

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Harry MacMillan

INTERVIEWER: S. A. Kerr

DATE: July 1984

[note attached to tape says "completed Jun 25/91"]

AK: . . .[opened in mid-sentence] 1984 and I'm in the town of Devon at the residence of Harry MacMillan. His residence is at 62 Saskatchewan Ave. and we're surrounded by beautiful desert plants reminiscent of Harry's annual trips to Yuma, Arizona. We're going to talk about the real old days and then lead up into coming up to Devon and then finally your career as a garage proprietor and in retirement. So Harry, to start things off, would you tell me where you were born and what year?

HM: August 26, 1898, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

AK: So you're a spud islander. And your parents were long time residents of Prince Edward Island?

HM: They were, long time residents.

AK: And your family had roots there over the years did they? Had they been United Empire Loyalists?

HM: No. My grandparents were. . .

AK: They had come up from the States?

HM: No, from the old country, Scotland and Ireland.

AK: Northern Ireland.

HM: Just Ireland.

AK: Okay. And you were one of how many brothers and sister?

HM: Five.

AK: And are you the surviving?

HM: I'm the surviving one left, I was the baby.

AK: So you have children and grandchildren?

HM: No, no children, no family.

AK: Oh, you didn't have any children. So you depend upon your nephews and nieces and grand-nephews and grand-nieces.

HM: And great-grand.

AK: So you lived in Charlottetown for how long?

HM: Till I was 16, came to High River. I had a brother out at High River, had a big ranch and I stayed with my brother for 10 years.

AK: What impelled you to come west?

HM: Well, the slogan was, go west, young man, go west.

AK: What did your parents think of it?

HM: They thought it was all right.

- #032 AK: So how did you travel in those days, could you just give me a brief resume of how you got out here?
- HM: I came out on a harvest excursion.
- AK: And how much did that cost you?
- HM: \$12.
- AK: All the way.
- HM: All the way.
- AK: And you took the train to the ferry?
- HM: Took the train to the ferry and the ferry to the train and came right to High River.
- AK: Let's see, you'd come across from Pictou, or from Summerside?
- HM: Summerside.
- AK: And you landed in, what was the town on the other side? At any rate you took the train, and you were in one of those colonists cars?
- HM: Yes.
- AK: And you laid down at night on the boards or did you have a mattress?
- HM: No, no mattress, you slept in your seats.
- AK: Oh you didn't even, you couldn't get horizontal?
- HM: No, you slept in your seats.
- AK: You just sat up.
- HM: Sat up.
- AK: And how big a crowd was there on the train?
- HM: There was about 300.
- AK: And you'd pick them up on the way?
- HM: On the way, yes.
- AK: And then you'd come to Montreal.
- HM: And to Calgary and High River.
- AK: And you got off at Calgary and then took the train down to High River. And your brother met you?
- HM: Yes.
- AK: I guess he'd been married by that time?
- HM: Yes, he was married and had a family.
- AK: And how many days did that take you?
- HM: 4 days and 5 nights.
- AK: And what did you do for food?
- HM: Well, I brought quite a lot of food with me and then we'd stop at stores and buy some food.
- AK: Did you have a little folding money when you left home?
- HM: Not very much.
- AK: Your dad gave you a buck or two?
- HM: Yes.
- AK: Can you imagine travelling all that distance for \$12.
- HM: Yes.
- AK: You can't even get from here to the airport for \$12. So wouldn't there be stations along

the way that had restaurants?

HM: Oh yes. Just snack bars.

AK: But you wouldn't have enough money, you'd want to get food, like groceries and things.

HM: Yes.

#058 AK: And wasn't there a stove at the end of each car, a cook stove?

HM: I don't think so.

AK: Say if you wanted to come back to Charlottetown, would you have been able to come back for the \$12 too.

HM: Oh no. It was just a special one way.

AK: And they were figuring that you'd stay?

HM: Right.

AK: And your brother you said had a ranch.

HM: Yes.

AK: Could you describe a little bit of what he had there?

HM: He had very large holdings at High River. He had 6 sections of land and I worked with my brother 10 years, then I got married in '26 and I moved out east of Blackie, bought a section of land, farmed it until '69, wasn't making any money so I decided to rent it out and go to the oil field.

AK: You mean 1929.

HM: 1929, yes.

AK: Who did you marry?

HM: Helen McDaniel.

AK: McDaniel. Was that any relation to the McDaniel's in Calgary, Rod McDaniel?

HM: Yes. Rod's her half-brother.

AK: So your wife was. . .

HM: Helen McDaniel.

AK: Who was Rod's aunt.

HM: No, sister. . .in-law.

AK: Quite a spread there in years, Rod's quite a bit younger than your wife.

HM: Yes. Second family.

AK: Oh, I see, yes. So you decided to leave your brother's spread and . . .

HM: Go on my own.

AK: Where did you get the money to buy the land?

HM: Saved it.

AK: How much did you pay for it?

HM: \$18,000.

AK: For how many acres?

HM: A section.

AK: That would be about \$30 an acre.

HM: \$30 an acre.

AK: And was there any building on it or any. . .?

HM: No, I had to build a home.

