

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: George D. Hobson

INTERVIEWER: David Finch

DATE: January 2001

DF: Today is January 8th, in the year 2001 and we are with Mr. George Hobson at the Glenbow Archives in Calgary. My name is David Finch. Could you start sir by telling us where and when you were born?

GH: It so happens that I was born 78 years ago today.

DF: Well, happy birthday.

GH: Thank you kindly. January 8th, 1923 in Hamilton, Ontario.

DF: And what were your parents doing at that time?

GH: My mother was staying at home as mothers did in those days and my father was working in the transportation department at the Steel Company of Canada in Hamilton.

DF: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

GH: I had one sister only.

DF: Younger or older?

GH: Younger by only 14 months.

DF: Tell us about your education and how you became interested in the sciences?

GH: I had my public school and high school education in Hamilton and then went to McMaster University in Hamilton, so I stayed at home for that part of my education. When I finished in Mathematics and Physics at McMaster I wondered what I was going to do and the only avenue I thought was available to me with that degree was to go into teaching. I didn't want to teach mathematics and I really didn't want to physics. Somehow I heard about geophysics over at the University of Toronto. I went over and got signed up and found a boarding house within a couple of blocks of the geophysics building and that set me up right there. At that time the staff was Arthur Brant, who was a mining man and John Hodgson who had actually worked for Schlumberger out here in the oil patch. And then along came, my second year was J. Touso??? Wilson, when he came down from Operation Muskox and it was my roommate and myself were the first two Canadians to go through in Petroleum Geophysics at the University of Toronto.

DF: Wow, what made you interested in Petroleum Geophysics, that was pretty unusual to take at that time wasn't it?

GH: At that time, I guess two things, I didn't want to stomp around northern Ontario carrying a magnetometer or some other type of instrument but there was an attraction to western Canada, in that, in those days the seismic crews came up to Canada in the summer and went down south for the winter.

DF: What year was this that you started in Toronto?

GH: I started in Toronto in the fall of '46, graduated in the spring of '48.

#030 DF: Okay, so you'd already made the petroleum decision before Leduc, that wasn't the influence?

GH: Yes. And actually one of our assignments was to do some contouring of seismic work on the Leduc field. I don't know how they got the information but at U. of T. that was one of our assignments.

DF: So the crews were going back south so that sounded like a good job for you, go south in the winter time?

GH: Yes, but I never did.

DF: So in '48 you came out.

GH: Came out in May '48.

DF: And how did you get your first job?

GH: I had that before I left home. With Heiland Exploration. That was where I met this other young fellow, Peter Savage. We were both hired by George Hume, who was with Shell Oil at the time to work with Heiland Exploration, who had the seismic contract, out of Moncton, New Brunswick.

DF: You worked on that?

GH: No. 10 days before I was supposed to go to Moncton, I received a telegram from Heiland Exploration saying, report to Edmonton. It was some 4 or 5 years later that I met Pete Savage but we always tie ourselves back to Moncton.

DF: Because you would have been on that same project with him?

GH: I would have been on the same project with Peter.

DF: Okay. So what did you do in Edmonton?

GH: I only spent about a weekend in Edmonton before they shipped me to Westlock as a computer. Not in the sense that we know today.

DF: Yes, t-o-r. Had you any experience on a seismic crew?

GH: Yes. My roommate for the two years at Toronto, he had done a seismic survey in an area north of Toronto, outlining the Grand River valley and I forget the name of the river valley just north of Toronto, in which there's a wonderful source of water wells for the city. He had done the seismic and I had been a shooter and surveyor. I knew what a seismic crew was and what the instruments were all about.

DF: So then you were working on a Heiland crew out of Edmonton?

GH: Out of Westlock.

#054 DF: Westlock, sorry. But for Heiland?

GH: Their office at that time. . the one I reported to was an old school up 101st St. It was an old school and the garage where they took care of the drills and recording crew vehicles were all out the back and this office was up I think, on the 2nd or 3rd floor in this deserted school. Even in those days they were shutting down schools. I spent the summer in Westlock, with my wife. Actually the day we got married, May 21st, we left Hamilton and pulled a trailer, a house trailer. We had an enjoyable honeymoon, it took us two weeks to get here.

