's right. There were the odd special assignment that you were on.
- BC: Where was Imperial active at that point, this would be in 1956, where was their biggest play going on?
- WG: Their biggest play was in western Canada. They had an office in London, Ontario, ??? southwestern Ontario play, which was fairly active. While I was in Toronto they conducted a drilling exploration play in the Maritimes.
- BC: Was that their first venture into the Maritimes?
- WG: I think so, yes. Certainly they had been keeping abreast of it from a geological point of view, and this sort of stuff, but to my knowledge, this was their first drilling in the Maritimes.
- BC: Were you involved with that part at all?
- WG: Somewhat. The company elected to move a rig from western Canada, and a crew and their families, down, they went by train to Quebec City and then offloaded there on to water vessels and moved into Summerside. They drilled 3 or 4 wells on Prince Edward Island and then moved from there over to Cape Breton, drilled a few wells there, a few wells or one well I guess, along the north shore of Nova Scotia.
- BC: Were any of them successful?
- WG: No.
- BC: Why were they drilling, had they thought that there was a good chance that there was something there?
- WG: Yes. There was some sedimentary basin there and well, it had never really thoroughly been tested. I mentioned earlier in my statement that Mobil Oil had drilled a well just off Charlottetown. So they did have a feel of the sedimentary basin that was there and they had some structures postulated. Unfortunately they were. . .

#041 BC: Did you go down into the Maritimes at all when this was going on?

- WG: Yes, I made several trips.
- BC: Who was in charge of that group down there, do you remember?
- WG: Yes, George Kirkpatrick. He was the tool push in charge of it.
- BC: Where had he been working out west?
- WG: He had been working all over the west as a matter of fact. I'd worked with him before in the Viking, Kinsella area, he was at Stolberg for awhile.
- BC: Was this Imperial's own drilling crew?
- WG: Yes.
- BC: They still had their own?
- WG: Yes, well, they still have to this day.
- BC: This is unusual now.
- WG: Yes, a lot of the companies have elected to go strictly to contract drilling. Imperial has, I really don't know how many rigs they've got now but they're mainly the big rigs that they use in the north and this sort of thing.
- BC: When you were involved with them what do you think would be the percentage of Imperial rigs to rigs that they would hire from independents?
- WG: That varied a lot depending on the play. When I was involved with the drilling in western Canada we had about 12 rigs, various sizes and 6 crews. So you'd drill a well in the north and then the rig is tied up because you can't get it out till next freeze-up so they'd move the crew out and drill with another rig here.
- BC: That would be something that a company like Imperial could do but a smaller company, that would be very expensive to leave half your rigs idle, wouldn't it?
- WG: I think you can look at it this way, if you leave a contractor in the bush, you're paying him to keep it there, so you might as well be paying to keep your own. There's that to be said for it. Certainly there's manpower problems associated with it.
- BC: How long were the crews down in Prince Edward Island and thereabouts?
- WG: They'd be there over a year.
- BC: This would be about when, about 1957?
- WG: No, it would be about 1958 or 9, in that range. Then they stacked the rig, I remember, in Moncton, or in the Moncton vicinity and it was there for a year or two and then they finally brought it back again. It posed a lot of problems, more logistic problems than anything else. While the Maritimes have a real fleet of trucks down there, not too many of them were equipped for oilfield type of operation. So that slowed their moves down. They took one big truck with them, it had to do a lot of work that you would normally have contracted out.
- BC: So although you were going into a much more settled area of Canada, you were pioneering and making do again?
- WG: That's correct, yes.
- BC: What were some of the adjustments you had to make?
- WG: I was only making fleeting trips down there, but oh, schooling was a problem for a lot of the children that were down there. However, I must say, wherever they were stationed, they were certainly very well received by the people. The kids were taken into the community. And there was normally a lobster party when they left, that type of thing.

- #083 BC: One of the things that I think might, could pose a problem, would be the fact that cost of living was lower, they would be getting the western or the oilfield wages, they would be making more than most of the people around them.
- WG: Yes, that is true. Your cost of living lower, perhaps that's right, but perhaps also, their standard of living wasn't as high as these people had become accustomed to. But I think they all thoroughly enjoyed their experience down there, that I've talked to.
- BC: At the same time, Imperial was working in the west fairly extensively. What parts had they moved into, what parts of the west, during the time that you were operations advisor, that would be from '56 to about '61, what areas in Alberta were they active in?
- WG: They were very active in the Judy Creek-Swan Hills area, they were active in the Slave Lake area, and they were into the Boundary Lake play in northeastern B.C., starting in that play.
- BC: Swan Hills was not Imperial's baby first, as Leduc was?
- WG: No.
- BC: So what was their situation, their land situation because of that?
- WG: They had a fairly good land position. There's the Judy Creek field and the Swan Hills complex, which is further to the north. They are not represented in that play but they have a dominant position in the Judy Creek area, which is a major oilfield in itself.
- BC: With something like Swan Hills coming in, and Imperial normally always at the front of a discovery, what problems might it pose to you as the operations advisor, to the people who are way back in central Canada?
- WG: I can't think it posed any special ones. It was, how fast can you afford to develop it, without running into the risk of dry holes. It was a large enough accumulation of oil and a large enough area that we had our gas gathering problems for example. We had to build a gas plant. It required some secondary recovery so it entailed water injection.
- BC: Were you involved with all this?
- WG: No, not directly, no.
- BC: Where would you be using water injection?
- WG: In the Judy Creek field. They got it from the Athabasca River and pumped it up, 15 miles or so, into a lake, the name slips me. Then they pumped it from the lake out into the reservoir.
- BC: One of the people that you worked very closely with of course, was Mr. Don Mackenzie, who was down in Toronto at the time you were there.
- WG: That is correct, yes.
- #122 BC: Tell me about Mr. Mackenzie?
- WG: He was a director of the company and manager of the producing operations. So he's the one I would make periodic reports to on various things. I remember on one occasion I went in and reviewed a rather lengthy report that had been coming in on a monthly basis. So he asked me, what do I do with that report now. I said, I file it. So he said, there's an awful lot of time and effort that goes into preparing that report, for all the use I'm making of it, I think we better discontinue it. So he was whittling back you might say, the

reporting. Certainly the essential stuff was still coming down, and relying more on the manager in Calgary to police such things.