AK: Was it raw land?

HM: No, it was cultivated land.

#088 AK: So you put up a small. .

HM: Home and lived there three years and then I decided I'd go to the oil field.

AK: Did you and your wife decide mutually to go?

HM: Yes.

AK: So you rented it out. Did you dispose of it later?

HM: Yes. 20 years later.

AK: So you figured you weren't getting the kind of living off the land.

HM: No, I wasn't.

AK: Now why did you go to the oil fields, why didn't you go say, into Calgary and do something like shop keeping or some other kind of business, what attracted you to Turner Valley?

HM: Oil field always attracted me.

AK: Where had you first heard of oil fields?

HM: Well, I lived for 10 years south of there a short distance. I used to haul gasoline for the ranch with horses from Turner Valley.

AK: That white lightning? That stuff that stank?

HM: Yes. Unrefined.

AK: You'd burn it right in the cars.

HM: The tractors.

AK: And the tractors. It would smoke I suppose.

HM: Oh it was good fuel.

AK: How much would you pay for that?

HM: 10 cents a gallon.

AK: No road tax either.

HM: No, no tax.

AK: So by that time you'd already found out about the oil patch and knew?

HM: Yes.

AK: So then you went, did you go straight to Turner Valley?

HM: Straight to Turner Valley and went to work for Freehold Oil Company.

AK: How did you find out about them?

HM: I had a friend who was one of the heads of it, so I hit him up and I got a job on production.

AK: And how many wells did they have?

HM: 5.

AK: Were they those naphtha wells?

HM: Naphtha wells, yes.

AK: And what would you have there, a separator?

HM: Yes, a separator.

AK: And then the gas would go to the big flare.

HM: Yes, we flared all our gas.

AK: But you didn't flare it right on the lease though?

HM: Oh yes.

#116 AK: Oh, you flared on the lease?

HM: Flared it right on the lease.

AK: You didn't send it to the big. . .

HM: No, no there was no market for it.

AK: No, I know that. You wouldn't get a real good stripping of the gas, you'd just get what you could out of the. . .

HM: Just what you could.

AK: What was it, a kind of separator or what was it?

HM: A separator yes. And no oil in it at all, white gasoline.

AK: And then what would you get for the gas, you'd sell it for how much a barrel?

HM: We got 10 cents a gallon.

AK: So that would be \$3.50 a barrel. And you'd sell it to whom?

HM: Farmers.

AK: Oh I see, you didn't. . . .

HM: No, no pipelines.

AK: Oh you'd sell it, it was real direct sales.

HM: Direct sales. They were coming there from Saskatchewan and all over for it.

AK: Of course, there would be no reporting or royalties probably?

HM: No, there were no royalties at that time.

AK: Pretty poor records.

HM: Yes.

AK: Do you recall any inspectors coming out from the Dominion department to look you over?

HM: Never saw an inspector till the Conservation Board.

AK: And that was '32 or '33, wasn't it?

HM: Yes, '32 I think it was.

AK: Okay, while you were with Freehold, you and your wife occupied a house on the lease and you were paid \$5 a day and that entitled you to the use of the house, is that right?

HM: That's right.

AK: Could you tell us about the unfortunate accident that you encountered when you fell into the cable tool well cellar, and just explain why you were down in there.

HM: We had this gas pump down in the bottom so nothing would freeze or nothing.

AK: What kind of a pump?

HM: A gas pump.

AK: Oh, a gasoline pump.

HM: No, just dry gas. And it was leaking and that's when I got gassed.

AK: What happened when you got gassed?

HM: Well, as soon as I got a breath of fresh air I choked off and fell over backwards, down the well.

AK: Down into the cellar.

HM: Yes and broke my back.

#149 AK: What did you hit?

HM: 4" pipeline that was down in the bottom of the cellar.

AK: And how did you get rescued?

HM: Two other men was on top and they got ropes and pulled me out.

AK: Then what?

HM: Went to the hospital and stayed there for 6 months.

AK: At High River?

HM: Yes. And High River didn't know my back was broke. They took x-rays but it never showed anything. So it wasn't getting any better so I decided I'd go to Calgary and have an x-ray and they put me in the Holy Cross Hospital.

AK: And that's where you were in the cast?

HM: Yes.

AK: The doctor diagnosed it there?

HM: Yes. Dr. McNab.

AK: And that's when the sisters were running it?

HM; Yes.

AK: Back in the old building there.

HM: Yes, the old building.

AK: So then you were convalescing and you were 5 months on compensation. How much was that compensation in dollars per day?

HM: It was a little more than I was, about \$6 a day.

AK: More than what you were earning, that's not bad.

HM: I was getting more than I was while working.

AK; So when you got healed up what was your next move?

HM: I went roughnecking for Union Drilling.

AK: And did you know somebody over there or how did you get the job?

HM: I just went after it and I got it.

AK: And you hadn't roughnecked before?

HM: No, broke into roughnecking there.

AK: With rotary tools?

HM: Yes.

AK: And where did you start, in the dumb corner?

HM: Oh yes.

AK: And who was your push?

HM: Scotty Baird.