DF: So that was '48?

GH: '48.

DF: And your wife's name?

GH: Arlie. So we had the summer in Westlock and then we got shipped over to Waskatenau, over on the Smoky Lake line. And that winter I was a surveyor around Waskatenau, that was just after Redwater had been found. The Heiland crew that I was assigned to had been I think, the crew that had worked on . . . now, I don't know whether they found Redwater but the rumour was that a few years before that, this same party, 102, had actually shot Redwater for Shell. And had actually . . . we didn't know much about how to interpret the data then, when they shot over a reef, but evidently when they went back they actually could see Redwater on the shallow records. And it had been shot by I think, this same party, 102, of Heiland. Anyway we worked around Waskatenau that winter and then out into a bush camp. I can't remember the name of the little town. It wasn't a town, it was a community. I always remember laying the spread right down through the main street and a shot on one end of the town and a shot on the other end of town and that's how we covered the community. You wouldn't do that today. Maybe with the vibrators. Then in the spring of '49 I was brought into Edmonton to work under Jerry Burns. It was at that time that I got a couple of items that I had cherished in my career. Have you heard of Chief Edwards? When I was assigned to a desk in the office in Edmonton, there were three original sketches in the desk. The desk had been used by Higden Rogers. That's an old name. I think Higden is long gone now. I took them in to Higden and I said, do you want these. Oh, he said, I don't need those. Three treasures that actually, recently I've donated them to the CSEG offices.

DF: Did you ever meet Chief.

GH: I met him on one occasion, when I in Westlock and I didn't know then. My first year out here, he was a shooter on a crew in Barrhead. I met him, I didn't know him from Harry or anything but I can say I did meet him but it was just how do you do.

DF: What was your impression of him, was he a big man, small man?

GH: I remember him as a man about my height but slighter in build. Gosh, in those days, I was 25 pounds lighter myself but I remember him as being maybe about my own stature, maybe a little. . . he was more wiry than I was. I guess that's the way of describing him.

DF: How tall are you?

GH: 5'10".

#112 DF: Because lots of people just had little encounters with him like that. What did you think of his artwork?

GH: I enjoyed it. His cards, the cartoons. . . was it Seismic Supply that used to turn those out? I've got a couple of packages of them at home, I haven't come across them in the last couple of years and I wanted to pass those on to CSEG too. I delighted. . . because you could look at his cartoons and my god, I've been there. Whether it was stumbling over a cable or hauling out a huge cable or putting your foot in the sump or the kelly bar rattling away there, he caught it all. And he didn't make up the recording truck or the real truck, that was real live. So many of them of course, were Heiland Exploration trucks that I worked with. So his art just took me back.

DF: That's wonderful. What do you remember about the early technology, what was the first

seismic equipment you worked with?

GH: The first seismic equipment I worked with was a six channel Heiland, produced by Heiland. That was when I was at U. of T. Then when I got out here, gee whiz, we got up to 12 channel and then even to 24. Then there was the portable SIE, I forget what they called that model but that was quite intriguing. Then the next one that I worked with was I think a 24 channel put out by. . my name's slip me, a company down in Dallas. Anyway, it is still in. . gee, who was the mother of GSI?

DF: Texas Instruments.

GH: Texas Instruments. So I started out here on 12 channel and graduated to seeing records. . the first records I worked on as a computer were 12 channel. And then quickly, I think it was still that first summer that we got to the 24 channel.

DF: So were you developing the records and all that or was somebody else doing that?

GH: No, that was done by the observer in the truck. They had got past the stage of bringing them in and developing them at the office.

DF: What else do you remember from those early years?

GH: In the early time though, the observer would bring them in, in a tin can, in the water and the first thing you had to do was hang them up on a piece of dynamite line and let them dry before you could work on them. What was your. . .?

DF: Just more stories from the really early period.

GH: That's where I got a dislike for coffee too.