BC: This would be rather innovative for central Canada, how did it go down with. . . ?

WG: Well, it didn't last long. Mr. Armstrong succeeded Mr. Mackenzie when he was there and he felt that if he was going to properly manager the company he had to have more data. So the amount of reporting was increased, certainly it took different forms but there was, shall we say, just kept more current I would guess, at that point in time.

BC: One thing, another comment earlier that you made about Mr. Mackenzie, it had to do with the trucking and him saying, you really, by trying to take a couple of cents off them, you've not really been. . . penny wise and pound foolish. He obviously was a very astute manager.

WG: He certainly was, yes. I remember on one occasion I was making a presentation to the board, it was in connection with some bids Imperial were proposing on some acreage that was being posted in the Pembina area. The dollars were significant as I recall, something of the order of \$5 million. So the material was forwarded to me and I briefly reviewed it with Mr. Mackenzie, then was presenting it to the board. I don't know, I guess I got a little excited or something and I missed what I felt was rather a key point. But Mr. Mackenzie, in his manner, asked a leading question. He knew the answer all right but he just asked a leading question to get me back on the track again. I was always very grateful for that and that was typical of his way of operating.

BC: He had a great care for the people that he worked with.

WG: I think you'd have to say that, yes.

#164 BC: Can you think of any other incidents about Mr. Mackenzie, that can flesh out him as a person?

WG: I would think, if I had to appoint a senator, I would have appointed Mr. Mackenzie. I would question that his skin would be thick enough to be a politician, but he was a true statesman. I can think back and I guess I'm not divulging any trade secrets as it goes way back. I happened to be in Toronto on course, and those tending the course were invited one day to sit in on the periphery of the board meeting. One of the items on the agenda was the gas development in northeastern British Columbia. Mr. Ray Walters was making a presentation. West Coast Transmission were proposing to pay 6 cents a thousand for the gas and Mr. Ray Walters was suggesting that for that money, it was an unviable play and recommended that they turn it down. However he said that Mr. Mackenzie, who was manager out here at that point in time, he said, he disagrees on this score. He agrees with the economics but he feels that unless we dedicate some gas in the area to enable them to get enough reserves to get a pipeline, that a pipeline will never be built. And that we may have to sacrifice some now but certainly future gas that they develop and sell, they'll be able to command a better price. Which I thought was pretty good statesmanship and long time thinking. So that was the way they elected to go.

BC: Did you know Mr. Mackenzie at this point?

WG: Oh yes.

BC: What was the final outcome?

WG: They accepted the 6 cents.

BC: They did, they did go with Mr. Mackenzie's suggestion?

WG: Yes.

BC: Can you think of any more things about, different situations like that, because I think this is what is the warp and woof of the oil patch?

WG: I mentioned I think, as far as my assignment in the engineering end of it in Calgary, the directions that we were getting from Mr. Mackenzie, that under no circumstances were you to perjure your technical or your professional standing. Which certainly made it a lot easier for those of us.

BC: Yes, because when you were standing up and having to make statements and you don't own the company, it can be a little worrisome. We'll perhaps come back to Mr. Mackenzie later on, because he certainly has played a big part in your career, your careers having travelled along the same road. I have a note here, about the time that, and it was really in Regina, so perhaps we could just clear this up, I have the Jack Pine Project, which we didn't talk about. Would you like to talk about it now or go back to it, how do you feel?

WG: I could talk about it now if you'd like.

#214 BC: Good, because otherwise we might hock past and I do apologize.

WG: This would be in 1955 I guess. There was a strong magnetic anomaly in the Nipawin area, that I understand was picked up by our air crew flying over the area. It was strong enough that it would throw their compasses out and one thing and another. I wasn't aware that the exploration people, well, I wasn't aware of it at all but they'd evidently been mulling this over for quite awhile, what caused this anomaly. It was in sedimentary area, so was it an iron deposit close to the surface, or was it a big one down deep, and if it was it probably caused some draping of the sedimentary beds over the top. So the first I heard of this I was asked to come in to an exploration meeting that was being held in the Regina office. Peter Whyte, who was the exploration manager at the time, he briefly reviewed the background to it and said that exploration management had decided to make a play of it. They would make a play, both by staking claims on the highly magnetic area, or anomaly area, and also, to cover it with seismic and drill a couple of holes to test it out. And they had acquired the P&NG leases at this point. But one of the big problems I guess, was the staking of the claims. The land had been surveyed years before, so being in surveyed territory, it required that each claim had to be one LSD. So this meant that you had to get back in and resurvey the territory and get it in.

BC: Was this a Saskatchewan rule or is this country wide?

WG: I can't answer that, I would suspect it's country wide but I don't know. Because if you're in unsurveyed territory you can tie your claim to a benchmark and work from that. So they asked me what I knew about it and I said, I've never staked a claim in my life, but Murray Hannah, who was in our engineering department, had worked for Consolidated Mining and Smelting in their field exploration and staking work in, I think, northern Manitoba. So they got him in and, well, to make the long and short of it, he was appointed kind of the field coordinator and I was appointed his contact in the office. In

staking mineral claims, you're limited in the number of claims that you can stake. I've forgotten the exact number but somewhere in the 10-15 range. So this meant that we had to get many stakers. They about robbed the office blind, engineers that could be spared, landmen, scouts, even the office boy. They were briefed, and I've often thought back on this because they were given the whole story and it was pointed out to them very clearly how the success or failure of the project, the staking, probably hinged on being able to keep it confidential. But they were given the complete story and they acquired their staking licenses and sent off. The anomaly was, as I recall, about 20 miles out of Nipawin, and while the country had been surveyed, it certainly wasn't developed. So it was decided they would put up a tent camp and do the seismic work and the surveying at the same time because they had to get the surveyors in. So equipping the number of people we had was quite an exercise. They leaned heavily on the B.C., Dawson Creek office, they're the ones that had a lot of the heavy sleeping bags and this type of thing. I think they also borrowed some manpower from them, and Edmonton as well, primarily in the surveying field. They established this tent camp and once you were in, you stayed there for the duration. Bruce Beaty, who was our personnel man in Regina at that time, he was given \$10,000 or something and sent up to hire a bunch of people to help. He went to an Indian reserve I guess, that was a fair bit south of where we were working and he hired a bunch of them and a few other people. It went very well. As they moved in, there had been a group in staking and they had staked, certainly the crest of the anomaly but there were, I think, only 2 of them so they didn't get that many claims staked.

