PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Lauder Nowers

INTERVIEWER: Susan Birley

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SB: It's January 17th, 1985 and this is Susan Birley interviewing Lauder Nowers at his home in Calgary. Mr. Nowers I wonder if we could start by just covering your early background, where were you born and raised?

LN: In Calgary, in this house. I've literally spent all my life here, except for a few years working in Turner Valley and a few years in the Army and this kind of thing.

SB: What about your mother and father, were they raised in Alberta or where did they come from?

LN: My father came from Montreal in 1902, my mother was born here in Calgary, which is a little unusual. Her father came out with the second contingent of the Mounted Police and her mother came out later on, in the early 1880's. And she came from Montreal too. So we've been here a long time.

SB: And when did they meet and get married?

LN: Well, my dad came out with the Bank of Commerce. He opened the bank in a little town called Innisfail, just up the line here. My mother lived there at that time, her father was the doctor, that and the JP and the whole business. Dad decided to leave the bank there and he went in to selling farm lands and insurance and horse trading. About 1910 he and Mother were married and shortly after moved down here. Dad went into the real estate development business with the fellow that laid out Elbow Park and Roxboro and Britannia and all those places.

SB: When they built this house were there many other buildings around?

LN: No. This one next door was just starting about the time Dad's house was finished and there were about 2 or 3 or 4 houses in Elbow Park, from Mission Bridge to well the Elbow River I guess. When I was a kid we had a cow. . .

#032 SB: Right here in town?

LN: Yes. Driving horses and chickens, it was just like a little farm. There were no houses behind us here at all, or across the street.

SB: So the Nickle house hadn't been built either.

LN: No, no, that was one of the last ones to be built. And the horses and cows were tethered on picket chains around the fields. I was trying to think, the next kind of moment in my life was my father selling the horses and the cow and he got a car. By that time of course, this immediate area was built up. The street cars turned up near Mission Bridge, they didn't come down here at that time. The roads were terrible, they were just mud holes when it rained. But it was great for the kids, a good place to play. About that time we all had riding horses, the kids all had them and we'd picket them out and in the fall we'd

take them out to some farmer who would watch over them for the winter. This kept us busy in the summertime.

SB: Do you remember what the first car was that your father had?

LN: It was called a Chevrolet 490, it was an open small touring car.

SB: And what year was that, that he got it?

LN: 1916.

SB: So it must have been one of the early models that came out.

LN: In the Chevrolet's it was, there were quite a few cars before that. This chap, Fred Lowells??? that my dad worked for, when he came down from Innisfail, he had gosh, I'm trying to think of the names, one was an early Cadillac and he had an American underslung, which was a race car of sorts. This was 1908, or '9. An interesting little sidelight, I don't know whether you want, you can pick this out some place, on the first rig that I worked on the head man, the tool pusher was a fellow named Harry Morris and he originally came from Edmonton. His father had the first car in Alberta and all the years that I knew Harry Morris, he had #1 license plate, the same as his father had. The government kept that for the Morris family.

SB: So there were a few cars around then, in the early 1920's.

LN: Yes, still all the trucking was done by horses, moving vans and the ice wagon and the milk wagons and the coal wagons were all pulled by horses. Right up into the early 20's when the trucks and other automobile machines took over. But it was the slope thing. The first war brought these things on, developed machinery much faster than it normally would have been developed. I think that anyway.

#076 SB: So where did you get your fuel, were there quite a few gas stations around?

LN: As a matter of fact, my father used to keep a barrel of the stuff in the barn. We had a barn right here on the property, which incidentally is the house at the back of us. And he used to take this barrel up to a service station, I can't remember where it was now. Anyway they'd fill this thing up and he had a little pump on it and he'd pump it up and pour the gasoline into this old car of his.

SB: So you went to school in Calgary as well I guess then, which ones did you go to?

LN: The first school in Elbow Park was a little 2 room cottage school that was built down on 6th St. and 36th Ave. I went to Grade 1 and 2 there, then they added kind of a duplicate of the school on one side so it became a 4 room school so I went to Grade 4 there. Then we all moved up to Earl Grey School, which was a large sandstone school that they tore down about 15 years ago. It was a regular public school with 8 rooms and up to . . . no, it had more than 8 rooms but up to Grade 8. And went to high school, to a thing called South Calgary High School, which no longer exists. Had to go way up the other side of 14th St. Just about that time the Depression started.

SB: Did you have any work during the summer, did you try to get jobs or, I guess there wasn't too much going then?

LN: No, there really weren't. When the 1928-'29 boom came there were summer jobs available because Calgary boomed in real estate and oil and heaven knows what and there were lots of jobs for young fellows, particularly in Board rooms of these stockbrokers.

Stockbrokers were all up and down 8th Ave. peddling regular things from the stock exchange. But the oil business was pretty good, it wasn't a real boom oil business but it was pretty good.

SB: I guess that was after the discovery of Royalite #4 was it?

LN: Yes, that was the first big well that was hit in Turner Valley. It wasn't a crude oil well, it was a naphtha well. It set off a real dandy boom in 1914 and a lot of wells were drilled in the Turner Valley town area, all of which were naphtha producers.

SB: Naphtha, was that closer to oil or gas or was it in between?

LN: It was a gas driven hydrocarbon, I don't know just how to put this, whether it was younger than crude oil or what I don't know. It was almost pure gasoline in the sense that if you ran it through a gas plant and got the sulphur out of it and some other materials, it was a pure white gasoline. It didn't have a very good anti-knock quality but it was perfectly useable. In fact they used to use the stuff right out of the well head and it would burn. It would also boil and smell to the high heavens. That kind of, for want of a better word, naphtha boom and gas boom, kind of kept Turner Valley going. There were a lot of wells being drilled up to about 1930-'31. Then the Depression really started to hit and everybody pulled in their horns. There were a lot of men laid off in Turner Valley and no rigs were operating from 1930 or '31 until 19. . . well, actually the first one I worked on was in '35 but it wasn't a Royalite well but Royalite drilled it. It was called the Arca and it was down on the Highwood River and it was dry.

#144 SB: You had worked before that for one of the bond companies too there. Which one was it?

LN: Tull & Ardern??? was the first company I worked for and then Tull & Ardern's assets, such as they were, were taken over by R. A. Daly and Co., it was a Toronto brokerage firm. And I worked for Daly up until I went with Royalite.

SB: Maybe could you outline how you got the job with Royalite, how you came to be employed?

LN: Yes. Getting a job in those days, particularly in the oil fields, was next to an impossibility unless you knew somebody. Fortunately for me, my father and J. H. Macleod, who was the President of Royalite were good friends and I put an application into Royalite for work and several months after, I got a call to come down to see them. I was interviewed by Mr. Macleod and he decided to offer me this job and was very quick to point out that after I reported down there I was completely on my own and if I didn't cut the mustard, why, good bye. So that was the beginning and that's the only way you could get a job was by knowing somebody or some pull some place. I suppose a little later on it had changed. Actually men came from all over Alberta to work in the oil fields because there was a lot of work then.

SB: And how did the other people you were working with view you getting the job that way, did you have any problems?