DF: How come?

GH: Because I was working in the office, I was the only Canadian and there were 2 or 3 Americans. All they drank was coffee, that was on the first crew. When I was a surveyor it was an American that was the Party Manager and there were 2 Americans on the drills. Then when I came back into Edmonton and learned some interpretation under Jerry Burns, I just had my fill of coffee. I go back to my early doodlebugging days to get a dislike for coffee. Maybe not many have that experience. Out in the field you'd remember the days when the trucks would go out and it would be raining or something like that and the rear axles would come back like oil drums from the gumbo. I'll always remember the first time I was sitting in a water truck when they went down into the ditch, so that they'd be right there for the drill rig. That was an experience. I kind of suspect that they felt that it was time for the surveyor, this new surveyor to have the experience of going into a deep ditch and finding out what it was like. Kind of scary too. I guess the people that we met in the various communities, we still remember them. Just last evening my wife and I were talking with our daughter about our early winters and how I'd go off to camp and my wife would be left in the town, bringing up a baby and how generous the people were in some of the communities. How generous the people were in the cold winter, Mr. Turner in Ponoka would come over in the mornings and warm our propane tank and the line leading from the oil drum into our Coleman heater in the trailer. Just to make things easier for my wife. Or the experience of going into one town, being the first seismic crew into Consort after another seismic crew had left a few months earlier and had dragged a plow down the main street of gravel. Seismic crews were not welcome in that town. But in other places, out at Mayerthorpe for instance, we were very, very welcome. There was

a Gulf crew in there too and they had established a good rapport with the townspeople. And just 3 or 4 years ago when my wife and I travelled out here, we went into Mayerthorpe and there were still people in one or two of the businesses who could remember our crew being in there in '52 and '53. And we were greeted, nicely so. You remember the people that you worked with, the people that ran the garage where you stored your trucks or got all your gasoline. The people that welcomed you into their homes and taught you how to eat peanut butter and dill pickle sandwiches. Little things like this.

#203 DF: Where did your career take you next, after working for Heiland out in the field?

GH: I stayed with Heiland, in the field. I became a partner in Heiland Exploration.

DF: Oh, did you?

GH: Yes, there were 8 of us. I think it was 8 or 9 of us, became partners in the firm when Larry Freeman and Henry Medsger sold Heiland Exploration. And the recording part became Heiland Exploration Canada and the drilling part was Elgin Exploration.

DF: So it split. And what year was that?

GH: That was about '52 or '53. There were I think it was 8 of us that bought the company. I stayed until. . . okay, I know when, it was when our first child, he was born in the fall of '48, Churchill's 75th birthday, we moved down to Calgary and he was ready for Grade 1 school. So that makes it about '55, '56. Heiland did not have anything for me in the city, they wanted me to continue field work and I said, no, I'd had enough of that without the family. So I joined Fina then, as a geophysicist working with Jim Ziegler.

DF: But you were a partner in Heiland?

GH: I was a partner in Heiland and they bought me out.

DF: Oh okay. Even as a partner you didn't have enough pull to get yourself a town job?

GH: There were enough of the partners that were in town that. . . no, I guess there were still 3 of us that were field men. No, even as a partner I couldn't get a job in town.

DF: Okay, so what did you do at Fina?

GH: I was a geophysicist working on the . . . there was a triumvirate of Fina and two others, Hudson Bay was one of them and I forget the third one that did the first work out west of Whitecourt, on the oil fields out there. So I knew Whitecourt from the times that I'd spent in Mayerthorpe. Then I went from Fina to Merrill Petroleums as their Chief Geophysicist. Walker was the principal owner, I forget his first name. He had a beautiful home out west of town here. Does the name Eagle Ridge mean anything? I think he was one of the original houses out on Eagle Ridge. Then Tanner . . . was he the President and he was a Mormon chap, very high in the Mormon church.

DF: Came out of the Alberta government, yes.