#309 BC: Had this been just prior to you people coming in do you think?

WG: They say that their campfire was still warm and they were in a hurry to get to Prince Albert to register their claims. They have to be registered within a certain time after they're actually staked, in order to be valid.

BC: They had staked their limit had they?

WG: I don't know, I don't recall the details but I do know that they had staked a few right on the crest.

BC: How did they hear about it, did you ever hear?

WG: No. They probably recognized the magnetic anomaly.

BC: Just about the same time, interesting.

WG: Yes. But it was also interesting, there were a couple of chaps from Nipawin that were out staking when the trucks were running up and down the road surveying. Anyway, this was drawn to Mr. Hannah's attention, so he made a point of seeing them, you know, where they were working. He said, oh, forget about it, they're not very serious, they've got 2 cases of beer and 1 ax. And I'm sure what they were having an outing, realizing it was going to be surveyed and then it would be that much easier for them. They didn't realize that there was also staking going on. Another interesting thing was one of the Indians that Mr. Beaty had hired had been worked for the Dominion Land Surveyor, when he was initially establishing the pins. It was also his registered trap line so he knew the country like the back of his hand and he knew where all the pins were. It was surprising, the boys told me, how he, one that would be now covered up by a beaver dam or something, he'd

say, there's one in there. But I'm sure he saved them hours and hours of searching.

BC: What was his name, do you. . . ?

WG: No.

BC: No, you don't remember?

WG: I don't know as I ever did hear it, I may have done but I don't recall. In any event, it was staked, and the seismic work was done and they drilled 2 or maybe 3 holes. They found an iron ore deposit but it was too deep to be economical for strip mining and an iron ore mine underground is a pretty expensive operation. The wells that they drilled on the flank, they failed to find any production there. So Imperial backed off, but I understood there was another chap, I think his name was Paris perhaps. He tried to make something go of the mine operation but I'm sure it never got off the ground.

BC: The world will have to be very short of iron before they dig that far.

WG: Yes. He was proposing rather a novel approach though, I understood, he was going to sink a shaft and go down and establish his concentrator underground. But that just is beyond me.

End of tape.

Tape 5 Side 2

WG: . . . iron ore deposit with very little sedimentary cover over it. It would certainly be something that would have to be looked at, whether it was economic at that time, or how long in the future.

BC: That is one thing about some of the major oil companies, they did, from time to time, look into diversification. Gulf looked at uranium at one point.

WG: Oh yes. Well, today, Imperial, Gulf and a lot of others are in mineral development, as well as coal.

BC: I have another note here to finish up Regina, and that was, I have a note about a plane crash.

WG: Yes. There was a Mr. Waldo Wearing, one of the senior geologists in the area, was taking some of the more junior geologists and reservoir engineers too, for that matter, out to look at some outcrops. The rock that was producing the oil in southern Saskatchewan actually outcrops in northeastern Saskatchewan. So they were making a flight with a plane on pontoons to some of the lakes where they could examine some of the rocks that they were dealing with underneath. They were making a landing on this lake early in the morning and the pilot had flown low over the lake, checking for logs and whatnot. Went up on the bank and turned to come back in for a landing and his motor cut out and they went into the trees. 3 were killed I guess, and 2 survived.

BC: what year was this?

WG: This would be in '56 I believe.

BC: This would be just before you went to Toronto then would it be, you were still in Regina?

WG: No. It would be perhaps '54.

BC: The people that survived, were they Imperial Oil employees.

WG: Yes.

- BC: Do you remember their names?
- WG: Kendall and Owen Smith. Owen was a reservoir engineer and Kendall was a geologist.
- BC: Did they continue on with Imperial?
- WG: Yes.
- BC: Are they still with Imperial today or are they retired?
- WG: No. I think Mr. Kendall still is, Owen Smith, he was transferred to the Exxon organization in their operations at Houston and he passed away here a number of years ago.
- BC: Looking in to the Toronto area, have you any other things that you wanted to say about your time when you were in Toronto?
- WG: I found myself on many company committees, representing our department on, oh, some of them were time consuming, some of them were rather rewarding.
- BC: What were some of the committees? I think it would be very interesting to go into a little more detail on the committee because this is something people don't realize, that there's all the internal workings and it should be documented.
- WG: Committees like [Coin Your Idea]??? committees, trying to maintain some degree of unanimity in the granting of awards and some of the major awards that were granted throughout the company were granted through our committee.
- #040 BC: What were the awards made for?
- WG: If a person came up with an idea that saved the company money beyond the scope of their job they were rewarded for it.
- BC: Can you think of any particular innovations that came from within?
- WG: Yes, there were several of them. A lot of them were in the production equipment operations. Where one of the field people, and it was beyond his responsibility, was able to recommend improvements in design for example, or in mode of operation. Exploration had several and to a large degree, I guess, seismic, seismic operations and how they were able to perform more efficiently.
- BC: Can you think of anything in particular? Sometimes when you want to you can't.
- WG: No, I can think of some of the smaller ones but. . .
- BC: That's all right, the smaller ones are important too.
- WG: . . . I can't think of the major ones. Oh, just in the gas plant for example, some recycling of some of the fluids by changing the piping designs and the savings were rather staggering as a matter of fact. This committee is still operating today, I was noticing in one of the journals, the company magazines that I received where there were several \$1,500 awards for ideas that had come in and had proven beneficial.
- BC: This is one of the internal things that keeps people feeling part of the company and that's what a lot of these committees were involved with.
- WG: Yes. And it's certainly recognition for the contribution that people are making, beyond the scope of their job. There were several also in the bookkeeping aspects of it, forms and this sort of stuff, that they were able to save money.
- BC: What other committees were you on?
- WG: I was on a security committee, primarily for the Toronto office area. I was there during

the time when there was a lot of talk about the atomic bombs and how you would cope with this, that type of thing.