AK: And who were some of the fellows that you later became associated with, were there any of your associates that you still know, or are still around?

HM: Corky Valrey was on that rig, myself, and Mac Muir and who else. . . . Garnet Edwards.

AK: So you worked there and drilling right in the valley of course, steam rig. When did you start to get set up?

HM: Well, that well was drilled and there was nowhere else to move to so I was offered the job in charge of production on that well. I turned it down and. . .

AK: What was the name of the well, do you remember? Some other company than Freehold was it?

HM: No, it wasn't connected with Freehold.

#190 AK: Anyway you decided not to do the production on that.

HM: Well, one reason I didn't want to be on there, because he had a cousin and a brother-in-law working there and they wanted me to take charge.

AK: Was this Mayland?

HM: Mayland, right. So I decided I'd quit and went over to see Bill Farris and I got a job with Bill Farris and Lou Cadanian???. They were just starting up.

AK: They just had the one rig?

HM: They only had the one rig at that time.

AK: And Ferris, was he an import from the U.S. or was he Canadian?

HM: No, he was an American but he'd been here a great number of years before that.

AK: What did you do drill or roughneck or what?

HM: Roughnecked. Then next spring Ralph Will came along and they got a bunch of rigs and I went to work for Ralph and worked all the years with Ralph.

AK: Now how did Ralph get attracted to Canada?

HM: Phil Byrnes brought Ralph in here to take charge.

AK: Was he looking for a good drilling man, was that the idea?

HM: Yes he was.

AK: And what did he go down and scout around in the States?

HM: I don't know how he got hold of Ralph but Ralph came over and took over.

AK: Could you describe some of the people that Ralph brought along with him. I understand that one of the people that he got in there was Cody Spencer, was that right?

HM: That was later. He brought Gene Denton up here with him as Production Manager.

AK: You mean Ralph did?

HM: Yes.

AK: Was that at the same time that he came up?

HM: No, a little bit later. And then Cody Spencer came up and I was working derrick for Cody Spencer all the time Cody drilled in the valley.

AK: Now could you describe the layout of Anglo-Canadian, they had, I think Ralph, and they had the office down in this valley didn't they?

HM: Yes, down in the river bottom.

AK: The river bottom, was that the Highwood River.

HM: The Highwood River.

AK: And that was just north of. . . ?

HM: North of the bridge.

AK: Yes, but what's the name of that little town, Royalties was it?

HM: Royalties, yes, that's right.

AK: Could you describe a little of that layout there?

HM: Well, I didn't have much to do with the office down there. I used to go on the rigs and never go down there.

AK: And where were you living at that time, you and your wife?

HM: At Freehold still.

#238 AK: Oh, you stayed on the Freehold lease. And how much rent did you pay, because you were no longer working for them?

HM: Not very much.

AK: So then how did you get back and forth to work from the Freehold lease.

HM: I had a car, just drive back and forth.

AK: What kind of a car did you have?

HM: Model B, Ford.

AK: Model T.

HM: B.

AK: B. Where did that fit in? There was the Model A and. . .

HM: It came after, the improvement on the A. There was the T and the A and then the B.

AK: What was that a 19. . . ?

HM: An 8 cylinder.

AK: Oh that was one of the V-8's.

HM: V-8's.

AK: Yes, well, '32 was the first V-8. So you were able to afford one of them. Did you buy it brand new or second hand?

HM: Well, they cost \$800 then. No, I bought one down in High River and just charged it and paid for it by the month, no finance charges, no nothing.

AK: Boy, you couldn't even buy gas for \$800 anymore. So then you were able to get back and forth to your work. Who else did Ralph have on his drilling crew there at that time, some of the pushes?

HM: Well, Mac Beeler??? was a driller. I worked with Mac there some, cat heading for him and Reg Young, Red McLaren.

AK: Was that Big Red or Little Red?

HM: Both Red's, big and little. They're both dead now.

AK: Little Red, did he not come up from the States?

HM: Yes, he was up from the States.

AK: Did Ralph bring him along.

HM: No, no, he was here long before Ralph.

AK: Oh, is that so? He was a fiery little. . .

HM: Yes, he was. Fine little fellow.

AK: And he was pushing tools was he, when you were. . .

HM: Yes. Drilling and roughnecking.

AK: He came up to Leduc didn't he, he was up here?

HM: Yes.

AK: Okay, who else was there around, was Hart McIver there by then? [tape was stopped] You were saying that Hart had not come with Ralph until you moved to the Calgary office. Now what kind of drilling did you do, all confined to the valley, you didn't move rigs out away from the valley?

HM: No, I never went wildcatting. We had some rigs out wildcatting but I never was out wildcatting, I stayed in the valley all the time.

#287 AK: Did you have a preference for staying there or how did you. . .?

HM: Yes, I had a preference.

AK: And you didn't have to go? Do you remember where they drilled out on the wildcat?

HM: It was all over the east country and the west country, Bottrel, way west of Olds.

AK: So when you were roughnecking, how many days a week did you work and when did you have your long change?

HM: Every three weeks we used to get a long change. We'd come off at 8:00 on Saturday morning, back on Sunday afternoon at 4:00.