LN: Well, I only had 1 friend for a long time, quite a long time. When I reported out to this rig to go to work the rig builders were still building the rig. It was a wooden rig, and the drilling machinery was all stashed all over the lease and there was pipe and all kinds of

things, all of which were completely strange to me. I had never seen a rig operating. And I really wasn't very mechanically inclined either although I really hadn't had an opportunity, this was the first. But the superintendent of Royalite, a fellow named Sam Coultis, his son, Don Coultis, reported for work the same day as I did. Needless to say he got the job because his father was the superintendent. So Don and I became pretty good friends, but we didn't have any other friends, they treated us like we had something worse than measles. Other than ignoring us they weren't exactly cruel or anything but they sure weren't friendly. Even to the point that the first day when we finished work which was a 12 hour shift and I was so darned tired I could hardly lift my feet, so was Don and they just drove off and left us. We had to walk, I had got a room in the Black Diamond Hotel when I came down in the morning, Don lived in Turner Valley which was a couple of miles away. So it was shorter if I walked to Turner Valley town with Don, which was about 4 miles and he got his mother's car and drove me over to the hotel. Somehow or other he wangled his mother's car for several weeks, and he'd come and pick me up in the morning and finally, after about 5 weeks, we got this rig all ready to sput in and go. And crews were put together and there was a drilled named Sam Sewell???, who lived quite close to me in Black Diamond. He had drilled or been a driller back in the 20's, in fact just about everybody that worked on this rig, with the exception of Don Coultis and I, had all worked before the big lay off in 1930. So anyway I was assigned to this crew head up by Sam Sewell and the cat head man was a chap named Walter Scott who was an old oil field employee. The pipe racker was a fellow named Jack Eaglesham???. Jack had worked in Turner Valley for Royalite before, he worked in the plant as a matter of fact. He'd worked in Sarnia and had worked in Burma as a cable tool driller. The [lead town]??? man was Don Coultis. . .no, he was the. . .

#234 SB: You mentioned before Johnny Guthrie.

LN: Yes, Johnny Guthrie, Coultis wasn't on there at that time. Guthrie was the derrick man, Walter Scott was cat head. Jack Eaglesham was the pipe racker and I was the lead town man. Well, we hadn't been working very long before Mr. Coultis came out to the rig and he said to Eaglesham, get back to the plant, we need you there more than we do here. Jack Eaglesham was quite disappointed, however away he went and Don Coultis, I don't know where he'd been, in the plant or something, he came and was then the pipe racker. This was . . . boy, it was strange stuff and dirty. I've never been so dirty in my life as I was in that. There was a reason for it. These rotary rigs use mud to lubricate the bit, to carry the cuttings off the bottom and bring them up and the hydro-static head of this column of mud keeps some of the loose formations from falling in. At least that's the theory. And the mud that we used, we made ourselves. We dug clay up in the north end of Turner Valley and mixed this in a great big mud box, about twice as big as this room. And it had a steam line in there and water line and we'd cook this stuff and break it all up until we had a great thick soup of clay. And it was thick, boy it was really thick. When you started this, if you were going to change the bit and you start pulling these stands out, roughly 90' in length. And the mud was so heavy that it wouldn't run out of the pipe until you got about, if you were down 3 or 4 thousand feet you'd pull half your pipe out and it would

be what we said was wet. It meant that it was full of mud. So when you broke the connection at the table, so that you could rack this pipe, god the mud just . . . all over everybody. And by the time you got all the pipe out of the hole you were standing in 6 or 7", right near the table, of this muck. And of course, before we could go back in or anybody could handle tools or ropes or anything you had to wash this stuff all off the rig floor and wash the pipe all off. We used to try and wash the pipe a little bit as it came out of the hole but the theory in those days was if you thinned that mud down you were in real trouble. So some drillers wouldn't let you wash the pipe and some would a little bit. Anyway we'd get this stuff back in, having been thoroughly drenched, changed overalls because you couldn't work with all this muck on you. And we'd finally get this thing back in the hole. It rarely stayed there very long because the bits were not anywhere near what they are today.

#301 SB: What kind of bits were they using?

LN: Well we started, actually, we sputted in with fish tails, which brought the cuttings up in great chunks. Fish tails worked pretty well, near the top of the hole. But the minute you had any hard rock you've got to pull them off and use a comb bit with teeth on it. Actually where we were, when we sputted in we drilled about 400' with a huge fishtail bit, it must have been about 18 or 19" in diameter. And the stuff that came out of that hole, it came out in about a wheelbarrow full a second. I might as well stop here and describe how we didn't have any method to get the cuttings out of the mud, other than a settling ditch. The shale shakers which we got later had undoubtedly been invented but we didn't have them. No Royalite rig had them, there was 2 rigs operating by this time. And they didn't have shale shakers so we had a settling ditch, I guess in total length it would be 150-175' long. It went out of the rig and went all around like this and back to the big mud pit where the suctions from the pumps pulled dirt back down the hole again. And getting these settlings as we called them, out of these ditches was really something. You just shovelled them out and threw them out you see. You had a walkway beside the ditch. This was back breaking work. God bless me, it was.

SB: That's the end of that side.

Tape 1 Side 2

SB: You didn't mention what your very first job was when you started at the rig.

LN: Well, the first job we had, and this fellow Don Coultis, we had to dig the mud pit, the suction pit for the big pumps. And it was 12' square and 8' deep, I'll never forget those dimensions. Where they decided, you had to locate this fairly close to the rig, first it was willow roots, then it was a blue clay that was just as hard, well, almost as hard as cement and we had to pick with a pickaxe, about 2' of this darn clay. Then we got out of that and ran into fairly decent clay that you could actually dig with a shovel. Both Don's and my hands were soft hands compared to these rig guys. After 2 or 3 days of this pickaxe stuff, I'm not exaggerating, I'd hold up my glove and there would be blood drop out of it. And the blisters, you can hardly believe.

SB: I guess I interrupted, you were describing the mud, not shaker box but. . .
LN: Oh, the settling.
SB: Yes, settling.
LN: Well as I said, this was back breaking work. And the whole operation was back breaking, it was hard work and very, very physical stuff. And as soon as we'd get the bit on the bottom and start to dig, everybody went out to the big ditches and started cleaning out the much that was coming out.
SB: Would the geologists look at any of the rock cuttings that came out of there?
LN: Yes. On top of the ground we'd get maybe a visit a week from somebody. And we'd catch samples, and wash them and put them in sample bags. We'd have 2 sample bags every 25 or 30' theoretically. But with the settling ditch, nobody had a clue, from the samples, where you were because you never knew where you got them. They could have come out of the hole 3 days ago. But the geologists knew the formation in Turner Valley pretty well. In some areas they knew it exactly and they knew what depths you were going to hit certain formations. And when you hit those formations the action of your bit told you that you had hit this marker as we used to call them. Then pretty soon, we'd start getting different kind of chips in the muck and we'd confirm that we'd gone through this particular marker. But we didn't see the geologist very much until we got down close to the limestone.

#052 SB: Do you remember who the geologist would have been?
LN: The names of them? Oh yes. Don Mackenzie was one of them, Vern Taylor was another. They were the 2 main ones as far as I was concerned but George Jones, or Jonesy, who later became our first scout. Jonesy could pick a sample just as fast as any geologist could and he could tell you where you were and everything else. George DeMille was another one. George DeMille ended up one of our most qualified and one of our best known geologists and George never had a geological degree. He just taught himself and he was good. But anyway we had Jonesy and George and 2 proper geologists.
SB: George Jones had started out as a cook I think.
LN: Yes. When I first knew him he was what we called a bull cook. He was a great little guy, we always liked Jonesy's arrival, he always had a bunch of new stories and stuff like this. He used to collect Nabob coupons and the amounts of coffee that were consumed in these work camps, Jonesy had hundreds of these. When Vern Taylor and Buddy were married, he gave them a complete set of silver plate, that he'd got through these Nabob coupons. And pots and pans and everything, he set up housekeeping. Then later on Jonesy left that work and became a scout but that's another story.
SB: Was he the one Ted Link used on one of his early survey crews?
LN: Oh yes. That was one of those little stories that comes out every now and again. When Jonesy retired, many years later, he said that he had worked for a period for Dr. Ted Link, that we had no record of. And this would amount to, total, 3 or 4 years service. So we got hold of Ted Link who was living right here in Calgary. Incidentally he had been the Chief Geologist of Imperial. We got hold of Ted and he said, sure he worked for me. These engineers and surveyors and geologists all keep very complete records of everything they

do. He got some of his old journals out and searched through them and sure enough, here's Jonesy, except that they didn't want him to hire any more men so he took Jonesy on and called him a man and a 2 horse team and in brackets on the journal, I saw the journal, was Jonesy. So that was rather interesting.