BC: Was this really considered quite a threat, did you have air raid precautions?

WG: No. Just, well, how would it be handled within the office, how would you carry on business following it, that type of thing.

BC: Was this taken seriously at this time?

WG: Serious enough that the company had established headquarters outside of Toronto for emergency basis.

BC: I think this is important because people tend to forget that there was a real. . .this would be about 1957, '58?

WG: That's right.

BC: That there was a real feeling of a threat of an atomic holocaust at that time. And some of the other things that you were. . .?

WG: One project I was on that was involving a court case, I was in as a technical witness. It had to do with, shall we say, the bookkeeping, the tax implication as far as Imperial's business was concerned. So it went to the exchequer court and I was down as a technical witness for the production side of the business. It lasted 4 or 5 days I guess.

#084 BC: What was the problem?

WG: It boiled down on how the company was set up as far as taxes that they had to pay was concerned. The money was big, I think we were talking \$22 million, but the implication throughout the industry, had Imperial been successful, it would have been, you know. . .

BC: What was it that Imperial was trying to establish?

WG: It had to do with the separation of revenues that came from the producing arm versus the revenues that came from the refinery, marketing complex.

BC: They were wanting to keep them in two. . .

WG: Yes. It boiled down to a definition of a word.

BC: What was that word?

WG: I don't remember what it was, I should have. Justice Thorson???, I believe, was head of the exchequer court and he ruled in the company's favour. The Crown appealed it to the Supreme Court and Imperial lost in the Supreme Court on a 5-4 split among the judges. So as you can see, it wasn't a frivolous case.

BC: Were you involved when it went to the appeal too?

WG: No, when you go to the appeal court just your legal representatives are there.

BC: Right, you're not involved at all anymore.

WG: No, as I understand it, there's no new evidence can be submitted, it's just reviewing the. . .

BC: This would be quite something that everybody would be talking about when you were down there I'm sure.

WG: Yes, there was many, many hours of work went into it. I think on Imperial's behalf, Greg Macdonnell, who was a lawyer for the company down there, he did most of the leg work. It was handled of course, by outside counsel when it went to court.

BC: But as a result of the loss, that meant that they had to then pay these millions of dollars.

- WG: No, they'd already paid them but this was claiming a refund. Following that then, there were some organizational changes, corporate changes made to ease part of the tax burden.
- BC: What kind of changes would they have to make?
- WG: They split it up into Imperial Oil Enterprises, that type of thing.
- BC: I think this is very important, not only as a test case of the court, but this perhaps explains why many of the companies have broken up into many smaller, really perhaps under an umbrella but quite independent.
- WG: This is getting out of my field and I don't know but I suspect there is tax implications to it. It also is done to improve the management of it. You know, getting your management people directly in charge and accountable at a different level.
- BC: When you were in Toronto for those 5 years, did you feel really separated from the oil patch?
- WG: I began to feel that near the end. When I was transferred down there it was to be for a shorter period of time.

#125 BC: How long did you expect to go?

- WG: 2 years. In about 1957 things started to slow down a little bit. I felt when I went down there I had a pretty close handle on the operations in western Canada. But towards the end, despite all your trips and reviews, perhaps I wasn't as effective then as I was when I first went down there.
- BC: You really felt the distance of 2,000 miles as difficult?
- WG: Yes. However, it was an interesting assignment. It was sparked a little bit, as I mentioned, by the drilling rig going east and getting involved in that. Our southwestern Ontario district was quite active at that point in time and . . .
- BC: How many rigs did you have down there?
- WG: They were all contract and most of them were cable tool. While I was there and I played a part in it I guess, they formed the, or established the gas storage operation and got it off the ground which Imperial has a 50% interest in it now with consumers gas and it's called Tecumseh. Which seems a real need as far as gas transmission is concerned to eastern Canada, to have a few billion feet readily available, close to your market source.
- BC: How involved were you in getting this set up?
- WG: The boys in the London office at that time, they were the ones that of course, worked the hardest on it. I presented it to the board and finally got it approved to go ahead through there. It was approved in principle I guess, when I left, that we'd get into the gas storage business. Prior to that Imperial was, they may not have thought so but I felt they were pretty oil oriented rather than gas, so it was a breakthrough in that regard.
- BC: This was reflected in their exploration, they weren't nearly as involved in the foothills as some of the others.
- WG: Well, they were early. And then they, with the success they had in the plains, they backed away from a lot of the foothills. I think, for 2 reasons, 1) they'd put a lot of money into the foothills, they're expensive wells to drill and their land clearing costs were quite a burden. So when they came renewals, they dropped a lot of it.
- BC: Have they even picked up any of that land again?

WG: Yes, I think the Court Creek play just out of Calgary here is one example. Whatever lands they picked up along the foothills, I wouldn't have any idea at this point in time.

BC: When you were in Toronto, was it when you came back that you were involved with Mr. Maroney?

WG: Well, yes. Of course, he was operations manager when I was in Redwater, and also my association with him goes back a long ways. He came to Imperial actually, when I was in Norman Wells. So virtually all the time I was in the production side of the business I was working under him.

BC: He was not in Toronto when you were there?

WG: No, he never worked in Toronto ???.

BC: Can you recall any incidents, anecdotes, about Mr. Maroney?