AK: And the rest of the time?

HM: The rest of the time, you'd stay a week on afternoons, starting on Sunday, the next week you'd be days and the next week you'd be graveyards and every three weeks you'd get a long change.

AK: And how many days a week?

HM; 7 days a week.

AK: No Sundays, or no 5 day week.

HM: No.

AK; And for that, what would you get in the way of pay?

HM: About \$7 a day, for cat heading and derrick, \$5 something for floor.

AK: What did the drillers get then?

HM: \$12.

AK: So there wasn't very much spare time kicking around?

HM: No.

AK: Would that include a little bit of vacation during the year, or you just kept going?

HM: There was no such a thing as vacation at that time.

AK: I was told by somebody else that during those tough days there would be a group of men down at the end of the walk with their lunch buckets, hoping that maybe one of the fellows didn't show up. Now if a fellow didn't show up because he was drunk, would he have the job the next day?

HM: No, somebody else had his job.

AK: It was that tough.

HM: That tough.

AK: And if you didn't like the way things were going, off you went?

HM: Yes.

AK: What about compensation on the rigs themselves, say if you got a finger off or you got a leg broken or something, did you get compensation?

HM: Oh yes, we were under compensation at that time.

AK: Okay. And you kept on working with Ralph. When did the name Drilling Contractors come along.

HM; Three years from that.

AK: What, about 1939.

HM: Yes.

#341 AK: And the company was still owned by Phil Byrne, it was all Phil Byrne's. Do you remember if Phil had gone public with the company, was it a publicly traded?

HM: Yes, it was public.

AK: Yes, and it was listed under Anglo Canadian.

HM: Anglo Canadian and then it was Drilling Contractors and then McIver Drilling.

AK: Well, just going back to Drilling Contractors, Grant Spratt was doing what with Drilling Contractors, or with Anglo, what was his job?

HM: Gee whiz now.

AK: Was he kind of like a production manager or something like that?

HM: Yes, I guess he was production manager, yes.

AK: I guess by that time, did Anglo Canadian have any production of their own producing wells?

HM: Oh yes.

AK: And I suppose Ralph drilled the wells that. .

HM: Ralph drilled the wells.

AK: And you completed them.

HM: Yes.

AK: The offices of Anglo Canadian were in the Lancaster building were they not?

HM: That's right.

AK: Did Ralph have an office in there too, or did he stay pretty well out at Longview all the time?

HM: Well, the head office was the Lancaster building, that was just a field office out there.

AK: Yes, but I mean, did Ralph start to spend some of his time in the . . .

HM: Oh yes.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

AK: . . .[in mid-sentence] mastermind behind Anglo Canadian.

HM: He was a very clever operator, lots of push to him.

AK: What was his background?

HM: He was an ex-policeman, RCMP.

AK: But he had no formal financial training?

HM: No, not that I know of. He was a financier.

AK: And he started up I suppose, in the wake of the Brown discovery, the oil discovery of 1936

HM: Yes, that was big help. He was just at the right place at the right time.

AK: And he must have had the ability to raise money.

HM: Oh he had. He sure could raise the money.

AK: Where would he go to raise most of his money?

HM: Well now, I don't know. He didn't get too much from the east. He raised a lot of money around Calgary, local.

AK: How would you rate him with some of the other promoters of the day, like the George Pokey Sr.'s and those others.

HM: Oh, very much superior to any of them

#015 AK: How did he attract Grant Spratt to his organization?

HM: He knew Grant was a smart man and he wanted him

AK: Who else did he dig up besides Ralph and Grant?

HM: I don't know. We were in the field and we didn't know too much what was going on, we weren't in the financial end of it at all.

AK: Now there's a very tragic story about Phil, could you give us a brief outline of what happened and what you think the causes were?

HM: I'd just as soon keep off of that.

AK: You'd rather not.

HM: I'd rather not because it's all hearsay.

AK: Okay, you could tell me where his house was, that beautiful red townhouse.

HM: Elbow Drive and 104th St. is it, right at the river

AK: Elbow Drive and Sifton Blvd. And I understand that Red Dutton took that over, he bought it. So the company continued though, without Phil. Who took over the reins of power?

HM: Ralph did.

AK: He moved in and started to. . and then Grant I guess was alongside of him.

HM: Yes. He got Grant with him.

AK: So that was a bit of a change in Ralph's career. Ralph's still alive and he's still fairly vigorous. How would you describe Ralph, I know you're a good friend of his? While we're on character sketches.

HM: He was the finest character man I ever worked for. Still I think the world of Ralph.

AK: I know you do. What would you say his success at building up a drilling company was due to, what would you say the main reason for doing so well.

HM: Field experience and education. He had all kinds of field experience.

AK; He was a graduate geologist wasn't he?

HM: Yes.

AK: And yet he got into drilling.

HM: Yes. That's where he lost his hand. Dynamite. Blowing a key out of a shaft.

AK: A key out of a . . .

HM: A big shaft.

AK: What kind of . . .as power shaft or . . .?

HM: Well, this big lock key in this big shaft. They couldn't get it out and they were blowing it out with dynamite and it took his finger off.