#094 SB: I was wondering also, you said that you got a room in the Black Diamond Hotel, it was a boarding house more than being a hotel, a lot of people would stay there?

LN: Actually when I went there, there was a fellow named Walter Bonderheim???, who had been in Black Diamond for some time and a few other fellows living in the hotel. I think they had about 20 rooms, 22 rooms, something like that. And it was, in those days, you know, somebody who was coming in for the day or for a couple of days, they were few and far between. But very quickly of course, the place filled up. It didn't fill up with permanent residents like I was and old Walter Bonderheim and 2 or 3 other people. They went in, stayed 2 or 3 days, found a boarding house somewhere which was much cheaper. As far as I was concerned the hotel was an ideal place. I paid $15 a month for my room and $25 a month for my food. They had a kitchen run by some Ukranian girls came from up north, 2 sisters, and we had meal tickets and they'd punch them when you had your meal. And they fed you like kings, man alive, I have never eaten better food or more of it. And they filled your lunch pail. Half the time I had to carry my thermos bottle in my pocket, they'd got so darned much stuff to eat in my lunch pail. It was an ideal set up and I was just around 5 years in the hotel. I never had my rent raised, I never paid any more for my meals than $25 a month.

SB: And would that include laundry and things like that?

LN: No, just board and room. But there was a laundry, a Chinese guy up the street that had been there for years and he did laundry. There was a hardware store and a drugstore and there was a fat genial fellow that had a little tailor shop. He did all kinds of other odd jobs but he had this tailor shop. His name was Solomon Waletsky, he was Jewish and I think he was a Polish Jew, he was a great guy. There was a restaurant, terrible place run by a Chinese guy and a laundry and there was a little, old grocery store run by a man named Zack, and he was a good head. There was no bank but there was a bank in Turner Valley. Gene Stubbs who owned the hotel did quite a banking business from the point of view of cashing cheques. And there was method in his madness, he had the beer parlour, he had the only beer parlour anywhere in the whole area at that particular time. So he'd keep 4 or 5 thousand dollars in the safe and he'd cash cheques for everybody. And of course, they spent a lot of it in the pub. But he was an awfully decent guy and ran a good hotel.

#148 SB: Do you remember anyone else who was working in the hotel, were Mary and Mel Pope there at that time?

LN: No. Mel Pope was there but he wasn't in the hotel. I think Mel, if I remember rightly, he was boarding with somebody. Because there were a lot of ladies ran boarding houses. This was amongst the local people, this was the favourite way to live. A lot of people thought I was a real spendthrift, spending this $40 a month on my room and board when I could have gone with Mrs. Who's It down the street. I think I could have had room and

board for $20 a month.

SB: Then you wouldn't have your own room I suppose, it would be just. . .?

LN: No. I couldn't see this at all. When I first went there you see, we worked a 12 hour shift, 7 days a week. I looked up to see what I made, $5.60 a day. This was a lot of money you know. In fact I felt I was rich as ??? on this stuff. When I first started there I was getting about $150 a month, more than that, about $165 I guess. And $40 to live. I didn't have anything to do with the other except stick it in the bank, I wasn't much of a beer drinker.

SB: Did they have a community hall there in Black Diamond?

LN: No, not really. Later on some of those amenities were built. There were a couple of churches. The Catholic Church had a little place, they used to have a fund raising thing and we'd all go, Crown and Anchor games and Blackjack games and stuff like this. The fact that most of us weren't Roman Catholics didn't matter a hoot. Anything that was a little out of the ordinary was fun.

SB: I was wondering, on the rig itself that you were working on, you mentioned that it was one of the early styles of rotary, the chain ran directly off the. . .was it called the cat head that it ran off of?

LN: When I first started the drive chain, the table drive chain came off the cat head. But quite quickly and I think they must have had these stored in the machine shop or something, they brought, after we sputted in, they brought out this drilling control, it was called a Haliburton Drilling Control. I frankly never did know how this thing worked and about 50% of the time it didn't work. But it added 3 chains to our drive train. The steam engine was back here, then the Haliburton drilling control. 3 chains came off the Haliburton drilling control and went to the cat head, the table and this kind of thing. And a chain came off the cat head and came on another drive, I don't remember the name of it now, but the drive wheel was underneath the cat head. This theoretically, was supposed to make a much more positive drive and the Haliburton drilling control with the bit was binding a bit or something and this thing was supposed to lift it off it so it would spin free and not twist off. It did this periodically but mostly it didn't. And because of all these extra chains we had chains breaking all the time. And the noise was unbelievable. You couldn't carry on a conversation on the rig floor with all this stuff whirling around and the table was howling like a banshee. They had ball bearings about the size of baseballs that the table turned on. But the first tables we had, these bearings were open. They had a thing over the top, a guard or something over the top but the sides, you could watch the ball bearings rolling around, in the mud. And ball bearings don't last very long in the mud, particularly when the mud is full of sand and grit and everything else. So anyway, that's the stuff that we used on this rig. I think I mentioned that Johnny Guthrie was the derrick man.

#228 SB: Yes.

LN: Yes. After we'd got down about 2,000' I guess, Johnny got drunk one night and ran his car into Sheep Creek and didn't turn up for work and got fired and I got his job. I'd been up the derrick climbed up but I'd never been up to work of course, because my job was down on the floor. But I had watched Johnny do this long enough to know what he did. I

wasn't too sure how he did it. But he was a little short guy and he seemed to be able to handle it all right so I figured I was taller, by this time I was just as strong as he was so I should be able to do this. But boy, when I walked out on this working board, man alive, and the thing, it was made of 2 planks that were fastened together. They were beautiful pieces of wood, they were absolutely knot free Douglas firs. And you could get out on the end of them and things would go down 2' you know, but scared the dickens out of me. And the night that Johnny drove into the creek it was foggy and cold and steam from the boilers was blowing through the rig and you couldn't see beans. And I was up on this rig and I couldn't see the floor, they couldn't see me either. There was the darnedest shouting match going on because I knew when a stand came up and they unhooked it. And of course, I knew by the action of the pipe up where I was that they had unscrewed it at the table and the pipe anchor would pull the bottom end of the stand over here out of the way and the driller would release the brake and drop the pipe. At the same time I would be manhandling the top and getting it around a jut of wood, there was a little notch in it called a finger, and I would release the thing that fastened onto the pipe. I'd release the door and that would swing free and then the blocks would go down again to pick up another. I think we were maybe, somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500' of pipe, which isn't very much. And I think it took us about 4 hours to get this stuff out of the hole, primarily because I didn't know what I was doing most of the time. And they didn't know what I was doing either, except that I was having a heck of a time. We finally got the stuff out of the hole. By this time I was almost in a state of collapse, I was so tired. Because when I said manhandling this pipe, I mean that, I didn't know how to be a proper derrick man. Later on I got the knack of this. When they started up with the 90' joint I'd get everything ready and get hold of this pipe and I'd snap the door open and get the pipe out of there and just rack ???, it was no problem at all. But we, on that particular shift, we never did get the pipe back in the hole, we left it for the other crew. Because everybody was tired and frustrated and nearly going crazy. And 2 of the fellows on the crew down below wouldn't climb the derrick, they didn't like the height. Nobody asked me if I liked the height at all. Height doesn't bother me but boy, that night.

