PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Willis Hancock

INTERVIEWER: Nadine Mackenzie

DATE: June 1983

NM: This is Nadine Mackenzie speaking. Today is Friday the 10th of June, 1983. I am at the hole of Mr. And Mrs. Willis Hancock situated at 305, 3232 Rideau Place S. W. in Calgary. Mr. Hancock, thank you very much for having accepted to participate in our project. How many years did you spend in the oil patch?

WH: I guess it started in '41 so it has to be about 42 years as of now.

NM: It's a long time. Where were you born?

WH: I was born in Saskatchewan, a little town in southeast Saskatchewan, Wobota??? is the town. It turned out that it's right on the edge of the oil patch there.

NM: Did you family work in the oil patch?

WH: Oh no, there wasn't an oil patch then of course. There had been no drilling that I'm aware of in Saskatchewan. No, my father was a minister in the United Church. Initially Methodist and then it became United. So I'm a minister's son and you move around with the family, there was a lot of moving.

NM: And where were you educated?

WH: Well, of course, various schools throughout the province and then, went to University of Saskatchewan. Graduated there in 1938 and took some post graduate work at Queens in Kingston, Ontario.

NM: How did you decide to become a geologist?

WH: That was not through any particular thought or considering a career, or a profession. It was sort of by accident when a visitor, a friend of my brother's came to our home. I was about 13 or 14 at the time and his father was a missionary in Norway House in Manitoba and he spoke of geologists who came through the area travelling in canoes and mapping the rocks, the geology. This seemed to me to be kind of a nice life and so I thought right there and then that whatever a geologist does, it sounds interesting so I'll be a geologist. And that's what I did.

NM: How many years did you spend at the university?

WH: 4 years at Saskatchewan and then about 2 years at Queens.

NM: And during the summer were you working already in the. . .?

WH: I had 3 summers with the Geological Survey of Canada, the first in 1938, in northern Saskatchewan. The next 2 summers I was with them again, and working in northern Quebec.

NM: And what were you doing as work?

WH: I was paddling the canoe, just what I wanted to do in looking at the rock and mapping the rock. This of course, was all what they call hard rock geology, looking for mineral deposits. Very unlike petroleum geology, which of course I hadn't really taken at university in any case. But it was paddling the canoe and camping out.

#041 NM: Were you the only one in the family to go into the oil patch?
WH: Yes. I have 1 brother and he's in medicine, he was ahead of me and he'd already started his medicine before I started my university.
NM: And after you finished your studies, what did you do?
WH: I went initially to northern Ontario to work in a gold mine, Hollinger??? Gold Mine just on the edge of Timmins. While I was there I corresponded with a friend I'd gone to school with in Saskatchewan and he was working for a company controlled, run by, Imperial Oil. He told me a bit about that work so I thought I'd try that for the summer. So I applied for a job and got one and came to Saskatchewan in the spring of '41, intending to go back to the mining in the fall but I never did get back, so I'm still here.
NM: What were you doing in the mine?
WH: It was called sampling. It's just a labour job but it's a good way to become exposed to the operations of a mine and to see all that's going on in a mine. It's hard work, it involved taking samples across the mining face in the mine. You're supposed to cut a channel across the rock and take samples of where the mineral is, the ore sample and samples of the rock on either side. Bag them up and they are assayed by the mine office so they can keep track of mineralization as they're digging out the rock.
NM: So it sounds like very hard work?
WH: It was hard work, yes.
NM: And how long did you stay with this work?
WH: I was there about 6 months.
NM: 6 months. And then, thanks to this friend, you were hired by Imperial?
WH: Yes.
NM: And that was in Saskatchewan?
WH: Yes, that's correct.
NM: Where in Saskatchewan?
WH: It was in southeast, we started out in the Weyburn area and then moved over to the general area that I was born in, near Wobota. Finally into Moose Jaw and it was from there that I came to Alberta, in October I think it was, of '41.
NM: So what were you doing as a worker at the time?
WH: At that time we were mapping the surface geology. And drilling core holes by hand and auger. This was hard work. But it was what you'd call surface and subsurface mapping of southeast Saskatchewan.
NM: After your work in Saskatchewan what did you do?
WH: I came to Alberta and Imperial, through the Northwest Co., they were doing the operating and drilling a well just south of the town of Brooks. So I was to be the well site geologist, which was going to be a pretty interesting thing to me because I'd never been on a well before. I had not even seen a well drilling. So I arrived there and Vern Hunter was the tool push. He is the Vern Hunter who was tool push on the Leduc discovery. So I had a lot of fun with him and he had a lot of fun with me of course, kidding me.

#083 NM: So you were good friends. Can you tell me about Brooks in this time?
WH: Brooks, the main thing about Brooks is it was the centre of the pheasant hunting in

season. Small town, just a couple of hotels there but in the fall, pheasant hunting season there would be 1 or 2 private railway cars would come into town and they'd be parked there. I don't know who the hunters were but they had their own rail cars and it was a very interesting thing to see. Coming like that to chase the pheasants.

NM: Did you ever go hunting yourself?

WH: I did a little, I was not too much interested in hunting but I did a little.

NM: How large was the population?

WH: This I don't know, a couple of thousand maybe, I don't know whether it would be that large.

NM: And how many oil wells were there?

WH: There was some shallow gas in the area, right around Brooks and at the neighbouring town, Tilley. After Brooks was drilled there was about 6 wells drilled in the vicinity of the town of Tilley and actually some oil was discovered there and a pipeline laid into the town and a siding for loading the oil into tank cars. I was there for that. Unfortunately, there was only 1 producing well and it only produced about 2,500 barrels I believe it was and then it went to water. It was a very small pool. But Imperial drilled around 6 there and then Rolling Hills and on south. This was '42, '42, and I guess into '43.

NM: Were there a lot of geologists working with you?

WH: On that, no. There was one geologist that came to work with me in Brooks, Fred McKinnon, you'll be talking to him. We were drilling wells at that time, I think we had 2 drill rigs going. Also we were operating a core hole program at that time so we had a couple of deep rigs and 2 or 3 core hole rigs. Enough to keep us pretty busy in any case. Fred was there, he'd come off a field party and was there for a few months. I think he was the only geologist who came out to work with me on that. I had a surveyor with me and that was it.

NM: Were there a lot of drillers though?

WH: Oh yes, a full complement of drilling crews.

NM: What was the production of Brooks at the time, was it a big production or a small one?

WH: No, that was a dry hole, the well we drilled there. I think maybe later it was completed in a shallower zone because there's quite a bit of shallow gas production in that area, all the way from Brooks to Medicine Hat. But at that time it was not commercial.