AK: What was this, like a power. . .

HM: Yes.

AK: What was it, a steam rig?

HM: A steam rig, yes.

AK: On the mud or. . what kind of a shaft was it.

HM: A big drive shaft on the drilling rig.

#055 AK; He also had. . his hand was kind of. . .

HM: Well, that's what happened, dynamite. He was blowing this key out of the shaft.

AK: Yes, but he never lost the power of that hand.

HM: No.

AK: You can grab. . .

HM: Oh, I know.

AK: You know, it just hurts.

HM: What's the thumb off?

AK: The thumb.

HM: The thumb is off.

AK: But that didn't slow him down.

HM: Not a bit.

AK: So you feel that he attracted people to him that he figured could do a job for him?

HM: That's right.

AK: And how was he with those that failed him, say fellows that got into drinking problems, did he. . .

HM: He had no use for them.

AK: He just dumped them

HM: He used to warn me, if any driller comes on to relieve you, you smell liquor on his breath, don't turn over to him, let him go and have a sleep for 4 hours, you stay on the shift. He used to warn me on that. Which many is the night I had to do it.

AK: Well, sure because if they were coming on graveyard, they'd have been partying and partying a little too hard. A lot of them you know, they'd come to work and then the first thing they'd do, they'd get on the bench there and have a sleep.

HM: Yes. That's right.

AK: And let the derrick man drill or something.

HM: Yes.

AK: That's how a lot of fellows learned their trade though, learning how to drill by subbing for a fellow that was. . . So he was pretty strict with the discipline.

HM: Oh, he was strict.

AK; Do you remember him drilling for other people other than Anglo Canadian, like on contract, we're still talking about the valley?

HM: No. He done a lot of contracting in the field there, but it was all for Anglo Canadian. He was pushing the rigs.

AK: But then later on he did go to work for Home Oil and drilled holes up in the north end.

HM: Yes.

AK: Now speaking of Home Oil Harry, would you recount your first experience with Gordon Webster and after you've told us about that maybe you could give us an account of that terrible accident he had?

HM: Gordon came out to work for Home Oil as head engineer. On a Sunday afternoon he got a call from the head office in Calgary, they said, kill #4 well. He came down to me and he said, how do you kill a well, I never heard that expression before. I didn't explain to him,

I went up and I killed the well for him.

#092 AK: And he went along with you?

HM: Yes, he went along with me to see how it was done.

AK: Well, that was very good of you. At that time you were working on still drilling on the rigs.

HM: Yes, I was drilling on the rigs at that time.

AK: Okay. And then about this accident, could you explain just how it happened?

HM: I wasn't there when it happened but I was there right after it happened. This line was opened up, a 2" line, the line wasn't tied down and it whipped around like a lariat and there was 1,800 lb. on it. It didn't hit Gordon's legs but the pressure from the pipe cut both legs off.

AK: It was the pressure.

HM: Yes.

AK: And what happened to Joe Wark?

HM: It hit him on the rear end going in the boiler house door and it drove him out the other door. But it didn't bust his clothes or nothing.

AK: So what did they do with Gordon then?

HM: Rushed him to the hospital.

AK: At?

HM: At Black Diamond, or Turner Valley Hospital.

AK: What was the outcome then, the doctors and that sort of thing, could you give me a little background?

HM: Well, Gordon was complaining about his feet were cold at the hospital and they had to bury his legs and shoes and his feet warmed up in the hospital.

AK: And the names of the doctors?

HM: Dr. Lander and Lander. They were cousins. He got wonderful care from those Dr. Lander's.

AK: Would you say that they were responsible for saving his life?

HM: Oh, I think so, yes, they stayed with him day and night.

AK: Well, that's my understading too, that they really went after him when he was complaining and feeling very bad that they talked right to him. Gordon is still a very productive person, he's retired from Home Oil now, you're aware of that?

HM: Yes. I was talking to him at the OTS.

AK: He was there?

HM: Yes.

AK: And he does a little consulting. Now you were saying Harry that Ralph wanted you to move up to the norht end where Home Oil was having a number of wells drilled. Could you give us a little background on that?

HM: Ralph asked me to go up there for 6 months and I was up there for 9 years. I built a home up there and I was very glad I did.

AK: Where did you build it?

HM: Right in the Home camp.

AK: And who else was there?

HM: Rd McLaren was the tool push, Don Campbell was on production, he built a home there, Miles Maybe was a driller, he built a home there. Jack Fulson, he built a home there.

#133 AK: That other person that you mentioned was there was Bill Gallup who at that time, was working for Home Oil.

HM: On production.

AK: Oh, on production.

HM: Yes.

AK: The two other names we just mentioned, Don Binney, who worked on the rigs but out on the wildcats and you were saying that during the summer he would come in and roughneck for you.

HM: Yes.

AK: What about Derosier?

HM: Yes, he roughnecked for me too. Come in off the wildcat wells.

AK: Where did Don Binney come from?

HM; Nova Scotia. No, Ontario I believe it was. His wife comes from Newfoundland, she's a Newfie.

AK: Okay, so there was a nucleus building up in Turner Valley which would form the backbone of the Leduc operation.