WG: I can remember one, I was down from Redwater. At this point in time we had set up an equipment committee to try to standardize some of our equipment we were using in the oilfields. Such things as types of pumping units etc., tanks and this type of thing. So we were meeting in Calgary and Mr. Maroney came in and stuck his head in the door and wished us luck. He said, one thing you have to remember, if you don't like the colour of the tie that salesman's wearing you don't have to buy his equipment. And laughed and he said, but if I ever hear about anybody buying equipment from such and such a company I'll run them down the road. I thought, oh dear, because we'd just entered into quite an extensive program with that company. So I said, Tip, I guess you better write out my ticket because we're just embarking and are committed to quite a program with them. Well, he said, you watch them, they'll beat you. And turned and walked out.

#193 BC: Did they, or did you watch them?

WG: No, we watched them. I don't think the performance was quite what we had hoped for. However I think we overdid it if you know what I mean.

BC: You were put on the alert, so you were so cautious?

WG: No, not really I don't think.

BC: What did Mr. Maroney look like?

WG: He was a tall athletic type of individual, reddish hair. He was quite a football player in his school days. As a matter of fact, he told me he was offered a contract with the New York Giants football team when he graduated from school but he felt that it was about time he started earning a living with something that he'd been trained to do. So when he got out of school he forgot about his football career and went to work for a living.

BC: He came to Imperial you say, while you were at Norman Wells. So then your first acquaintance with him would be in Redwater would it?

WG: Yes, I think you'd have to say that.

BC: And what was his position in Redwater?

WG: He was operations manager of the drilling and production.

BC: Were you all living in, was he living in the bunkhouse you were living in?

WG: Oh no, he was in Calgary at this point in time.

BC: I see, he wasn't out in . . . ?

WG: No, he was in charge of all of western Canada.

BC: Can you think of any other. . .?

WG: He was a tremendous man to work for. He expected you to make a decision and get the job done and even if your decision was wrong he'd stand behind you. But as I say, he expected you to do something. Very practical man, very practical and extremely knowledgeable. He'd spent, from the time he graduated, he joined International Petroleum which was a wholly owned subsidiary of Imperial Oil at that point in time, operating in Peru. He went down to Peru and became in charge of the play down there. I don't think he was involved with the refinery but he was involved with the drilling and production and the pipelining, which was rather a major chore because they had to provide all their own shops, they had to all their own warehousing, this type of thing. So it required a lot of long range planning and it was a big operation. He still can speak Spanish very fluently. As a matter of fact, he was called upon by the federal government I think, to go along when they had some senior Peruvians up here, to go as an interpreter. As I say, he was extremely competent.

#244 BC: When you went down to Toronto, you say you went for 2 years, stayed for 5, and then you did get a chance to come back west again. And you came back as the assistant production manager. Whom did you replace?

WG: I think it was a new position. I was assistant to Mr. Maroney. My area of responsibility was drilling and more the crude oil side of the business. Mr. Bob Welsh was in there also and he carried the burden of the gas side of the business, the gas plants and marketing the gas and all this sort of stuff. That was in his field of expertise.

BC: So your area, with the crude oil, what all did your duties entail?

WG: We had division offices in Regina, in Edmonton and in Dawson Creek when we first went in there. The drilling department was operated out of the Calgary office. The bulk of our manpower was located in Edmonton, however the drilling superintendent and the assistant drilling superintendent were in Calgary. I played a part I guess, in that, in that I felt that our drilling department could be more effective if there was a manager set up and located in Edmonton. I was successful in selling that so. . .

BC: Why did you feel this would be better?

WG: I just felt that the manager located right in the base of operations could function more efficiently than 200 miles away. I think also, drilling is probably one of the most glamorous parts of the oil and gas business and they were too close to senior management in Calgary, as far as contracts and all this sort of stuff, I felt they could function better if they were divorced from them and were able to make their own decisions re: drilling contracts, all this sort of stuff.

#288 BC: Why did you feel that the senior management in the Calgary level would inhibit this? Was there a lack of understanding of really, what's involved with drilling by upper management sometimes?

WG: No, I don't think so. You were finding senior drilling contracting people though, coming and talking to people over the head of our drilling superintendent, which I didn't like.

BC: You sort of don't go to the assistant when you can go to the top?

- WG: That is correct. So it was set up in Edmonton. The structure of the department has been changed, of necessity since then, with the bulk of their activities being in the Beaufort or in the north. So the drilling and transportation are operated out of Edmonton. It's subsequently moved back to Calgary again, ??? consolidation.
- BC: But at that time, it was a strenuous activity going on, with Edmonton as the pivot.
- WG: That is correct, yes.
- BC: This is not so today really.
- WG: No. There was also activity going on in the B.C. operations and some in southwestern Saskatchewan, not to the same extent.
- BC: We're looking at 1961 now, which is 21 yrs. ago. Quite a difference in those 20 years, there's been a lot of changes in . . .
- WG: Yes. Technology and everything else, yes.
- BC: Yes. You mentioned drilling, has the drilling changed that much in the 20 years, from what you were doing and what equipment you had then?
- WG: Yes, I think Imperial was one of the first to employ an electric rig.
- BC: What year would that be would you think?
- WG: That would be just about this time, the late 50's, early 60's. Most big rigs now are electric.

#331BC: So what was the major difference between the electric, what was the improvement?

- WG: Well, you have a power plant on site and then you connect it by cable to a motor that runs your draw works, or a motor that runs your pumps, rather than having a whole bunch of big engines running the draw works or running the pumps. It was a more compact unit. It has some of the advantages of the old steam rig, in that when you engage your draw works there's a certain cushion there versus the [square clutch]??? of the diesel rigs, they tended to hit pretty hard. Certainly rigging up and tearing down is simpler. You don't have to have all your big engines tied on to a gear box and take it apart every time you move, this type of thing. So the performance, but over and above that, the instrumentation on a rig today, and certainly I haven't been close to them for a long time, but it's far superior to what it was when I was associated with the drilling.