#299 SB: Was this what they called the monkey boy that you would be standing out on?

LN: The monkey boy, yes.

SB: Did it have any guard around it or anything or was it just the board?

LN: No. You had a safety belt. You couldn't work with a guard around it. I had a safety belt which today wouldn't be passed at all. It was just a waist belt, a big, wide belt and I had fastened it so darned tight I could hardly breathe. I found out later it didn't have to be that tight. Later on we used a belt with a shoulder harness, which was much safer. I fell off the board once or twice and I got knocked off it a couple of times, but obviously I didn't slip through the belt. But it was a bit of a shock to go end over tip off the board and come to a sudden stop about 6' below it.

SB: You said that they'd work 7 days a week, 12 hours a day. Would you get a break at some point?

LN: Yes in a way. At the end of 6 weeks you had what they called a long change. No, this was

after we quit the 12 hours, which we did fairly quickly. I think about 3 months after I started they decided that this 12 hour shift was crazy. We'd work 3-8 hours shifts, 7 days a week. So on the third change, you got off Saturday morning at 8:00 and you didn't have to go to work until 4:00 on Sunday afternoon.

SB: And that was your break?

LN: Well, you got a break but you didn't sleep. Normally if you'd gone and slept 7 or 8 hours you then would have had an evening and the following day till 4:00. But when you got off long change you never even thought of going to bed. I'd come home here to Calgary. There were all kinds of fellows that would give you a ride. After this first rig, the end of the first rig, I bought a car so then I could do what I liked.

SB: What were some of the special events that happened with this rig, I think you mentioned before, you shot it with nitroglycerin?

LN: Yes. When we finally got down to the limestone and this was about 7 ½ months it took us to get down there, primarily from lack of good equipment, good equipment by standards that we later came to, and pipe that cost us 3 or 4 fishing jobs. We finally hit this limestone cap, it was hard as. . . it was harder than the best concrete that you ever saw. And we wore 3 or 4 bits out. . .

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

SB: Okay, you were just mentioning when you hit the limestone.

LN: Yes, and we got through this stuff and the limestone, once you got through the cap block, was pretty good digging and we thought that we would surely get a well. However, there were signs that oil had been there or a little bit might be there. But when we tried to produce the well nothing came out at all. This was before the days of acidizing or structure fracturing or any of the modern methods they have now to really be assured of a well, if there's anything there. So the decision was made to blow this with nitroglycerin. So a chap named Stalnechter, who lived in Shelby in Montana, he was the owner and sole survivor of an international torpedo company. So they contacted Charlie and he came up to see what he would need and this kind of thing. And went back down to Shelby, then about a week or so later, he arrived with this truck, 1,200 quarts of liquid nitroglycerin. Which is by far the most volatile explosive and today liquid nitroglycerine is never used under any circumstances, for anything. But it's the main component of dynamite. Now they have been able to mix nitroglycerine with various products and made a stable explosive out of it, an explosive that you can do all kinds of things with, relatively safely. But this liquid stuff will just go off for no apparent reason sometimes. If it gets shaken the wrong way or some darn thing happens. Normally you set it off with dynamite, the explosion of the dynamite makes the nitro go. Anyway, when Charlie Stalnechter arrived at the rig with this truck everybody left except me. I was, I guess, too darned ignorant, I couldn't see any reason for leaving. I was kind of interested in this nitro bit. So I'm hanging around there and Stalnechter didn't have a helper with him and he asked me if I wanted the job. We were going to be laid off for 2 weeks while this great big charge was

all put together, it's a very slow, careful process. So I said, sure. I forget now what he paid me but it was 10 times at least, what I got per day from Royalite. And I helped with putting these torpedos together and held them while he poured the nitro in.

#043 SB: Was a torpedo, what was that, a device. . .?

LN: These were very thin, almost like tin. But they were tin that wouldn't spark, they were a special alloy of tin. They were about 4" in diameter and you could put them together, like sleeve fit you see. We'd put a new section on and pour this stuff in, lower it into the hole. You get terrible headaches from nitroglycerin, the fumes. But Charlie didn't he'd become immune to this but I sure thought my head was going to explode.

SB: What was the active ingredient in it, was it mixed with some petroleum product or something?

LN: You asked about. . .

SB: I was just wondering about the components of nitroglycerin, why it would cause headaches?

LN: I can tell you what it is, it's trinitrotololoine???, that's the TNT. It's an explosive that was invented in Sweden. The rewards today that are given to peace makers and great chemists and heaven knows what, by the Swedes, all came from dynamite and nitroglycerine. The old boy that invented dynamite and nitro, he invented nitro first, then dynamite, he became one of the richest men in the world and set up these great trusts and funds to further, after blowing up mankind, to try and make his extinction a little slower. Anyway, this stuff had to be handled with just. . .talk about kid gloves. Needless to say Charlie was an expert at this. He kiddingly said to me, this is a great job because you only make one mistake. As far as I know, whether Charlie is still alive, I've never heard of him dying actually, but he went out of this business later on. I worked for him 2 or 3 other times after this but that's more stories. But anyway we got this torpedo, which was about 300' long I guess, and finally I was given the bum's rush off the rig and he made up the time bomb. It was fastened to the top of the charge and it had a clock and everything to set this on. These were special clocks that he had made in the States for this purpose. And 4 or 5 sticks of dynamite to fasten to it and if anything had gone wrong that would have been the end of Charlie and the rig. I was off sitting, having a smoke about 100 yards away. But it went down the hole and ??? charge and there was a great kewhump that you could feel more than hear when this thing went off. You put in water on top of the, so that your blast wouldn't come back up the hole. A little water shot out of the hole, about 20' but that was all. Explosives are funny things. If you put a stick of dynamite on a rock and you want to break the rock, you put 3 or 4 shovelfuls of dirt on top, all the explosive force will go down through the rock. So a little column of water kept all the fracturing possibilities down instead of coming up the hole. Then of course, Charlie was finished, he packed up his stuff and away he went. The crews came back and we put a bit on the end of the pipe and go down and as soon as we came to the first obstruction then we started to spin and theoretically dig this stuff. Well, we did, we made about 17 or 18' with that first bit. Then it came to a sudden halt and we thought we had twisted off but we hadn't. The driller was very wide awake to what might happen and he hit the throttle just as soon as it started to

howl. We pulled back up the hole a piece and started her spinning again and went back in and the same thing happened. That was all we did for that particular shift. The next guy that came on twisted off so we had to fish. We fished for about a week. We never did get the darned fish out but we drove it off, apparently somebody drove it off to one side and a big fracture. We tried and tried and tried to get into that hole again and couldn't do it. We were about 6 weeks fishing and messing about. Finally ended up playing horseshoes.

#114 SB: So how much time had it taken then, to drill the well up to that stage?

LN: About 8 ½ months. It was almost 9 months when we went over to Sterling 6.

SB: Was that a usual rate for drilling?