HM: That's right.

AK: When did Ralph get the first signal to move up to Leduc.

HM: Right after the discovery.

AK: What is your recollection of how it happened, how the move happened?

HM: He had converted his rigs and moved up there just as fast as he could, after the discovery. We done an awful lot of drilling for Home up here.

AK: Did Little Red specialize in derrick building?

HM: No.

AK: Who was it that did the derrick building for you?

HM: Alec Hislop.

AK: Alec Hislop. And he was a contractor.

HM: Yes, he was a contractor.

AK: And you'd keep derricks ahead?

HM; Yes. But up here, instead of tearing the derricks down, we'd load them on ??? wagons and haul them around the country.

AK: Upright or. . .

HM: Upright.

AK: And you could keep them upright?

HM: Yes.

AK: What about power lines?

HM: We'd have Calgary Power and the telephone company out to take the lines down, cross the road and away we'd go.

AK: But in the first instance there was a lot of derrick building up here though, wasn't there?

HM: Yes, at first.

AK: And then they got wise and started to move them with. . .

HM: Yes, ??? wagons. I moved 8 times down here, I moved rigs on the ??? wagons across the road.

#170 AK: When you first came up here, were you set up as a push?

HM: Yes. I took over from Scotty Tosh. Scotty Tosh was here and I took his job.

AK: That's when he left to go with. .

HM: Yes, Pacific.

AK: With the McMahan brothers eh?

HM: Yes, Pacific.

AK: And up to that time he'd been pushing?

HM: Yes.

AK: Well, he did do some drilling for Ralph in Leduc didn't he?

HM: Yes, for a few months.

AK: Now when Ralph Will got the word, what did he tell you to do, did he say you've got to get up there or I'd like you up there or how did he put it?

HM: He always knew I didn't want to come up here and he made the proposition so good to me that I couldn't turn it down.

AK: And that was in terms of dollars was it?

HM: In terms of dollars.

AK: And he also set you up as a push?

HM: Yes.

AK: Now where did you live when you first came up here, you and your wife?

HM: Over what's the name of this battery over here, it's not there, but he had a shack there for me.

AK: And that's where you . . .

HM: That's where we moved into.

AK: And you were just by yourself there out by the back.

HM: Yes. Moved the shack around from one well to the other.

AK: Oh, you'd move the shack with the rig.

HM: Yes. And then 6 months later I got tired of living in this little shack so I said to Ralph one day, I'd like to get a 12' x 32' mounted on skids, so we could haul it behind the trucks, move from one rig to another. Oh, Ralph said, it would cost too much money. I said, you give me \$1,000 for it Ralph and I'll do the scrounging around and build it. So I built it for \$1,000 and I gave it to him after I left.

AK: It was skid mounted was it?

HM: Skid mounted. Go down the road 30 miles an hour behind a truck.

AK: And would you. . .

HM: 12' x 32'.

AK: Well that would be a pretty good sized . . .

HM: It really was. I had an old carpenter come up from the valley and build it, Bill Cooper.

AK: But still outside plumbing.

HM: Still outside plumbing, yes.

AK: When you were moving around you would have plenty of time to know where your next hole was, you'd have it all planned out, you'd know.

HM: Oh yes. And the first year I was up here I looked after 3 wells.

#211 AK: Three different rigs you mean?

HM: Three different rigs.

AK: So you were pushing three rigs.

HM: Yes, pushing three rigs.

AK: And who were your drillers?

HM: I have drillers here that roughnecked 6 weeks. I couldn't get boys from the valley to come up so there was one or two I set up 6 or 8 weeks roughnecking.

AK: But you'd have to be a pretty good judge as to whether you could trust them?

HM: Oh yes. You had to pick your best.

AK: And did they. . .?

HM: They turned out good.

AK: There was another way in which Ralph kept you guys going was some type of bonus arrangement?

HM: That's right.

AK: And to whom was that paid?

HM: To the tool push.

AK: And the driller?

HM: No.

AK: Just the pushes. That was over and above your monthly, by that time you were on a monthly salary.

HM: Yes.

AK: Did you manage to get a few days off?

HM: Oh yes. 1950 my wife took ill and I had to take her to Rochester and Ralph gave me time off. I was down there 6 weeks with my wife and I got a phone call one morning, hurry back Harry, we got a lot of work to do. So I tore right back and hired a nurse to stay with my wife down there and came back and stayed in a hotel.

AK: When did you get away from your 12' x '32 shack?

HM: I didn't until I bought this place.

AK: You bought that when you retired from . . .

HM: No, I bought this before I retired.

AK: Before you retired. And was the area around here built up at all, or was it just building up?

HM: This house was 8 months old when I bought it.

AK: It already had been built I see. And somebody had occupied it?

HM: Yes, a lumber man built it here and built it good for himself. And they went broke and had to sell it.

AK: Way back in those boom days, people going broke. Bad management I guess.

HM: Bad management. So I bought this house from Ashdown's Hardware, \$7,500.

AK: Oh boy, pretty good buy. Okay, one of the things that we didn't touch on was the way in which Ralph ran the company. He would write these rigs off within three years and then they would be zero value and then the successor company would buy them from the predecessor company and the sequence was Anglo Canadian, Drilling Contractors. . . .