#124 NM: What were the living conditions?

WH: About the only place for somebody like myself, single, was to live in a hotel. In Brooks in the newer hotel and then when we moved to Tilley, in the Tilley Hotel. I lived in a room.

NM: Were there any big discoveries made in Brooks at the time?

WH: No there weren't, there was a discovery near Tilley which didn't last too long, was at the edge of a field that was discovered later, I think in 1948. It was perhaps the indicator that there was something nearby but at the end of '42 the work kind of slowed down. This was when the interest was developed in the Norman Wells, Canol project and a lot of the activity moved up there for Imperial Oil. Other companies were continuing their search in Alberta, mainly what I can think of is Chevron and McCall Frontenac.

NM: Then after Brooks you came to Calgary?

WH: I came to Calgary to write a report on what I had done, and the company had done. They'd been doing seismic work of course, was the basis of locating the wells. Then as it still is. They'd done a gravity meter program and then of course, there was the drilling results that I'd been involved in and the core hole program that had been carried out.

NM: And you were working in an office then?

WH: Yes, I was doing this report. It was in early 1943 that the Canol project really got going so I went from Calgary to Edmonton and on up to Norman Wells on the Canol project.

NM: Can you tell me about your involvement with the Canol project and your work in Norman Wells?

WH: This was very interesting work for me because I had not done any field work in oil exploration. My field work had been entirely in hard rock, mineral geology if you like. So to have my first opportunity to get into the field, I was really looking forward to it. It was something that I was really probably not prepared for. There were, as I recall, 14 field parties working out of Norman Wells covering various areas. The geology had been mapped on a lot of the main courses there in early years but not too much in the tributaries of the Mackenzie River. So each party was assigned various areas and flown in, generally to some lake nearby a river and then you'd portage or float out to the main river and cruise down that, mapping the geology, using air photos for an awful lot of the work. It was an amazing project in that, with all of these field parties, many of them not having been exposed to this kind of area, there were quite a few American boys that had not been in that kind of country. In any case, out of all of this work, there were no casualties at all for the whole project. The story I was telling you about earlier, flying, an interesting thing was in northern Saskatchewan where the pilot came into our camp, he was moving us to another area and apologized for being late. This was when we were up in the air and I said, that's all right, we're in no hurry and he said he was late because he had to fly in and pick up a body. Somebody had died. So I said, what did you do with it, where is it and he looked around and he said, you're sitting on it. There were all kinds of experiences of that sort when you're flying in the north.

#183 NM: You have to be ready for anything.

WH: Yes.

NM: Were you doing a lot of field trips?

WH: Oh yes, that was the main purpose of the project as far as the geologists were concerned. They'd fly you out to near the headwaters or as far as you could go on a river and then canoe back down the river with overland trips of course, into areas where you knew there were rock exposures. I think everybody had interesting experiences with bears, with rough water, overturning or sinking but in all of this. . .

NM: Did anything dreadful happen to you at this time?

WH: There were no casualties. Well, it wasn't dreadful but we lost all of our camp on one trip. There were just 2 of us on this project on the Redstone River and we didn't overturn but went through some rapids, we were heavily loaded and the water just rode in over the edges of the canoe and we sank. The canoe did overturn, I was going down the river with it and my partner got to shore. So we lost all of our supplies pretty well, lost our canoe

paddles and our beds and our tent and air photos and . . .

NM: Everything?

WH: Everything except one packsack, which was bouncing along the bottom of the river and I rescued that. I didn't know what I had but there was some food in that. We were back behind the first range of the mountains and tried going on for one more day and it was not very good so we decided we'd walk out. We left our canoe behind and took this one pack that had some raisins and some c-rations and what was left of the ham and headed out. We travelled for. . .well, we lost track of time because up there of course, you don't have very much night so you lose track of days.

NM: How many of you?

WH: 2.

NM: And what was the name of the other person?

WH: I'll get to that. I had his name on the tip of my tongue here a minute ago. We finally reached the mouth of the Redstone River and just had to wait there until somebody came by to pick us up.

#223 NM: Did you have to wait long?

WH: We had to wait for a couple of days, yes. As I say, we had no tent. The weather wasn't very pleasant and we had no extra clothes, just a shirt. We'd run out of tobacco. I had a lighter that worked so we smoked dried leaves, something to do, that's all. It was raining part of the time and you can't keep a fire going in the rain always. Eventually a boat came along that was headed the wrong way. It was going up river and we wanted to go down but we got onboard that.

NM: You can't be choosy at the time.

WH: We then went to Fort Wrigley and wired from there to Norman Wells to let them know where we were. We had an incident with a bear there. He didn't get into our camp but on the way down, this was in July and bears go down in the valleys at that time of year where the raspberries are and other fruit. We were both vying for the same raspberries.

NM: Competition with the bears. Did you have a gun with you at the time?

WH: No. We never carried a gun, I think maybe some of them did. I'd be afraid of just making the bear angry, I'd just sooner get out of their way.

NM: In Norman Wells you were working at the time of war. Did you talk about it with other people or not?

WH: Yes we did. We didn't have all that much news on the war. We were out in the field most of the time so I don't know what news they may have had coming in. They'd be getting papers of course, at Norman Wells, but we didn't hear too much.

NM: So you were not frightened the Japanese were going to invade Canada really?

WH: Personally I didn't think about that. I didn't think they'd be coming our way because they wouldn't have cared for that area. One of the things that various parties did in the vicinity of Norman Wells was to go out to map the local geology. They had what they called skid shacks which would be taken along with them, it was their camp and this was dragged along behind a D-6, D-8 cat. There were some funny things happened in that connection. One that happened to Keith Huff and myself, we went to map in the Vermillion area. We

were returning from the project and going along these cut lines that the cats had previously made and they'd just run over the various logs and brush and whatnot. In this case a log lay parallel to the track and when the tractor went over it the end of the log raised up and came right through the front door of our shack and was headed out through the back by the stove. Fortunately there was nobody in the way of that.

#280 NM: How was the production of oil in Norman Wells, was it a big production?

WH: At that time no, it wasn't very large because there was not much of a market. I can't recall what it amounted to but the refinery had been in operation for some time and just supplying the local market, Mackenzie River and on down to the Arctic. Very small and the plant of course, didn't operate year round, it was a summer project. But there are others that could give you an exact figure on that. And of course, the market isn't that large today, it's larger of course. As you're aware there's a project to bring the oil from there south so they'll be able to produce quite a bit more than they have been.