LN: No. Well, if you cut the 5 or 6 weeks we were messing around after the shot, probably 2 weeks of that would have been taken up getting the production side fixed up and that kind of thing. So we were probably a month longer than we should have been, had the well been completed in the usual way.

SB: And did they run casing, if it had gone into production they would have run. . . ?

LN: Oh yes, we ran casing and tubing and the whole bit. Had to haul the whole damn thing out. We only got half the casing out, the rest was stuck and we couldn't pull it. But there were other crews that did this and we went over to Sterling 6.

SB: So when you got to Sterling 6, I guess, you were mentioning before that a lot of the drilling practices had changed and the technology.

LN: Yes. I better go back a little bit and say that 2 men came up from the Humble Oil Company, which was the largest subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey. They were drilling wells all over the United States and South America and almost anywhere there was oil, Humble was in it. So they had the latest machinery, techniques, all this type of thing, to drill an efficient oil well. And these 2 fellows came up, one was a mud expert and the other was a drilling engineer.

SB: Do you remember their names?

LN: Can't remember Susan, no.

SB: I guess they weren't people from here anyway.

LN: No, no. I know somebody who might remember, anyway I'll get that for you. Anyway, we arrived over at this Sterling 6 and the first thing that was different, we had a steel rig instead of a wooden one. This didn't do anything that the wooden rig didn't do but it looked different and it was easier to do some things in the steel rig over the wooden rig.

#151 SB: Did they have a rig building crew for that as well.

LN: Yes, they had a rig building crew but the rig was up when we got there. To my mind, the most important thing that was on this new rig was a shale shaker. I'll get around to that some more but we had moved in the same drill pipe that we had started over at Dalhousie 8, started with. This was terrible stuff, it was 8" in diameter and it was heavy, cumbersome, awkward stuff to handle. And this drilling engineer took a look at this and said, we'll have to get rid of that stuff right now. And we didn't even run it in the hole. Crews came out and we rolled the pipe back up onto the truck and lumbered her back to the yards in Turner Valley and out came a string of what they called, the pipe, a string of

pipe, enough to go from top to bottom. They sent out a string of 5" drill pipe and 3 big, heavy drill collars that were about 8 or 9" in diameter and almost solid. They had a little hole about 2" in diameter drilled through them. The idea of the drill collar was that the bottom hundred feet, in round numbers, on top of the bit, was very, very rigid and wouldn't bend or slip of formations quite as easily. We got this stuff in the hole, as a matter of fact, when we got started our crew was on shift. And the driller got the bit on the bottom and turned the power on to the table and she started to turn and we turned up about 50 revolutions a minute, which was about standard in those days with the equipment we had. The drilling engineer said, no, faster and he kept saying faster and faster until finally he opened the throttle himself and got the thing up to about 125-140 revolutions a minute. Our driller was just, he figured we were going to twist off or burn the thing up or do something. But it didn't, it just dug like the ???, it just went down. And on that shift we dug a couple of hundred feet through this top formation. I was the derrick man there so the mud was my responsibility and I couldn't stay away from this shale shaker. The mud was flowing over it and all the chips and sand and stuff were flowing down the screen into a pit and I could hardly believe it. We had mud testing equipment where we waited to get the weight per gallon and the consistency of the mud was measured. The mud we used on that hole was relatively as thin as thin cream. But it was pure bentonite and it carried the chips up beautifully and it was just great. Well, we got a new table I remember there, which had better bearings, the bearings were enclosed so they didn't get full of mud. And this made things a little easier.

#204 SB: What about the cat head, was it closed in or did it have. . . ?

LN: Yes, we had what you'd call a unitized rig, it wasn't the same draw works and stuff that we'd had at Dalhousie 8. It was a different unit. They had put more guard things on it so there was less chance of getting into a chain and they had improved some other things and the pumps were on skids, things like that. This made rigging up easier. It didn't change the actual day to day drilling very much. But handling this light pipe was a cinch for me, it was so light and easy to handle versus this awful stuff we'd had before. And the pipe, because of the light mud, we never pulled a wet stand at all. Everything was nice and dry. . .well, it wasn't dry it was clean. And so when we had finished pulling 2, 3, 4, 5 thousand feet of pipe out of the hole, the floor was a little bit slippery which took about 5 minutes with a hose to wash off and the crew were clean too. We didn't get covered with muck like we used to do. Although I had, I always thought the best job on the rig was up top because it was dryer and cleaner. We had wind boards up the rig too you see, to protect you from the wind. It was cold as the devil in the wintertime up there but we had heater up there and this was one of the beauties of having steam rigs. We had great big radiators and we had radiators in the doghouse, which was the little office where the driller had his books and things like that. There was a long bench and a steam radiator underneath it and these were machine shop made radiators, they were made out of 4" and 2" pipe so when they got hot believe me it was something. And we had heaters around the pipe rack to try and dry the pipe out a little bit. And they ran a line up the corner of the rig, up to the top and I had a big radiator, about 6' high, in the form of a V that sat in the corner of the

derrick. If there was a shut down down in the bottom, instead of coming down I'd just walk in there. Get nice and warm and I always had dry gloves. I used cotton gloves mostly up in the derrick. The crew used heavy leather gloves downstairs, down in the bottom.

#249 SB: Why would that be?

LN: To protect your fingers. Everything we had was heavy. We rarely used any kind of a wrench smaller than a 36" pipe wrench and the big wrenches that you tightened the pipe up with were so heavy that they were slung on cables. So there was a great business of busting knuckles and busting fingers too, handling this stuff, unless you were awfully careful. But up top I found cotton gloves were the best and that's what I used and I always had about 6 pairs of the things lined up on the radiator.

SB: Did you still mix the mud yourself, from local clay, or did you have sacks then?

LN: We had sacks of this stuff that were shipped in from somewhere in the States. And we'd get great truckloads of this, 1,000 bags at a time. And instead of mixing the mud in a great huge box the way we had, we had a circular funnel, about 3' in diameter and about 3 ½ - 4' high. This was hooked to a 3 or 4" pipe that had water running in it and we'd dump these bags of stuff and it would automatically mix you see, until we got it, we'd keep testing it until we got the right weight and the right density or thickness. But it was great stuff, that bagged mud. Kind of the upshot of all this new equipment and new techniques was that we drilled a hole that was I think, if I remember correctly about 72 or 73 hundred feet deep in about 2 ½ months, instead of the 6 or 7 or 8 months that we'd spent on the other one. And actually later on we cut that time down to around 2 months, 7 weeks to 2 months.

SB: Were the bits any different that they were using on this rig?

LN; Not a great deal. There were improvements in them, no question about it. They did last a little bit longer but they didn't drill the real hard stuff, the ???, a devil of a lot faster than they had before.

#292 SB: Were they still the 3 coned bits?

LN: Yes, we had, primarily tri-cones they called them. They seemed to be the most popular bit and the most useful one. There were some bits with 2 cones on them but they were inclined to twist and break a cone off. And we used Hughes bits primarily, although later on there was another bit came out that we used to use some, Reid bits. Now I understand they've got many different kinds of bits and they last 10 times longer than our bits did.

SB: Did you have the same crew working with you, most of the same people?

LN: No. When we went over to Sterling 6 we had the same driller, Walter Scott the cat head man had decided to, he was also a welder, had his own welding business and he decided to go. The whole industry was perking up you see, and so he left us and went contracting out with his welding equipment. So we got . . .I'd have to think of his name but we got a new cat head man. Also the pipe racker had been moved and we got a chap named Joe Henry as the pipe racker. I think those were the only two ones. Bord Macintyre, I don't know whether Bord is on that list or not but he's . . .