HM: And McIver Drilling, then Hightower.

AK: Then Hightower. And McIver started up, I think when they were up here weren't they?

HM: Yes.

#266 AK: There was one other thing that Ralph did that we should get on tape here is, around '50 or '51, during the Korean War, he was in charge of tubular goods. Do you remember that job that he had, looking after. . .

HM: No.

AK: He was given the job by the government of rationing out casing and that sort of thing, it was in such short supply, that didn't come to your attention?

HM: No.

AK: Did you ever have anything to do with the McIver Drilling down in Virden, Manitoba.

HM: No.

AK: You probably heard about it.

HM: I visited their camp down there once or twice.

AK: Do you know the story of that well that was drilled there? ???'s place. That was Hart's grandfather.

HM: Hart's grandfather.

AK: And he had the minerals?

HM: Yes, he had the minerals.

AK: The made a well there, didn't they?

HM: A small well.

AK: Was that brought into the company?

HM: No, that was private.

AK: During the time, apart from Anglo Canadian, Drilling Contractors and Hart McIver and McIver Drilling, was there any instances where you drilled to earn an interest in property?

HM: No.

AK: Straight up contracting.

HM: Yes, straight up contracts.

AK: And as the time went on, the drilling was, I suppose by 1952 it was slowing down a bit?

HM: Yes, we were going to have to move here, so I decided I wouldn't go. So I built this garage and stayed here.

AK: How about the others, did they go with. . was it '52 that Ralph sold out?

HM: Yes.

AK: And he sold out to the Seaman brothers?

HM: Yes.

AK: How many of them went over with Seaman, like Don Binney and some of those others?

HM: Oh yes, a lot of them went over with them, Joe Wark. I could have went too but I decided I'd stay. They wanted me to go. But I was getting tired of it by that time.

AK: Now I know Harry that you weren't, or Ralph wasn't directly involved in Atlantic #3 but can you give me your recollections of how you saw that thing and your remembrance of what went on there?

HM: I remember one afternoon, I was south of the plant here, on the hill, I looked over at Atlantic and I saw 6, well, it was cratered, 6 of them catch of fire that afternoon.

#328 AK: Was that the big fire or was that just. . .

HM: No, the big fire was going before that but the whole field, it ignited from one to the other.

AK: Oh I see, but it only burnt for a few days.

HM: Yes.

AK: Do you remember Ralph talking to Cody, or did you have much to do with Cody Spencer at all when this hole was getting out of control.

HM: Not very much.

AK: So Harry you were too busy with your own rigs to have much if any contract with Atlantic 3.

HM: That's right.

AK: What about Tip Maroney or Charlie Visser, did you have much to do with them?

HM: Quite a bit with Charlie but not with Tip. I'd see Tip once in awhile. He was a busy man too.

AK: So when you were running these 3 rigs, one of them was over on the Woodbend side.

HM: Woodbend side.

AK: And how did you get over there?

HM: Drive around by Jasper Place, twice a day.

AK: Over the High Level bridge?

HM: Yes.

AK: You'd have to go all the way right downtown wouldn't you?

HM: No.

AK: Was there a bridge. . .

HM: No, they had the ??? Bridge in then.

AK: Oh, the ??? was in then, well that saves you a little bit.

HM: Yes, a little bit.

AK: And then you'd drive all the way back?

HM: All the way back.

AK: And there was no ferry?

HM: No ferry.

AK: When did they put that in?

HM: The next spring.

AK: That was 1950?

HM: '50.

AK: And then the bridge went in. . . '53 or '54 or something.

HM: '52 I think.

AK: That's the end of that side, we'll go to the next tape. . . radios?

HM: No radios. And I had to be back every morning with the reports from all three rigs, phone

into Calgary.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

AK: We'll just do some of this, this is the second tape, side 1. We were talking about the bad roads out here and the fact that you didn't have radios and there was that one story that you mentioned about Little Red Young and his car getting stuck in the mud and the fact that you had to get three jeeps to pull it out to Calmar.

HM: Back to Calmar, yes.

AK: And you all had jeeps as back-up.

HM: Back-ups, yes.

AK: And then to get the men in and out from the rigs to Calmar, they had jeeps too.

HM: Yes.

AK: I think we'd established the fact that we didn't have radios. So it was just driving to the nearest phone and getting those phone reports to McIver. . . .

HM: Had to have them in by 8:00 in the morning.

AK: Ralph wanted them in there by 8. What about Saturdays and Sundays?

HM: Same as any other day.

AK: Phone them in. Who would be down at the phone?

HM: McIver and Ralph.

AK: Every day?

HM: Yes, every day. Sunday's the same as any other day.

AK: So you all worked hard and I could see where you built up your business. You were using different supply stores, there was no particular favourites.

HM: No.

AK: You just got them to bring the stuff out. What were most of those draw works, were they National's or Oilwell's?

HM: Mostly Oilwell's, yes.

AK: And what pumps.

HM: Oilwell pumps. We had a couple of National's but mostly Oilwell.