End of tape.

Tape 6 Side 1

- BC: Speaking of changes, coming back to the west after, although I know you had many trips out, but coming back to the west after being away for 5 years, did you feel that it had really been more than 5 years in some ways?
- WG: Yes, I did. Although we were reluctant to move to Toronto, the big city, having been raised on the prairies, however we got so that life there was quite acceptable but we were certainly happy to get back west again.
- BC: What changes did you find had taken place in the company while you were gone?
- WG: Our operations had certainly expanded. As I say, the operations at Judy Creek, operations

at Boundary Lake in northern B.C., the Slave Lake area. Primarily expanded, the older fields such as Redwater and Leduc were pretty stable operations at this time. Although there was always things going on. I don't know whether it happened while I was away or shortly after I got back but the regulations were changed to allow you to produce fewer wells in a certain block and transfer allowables to get credit for the other wells. This was certainly an operation savings.

BC: In what way, just to explain it, to get it on to tape?

WG: If you could take, for example, in Redwater, where the wells had a lot of producibility and their allowable was maybe, 60 barrels a day, if you could produce it at 300 barrels a day without hurting the reservoir that meant that you could shut down 5 other wells. This concept was approved by the authorities, under strict guidelines of course.

BC: Why had this not been allowed before?

WG: I don't know. Imperial, in the real early days of the development of Redwater, I made a lengthy dissertation to the Conservation Board at that time asking for 160 acre spacing in Redwater. There was still considerable Crown land to go up for sale, I don't know whether that had a bearing on it or not, or their concern probably would be on the edge wells. Because they would have to designate one specific LSD in a quarter and there could be wells that would be productive in a specific quarter but maybe not the one that had to be drilled. So I'm sure this had a bearing on it. However, it was interesting, Golden Spike, which was a very thick, prolific reservoir, Imperial thought they had it all. That field was developed on 160 acre spacing.

BC: This was the first time this was allowed, but was it an exception?

WG: No, and you didn't get the allowables for it though, which I always thought was an injustice.

#040 BC: Why didn't you?

WG: Because the normal spacing pattern is established by the authorities as one well every, you got credit for 40 acres.

BC: What other big changes had you seen?

WG: I think there had been some consolidation of offices. Well, the Regina area was certainly slacking off. Just lack of prospects to drill, the fields were smaller and they were getting into the secondary recovery phase in a lot of them. The activity, as I mentioned before, up in Judy Creek, with a whole new town site in existence and requiring staffing up there, and in Lesser Slave Lake, they were active in that area. Which, it was subsequently unitized and Imperial were not the operator of it. I think, speaking of unitization, that was one thing that had made a lot of advancements during this period and it carried on. Certainly there are a lot of efficiencies in operation if you get one operator operating a field or a segment of a field rather than having a whole bunch.

BC: Was this forced upon the companies by the government at this time or was it something. .?

WG: No, it was strictly a voluntary arrangement.

BC: Because that certainly was a change in an outlook of all working together. But it made for greater efficiency as you were getting into areas perhaps, where the exploration costs and

everything, were so expensive. Now you mentioned that things were slowing down in Regina. And actually, at the time, just after you went to Toronto, there had been a slight slowdown in the oil patch in '57. This seems to be sort of like American elections, about every 4 years there seems to be a downturn.

WG: Yes, they're cyclic all right.

BC: What caused the '57 slow down? Do you remember?

WG: No. I would suspect over production, or surplus production as much as anything.

BC: And the slow down in Regina at that time was simply because they had exhausted their explorations?

WG: Yes.

BC: Looking at the work that you were doing as the district production manager, you moved again very quickly into another position?

WG: Mr. Maroney was appointed a senior operations advisor and I took over his job.

BC: Do you know what year that was?

WG: 1966 I believe.

BC: '66, so you really did have 4 years in the one and then took over in '66. So before you had really been assisting him had you?

WG: Yes. And I must confess that when I took over the job, he was a shoulder that I called on quite often.

#085 BC: He still stayed in Calgary?

WG: Oh yes.

BC: This was a new position that they created for Mr. Maroney?

WG: That's right.

BC: Why was there this necessity to expand again, at that time?

WG: He was devoting an awful lot of his time to some Imperial joint ventures, pipeline joint ventures, this type of thing. I think they felt they could also use him advantageously as far as exploration activities were concerned. So he was relieved of the details of it. I think it must be pointed out though, that with our divisions, while you had the title of manager you really didn't get that involved with the day to day operations. That had been delegated out to your various division areas.

BC: What would your work really be then, at that level?

WG: Of course, your reviews, both capital and expense. Examining the prospects that they came up for development locations, trying to establish a policy as to whether it's a viable proposition or not.

BC: You had been really, out of the field work for many years at this point hadn't you?

WG: Yes.

BC: Was this still an extension of what you had been doing or was this coming back closer to looking very closely at...?

WG: Getting back closer to it, yes. But when I became the manager, as I say, by this time I no longer had any responsibility for the drilling organization.

BC: So your responsibilities were what?

WG: The production.

BC: Just the production?

WG: And Mr. Welsh, he still carried on with the gas. Mine was predominantly the crude oil side of the business.

BC: What were some of the problems you faced in that position?

WG: I think communication was probably one of the main ones.

BC: With whom?

WG: Just within the department, between myself, the divisions, senior management.

BC: Why was that a real problem for you to solve?

WG: I don't know that I ever completely solved it. It made it rather difficult for some of the field people when they were working for 2 bosses as it were.

BC: Who was the other boss?

WG: Well, the division manager and myself. The division manager, you can argue, he's responsible for their. . .so it was a communication which always seemed to exist. You would review things with his production staff and probably remiss at times in not coordinating it well enough for the division managers and vice versa.

#127 BC: Did you find this a frustrating part of your work?

WG: At times I did, yes. But enjoyable nevertheless.

BC: Very quickly you moved on to crude oil, did you not, or was this all part of it?