GH: Yes. And Art Patterson was the Exploration Manager. When I saw your book the other day, R. M. Patterson, I thought of A. M. Patterson right away. And I'm still in touch with him. And I was their Chief Geophysicist there. Then Merrill was bought out by Pacific and I reverted to being a geophysicist who did most of their being the contact with their contractors. Because I'd been a contractor, you know, set a thief to catch a thief. I did most of the work with the contractors. Then we came into a low period in the oil patch,

you know the ups and downs.

DF: Yes, what year was that?

GH: '58.

DF: Okay. And what caused that downturn?

GH: Gosh, I don't know, I don't remember. At that point there was an opening advertised in the Geological Survey of Canada for a geophysicist specializing in seismic. So we moved to Ottawa in the fall of '58 and I was the first seismic geophysicist with the Geological Survey.

#274 DF: So by this point, just review your qualifications, you had what kind of a degree from Toronto?

GH: A Masters degree in Geophysics.

DF: Okay, and then you had field experience?

GH: Yes, about 10 1/2 years in the oil patch.

DF: And you'd been Party Chief, you'd done all the stuff out in the field?

GH: Yes.

DF: Interpretation, Senior Geophysicist for oil companies?

GH: Chief Geophysicist experience, yes.

DF: So you'd been through it all. So when you went to Ottawa what was going to be your job there?

GH: To head up the seismic section in the geophysics division.

DF: Why had they never had one before?

GH: The chief of the division had been very strong, he had done his PhD in magnetics, airborne magnetics. The Geological Survey at that time was much stronger in mining than it was in petroleum. That's probably why they hired Larry, because of his mining background and his knowledge of mining geophysics, magnetometer, gravity, IP, the various types of mining geophysics.

DF: Larry?

GH: Morley. He's still alive, living in Owen Sound, I saw him last summer. Incidentally I have reason to believe that I was the first Canadian Party Chief in the Alberta oil patch. I can't find anybody that disputes me. There were Canadian Party Chief. But that goes back to Denny and I were the first two Canadians, first two to graduate in Petroleum Geophysics from Toronto. Denny went to Western Geophysical and I went to Heiland.

DF: Denny who?

GH: Dennis Mett.

#306 DF: So what year were you the first Canadian Party Chief then?

GH: I would say that was, it would be '50.

DF: No, I don't think there was anybody earlier than that.

GH: I haven't been able to find anybody.

DF: No. Good for you. So what were the challenges at the GSC?

GH: The only seismic they had done was some shallow work. The first challenge was to find a set of instruments. That's when I purchased a set of. . what did you say that name was. .

Texas. That's when I got the Texas Instruments and went down to Dallas and took delivery of them, before March 31st, so it was all in that one year of budget. In March '59. And then in the summer of '59 was when we put a seismic crew together and I got an observer from Hugh Macaulay, who had been an observer with Heiland Exploration, Ken Hodge who had been on seismic crews and he came along as an assistant observer. Then a couple of students as shooter and laying out the phones and then public works hired an ex-Heiland Exploration man as a driller for the summer. We had an ex-Heiland crew almost as the first seismic crew with the Geological Survey and we went around southern Ontario determining the depth to the pre-Cambrian and doing some shooting over known reefs. Some work that had actually, originally been done in the late 40's by John Hodgson.

#354 DF: And what was the purpose of shooting over known reefs?

GH: Just to see what they looked like, whether there was any comparison between those, like the Tilbury reef in southern Ontario, was there any relation between those and the good producers in Alberta. Turned out that you could almost see the reefs in southern Ontario if you stood there and looked for the high points of land, particularly down in the southern Ontario basin, adjacent to the Michigan basin. You could actually see a knoll drill.

End of tape.

Side 2

DF: Okay, so you're doing seismic for the GSC in Ontario.