AK: Right. So it was pretty easy to get parts for.

HM: Pretty easy to get parts.

AK: All the difference was that you had the sprocket chain running out to the. . .

HM: We had Al Granger, the running man, to pick up the parts.

AK: Oh, I remember Al, yes. Is he still around.

HM: He's safety man down in Calgary, for a lot of companies.

AK: For which?

HM: For a lot of different companies.

AK: Oh I see, he does safety work.

HM: Safety work. And training new roughnecks for safety. Goes around to the rigs all over the north, he's done well.

AK: That's good. So when 1952 came Ralph decided to sell out and he discussed this with you fellows.

HM: Yes.

#034 AK: And nobody wanted to try to buy him out, he was making his deal with the Seaman brothers?

HM: Yes, he made the deal.

AK: They had just those claw??? holes before.

HM: Yes.

AK: So did all the rigs go?

HM: Yes, they all went, everything went.

AK: What did they do with them, did they rebuild them?

HM: I don't know what they did, I didn't go with them. They wanted me to go but I thought I had enough.

AK: So by that time you had this house here.

HM: Yes. And I wanted to spend some winters away. So I spent 31 winters in Phoenix and 3 now in Yuma.

AK: Right. So in order to keep yourself busy you thought you'd like a service station.

HM: A service station, yes.

AK: But I think you were saying it was something you'd never even thought about?

HM: No. I always said, it was one thing I'd never go into.

AK: Was it Imperial that approached you to. . .?

HM: Yes. They talked me into building this.

AK: Did you buy the land from Devon Estates?

HM: Yes, \$100 a lot.

AK: Oh boy, what did you get, 3 lots.

HM: 6.

AK: 6 lots.

HM: Yes, and I sold them for \$30,000 a lot.

AK: So there was a nice markup without even the buildings or anything.

HM: Yes.

AK: But you didn't sell them separate did you?

HM: No.

AK: No, that was what your price was.

HM: Yes. No, I kept them all together, 6 of them.

AK: And that meant you were in the service station business from '52 to '74.

HM: Yes.

AK: And then, was it immediately that you made a deal with Waterloo Motors, and you became a dealership using their facilities?

HM: Using their facilities, associated dealer. So I wouldn't have to keep a lot of cars out here. Just take the customers in there, use their yards. They had lots of varieties. I had the numbers and the prices of every car they had in there.

AK: So you could say what they had and whatever. And you didn't have any special

arrangement with Imperial?

HM: No.

AK: You pumped a lot of gas. You were saying you pumped as much as 1,000 gallons. . .

HM: Before 8:00 in the morning.

#064 AK: And then you had service mechanics.

HM: Oh yes. 3 bays, 3 mechanics, all the time, grease men.

AK: Did you have trouble keeping people?

HM: No. I had one mechanic 21 years with me, another 19. Good mechanics too.

AK: And then when you folded, they left?

HM: Yes. I gave them a nice bonus, both of them.

AK: When you left?

HM: Yes.

AK: Well, they'll remember that. So since then you've. . .

HM: Well, I wanted to travel. I could always hire a manager to hire the thing in wintertime when I was away.

AK: You had no trouble in that respect eh?

HM: No.

AK: Somebody that would look after your interests.

HM: Oh, I'd have made more money if I'd have stayed home. But I had 31 winters away.

AK: Oh, those are good. And you'll have quite a few more.

HM: Hope to.

AK: Yes. Well, winding this thing up Harry, just let me hear what you have to say about your philosophy about young people going into the drilling business?

HM: I don't think it's as good now as it was when I went in. It's a lot of wildcatting today and it's not too steady for young boys.

AK: No, when the boom was on everybody was really busy.

HM: Yes.

AK: Do you think there's a future for younger people in the drilling business?

HM: I wouldn't advise any young fellow to go into the oil business any more.

AK: It's all changed.

HM: It's all changed, yes.

AK: And it will never. . just like Al Forrest there, asking why don't they drill more wells around here. Because there's nothing more to drill for.

HM: It's drilled out.

AK: That's right. And all I know about it, there's a bunch of holes being drilled but they're just pecking around the edges.

HM: Oh yes. Just marginal holes.

AK: No really, there's no big plays.

HM: No, there's no big plays.

AK: I guess it probably went foreign. That seemed to work out good for Art Branchcombe, did you know Art?

HM: Oh yes, I knew Art.

AK: He did well on the foreign service. Maybe that's a place where there's still some action.

HM: But there's a lot of bad places to have to go to.

AK: During your time with Ralph, did Ralph ever get the idea that he wanted to move rigs into foreign. . .

HM: No.

#100 AK: He just wanted to stay right here?

HM: Yes.

AK: He didn't want to go overseas?

HM: No, he had no desire to go foreign at all.

AK: Was he asked to do it?

HM: I imagine he was.

AK: Well, I think that does it Harry. I'm sorry about that mix-up on the switch here but I appreciate your time and I've enjoyed this interview and I hope that. . .

HM: I wish I could have gave you a better story.

AK: Oh no, you've done very well, it's given a good insight into a lot of those early days, where you worked and so forth. So thank you, over and out.