WG: This was part of the crude oil, yes. And Mr. Welsh had the gas.

BC: Yes, now when you look at being the production manager of the crude oil, would you really be involved with actually getting it into the pipelines and pushing it through the pipeline to your refineries etc.?

WG: No. We would establish it in tanks in the field and then the pipeline companies would take it from there. You were asking for changes that were made, I think one of the significant changes was the consolidation of a lot of our field facilities. From say, having one production facility servicing 16 wells there may be 100 wells going to it. This type of operation which enabled you to certainly more efficiently operate. That was particularly true I suggest, in the older fields, such as Redwater and Leduc, where they were able to consolidate.

BC: Was this because of the nature of those fields themselves?

WG: Perhaps. And also, your concentrated land position.

BC: Yes, because you'd been in there first and got everything. You're sort of the big, right down the middle type thing.

WG: Yes. And it also went in fields that were unitized. As a general rule of thumb, the largest operator in a field, once it was unitized, he operated for everybody else. So he was able then, to shut down a lot of facilities and consolidate and this is where the efficiencies came in the unitization there and the manpower savings.

BC: The cost of gas and oil hadn't really started to move too much in these years?

WG: No.

BC: It was really in the 70's.

WG: Yes, late 70's yes.

BC: Then in the midst of your work here, that's when you had a heart attack, did you not?

WG: That is correct yes.
BC: Was this attributed in any way to the new kind of pressures that you were undergoing?
WG: The medical profession never assessed it one way or the other. And I can't either, except I do know I was uptight at that point in time.
BC: What would cause that, how long were you in this position before you took ill?
WG: I had my first heart attack in '68.
BC: So you'd been back about a year and a half. When you say you were uptight, were there problems within the industry or within the operations?
WG: I don't know whether there were problems. There were some reorganizational, manpower changes and one thing and another.

#171 BC: What was reorganized, can you remember what the major reorganization was?

WG: No, but it was. . .there were some staff layoffs and this sort of stuff.

BC: This was another of the down times.

WG: This is correct, yes.

BC: And these layoffs, were some of them within your department, some of the people that you would have . . .?

WG: Yes.

BC: This must have been a very difficult thing for managers throughout the flow and ebb of the tide of oil.

WG: Yes.

BC: Having to say, I'm sorry, you've got to go.

WG: Some of them, they were primarily early retirements. Some of them were prepared to accept early retirements and others weren't.

BC: At that time, early retirement was something people couldn't fight quite the same as they do today. Today there isn't even sort of, nobody retires unless they want, and then, a lot of them say, I think I will go earlier. How did you try to sweeten the pot, how did Imperial try to sweeten the pot with early retirees at that time, or did they?

WG: Yes, there was some sweetening.

BC: Such as?

WG: The discounted pension was reduced. In other words, they didn't discount it the full amount. This was about the time when they came in with their policy where you could retire at 62 with the pension you'd earned or down to your age of 55 it was 5% per year. So you could retire at 50 with 50% of your pension.

BC: Were you asking people of 50 to retire at that time?

WG: No.

BC: How many people in your department did you have to encourage to take early retirement?

WG: I don't recall.

BC: You nearly took early retirement yourself in the meantime eh?

WG: Yes. Then following my heart attack I went back and I found that more and more of my time was being spent in environmental matters. Actually, they appointed a new production manager and I stayed on as his executive assistant or some such thing. As I say, more and more of my time, not only through, on behalf of Imperial Oil but also as a

representative of the CPA committee.

BC: This would be from . . .when did you go back to work, how many months were you off work with your heart attack?

WG: I was just off a month full time. And then half days for awhile.

#212 BC: Environmental matter, at that time, in '68, '69, this was terribly important. Wasn't there a report came out?

WG: Yes, it was getting a big play at that point in time. The government had set up a committee, I've forgotten the name now but they held rather major hearings on such things as gas plants, eastern slopes hearings and all this sort of stuff. So this took up a lot of time.

BC: In some companies there were new departments formed to deal with environment, did you become part of that department officially?

WG: Within Imperial there were several of us working on it, but split up. For example, the people working in the north, in the Beaufort Sea, that sort of stuff, I didn't get involved in that or on the eastern coast. My involvement was predominantly the western Canadian basin.

BC: Did you get involved in any of the Northwest Territories controversy?

WG: I didn't, no.

BC: Because that was going on around that same time too.

WG: That is correct, no.

BC: Particularly when you'd been involved with crude oil and pipeline, this was very . . .?

WG: Yes. No, within Imperial, they were active in the Mackenzie Valley pipeline application and did a lot of work, I inspected some of their test sites.

BC: Were you involved in that?

WG: No, I wasn't, it was just a visit to it, to gather data for the basis for their postulated pipeline, which never did come about.

BC: In going up into that area, did you fly over a lot of that delta area at all?

WG: Not a great deal. Out over the Tuk peninsula and swung around a bit but not . . .

BC: I was just wondering if you know where there have been some of the early seismic work done, where the land was criss crossed, or so they said.

WG: Yes, I was still involved when we drilled a well at Fort McPherson. This had been following seismic. Imperial used this as an example of what not to do. They had actually built roads that broke the moss cover and then the permafrost would melt and you were getting gullies formed, this type of thing. Now they did other seismic work there too, so there's probably other examples of that. But following that they changed their mode of operation and were able to cover the terrain.

#260 BC: How did they change, what did they change?

WG: They went more to tracked vehicles, and built snow roads instead of clearing down. Then they went to the big tired type of operations that could get over the moguls and the rough, because that tundra is pretty rough, a lot of it you know. And the conventional truck couldn't travel it.