GH: Yes, and then it was in the summer of '59 when we were doing the seismic of Ontario that they decided that a new branch had been developed in the, I guess it was, Mines and Technical Surveys at that time, where the Geological Survey was located, that they were going to undertake a new project in the Arctic, when the Polar Continental Shelf Project was formed. The first crews, there were 7 or 8 people went up in '59 just to look at Isaacson and to look at the land and to see what the geography was all about, to determine where they might put a navigation system, what was required in the way of housing for people. And in 1960 there were 6 parties I think it was, 6 parties went up and I was Party Chief on one of them. The attitude at the Geological Survey was, you've had some experience in the oil patch in western Canada, we think that in the Sverdup Basin, in the Arctic, there's possibility for gas and oil. We think that you should take a party up there and take a look. So that's how I ended up in the Arctic.

DF: So those 6 parties, yours was the only seismic party?

GH: The only seismic.

DF: Okay, the rest were all doing geology?

GH: Geology, yes. And one oceanography one too. But the rest were doing geology. So in '60 and '61 I did the first refraction surveys across the Sverdup Basin. It was at that time that we showed to industry that there was a minimum of 80,000 - 90,000 feet of sediments and then, as you well know, it was after that that there was some drilling in the Arctic Islands. Then I did the first seismic profiles out in Hudson Bay in '65 and then I did the

first seismic surveys in the Gulf of St. Lawrence the following year too. So I've had a couple of first in looking at new basins in North America.

DF: So it sounds like some of this was on land but most of it was in the water.

GH: Most of it was on the water, yes.

DF: Can you tell us about that technology at that time?

GH: It was easier in the Arctic to shoot over the ice. Just drilling a hole in the water and dropping your charge in the water instead of drilling a hole in the permafrost on the land. We also tried what was known as the poulter method, and I saw a reference to that not too long ago in something I was reading. I think it was first used over in the Middle East, in the deserts and we tried it in the Arctic. You set a charge up on a pole, maybe a 6' high pole and blast in the air and get your energy into the water, into the sub-surface that way. We used the poulter on the land but over the ice, why it was drill a hole and put a dynamite charge. It was at that time that CIL, we were using the wooden boxes of 5 lb. gel, it was at that time that CIL developed a 50 lb. charge for us. Nobody had ever used anything like. . .you just didn't drill a 10" hole to take an 8", 50 lb. charge. But you could drill a 9" or 10" hole in the ice a lot easier than you could, just drop it through 6' or 8' of ice and kaboom. We used those bigger charges too, in Hudson Bay and offshore in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and offshore Newfoundland.

#044 DF: Where you didn't have ice you were doing what?

GH: Shooting the poulter method onshore.

DF: Okay but off Newfoundland you were in the open water weren't you?

GH: We were in the open water and two ships. And in Hudson Bay it was two ships. The CSS Hudson, on her maiden scientific trip was the vessel that we used. And the Theta was our shooting ship. The Theta was one of them that we used off. . .oh yes, the Theta or the, it started with a TH, we had the same captain, it was a name of another ship from the same company, along with the Sackville, which is now a museum piece in Halifax. It was a World War II destroyer or. . . I don't think it was as big as a destroyer, but it had been converted to civilian use and we used that as our recording vessel, dragged the cable behind it.

DF: Any interesting discoveries in those projects?

GH: Not as interesting as the Arctic, where we. . . Hudson Bay turned out to be only 6 or 7 thousand feet of sediments. I forget what the. . . I didn't do the interpretation, I left that to a student to do the interpretation of that project, so that he got his Masters degree through that. So I forget what the results of that one were. It was rather interesting out there on the eastern Newfoundland coast. Ran into a few storms but. . . Now, when I get on a ship, why it's only 13 days till I get off, tomorrow morning it's only 12 days till I get off. Then it was in '72 that I arranged a reflection survey across the Sverdup Basin in the Arctic. The Geological Survey, in cooperation with five oil companies, now don't ask me the oil companies names, one or two of them I can remember, but I set up a cooperative project with five oil companies and the GSC. And of course, the GSC kept the data confidential for a couple of years and we got this seismic survey, reflection survey. That was the first reflection completely across the Sverdup Basin. That was a very interesting project,