NM: How long did you stay then, in Norman Wells?

WH: That year it was till sometime in December. After the field work was done I worked in the Norman Wells office and sat on different wells on Goose Island, just across from Norman Wells refinery.

NM: How was Goose Island?

WH: It was fine. This was in December I was working there, November, December I guess. It was a typical oilfield camp for those days, not much to do except work. We were able to go across to Norman Wells, just walk across the ice. There's nothing much more to say about that.

NM: After Goose Island, what did you do?

WH: I came into Edmonton then, which was the headquarters for the Canol project and there was an exploration office there. So I worked with the various people who were still there after the field work, compiling reports and that kind of thing. I was there I guess until the project under Imperial Oil, Norman exploration started in the spring on 1944. Then once again, went north, this time there were only 2 or 3 field parties. Fred McKinnon and Ray Sluser???, myself. There was some gravity work I believe, going on at that time.

NM: This is the end of the tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

NM: How long did you stay in Norman Wells?

WH: Just into the fall of '44. As a matter of fact, while I was up there I came out for something I had to do and while I was out decided to get married. So it was in July of '44 that I got married and went back in then, till September or early October of '44.

NM: Was your wife a Calgarian?

WH: Edmontonian.

NM: Where did you get married, in Calgary?

WH: In Calgary, yes. Came back here then in the fall of '44 and it's been home ever since, except for a couple of short intervals away.

NM: So you were working for Imperial in Calgary?
WH: Yes.
NM: As a geologist then?
WH: Yes, as a geologist and I did a little well sitting again, initially, and then I was in the office in the subsurface department. Was there through the time of the discovery at Leduc and Redwater and in 1951, moved to Peace River for Imperial.
NM: In Calgary where was your office?
WH: The office was at 606 - 2nd St. W. initially. That's where the Bay parkade is now. The exploration office, I've forgotten at what particular time, was moved over to the old Examiner building, which was 8th Ave. and 5th St. and is no longer. Then moved into the Tecumseh building, which was 7th Ave. and 3rd St. and then into the Albertan building, which was 9th Ave. and 2nd St. I believe.

#036 NM: Why were you moving like that?
WH: The company was growing. You see, initially it was 606 - 2nd St. and there was a service station downstairs and a few offices. I say downstairs, on the ground level, and then offices up on the 2nd storey and that was Imperial Oil. 1 ½ floors, not a very large building. So the company was growing through all of this time and continually needing more space. Of course, after Leduc, it mushroomed and of course, district offices were started. There was Edmonton district and Saskatchewan, Peace River.
NM: The same geologists who were working with you in Norman Wells, did you find them again in Calgary?
WH: Yes, pretty well all of them. As I mentioned earlier in Norman Wells, there were some American boys, some that were in the Army and some that weren't that were on the project and of course, they went back to the U.S. But yes, I think all of the Canadian boys wound up back here in Calgary. Some of course, went back to school and some eventually with other companies.
NM: Can you give me some names?
WH: Fred McKinnon, ??? Sluser, Charlie Stelck of course, recently retired from University of Alberta.
NM: What about the geologist with whom you had these dreadful experience in the river?
WH: He was not a geologist, he went on with Imperial, he was an engineer. I believe he was at Leduc for period, and Redwater, and I don't know where else.
NM: And his name was?
WH: Don Waterford???.

#060 NM: What were you doing in your offices at Imperial in Calgary in '44?
WH: At that time Imperial was operating mainly on the plains of Alberta, continuing a program that they'd started earlier, pre-Canol project. There was seismic programs, mainly in the summer at that time, some field work and some subsurface, structure test drilling. My work with Imperial, when I returned from Norman exploration was concerned primarily with the subsurface activities. It had to do with the drilling of these wildcat holes, it had to do with structure test drilling. I sat an occasional well during the start of that period.

Eventually moved into the subsurface department, I headed that up and all of the subsurface well information and field activities subsurface, came through that department. Then there were maps to draw and well programs to draw up. '45, '46 Imperial became involved, after not having had any spectacular, really, commercial discoveries in the program to that date they became interested in the Viking Kinsella gas area and thought that if enough gas reserves could be developed there they'd go into a program of conversion of gas into gasoline and fuel. So that program was underway during the time I was in the subsurface department and Doug Layer did a lot of work on that. A lot of well site and detailed studies on the Viking Kinsella field. It was to complement that program in part I think and to continue exploration through another part of the Alberta basin that Imperial went into the Edmonton area and took out some large reservations to explore there for gas if that's all they could find. Oil of course, would be more than welcome. A seismic program was started in the Edmonton area over these reservations that Imperial had taken out. I was not really involved in any of this but when it came time to drill wells the subsurface department would become involved in drawing up a program and prognosis and that kind of thing. And having somebody go out and sit on the wells and report what they see. It was through the geophysical efforts of their mapping that Leduc #1 well was drilled on a seismic anomaly. Of course, the industry really began in earnest then, in Alberta, with the discovery of the Leduc oilfield. Doug Layer sat initially on the well and then, as he will tell you in your interview with him, he was followed by, I think it was Steve Cosburn, who was there when the pay dirt was hit. Of course, later Aubrey Kerr moved to Leduc and was in charge of the geological work and development of the Leduc oilfield.

NM: This is the end of the first interview with Willis Hancock.

Tape 2 Side 1

NM: This is the second interview with Bill Hancock. This is Nadine Mackenzie speaking. Mr. Hancock can you tell me about Leduc?

WH: Leduc happened at a very interesting time in the oil patch history. There had been a pretty long dry spell of wildcat ventures in western Canada, Saskatchewan and Alberta. This was on the plains. Imperial had gone in to a project in the Viking Kinsella area, developing and exploring for gas reserves. The idea in developing large gas reserves was to hopefully find sufficient to be able to use a process which had been developed by the Germans during the last war, to convert, or make from natural gas, liquid gasoline for fuelling whatever transportation and so on, to take the place of crude oil. In the course of this they took out large reservation permits to explore in and around the city of Edmonton and conducted seismic surveys. There were still at that time, 2 opposing views as to where the main potential for gas and oil reserves lay. One view was that the geologic section down to the top of the Mississippian unconformity contained the main zones of potential, that would be the Cretaceous section. And that there was little to be gained by penetrating the additional section, the Mississippian, Devonian and older rocks. The other view of course was that the entire geologic section needed to be evaluated. The main