SB: He's well known though.
LN: Oh yes. He later drilled for us. And I got my first car when we got to Sterling 6.
SB: Was that from wages that you'd made on the first one?
LN: Yes. Oh sure, I made so darned much money I didn't know what to do with it. And as I've often said, after I got the car, I didn't have any.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

LN: . . . it was rather nice, particularly now that I had transportation of my own.
SB: Yes. So would you still work on the long change system.
LN: Oh yes, sure.
SB: So was there anything found at that well?
LN: Oh yes, that was a good one. Actually we had 3 wells in a row, Sterling 4, 5 and 6 and they were very close to the discovery well that R. A. Brown drilled, which was called Turner Valley Royalties. We were less than a quarter mile, probably about a kilometre today, from that well. So all ours were good, the 3 of them were dandies, they produced 3,500 - 4,000 barrels a day.
SB: Would you do your own completions in those days?
LN: Pretty well, on that well we did. We'd have a couple of engineers out there and when the completions came the tool pusher and drilling superintendent were very visible. Then we had completion crews that came out, did all the pipe work because you had big production pipe, 6" in diameter, or 4" or whatever. And they were the only people that could handle this kind of pipe because it had to be threaded, in some cases welded. Then you had to string a line from the well to the nearest battery, where you separated the gas and the oil, and got some water out of it if there was any. But usually by the time we had got the casing set and run the tubing in we would start dismantling, because we nearly always had another place to go right away.
SB: So did you work on the other Sterling wells, like 4, 5, and 6.
LN: No. By the time we got to Sterling 6, Sterling 4 was just about half way down, Sterling 5 was completed. This had all gone on while we were messing around over at Dalhousie 8, which was about 2 miles away. So actually nothing really changed in the drilling techniques to any great extent for the rest of the time that I was there. We got new things. . .well, one thing that did improve. I think in our original interview I told you about using an acid bottle to try and gauge how far out you were from vertical. Well, an outfit called Lane Wells, who were professionals at this well logging bit, they moved in to the valley and they had some relatively very sophisticated stuff. They could tell you how far you were off and it was pretty accurate. They could tell you fairly accurately in what direction you were off. It wasn't like it is today where they can tell you almost within a yard of where you are, it wasn't just quite that good but it was a devil of a lot better than the stuff we had used.

#061 SB: Was Spi Langston with them then?

LN: No. Well, right at that particular time I don't know where Spi was, I don't think he was there. I don't seem to remember him in the first year or so that I was there, it was after that that I used to run into him.

SB: So I guess when you were drilling Sterling 6 it was around 19. . . ?

LN: It was in 1937.

SB: Oh, 1937. And Royalite was still developing the Turner Valley field then I guess, was it?

LN: Oh yes. And we had other drilling contractors had moved in. The tool pusher that we'd had, old Jigs Head, he and a fellow named Clarence Snyder, Clarence Snyder drilled on the #1 well in Turner Valley, well, they had Snyder and Head who were drilling contractors. Then there were a couple of others, there was one other big one that turned out to be pretty big.

SB: Drilling Contractors or. . .?

LN: Newell and Chandler. Shorty Chandler and . . .Newell is still here in town somewhere. They had 10 rigs running in Turner Valley. And they were . . . Royalite with some exceptions drilled all their own wells. Well, they did drill all their own wells but we also took contracts to drill a couple of others. I worked on one called Royal Canadian something or another, which was a little bit south. Here comes the tea.

SB: How many rigs do you think you worked on in that time?

LN: As near as I can remember, 9. There were a couple of others, this just comes to mind now, that we went back and cleaned out. These were wells that had been drilled prior to Turner Valley Royalties coming in and we deepened them, one was near Hartel. It's a kind of funny story in a way about this one, because we got this thing cleaned out and we had nothing to do once we got this done. They were waiting for another location or something but anyway, we had the afternoon tower??? so we'd all sleep. Well, we had an assistant tool pusher whose name doesn't really matter but he was an officious little bird. He came down the Hartel hill and turned into this little lease and caught us all sleeping and raised heck about this you see. He used to dance up and down and screech and everything else. Anyway we figured he'd be back the next night, only this time he had to be very careful, in case we were watching for him. So they had all kinds of oil barrels around, big 45 gal. drums, empties, so we piled about 10 of these right in the gateway. The road coming down from the north was quite narrow and you had to make a very sharp little turn and the gat was shielded a little bit by low shrub bushes and things. So we set these where we thought they were best and this guy, sure enough, he came down the hill about midnight, turned his lights off and he wheeled around this corner into the lease and he hit these barrels and they fell all over his car, we could hear cussing and we could hardly stop laughing you know. We were standing quite close in the bush watching this whole effort. By gosh, he cussed and swore and he finally backed the car out. Never turned the lights on, although I don't think he could have, they were probably all smashed. But he didn't hit these barrels so terribly hard that he broke the windshield or anything like that. But we found out later that one barrel had lit on the top and made a hole right clean through it. But he never came back, never said a word. I don't know what kind of cock and bull story he told them back there about what happened to the car but we

weren't bothered with him from then on. I worked in the north end of Turner Valley too, on some clean out jobs and it was while we were doing this that somebody stole the water line. They had this water line they had laid and it went over the hill. And when the water didn't come out of the other end they couldn't figure out why so they sent a fellow back to check on it and all the water line that was out of sight, from the rig location, was gone. Apparently as soon as they hit the top of the hill the pipe thieves started unhooking this stuff as fast as they could work and loading it on a truck and it was gone. As kind of sequel to that was, that they swore this little tin pot refinery that was down on the Macleod Trail, across the road from Woodward's now, they used to swear it was all built by stolen pipe from Turner Valley. So maybe that's where this load of pipe went.

#136 SB: So there was a lot of thefts in that time, equipment and things like that?

LN: Anything that was lying around loose and you didn't have your eye on, could and often did, disappear. I remember one cable tool outfit that was still operating and they were using it, they had bought a new wire line, inch and a quarter line, and they used long, long lines on the cable tool when they got down deep. They unloaded this at their pipe rack or whatever and the truck went away and when the crew came on to string this new line it was gone, the whole business. I think in those days probably that line cost 7 or 8 or 9 hundred dollars or something. Today it would be 50 times that. And as far as I know they never did find it.

SB: I wonder why that would have been. Do you think this had just started to get on the rise, the incidents of. . .

LN: No, I think we still had a lot of fellows out of work and we had a lot of fellows come in to Turner Valley from various places and there was an element I guess, of unsavoury characters. Because they did, they pinched a lot of stuff.

SB: Were there police in Turner Valley?

LN: Oh yes, the RCMP were there. I think actually it was Alberta Provincial Police at that time. And there was a tough sergeant there, Sergeant Smith and he had 2 or 3 constable later. When I first knew him he and one constable looked after the whole area. But when it got real big he got some more help. He had his ear to the ground, he knew everything that was going on. He was actually not a bad sort of guy but he was tough as nails. We had, when Little Chicago was booming of course, the ladies of easy virtue moved in but the day after they moved in, Smith ran them out of town. He kept his finger on the pulse of everything that was going on there but of course, these guys that pinched pipe and wire lines in the middle of the night, you couldn't catch everything. But he ran a very tidy area. There was some kind of a census made in about 1938 or '39, I can't remember, and there were 18,000 people from Turner Valley to the Highwood River, all working in and around and about the oil wells and batteries and pipelines and things like this.