working with the different oil companies. You could walk in and talk with them and they knew you were going across the street to talk to somebody else but they were showing you things. I can look back on that part and thought, gee whiz, they must have had a certain amount of confidence in me that they could disclose some of the things that they were doing, knowing full well I was walking across 8th Ave. to somebody else. George kept his mouth shut, they learned that he didn't spread too many trade secrets around. But it was in '72 that I left the Geological Survey to go to the Polar Continental Shelf Project as their Director. That was the best job that anybody ever had in this world as far as I'm concerned. The provision of logistics for all government and university science in the Arctic. In cooperation with Sun Oil out of Resolute, on some of their projects, we provided the first Decca navigation system in the Beaufort Sea for Imperial Oil, until they got their own navigation system going there. George evidently had a relationship with the oil companies nobody else in the GSC had and it was that experience in the Geological Survey and the oil that also got me the opportunity to travel to various places in the world on behalf of CIDA, Canadian International Development Agency, to work with the Geological Survey in Guyana, to work with the Geological Survey in India, putting instruments in, mining and petroleum, seismic and gravity, IP, etc., etc., with them and in Pakistan with the Oil and Gas Development Corporation. I was a government person who had oil field experience. I wasn't a consultant who had any ax to grind at all. So it paid off in that way. But the best part of course, was with the Polar Continental Shelf Project. As I used to say, archeology to zoology, from Greenland to Alaska to the pole. Meeting some of the leading authorities in all those fields from around the world, and just to be able to sit and chat with them and read their papers. It was a real education.

#106 DF: So how would all these different organizations come to you, what was the mechanism?

GH: If they were going to work in the Arctic at that time, there was Polar Continental Shelf Project, which had a base camp at Resolute and a base camp at Tuktoyaktuk. We could supply them with a radio network, if you didn't have tents or radios or rifles, you brought your own food, equipment and general know-how. And we also had the helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. In our budget we could pay for a lot of your flying, unless you were from outside of Canada and if you were from outside of Canada, U. S. or France or someplace like that, or Japan, you paid for your flying, rather than take the money away from Canadian scientists. We might give you free room and board, that was just another mouth to feed at the base camp. But at that time, Polar Shelf was the focal point. And when you have 250-270 scientific parties walking around doing their thing every year, 1,000 people, 300 of them being students, you're doing a lot towards learning an awful lot about our northern extremes. And also doing a lot about sovereignty. Greenland at one time, was disputed by Norway and Sweden. . or Norway and Denmark were arguing over who actually owned Greenland. The world court gave it to Denmark because the Danes had sent parties and people over to Greenland just to do their thing. The Norwegians hadn't done anything. With Canada, with 1,000 scientists just walking around doing their thing, or flying around doing their thing, I thought that was expressing sovereignty. Polar

Shelf was the only agency in the Canadian government, outside of Defence, that had sovereignty written in the mandate.

DF: Really. So if you had 1,000 Canadians wandering around the north, how many Americans would have been up there?

GH: Oh, half a dozen.

DF: Okay, so quite small. So sovereignty is a pretty big issue for you up north?

GH: Yes. Lately, in the last couple of years, when . . . well, there's been quite a cut in the funding for Canadian scientists in the Arctic. I still sit on a couple of funding agencies that provide funds to students and professors. I used to be Secretary on one of the ENSERC committees, for five years I sat on one of those. So I've seen what the decline has been in the funding. Nowadays there's be a Swedish ship come into the Arctic and go through the Northwest Passage, doing all its science and the Canadian scientists can't get a Coast Guard vessel to do doodly poop for them. Or the Americans will come up with \$1 million in their back pocket to do research on a fossil forest on Axel Heiberg and yet Canadians can't. . . well, there's one Canadian organization I know cannot get 10 hours of flying to go and look at what the Americans did on the Axel Heiberg fossil forest, due to the photography. Just to fly over and see what was done. They can't raise \$10,000 and that American organization is coming up with \$1 million of funding behind them. From a private organization, not from the American government. So I noticed in the Nickle, I think it's called the Petroleum Explorer, I read it somewhere last week, that the Geological Survey is advocating for funding, they're going to make a proposal this October to the government, to get some funding for a major geological, geophysical etc., program in the High Arctic in the coming years. Canada has backed away from the science and now. . . there's always been arguments with the United States. At one time the Americans wanted to take the Alaska boundary from 141 and go at right angles to the coast there and part of Banks Island, almost all of Melville Island, Prince Patrick Island would have belonged to the United States, according to the Americans. And I got into a discussion about where is the boundary between Canada and Greenland. I flew over one island to find out that an oil company cabin was actually on the Canadian side of the island. So these ongoing sovereignty problems. But Canada's got to get up there and do some more work.