proponent of this idea was Dr. Link who at that time was in Toronto. He promoted this idea and proposed a series of deep wells, starting up in the vicinity of the Athabasca oil sands and going down dip, going southwest that is, towards the mountains. The idea being to attain stratigraphic information and to better be able to assess where the main potential lay, where in the geologic section. So it came time to do something on these lands around Edmonton and the seismic work had indicated a small structural feature in the vicinity of what is now the town of Devon, west of Leduc. So it was decided to drill a test there and the problem became, how deep is this well going to be drilled. Is it going to be just to satisfy those who put the main emphasis on the shallower horizons, from the Mississippian on up, or would it go on down to the bottom of the entire stratigraphic section. It's recorded someplace in all of this that I recommended that we compromise and go into what I thought was the Silurian section, the salt beds. The prognosis for the well was written up on that basis. As it turned out, during the course of drilling, the well did get some favourable indications in the Cretaceous section, that is the higher part of the geologic column, in which the one group maintained that was probably the main source of reserves. Before that well was completed it had been decided to drill a second well down dip to further test these Cretaceous sands. Meanwhile of course, Leduc #1 carried on in to what was for that area, an unknown, untested section, and discovered oil in the Devonian zone, now called the Nisku zone. It became the discovery well for the Leduc Devonian oilfields.

#077 NM: After Leduc you stayed in Calgary until '51 and then you were moved to Peace River. Why did they sent you to Peace River?

WH: They had opened an office in Peace River and they were staffing it. They had a district manager of Peace River, George Shoultis, a geophysicist, and they had geologists and geophysicists and all that it takes to run an exploration office. They had quite a bit of exploration work going on north of Peace River in the area that later developed to be the Zama Lake, Rainbow area. They were northwest in Peerless Lake area where oilfields have since been discovered. And I think we were expanding into B.C. and eventually the office in Peace River moved from Peace River into B.C., into Dawson Creek. I had left there at that time but in any case, the whole area was proceeding at quite a fast pace exploration wise and they had to set up staff to look after the operations. I went there as assistant to George Shoultis.

NM: And how long did you stay in Peace River.

WH: Just over a year and a half. Long enough to build a house on the banks of the Peace River. It's a very interesting town I might add, it certainly was at that time. Some of the early drilling had been conducted there at Peace River. There was, actually across the river from the town, near the end of the bridge, there was an old well, I've forgotten when it was drilled, in the 1920's, it was still flowing water and a little gas. So it had received some early attention, what, 25 or 30 years previous to the time I went there.

NM: Was there a large population or a very small population?

WH: Oh no, Peace River would have been about 2,000 at that time. I don't know what it is now, I haven't been back. It's developed a lot I know.

NM: And how was the work there?

WH: It's always interesting to get into a smaller operation, to leave a large office and go out into a district, into a small town. The work was similar to any other exploration office. I was in the office, didn't have any field activities particularly, go out and visit the crews and go to well sites. But it was the different atmosphere I think, of living in a small town that appealed. There were disadvantages so far as the industry was concerned in that you aren't exposed to the developments country wide. You're in a small area and just looking at what's going on there. Which I guess is the reason I left Imperial in 1953, in the spring. Not because I had something else to go to, but just because I wanted to see something else.

#121 NM: So you wanted more challenge?

WH: I think there was plenty of challenge there. I wanted just to be able to see more things going on. I didn't want to be just a northwest Alberta.

NM: You wanted to see the world or. . .?

WH: To see industry throughout Canada.

NM: So with whom did you go to work for in '53?

WH: Eventually I wound up with Merrill Petroleums in, I guess it was July of '53. Merrill was formed by the son-in-law of N.E. Tanner, who had been I guess at the time the company was formed was the Minister of Mines and Natural Resources for the province. Mr. Tanner later came to Merrill as president.

NM: Was it a big company?

WH: No, it wasn't a large company, no. But it was a very interesting little company and quickly became involved in some interesting acreage. The Pembina oilfield was discovered in an area of some of their land holdings, they and partners. As I recall, it was a farm out from Mobil Oil. I had nothing to do with that, it happened about the time I arrived there but it was interesting to follow that. I was with Merrill for 2 years and left there in '55.

NM: Were you working with other geologists at the time with Merrill?

WH: Oh yes, there were others. Some that were there when I went and some that got hired. Art Patterson was one, he had been with Imperial Oil when I was there and he came to work at Merrill. As with a number of these companies they later wind up being taken over by others. I left Merrill before that happened but about a year later, it was taken over by Pacific Petroleums. So it wound up in a much bigger company. Of course, that's gone on now to be Petro Canada.

NM: Why did you leave?

WH: At that time it seemed to me that Merrill was involved in a partnership with 2 other companies, the companies being Canadian Seaboard and Honolulu. These 3 companies had, I thought, done a very good job of putting together an exploration program and acreage. As I mentioned before, the Pembina oilfield was discovered on acreage that they had acquired under farm out. It seemed to me that these companies were doing a really good job and they were meeting together and planning but again, there were indications that the project was coming to an end and what they developed was going to be as far as

they were going to go. It seemed to me that this was going to be the end in the not too distant future of things, so I did go elsewhere.

#170 NM: While you were working for them did you travel a lot?

WH: No, not a lot. There were occasional meetings, once every 2 months, either in Los Angeles or San Francisco. Meetings of the 3 way group. But that was the extent of it, it was just to meet, it wasn't to do work.

NM: A type of convention or. . .

WH: Yes.

NM: And their offices were in Calgary or did they have office somewhere else too?

WH: Well, their head offices were in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

NM: And after leaving Merrill, what did you do?

WH: I went to work then for Canadian Export Gas and Oil. Gus Beck, who had been with Imperial when I was there, was president of Canadian Export Gas and Oil. It had just formed a year previously, in 1954 I believe it was. Their objective was, at this time there was a big push on for search for and development of, gas reserves in Alberta, with the idea of moving the gas through eastern markets. Drilling a pipeline and taking the gas to eastern Canada. Of course, what eventually came was the big pipeline debate. But to get back to Canadian Export Gas, it was formed for that purpose primarily, of developing gas reserves in Alberta and primarily in the easy to get at areas, shallow gas. This was initially in eastern Alberta. This was a fairly successful program. Once again, Cam Sproule who I first worked for in industry was working for and with Canadian Export and their partners in searching for these reserves.

NM: So how long were you with this company?

WH: I was with that company and successor companies until. . . well, I'm just about to finish with them now, so that is almost 30 years.

NM: Were there any major discoveries during the time you were working for them?