#177 SB: So it was quite a big population then. What about, you know, you hear of gambling dens and things like that, would that have been . . .?

LN: Yes there were. . . there were games going all the time. This was a hold over from the earlier booms and one of the first things that started up in Turner Valley was a fellow

named Pete Crow who had a game going in Turner Valley all the time. That game was actually going in a very small, quiet way when I went down there. And it perked up to beat the band. As a matter of fact, a fellow moved into the Black Diamond Hotel, in the room next to me named Harris. Harris was a professional gambler. God, he could do anything with cards, I've never seen anything like it. Anyway, he used to play in this game of Pete Crow's and there was a lot of money changed hands in these games. Down in Little Chicago, I never was at one but I know there were several games going on there all the time. There was a deuce of a lot of money around you know, with all these guys working and they were making then, big wages. One interesting little thing, later on this was but I'll tell it before I forget, Pete Crow, when the war started, somebody asked Pete, he was the funniest looking little bird you ever saw in your life, if he was going to join the Army. No, he said, I'm not, I've got to have an operation before I can join the Army, oh, what's that operation Pete. He says, I've got a great big yellow stripe right down the middle of my back and I've got to get that out. This was the kind of a character he was. But the gambling . . . I used to hear rumours about the odd crook or fellow that tried to beat some of these games but he had to be a real sharpie to do it and they usually caught him.

#213 SB: It was mostly just a form of recreation I guess.

LN: Yes. Quite expensive recreation at times. There would be lots of fellows lose a pay cheque in a night. I remember watching one game, there were 2 or 3 pots that had 2 or 3 thousand dollars in. But I was never much of a gambler.

SB: So I guess in '36, after the discovery there was a lot of development of all the settlements around there too?

LN: Yes, they were almost all non-permanent settlements, except Longview. Longview they built, 2 old hockey players, named Cook built the hotel down there, which is still there. So this kind of made a spot for a little bit of permanent housing. Many of those houses that were built then, which were pretty good, are still there. And there were 2 or 3 little stores built. But Little Chicago, after the boom was over, or the drilling was over, it just faded away. There's still the odd person at Hartel, this little hamlet that I spoke of earlier, there would be a few people living there. There were fellows looking after the wells that would drive in there from somewhere, wherever they happened to live. Many of them lived in Black Diamond and Turner Valley and it was only, from Black Diamond to the nearest wells, about 9 miles. So it wasn't far. And the roads gradually were improved so that they were much more passable than they had been. But it was a booming, exciting, interesting place, from 1936 to 1940.

SB: I guess everybody was aware of the situation building up in Europe towards a war were they?

LN: Yes, we all had radios so we kept tab on what was going on. I knew more than some what was going on because I spent quite a few years in the non-permanent army. So I used to come into Calgary more frequently in those days, the latter part of the 30's. So I was able to keep track of what was going on and I knew as soon as the war started that sooner or later I was going to have to go. But in the beginning they wouldn't let us loose, in an

essential industry. However Turner Valley was petering out, the big boom was petering out anyway.

#272 SB: You were also married somewhere in that time.
LN: 29th of July, 1939. About 2 months before the war started.
SB: And your wife was from Calgary you were saying?
LN: Yes. As a matter of fact we went to school together. So she was familiar with what I was doing. She used to come out to Turner Valley when they used to put on concerts and things like that and she got to know some of the Turner Valley ladies at that time. And some of them still are our old friends. One lives down the street here that was there in 1937 and when we moved back to Calgary from Edmonton we moved right beside this couple that I had worked with in Turner Valley.
SB: I wonder if we could go on to what happened when the war was declared, you were enlisted . . .?
LN: No, not right away, no. You see, it started in September '39 and I went into the Army in May '40.
SB: How did you get around the thing of being in an essential industry?
LN: Part of it was my background and the training I'd had. Part of it was too, the boom in Turner Valley was literally over at this time so it was freeing up a lot of people that had jobs for 3 or 4 or 5 years and now were laid off, this kind of thing. Royalite didn't lay anybody off but it was getting thin. So it became much easier to leave, or get out or whatever you want to call it.
SB: What was your position when you did join the Army?
LN: I was an officer in the Calgary Highlanders and stayed with them pretty well all the way through.
SB: Did you have some kind of arrangement for coming back?
LN: Oh yes. Actually anybody who joined the Army, who were permanent employees were literally on leave of absence. Your company benefits were all paid for by the company. If the differential between your Royalite pay and the Army pay was, how would I put it, in Royalite's favour, they made up the money. So a fellow could join the Army as a private, who had been a driller in Turner Valley and he spent all his war years, if he was lucky and got drillers pay. Which was about equal to . . . well, I became a Major in the Army and that's when my pay equalled my drillers pay. And that was about 1943, '44, somewhere in there. So they were awfully good to us. The whole of Imperial Oil did this, right from Halifax to Victoria.
SB: So they wanted to hang on to the people that they trained I guess?
LN: Yes, that I think, was partly it, but they were great citizens. We had pensions back in 1919, long, long before anybody except the banks, were the only other people that had pensions at that time. We had benefit plans, with sick benefits, group insurance, pensions, 40 years ago.
SB: Do you ever remember anyone trying to form a union in Turner Valley, either in the producing or the drilling end.
LN: No. As far as I know, there is no such thing today.

End of tape.

Tape 3 Side 1

SB: Did you ever hear of any unions being formed in the oil business?

LN: Not at that time, there were no unions at all in the oil business, particularly in the exploration side of it. Later on, after Turner Valley, they were moving all the time, they were wildcatting everywhere. Some union organizer might decide to come in and talk to a bunch of fellows and 2 weeks later they were all gone, they were dispersed all over the country. So the oil business, in the production and exploration didn't lend itself to union activity. And I have never heard of, even to this day, any production or exploration people being unionized in the oil business. However the Calgary Refinery was organized in about 1966 or '67. And a couple of years before that the Imperial Refinery at Vancouver was organized. But those were the only unions in Imperial. We had what we called an industrial council system, which the unions will tell you, are management dominated methods of dealing with your employees, and I guess they are but if you've got a benevolent outfit, why bother paying union dues. The great majority of our employees still believe that. We don't fight unions. As a matter of a fact before I retired I went down to the Calgary refinery and I dealt with the union there. We hadn't the slightest problem. The United Oil Workers and Atomic Workers Union or something they called themselves. As far as I was concerned they were a good bunch and when you hammered out a contract that was it.

SB: Not like the postal worker.

LN: No. And they made us stick to it and we made them stick to it. Unless there was some awfully good reason we didn't deviate from that contract. Sometimes they'd like to have a little bit, they'd think well, Imperial's a pretty good bunch, they'll wink an eye at this. Well, we didn't. We had a contract. We never tried to override them or anything.

#035 SB: So when you came back after the war then, did you just carry on in the same position you were in before you left?