#171 DF: If you don't use it you lose it, eh?

GH: Use it or lose it. When you had 1,000 scientists up there, you were using it. I can ramble on that one.

DF: Get you exercised on that one, eh. What are you most proud of in your time working in geophysics, what gave you the most pleasure?

GH: I guess the most pleasure was and this may seem a little. . . I remember finding, they drilled a well on some of my work up at Mile 101 on the Alaska Highway. But I guess doing the Sverdup Basin in the High Arctic. Where I get most of my pleasure now is saying, the fellow that is the head of geophysics at University of Southern California or the fellow who heads up the Geology Section at Bedford Institute of Oceanography, or that book that just came out, so many of them were my students. I call them my students, they may

have not been under my supervision, some of them were at times, but that I helped in the Arctic when I was Director of Polar Shelf. And there's so many people across this country that I look at and say, he was one of my students. Because maybe he was working, doing his Masters thesis or his PhD thesis or he was just a member of a geological or an archeological project or something like that. But I helped and this is where I get most of my satisfaction. It comes up, I don't know whether it's once a month or four times a year or something like that, that I'll be able to say, he was one of my students, I helped him. I think that's where I get most of my satisfaction.

DF: That's wonderful. Any regrets, anything you would have liked to have done that you didn't get to do?

GH: My hobby at the present time is Sir John Franklin. I wish I had got more involved back in the 60's and 70's. Well, in the 60's. I got involved in the mid 70's but I had opportunities in the 60's and then when I was Director, I could have hopped on an aeroplane that was going someplace and I could have had another look at something and I didn't take advantage of it. Maybe I wouldn't have either because in 1992 I was the Project Manager for the Royal Canadian Geographic Society when they climbed Mount Logan to determine its height. After everybody, all the climbers and their equipment had got over there, there was one battery weighing 45 pounds that was still left to go. Somebody said, why don't you take an aeroplane George and go on over and you can see Mount Logan and I didn't. Because at that time I had raised all the funds for that project and I knew how much an aeroplane ride cost. I said to myself, I can't spend that money. But maybe if I'd still been. . . my attitude now is, maybe I could have got on some aeroplanes that were going over to Beachy Island and done a little bit of looking around if there was an empty seat of put one less barrel of fuel on. Or gone over to Melville Island and looked where McClintock had been or down to King William Island when there was still a few more artifacts around before some of the scientists and tourists picked them up you know.

#227 DF: So you're still looking, how are you looking these days?

GH: Well, I was on the St. Rock II re-enactment this summer and we spent a week off the south coast of King William with some forward looking sonar looking for one of the ships. Then in '94 and '95 I was on King William Island, we were looking at some of the features on the land, looking for where the log book might have been left, or where the 21 bodies are on King William Island. But the first thing we'll find is one of the ships anyway.

DF: When a ship gets crushed by the ice like that, what's left?

GH: There's reason to believe that one of those ships is still in as good shape as the Bridalbin??? is, off the coast of Ebon Island, off Beachy Island. I was on the side scan sonar looking for that one. There's one mast lying on the ocean floor in 103 metres of water and it is in perfect otherwise condition. There's reason to believe that one of the Franklin ships is in similar condition.

DF: But you haven't found it yet?

GH: No. I know where I'd like to go looking but it's getting the funding for it.

DF: So where do you think those bodies are? What's the big secret there, where did they go?