WH: We had discoveries. I suppose as with most small companies you were participating generally with other companies. Discoveries were shared and not necessarily found by any one of a group. I suppose the largest discovery was the Strachan gas field, in which our company had a very small interest but in terms of size of field it's one of the major gas pools in western Canada. The company went into the Medicine Hat area, Medicine Hat of course, was one of the first gas fields to be discovered in western Canada. It was an area that the company went into, it went into the Bindloss area. These were not, you can't call them new discoveries but there was quite a challenge there to develop and extend reserves. There were a number of small discoveries, Wood River was one. You drill a wildcat and you get a discovery, you don't know what kind of an animal you have.

#232 NM: If it is a success or not.

WH: Well, a success is sometimes just a one well success. Sometimes it can be a huge success, you can be right on the top of something big, on the edge of something big or it's a near miss. I think one of the interesting things with Canadian Export, well, it was interesting to be working with men like Gus Beck who, I believe, was a graduate. . .well, he was from the Colorado School of Mines so he had a fair amount of mining geology and

engineering, I think, in his initial training. But he was quite an explorationist. He had worked in South America with the New Jersey group. But exploration was one of his loves and he was always interested in wherever there may be possibilities. It wasn't very easy for a small company to get involved in some of these things of course, because foreign operations are always pretty expensive. We did get involved in some of those but one of the interesting things was going back to the original of Canadian oil activity and that was back into Ontario. Where of course, the industry started, the Canadian industry. This was just after I joined Canadian Export and again, one of the old time New Jersey or Imperial employees, Frank Foynier???, came to Export and set up a plan for operations in Ontario. Frank had earlier worked for Imperial and affiliated companies in Egypt, South America and came back to Canada pre-Canol days and wound up in Calgary, eventually Toronto, back to Calgary and then on to Calvan, an Alberta company. He had quite a career there. Anyway,

#279 he came to our company and set up this operation in Ontario and put together quite a bit of acreage, built a number of wells with some success. But it's always interesting to go back to these old areas. Eventually Frank went on to another job but we carried on in Ontario and put a big acreage picture together and did some drilling. One of the interesting things I think, in this work, we located a well on the basis of a government report of a map that had been made 20 or 30 years before and I said, let's drill there. It might be a good place. And it turned out to be some kind of discovery. Once again, it's one of these things that you have great hopes. It was an indicator for the potential of the area and eventually a lot of work was done in the area and some small fields developed. This was not a discovery in the sense that they found a new zone, there had been production in the general region. But anyway, that's just an indication of Gus Back and how he liked to go into these new areas, old areas, new challenges. From there, and at a time when the industry of course, had its up and downs, you get a little tired of one area or government policies kind of turn you off and industry says, let's look someplace off. We recently went through this, where everybody, after the NEP, I shouldn't say everybody but a lot took off for foreign areas, a good part of the activity moving to the States. But in a previous round of discontent if you like, with the local scene, we had become interested in foreign opportunities, the North Sea was one. That was most interesting. We tried things, tried to develop something in Nigeria, nothing came of that, did do some work in Kenya.

NM: Did you go to Nigeria?

WH: I was in Nigeria for a few days. I think it's just as well we didn't get involved there. A fair amount of oil and gas but the politics hasn't been too good.

NM: You were doing a lot of travelling at the time were you not?

WH: Well at one time our company, as many others, became interested in foreign exploration. The North Sea was becoming a very interesting area.

NM: We have to stop here at the North Sea because it is the end of the tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

NM: So shall we go back to North Sea now?

WH: Yes, all right. We joined a group of companies, English, American, German and obtained some permits in the North Sea, conducted seismic surveys and eventually did some drilling. Our second hole gave us great hopes, we discovered some oil in one of the major oil producing zones of the North Sea. Unfortunately it turned out that it was just a small accumulation and this was proven through additional drilling of course, and it was not developed into anything commercial. At about the same time that we were looking there we looked at other foreign areas. We did become involved in a program in Kenya, seismic work was conducted but nothing that warranted drilling was found and we had to walk away from that one. We looked at Nigeria but never became involved in any exploration there which was probably fortunate. Did some work on offshore Spain. There was a period there when I think, most companies, were looking at opportunities worldwide. It was very interesting to be exposed to these things. I'm disappointed that our North Sea operations didn't really get anyplace. We did become involved in the onshore play there, in the U.K. as well. Once again, we had to leave that, well, it's just been an unfortunate foreign experience I guess you could say. But you need to stay at the game. If you go into an area you have to stay there for a long time before you can expect any results. It's often more than a small company can handle.

NM: And all that costs a lot of money.

WH: It costs a lot of money, yes. You go into these things with partners so the costs are shared and in that respect it's easier to do than to keep up the enthusiasm for it.

NM: You went also to Abu Dabbi?

WH: Yes, this was a project with 2 or 3 other companies and it was a visitation I guess you would call it, to visit government officials and to look at the information that they had relative to areas, offshore and onshore areas of Abu Dabbi. We gathered some information and tried to work up some plays there. However like many of these others it was unsuccessful.

#044 NM: And you went to Norway too?

WH: We went to Norway, yes. This was in connection to the North Sea. We were working on the English side of the North Sea and the Norwegian side was developing also of course. There were new opportunities coming there.

NM: Was everybody very excited with the discovery of the North Sea?

WH: Oh yes, it was one of the more important worldwide discoveries. For the U.K. to have their own reserves after years of everything essentially, being imported, it was a most important event for them. And I guess you could say, for all of Europe because they were fully dependent pretty well, in imports.

NM: So what were you doing in Norway?

WH: Norway was just a visitation once again. We were working with other people and gathering seismic, evaluating areas. I was in London, it was an opportunity to go over there and meet with Norwegian companies and people in government and to let them know that we were interested in working there and who we were and you know, that we had experience in North Sea operations.

NM: So in fact, you were offering the technology?
WH: Yes.
NM: And after Norway you came back to Calgary and then, did you go somewhere else?
WH: Actually Norway was just one of the. . .
NM: One of these trips.
WH: A trip. I mentioned Peru, we were down there with a group, once again, on the same kind of a deal to. . . well, we had been offered participation with another company who had developed some reserves in the Orienti??? of Peru. We went down to discuss with the government, our possible participation in this area and participation in other areas. There was quite a program of exploration in all of the Orienti portion of Peru. There was acreage that was open, available for bid so we were interested in seeing what was available. And to see the government, to let them see us and be in a position to seize an opportunity if it was possible.
NM: And did you find something?
WH: No, we didn't. With a lot of these foreign countries you're bidding isn't the way you'd bid here. You bid on something, or have a program and you're never sure that it's going to be confidential or that somebody else won't . . .
NM: Won't steal it, yes.
WH: And of course, the governments in these countries are looking for their participation.
NM: Everybody wanted to own shares. This is the end of the second interview with Willis Hancock.