- BC: Some people think of the tundra as sort of something mostly moss covered that's going to be ripped up the first time any track goes over it.
- WG: No. But certainly regulations came in. I think the industry itself had changed its mode of operation. A lot of the regulations were probably not necessary but it certainly ensures good performance.
- BC: You were part of the environmental committee for the Canadian Petroleum Association. During what time was that?
- WG: That would be from about '72 to '74 I guess.
- BC: What were they trying to do in this committee, what were you trying to do?
- WG: Trying to get the industry's approach across I guess. And in many ways it was a foreign field to most of us. Your biologists were in there pretty thick and fast and that was one area of expertise that, by and large, the oil industry was lacking. So it meant upgrading people in that area that could speak intelligently on it.
- BC: Did you have to take any courses on the environment?
- WG: No, I didn't take any, no. But I had a pretty good technical staff working with me.
- BC: Did you have to organize classes or courses for some of your people?
- WG: One or two, I don't know as you'd call it courses but to get some speakers in to speak to them, this type of thing. Certainly it was a learning process for me. I could comment a bit I guess, on the eastern slopes hearing. I was instrumental I guess, in the preparation and presentation of Imperial's submission and played a part in the Canadian Petroleum Association's submission. Theirs was certainly much more elaborate than Imperial's. But they were both much the same, in the same vein I think.

#310 BC: What were you trying to present?

- WG: That oil and gas exploration and development could be carried out in the foothills in conjunction with and in harmony with, the other demands that were placed on it. I believe that very strongly. I'm not much of a camper but to give you one example, we rented a motorhome on one occasion and ended up at Crimson Lake, just west of Rocky Mountain House. I was out walking around some of the trails and one of them had a no trespassing sign on it and I went in and here's a gas well there. Dear oh dear, most of the roads that were in the area were ones that had been put in by the oil companies. The gas production and the demands of the picnicking public were sure living in harmony there. And I think that could apply all up and down the foothills.
- BC: I'm sure in the time that you have been in the oil patch, you have seen not just those more remote areas developed, but parts that were very remote became accessible for people to live in because the oil companies went in first.
- WG: Yes. I think, and I shouldn't speak on this subject because I was never involved in any of the operations out there, but from what I understand, the Pembina oilfield was very predominantly muskeg country. Once it's been developed, there's some drainage in the area, it's now a farming community.

End of tape.

BC: You retired, you took retirement in 1976.

WG: That is correct.

BC: You were one of the early retirees?

WG: Well, I had another heart attack in 1974 and I was on sick leave for a year and then took official retirement in '76.

BC: And you have not been very active in the oil patch since, you're not one of these that went into consulting?

WG: No. I've had a few approaches, but on the advice of my doctor, I felt it maybe wasn't wise to get too involved.

BC: Have you any words that you'd like to say in just summing up your time in the oil patch?

WG: Just that I spent my entire working career, some 30 years of it, in the oil industry and I'm very proud to have played a small part in helping it grow. And in so doing, contribute to the well being of all Canadians, not just Albertans. I'm also proud to have been associated with Imperial Oil, a company that I think is an excellent corporate citizen and one that I always found to be fair and to demonstrate a lot of business ethics in its dealings. Fair not only in its dealings with others but also with its personnel. The climate in the industry has certainly changed today from when I was active in it and I . . .

BC: Too bureaucratic today do you think?

WG: I would suggest so. I don't think it can be as rewarding today. I'm not saying that there isn't an awful lot of work to do, but the effort would have to be directed along different lines to cope with the operating situation today. I often think back to a comment made to me by Mr. Dave Gustaffasons, it was when I moved into Calgary in the engineering end of it in the early 50's. He was the chief engineer at that time for Imperial. His comment was that he thought the smartest men in the oil industry then were Mr. Manning, Mr. Tanner and company. He felt that they were giving the industry just enough to keep them happy and still keep them coming back for more. This I think, was right and I would also like to make a comment about the outstanding technical competence of the Energy and Resources Conservation Board in Alberta. That is the one that I've had the most dealings with but I make this statement not only from personal experience in appearing before them many times, but also, comments that have been made by people from the U.S. who have been up here and appearing before them also. These comments are from people who were not a member of the Exxon or the Jersey family, but others and they were very impressed with the technical competence and the separation of the political arena from the technical arena. And I guess, that's one reason why the pattern established by them has been used in other places all around the world in setting up their regulatory authorities. I'd like also, if I may, just to make mention of a few people who I worked with throughout my career and I would suggest that they also played a part in shaping it. While certainly there were many, there is a few that stand out. Tip Maroney, Don Mackenzie, Vern Taylor, Bob Welsh, George Bannantine and well, perhaps even C. B. Barlow, who is not affiliated with Imperial but one we had some dealings with.

#059 BC: Mr. Barlow is not one that we have talked about, the others you have mentioned

as we've gone along. Perhaps we should just put a postscript. What did Mr. Barlow do?

WG: Mr. Barlow's early career was in the oil fields in California. He moved into Alberta in the 30's I guess, or early 40's, in the heavy oil districts of Wainwright and Lloydminster. He, talking to one Jack McCaskell, who was a conservation man up at that point in time and he claims that the Lloydminster oil field owes its existence to Mr. Barlow. They were having a lot of trouble with the pumps that they put in, sanding up and it's as a result of his experience in California with similar reservoir conditions, he brought in pumps that were able to better handle the sand situation. But he was truly a member of the old school, and a fine gentleman. His word was as good as gold.

BC: What was his first name or did you always just know him as C. B.?

WG: I would guess it's Charles but I don't know. His son is still active in Calgary while Mr. Barlow is retired and back in California.

BC: Right. Is there anything else that you'd like to add at this time Mr. Gibson, to the story that we've been unfolding of your career? It's been very diversified and very active.

WG: I think not, I think we probably have covered it pretty well.

BC: I hope I can leave the door open so if there are some areas that I want to come back and just delve into a little more I can. But right now, I would like to thank You for giving your time and sharing a very interesting career with us and going into such detail. You've really brought the oil patch alive in the areas where You were involved and it's been really a pleasure talking and meeting with you.

WG: I've enjoyed it. I haven't done as much preparation for this as I should have.

BC: All your life you've been preparing.

WG: But it points out one thing though, a person should keep a diary. Thank you.

BC: Thank you.