GH: They're buried somewhere up on the northwest corner of King William Island. Ernie Coleman, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy was up there a few years ago, and he thinks he found the mound. Like a burial mound that they have over in England and Ireland. And Crossier was an Irishman who was second in command to Franklin. That one was looked at by Jim Seville, an archeologist and Art Dyke, a geologist. They did some testing on it, magnetics and making a few shallow excavations where they saw some flat stones that looked as though they could have been put there, but they came to the conclusion that it was natural. But there are very few places up in that northwest corner of King William Island where you can dig a grave. It's the worst country I've ever walked on, terrible.

DF: Why?

GH: It's all stuff that's 4", 6", 2" thick, just tears the hell out of your boots. If you're walking along your eyes are down at what you're walking on and you stop to take a look. You go another 10' or 100' and then do your looking. It's terrible. So there are very few places. In '95 we think we found the summer camp where Franklin and his men would have come ashore. But where they are buried, we're assuming it's around there close. There are one or two places that look as though they could be diggable. But what it means now is that you have to go in with ground penetrating radar and do a survey over them.

DF: So rocky, is it permafrost too?

GH: Oh yes.

DF: So a combination of really inhospitable forces.

GH: Yes. It is in the area of King William Island that the Eskimos still call The Land Back of Beyond. They never went up there. The Land Back of Beyond, which describes the word horizon. The word for horizon is the edge of beyond and when you're back of beyond, you're back of the horizon. That's how the words are in Inuktitut.

#289 DF: Anything else you'd like to tell us about your career?

GH: No, I think you've dragged a lot out of it here.

DF: What are you doing now, you said something at lunch about some cruise ships?

GH: Oh, some people think I know a little bit about the Arctic so I've had 14 cruises, as a lecturer. I've had the trip from Provedenia, Siberia to Greenland, up the east and west coast of Ellesmere, circumnavigated Baffin Island twice, Resolute to Sanderstrom and back a few times. Meeting very knowledgeable and very pleasant people on the cruise ships.

DF: And what's your job?

GH: My job has been lecturing to them about the geology in the Arctic, John Franklin, the north poles, now Nunavut, the new territory of Nunavut. This past year I was on a team that had a contract to study transportation in Nunavut, land, sea and air. And they asked me to come along to interpret the reports from the communities mainly, to read between the lines of what the community reports were. That was 18 out of the 26 communities so that was rather interesting, to hear what their wish list was in the way of transportation for the next 20 years.

DF: What's the backbone of that, what do they expect or want?

GH: Little things like, we think we should have a railroad from Cape Dorset to Iqaluit. Or we

think that we should have a native owned airline, which bothers me, in that First Air, the major airline up there is owned by Macavic Corporation. But it came out in half a dozen community reports. And the biggest part of my report, I devoted to, I think the caption was, information that should be and probably has been available to the communities. Thing that they were asking for or suggesting which are already in place and the people in the communities don't know about. You can get in your car, in fact you can go all the way to Halifax if you want, we think we should have a highway between Iqaluit and Pond's Inlet. Wait a minute now, that's only 2 hours of flying, 1,100 miles or so like that, 1,200 miles when you put everything in. But there's only 2,700 people between those two points in the 3 communities. A lot of good suggestions, a lot of things that we have recommended. Like there should be a graded road to their fishing site, which they don't all have. They're very conservation minded, very environmentally minded, the northern peoples. If you had a trail to their fishing site they wouldn't be driving their 4 x 4's in a fan mode and running down the environment, they would focus on that road so it would be a blessing to them. But a little thing like, we think there should be a cabin at every fishing site. Whoa, wait a minute, that becomes a hang out for the teens. So we recommended a road to each and every fishing site and to some of the other sites around, some of the archeological sites, but don't put a cabin there. Anyway it was very interesting. Then I do a lot of volunteering at the Royal Canadian Geographic Society. So I keep busy.

DF: Well, happy birthday again, Mr. Hobson, it's been wonderful to spend this time with you this afternoon and on behalf of the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project, the Petroleum History Society and the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists, I'd like to thank you for spending this time with us and allowing us to record your interview.

GH: A pleasure indeed David.