Tape 3 Side 1

NM: This is the third interview with Willis Hancock. Mr. Hancock, looking back at your career, can you compare the conditions the geologists had in your time to what they have nowadays.
WH: Yes, going in particular to the well site work. When I started and came to Alberta the war was on of course. There was a lack of equipment and I started off at Brooks with practically nothing. I had my own hand lens, I had no microscope for examination of samples. The rig was not equipped with a shale shaker which is the little machine that's attached to the drilling rig for separating the samples from the mud. This was something that was not available because of war time. I had no place to wash samples except in my hotel room and examine them with my hand lens and put them out in a muffin tin. It was a very good way in a sense because you could see the changes in the rock types in the different samples so you'd know right where to look to pick these changes, just by general appearance of the samples. So it was very primitive, they had no facilities on the well site as they do now, with a little office which is set up of course, with facilities for cleaning the samples, for examining them with the microscope, for testing them. At the time I was there they had no other gadgets for helping the geologists, such as the mud loggers that they have now and various techniques for picking out indications of hydrocarbons from the samples. It was all a completely manual and visual kind of examination, as I said, with no facilities on the site. At one point the company did supply

a trailer which was very handy to take out to the well site. That's a bit of another story, the trailer belonged to Nick de Grandmaisson, the famous. . .

NM: The painter.

WH: The painter, yes. My friend and I, Lee Elliot had to go up to Banff to pick up this trailer and we met Nick. It was one of his hard times I guess, things were pretty tough then for painters. So after that we did have a trailer to take to well sites so there was a place to sleep at least when you had to be there all night. But it was a kind of primitive piece of equipment too. The heating was a little small coal or wood stove. No propane in those days. So it in itself was kind of primitive. I haven't been in any present day well site camps but my son is in the business of renting these and I have seen many in his yard at Nisku and of course, the field camps are very well set up these days.

#046 NM: Very luxurious compared to what you had.

WH: Oh yes. They have cooks and recreation, just everything you need. This just didn't exist when I started out. There's also quite a change in the procedures or time that is spent on the well site by the present day geologists. When I started out you went out on a well and you stayed there till it was finished. You lived in a hotel nearby and went out to the well whenever you had to be there and would stay all night and sleep in the doghouse or wherever you could find room. As I say, it was just there for the duration without coming in as they do now. It seems to be it's 2 or 3 weeks on the job and then back in. This was a continuous project. As a matter of fact, do well site work and at the same time have a core drill rig operating so you'd have 2 projects going on at the same time. We didn't of course, we weren't slowed down by all the gadgets you have now, it had to be a pretty quick process.

NM: Mr. Hancock, you met Cam Sproule and Stan Harding, can you tell me a bit more about Cam Sproule?

WH: Cam was my first boss in the oil industry, I'd come from Ontario to spend the summer as I mentioned previously. I was assigned to Cam's project in Saskatchewan, Weyburn. I'd heard of Cam of course, before, and in 1938 was supposed to join his geological party in northern Saskatchewan. So having heard of him, I was looking forward to working with him and meeting him. I had heard how tough a guy he was on his help. In any case it was a great experience with Cam and we developed a great friendship. I learned an awful lot over the years with him and I found that he was, as many people did, he was very fast on his feet, a fast thinker and . . .

NM: He must have been a very bright man.

WH: He was a very bright man. Not too many people could keep up with him and sometimes he'd lose patience with others and sometimes jump to the wrong conclusions. He was tireless in his efforts and expected the same from everybody else.

NM: He was considered as being a very bright geologist.

WH: Oh yes. And he had a lot of vision. The north was one of his favourite areas, the Arctic and he worked very hard on that to get companies interested, to get the government involved and was instrumental with others, as far as I know, in getting Pan Arctic organized. So it's one thing to have all of these visions and to get things going but it's

another thing to run projects of that kind. In a sense I think he's something like Jack Gallagher in his visions of the north. The 2 of them with similar visions had problems in getting along.

#095 NM: Stan Harding also had an important role in the development of Pan Arctic.

WH: Yes. Stan with myself, started out working for Cam Sproule. When Cam went into consulting and started on the work in the north and his ideas of the Pan Arctic program. . . well, previous to that time I expect it was that Stan left Imperial and joined Cam's company. He was right away involved in the exploration activities in the Arctic and as I understand, contributed quite a bit to the Arctic exploration. He stayed with that until he retired from active duty.

NM: What about Ted Link, he was also a friend of yours?

WH: Oh yes. Of course, he started very early in the Canadian scene. As you know he was involved in the Norman Wells in 1918, 1919, in there. It was in 1941 of course, when I came to Saskatchewan and working with Sproule and Ted Link was in charge of Imperial's exploration efforts. Then when the summer program in Saskatchewan came to an end Ted came over there and asked me if I'd come to Alberta, to sit on the Brooks well. From that point on I guess I was working for Ted Link.

NM: What type of man was he?

WH: He was a great guy, very clever, very brusque, he didn't like to show his humour off the bat anyway. He'd have to say, if you knocked on his door, he'd look up, well, what the hell do you want, what are you doing here. But behind all that he was a great guy and very good to work for.

NM: How did you become vice-president and exploration manager of Canadian Export Gas and Oil in Calgary?

WH: After I left Merrill Petroleums I of course, had to find another job. Once again, I visited with my friend Cam Sproule who was doing some work for Canadian Export Gas and Oil. The president to be of that company was Gus Beck, a former Imperial and Standard of New Jersey employee. He and Cam were buddies from South America I guess, is perhaps where they first met, I'm not sure. Cam had been doing some work for Canadian Export and I of course, knew Gus Beck. He'd been with Imperial when I was and was one of the ones that asked me if I wanted to go to Peace River with Imperial. So we were old acquaintances and I visited Gus and he had a job in his company. There was one younger geologist working for them and that was it. The company had really just started, so I joined Canadian Export Gas and Oil and as they developed and grew and became a real company, they had to have officers and because I was there I became one.

#150 NM: You make it sound so easy.

WH: Well, it was easy because Gus Beck was a real great guy, easy to work for. He's one of the important men in my life, along with Cam and Ted Link. He was a really wonderful guy. Very exploration minded and interested in all kinds of activity. He'd had foreign experience and as I mentioned, Canadian Export at one time became involved in looking at many foreign projects. These were always intriguing to Gus Beck. We had a lot of fun in at least considering some and busy in some areas and getting involved in 1 or 2 of

them.

NM: How many years did you stay with the company, Canadian Export Gas and Oil?

WH: Well, I started in '55 and I finished with the company and associated companies in 1982.

NM: Were there any major discoveries during this time?

WH: There were important discoveries. I suppose there were maybe 1 or 2 major. The Strachan field was one that we participated in. We became involved in some up in the Swan Hills area, up in the Peace River country, in Alberta and in B.C. As with many small companies, many companies, you have some near misses too where you try to get into areas and bid on acreage because you think that this is where you want to explore. But if you don't get the acreage you can't do much about it. We had some near misses in that regard.

NM: And after leaving the company, what did you do?

WH: Before leaving the company a new company was set up to carry out some exploration in the Phillippines. Our parent company, Canadian Export by the way, became, about 6 years ago had a change in ownership and was purchased by Placer Development of Vancouver. Placer Development was formed 50 some years ago as a mining company, operating, the first mine was in New Guinea. It was a Canadian company at that time and has just expanded and kept growing. They did get into the oil business about 10-12 years ago and had some success and developed some reserves and a staff and they were looking for another company to build their oil organization around and they purchased Canadian Export Gas and Oil. So I spent about 4 of the last 6 years with the Placer group in Calgary. They have a mine in the Phillippines and with their operations over there and their office and personnel and staff and what was going on at that time in the Phillippines, there had just been some oil discoveries, offshore ???, they thought that they'd spend a little bit of time and money looking at opportunities in the Phillippines. So I left the organization in Calgary and went over to set up a joint Placer and Filipino operation and transferred to Manila to carry out this project. It was just supposed to be a 2 year project and then consider further activities depending on the results of that program. So in July of 1980 I went to the Phillippines, Manila.

#220 NM: How were the living conditions in the Phillippines?

WH: For people going from here they can be just great. Manila is a very modern city, around 6 million people so it's quite a place. There's every kind of condition you care to imagine, living conditions. The slums to the walled villages where the rich Filipinos and the ex-pats live. Conditions are great.

NM: Do they have 2 type of classes there, the very rich and the very poor?

WH: Oh yes, it's the very rich and the very poor. There's a middle class too.

NM: Can you tell me a bit more about the discoveries there?

WH: The discoveries were made. . .well, the industry in the Phillippines has been going on, it started there in the 1890's I think it was, when the first wells were drilled. There had been oil seeps on the island of Sabu and other places. Wells were drilled way back then, what's that, about 90 years ago. No commercial production was found there but there's been activity throughout time you know. The recent activity commenced maybe 10-15 years

ago, with the first discovery being made in 1967 I think it was. This is just in the westernmost part, off the westernmost island, Pellalon. It really stimulated industry. Unfortunately the fields that have been discovered are small and have very fast depletion rate, at least the way they've been drawing on them. The great enthusiasm and hope has kind of diminished for the Phillippines, although what's happened in the last year I'm not familiar with. There's very little information coming out.

NM: What about the employees there, were they mainly Filipinos?

WH: Quite a few, yes. Most companies have a staff from their head offices, you know, we're talking about the oil companies now. They'll have their staff from Houston, Denver, wherever, their technical people. And they're bringing along of course, professional geologists, geophysicists, engineers in the Phillippines, Filipinos. The other staff in the companies are all Filipinos, you know, the clerical, the purchasing and legal.

#272 NM: Where are these employees trained generally, have they been trained in the States or are they trained in the Phillippines?

WH: They are trained both places. A lot of them get over to the States but they have good schools in the Phillippines for training these places. They've had colleges and universities there, of course, it's Spanish. They were there 400 years ago and they set up schools and universities. The education facilities are fairly good there and the Filipinos are interested in education. They are very nice people and pretty clever too.

NM: After nearly 2 years in the Philippines you came back to Calgary?

WH: Yes, I came back here roughly a year ago. While in the Phillippines I had reached retirement age and was retired from Placer. For the last year I've been retained as a consultant for the company and am just about to complete that assignment this month and then I don't know.

NM: What will you do then, take it easy and travel?

WH: Yes, I want to take it easy. I want to see what a summer is like in Alberta with nothing to do and just travel around the province here and have a real summer holiday.

NM: And have a good time.

WH: Have a good time. After that I don't have any firm plans. We spent a while in Australia en route back from the Phillippines and that's one place I want to go. I have been doing work in the past year on Australia, geological. I want to get back there on the ground and see some of these areas and find out more. I might even work, I don't know.

NM: End of the tape.

Tape 3 Side 2

NM: Looking back at your career Mr. Hancock, what was the most exciting experience in the oil patch?

WH: Of course, Leduc has to be the most exciting thing that happened in the oil patch in Canada. It started the whole industry really. From it followed the discovery and the development of all of the present day reserves in the province of Alberta and B.C. It was followed quickly by Redwater and then other fields, all tied in and related to the story of

Leduc, all the same kind of beast so far as oil accumulations are concerned. You don't always recognize these things when they first happen, you don't wake up the next morning and say, that's the greatest thing. You don't realize but it had to be, yes.

NM: Who were the most influential person in your career, or maybe the most influential persons?

WH: I think Cam Sproule had to be the most influential. As I mentioned I started with him in the industry. When I made other decisions I always went to Cam to talk with him. Never with the idea that I might work with him because I would sooner have him as a good friend than as an employer. So he was #1 I think and of course, everybody influences you some way or another. Ted Link, Jack Webb, Gus Beck, all of these had quite an influence, an impact on me, yes.

NM: What do you consider your highest achievements?

WH: That's hard to answer. If I'd discovered many giant oil fields I could give that but discovery is not always. . . you have to discovery something, you have to have some success of course. But I think success in some ways can be measured also by having an impact on and influence on other people. I've enjoyed working with others. I've found occasionally that somebody will tell me that, you spoke to a group at Western Canada High School for example is one, about geology and so I decided to become a geologist.

#046 NM; That's very nice to hear that.

WH: Yes, it's nice to think maybe you helped somebody to find what they wanted to do. Somebody who has perhaps made a great contribution to the industry. So I've been involved in discoveries of gas and oil. Seldom does any one person get or deserve the credit for a discovery. It generally takes a group of people, geologists, geophysicists. So I have no special claim in that regard but I like to think that maybe I've helped others.

NM: This is the end of the third interview with Willis Hancock. Mr. Hancock, thank you very, very much for all these interviews you gave me.

WH: My pleasure.

Tape 4 Side 1 Canol

NM: This is Nadine Mackenzie speaking. Today is Tuesday, July 6th, 1983. I am at the home of Mr. Willis Hancock situated at 305, 3232 Rideau Place S.W. in Calgary. Mr. Hancock worked for 12 years for Imperial. Mr. Hancock, when did you hear for the first time about the Canol project?

WH: I had left the Brooks-Tilley area where I had been working, sitting on wells and doing subsurface core drill work. I'd come into Calgary just in the new year, that would be 1943, to write up a report on the work that had been done in that area. It was at that time that the Canol project was in the middle of being organized, personnel acquired for the operation. Imperial Oil was in charge of the exploration and drilling efforts that were part of the program. I'm not sure of the arrangement, of course, it was a Canadian-U.S. operation and the U.S. part was handled by the U.S. Engineering Division I believe, U.S.E.D., who contracted other workers such as PBC, Price, Bechtel and Callahan. So it

would have been through the Imperial office here in Calgary where I was working that I heard of this. Of course, Dr. Link was in charge of the geological work that was to be carried out. They were looking for people, people that were already employed by the company and people outside the company.

NM: How did you travel there?

WH: It was by plane of course, from Edmonton, maybe DC-3's I guess, at that time. Some of them were set up as normal airplanes, that is, usual passenger planes and others were just seats along the side with room in the centre for cargo.

NM: What time of the year was it when you arrived in Norman Wells?

WH: It was late May. Spring hadn't really yet arrived there. That is, the river was still full of ice but the weather can be quite pleasant and as you know you can get really warm days.

#039 NM: Despite mosquitos and flies?

WH: Actually they're not too bad as a rule, right around settlements such as Norman Wells. But you get out just on the edge of the settlements and that's where there are hordes of them.

NM: What did you do there as work?

WH: The program was to send out geological field parties, to map the geology, look for structures and likely places where additional oilfields might be found. So there were a number of parties, I've forgotten the exact number, 14 is perhaps a figure that is close. 2 or 3 men to a party. Go out to various areas, often taken by plane with a canoe to, not necessarily the headwaters but someplace up stream from the rivers that were draining into the Mackenzie. And then you'd go down the stream or river, mapping the geology as you went.

NM: When you arrived there were there a lot of people already?

WH: Oh yes. The project had started, that is moving in of equipment and personnel, the year before. Some geological work had been done. But there was much more to it than just the exploration in which I was involved. I worked out of Norman Wells, that's where the geological exploration was carried out from. But on the other side of the river Camp Canol had been established by the U.S. Army. Their personnel, the personnel that weren't directly involved at least, in the exploration work, were over there at Camp Canol. The construction crews, road building, pipeline, they operated out of Camp Canol on the other side. They were well established by the time I got there.

NM: So it was a huge staff?

WH: Oh yes, very large. With the amount of equipment that was being brought in and ??? and road building and so on. And of course, Norman Wells itself, with developing the field and drilling out on the islands, a large staff was involved there.

NM: Did you find a lot of oil?

WH: No, there were no new oilfields found. Norman Wells of course, had been found about 20 years previously. Initially of course, there wasn't much in the way of exploratory drilling until the initial field work had been done, to find likely places to drill.

NM: Can you tell me about the highway they were building at the time?

WH: The highway was of course, required in order to build the pipeline. As a highway, I never

did see it developed or the final stages of it. It was just a road that left Camp Canol and I'd been along part of it. In fact on our first trip we rode in a canoe and a bit of food and went on a truck that was carrying diesel fuel out to the earth movers and so on that were working on the pipeline and road beyond Camp Canol. That was my only experience on the Canol road was this short trip to Loon??? Creek. We later followed down the creek and mapped the geology along the creek. It was a pretty primitive road of course, at that time.

#086 NM: It must have been quite something to bring all this equipment, heavy equipment.
WH: Yes. Brought in by barge in the navigation season on the Mackenzie River and in the winter, by winter roads. No big problem. In the winter time of course, once the road was cleared. . .
NM: The ice. . .
WH: No, it's back, it's not on the ice. The river itself gets very, very rough. You know, the river surface, you get a pile-up of ice. The winter roads are generally back through the bush, away from the river.
NM: How were the conditions of living there?
WH: They were fine. Some quarters were just tents which we lived in, the geologists. They'd be over a wooden frame with a gas heater of some kind, often just an oil drum. But that was better than we had when we were out in the bush of course, when we had to build our own camps. So the living in camp was fine. Of course, there was a dining hall and lots of food.
NM: People were working very hard, 7 days a week?
WH: Out in the field, certainly the geologists were. I don't know about the office workers, whether they worked 7 days. But yes, you'd take days off to clean off and some days you're moving camp so you weren't always working your 8 or 10 hours a day.
NM: Were people talking a lot about the political situation at the time?
WH: Political, you mean, international?
NM: Yes.
WH: No, not as far as I was concerned. We weren't worried politically, if you're thinking of our position up there and the proximity to the Japanese.
NM; Were many people frightened the Japanese were going to invade Canada?
WH: Some may have been. Some were frightened just to be there, that far away from home and civilization but it was just a great experience as far as I was concerned.
NM: What did you think yourself, did you think the Japanese would be coming?
WH: No.
NM: No. So you were just concerned with your work?
WH: Oh yes. It was just a great opportunity.
NM: How long did you stay in Norman Wells?
WH: After the field work I was sent to Goose Island, to sit on wells. This would have been in late September and I was on Goose Island and in the office in Norman Wells until about mid-December, at which time I came out to Edmonton.

#126 NM: And you stayed in Norman Wells from May to December.
WH: Yes.
NM: The cost of the Canol project was astronomical at the time, was it not?
WH: Yes, certainly for that time. What the figures actually were I can't recall, but by today's standards they would sound like nothing at all, just as of course, the cost of anything there. Wages would be about 1/10 of what they are now, so I guess you'd have to multiply those costs by 10 to put it into today's figures.
NM: There was a small refinery at Norman Wells, was there not?
WH: Yes, the refinery had been there for many years. As you say, small and just serving the local market and the Mackenzie River. Part of the project was to build a refinery at Whitehorse which would be the western end of the Canol pipeline. To refine of course, the oil that was sent through the line from Norman Wells.
NM: Looking back at the Canol project, what do you think about it?
WH: I think it was a well thought out project, a necessary project. Unfortunately it was not successful in finding new oil reserves in the area but an awful lot of information was obtained that has been most useful in later exploration. The importance of the program, as what I'm saying is important at least, is not related to was it necessary, and that I don't know. For what was found, I suppose it wouldn't have done very much for the war effort because no new fields were in fact, found.
NM: Thank you Mr. Hancock.