LN: No, Susan, when I got back here, as a matter of fact I didn't report to them for about 6 weeks or 2 months or something because I hadn't had any leave for a long time. But I finally went down to Turner Valley and reported in and they said, well, what do you want to do. I said, I've made up my mind about one thing, I'm not going back in the drilling business. By this time the company's rigs were scattered from southern Saskatchewan to, way up in the bush north of Edmonton. And this nomadic type of thing, I decided I'd had enough of that for the past 5 or 6 years so there would be no more of that. And I could have got tool pushers jobs in South America and several things like that but the money was great but I decided against it. Laterally in the army I'd had a lot to do with replacing people and getting them back into civilian life and all this kind of stuff, and they knew this. So they said, we're going to form a personnel department in Calgary. By this time we had rigs operating all in the Edmonton area, we had half a dozen rigs up there. Personnel departments or employee relations departments were becoming known in

industry and we had hit with 2 or 3 little piddling oil fields around but nothing very much. Then just about that time we hit the big field at Devon and this made the forming or a personnel department much more urgent. So I was brought into it, a fellow named George Martin came from Toronto to head up this department and a fellow named Bill Evans who had been in Turner Valley with me, he came into it and a fellow named George Thompson, who had, he'd been working in Turner Valley but he'd also worked on a radio station here in Calgary. The safety man was Archie Langil??? and the payroll department was right next to us, we worked closely with the payroll department. The payroll department was made up of Canol project people, all of whom were brought back out of the north. My main job for quite a long time was hiring people to work in Devon, or work in the oil fields there, Devon we didn't have at that time. And hiring people for the rigs. And I was as busy as the dickens on this job. This lasted until 1948 and we were going to bring the man who was, by this time the town of Devon had been built, we'd built about 120 or 30 houses and built the whole town right from the ground up.

#080 SB: Were you involved in hiring people for that as well?

LN: No. Just for the Devon operation, plus rigs and things like that. But the town, the houses were all built by contractors and financed by Great West Life. We built them and then we sold them to the employees you see. 1948, the fellow who was personnel in Devon was going to be moved to Calgary to take over a training group, this was George Thompson. So I went up to Devon to take his place and just after I got kind of settled into Devon, but I didn't move the family or anything up there, they changed their mind about moving Thompson because we had discovered the Redwater field. And the first decision was to just kind of sit on Redwater. But I guess the powers that be down in Toronto decided that they could develop the Redwater field, they'd slow down on the development of the Devon field and push the Redwater one, because it was going to be cheap as the dicken to drill and the cost of producing oil was way less than it was at Devon. So get this stuff on the market and get it into pipelines. Of course, by this time the Trans Canada line was being built and the other big crude line was being built. And we were discovering little pocket oil fields all around the place. So I ended up in Redwater, they kept Thompson where he was and brought in another training man from down east and I went to Redwater, from scratch. We had to hire the people, we tried to hire as many people from the district as we possibly could. Redwater was right in the heart of the last big Ukranian settlement in Alberta and these people had come from the Ukraine in 1921, '22, '23, in that area. They had homesteaded in this piece of country, part of it was pretty good and part of it was rotten. It was all sand and jack pines, it was a heck of a place. So some of them did awfully well and had good farms and some of them just existed. They had some of the darnedest houses, but I quickly got to know the kind of. . . there were always kind of head men in all these ethnic groups you know, that everybody kind of turns to for advice and this kind of thing. So I quite quickly got to know the more influential fellows in this Redwater area. They were just tickled to death with this big development coming in you see, and of course, they were late coming in to Alberta so they didn't have any mineral rights. Mineral rights were all held by the Crown. But they got surface rights and

there were lots of farms there that had 8 and as many as 16 wells on their farms. I think we used to pay them about $4,000 a year for the surface rights. So very quickly going from the crudest old log places, chinked up with cow manure and clay and stuff, to building quite modern places and buying new cars and the whole place started to look better. Eventually we built about 78 houses there and we built a little town up. Nobody really knew how many people were there, it was a hamlet. So it wasn't governed itself, it didn't have a mayor or anything like that. By the time we got our people all moved in and others who had moved in and had jobs with other oil companies and with satellite industries, not industry really but light business, small business. Like stores and hardwares and garages and service stations and things, we had a population of about 600. So a town was actually formed and a mayor and council elected and so on. When this happened we made overtures to the town to take the whole place over, which we owned, this was on the fringes of Redwater. We made a deal with them, we sold them all the systems, water, sewer, gas and everything, for a dollar, and our people then paid taxes to the town or Redwater. The whole thing became much more stable and it looked better, it was then home to a lot of people.

#155 SB: Were most of the people that were say, mayor and on local council, would they have been the local people or would they have been people working for Imperial?

LN: No. Actually different from Devon where the first mayor of Devon was George Thompson, the personnel manager. He was a pretty good mayor too. But in Redwater the first mayor was one of the local fellows. We had Jim Henderson, one of our engineers was on the council and we had a battery operator that was on the council. The rest were local people, garage owners or store keepers or something. But it was kind of fun to see this little hamlet grow into a nice small town. When we went in there the hotel had just burned down and a very good thing, it was lousy and I mean lousy. It was full of bedbugs, it was an awful place. So it very conveniently caught fire and the fellows that owned the old hotel, they had the beer license. I never saw a new hotel built so fast anywhere as that was. It went up in a real hurry. Of course, it had a pub that was a pretty good sized, it would hold a couple of hundred. I don't know anything about the rooms, I was never in one of them but I think they were probably pretty crude things. The food wasn't very good. One interesting little thing, there were 4 or 5 of us, we all lived in the bunkhouse that had been put up. The only place we had to eat in Redwater was a little confectionary type place. This fellow had 2 or 3 kind of little booths that you could sit in and we could get bacon and eggs, ham and eggs, blueberry pie and that was just about it, that's all you could get. I ate enough bacon and eggs and ham and eggs to sink a ship and I loved blueberries but I darned near got sick of them too. Great blueberry country up there, wild blueberries everywhere.

SB: Was it hard finding qualified people for a lot of the technical positions?

LN: Any technical positions we moved them in, you couldn't find anybody up there. These boys were all farmers or farmer's helpers. They were darned good workers and caught on very, very quickly to mechanical things. They were first class. And we had training programs set up to teach them all this stuff. No, I had no trouble finding good men. And

it's interesting, I still get the Esso reporter and seeing these guys retiring now. No, we had first class guys, they were well trained, we were very lucky, we never lost a single man from an accident or getting gassed or anything like that.

#210 SB: Were there any new programs or services that you brought in during that time, like medical plans or were they in place?

LN: No, we had them. But we expanded them at that time. Our population was getting big at this time. At Devon there were about 300, Redwater our maximum was about 140. There was a reason for that differential. In Devon, when the field was discovered they did all their own work. They built up labour crews to do all these things. By they time we got to Redwater there were people available, contractors available that would come in and build your batteries, lay your pipelines, clean the place up and everything. So we worked on a contract system. So we had about 1,800 men working, drilling wells, building batteries, laying pipelines, building roads, all this kind of stuff at the height of the Redwater development. And we had over 400 wells drilled and we did all this in about 18 months. At the end of 18 months the town was finished, all the houses were finished and those of us who were married brought wives and children and everything in and the social life of the old place boomed. Imperial and Western Leaseholds built a big curling rink and bought all the rocks and this kind of thing. There were a couple of little churches built, all the little goings on of a new town. Vacuum cleaner salesmen were a dime a dozen.

SB: So you moved into Devon or Redwater.

LN: In Devon I just lived in the bunkhouse but in Redwater, I did the same, I lived in the bunkhouse for 18 months. We built a new bunkhouse and this was a real poshy place. Then Betty and the girls came up. Tara, our eldest daughter, was 7 and the youngest daughter Carrie was 18 months old. Tara started school there. [tape stopped]

SB: You were just talking about the kind of hospital that was available to you . . . at Redwater?

LN: At Radway.

SB: Oh Radway. And that was close to Redwater was it?

LN: About 14, 15 miles away. Not too far.

SB: And that was the closest place you could get medical attention?

LN: Yes. You see, later on, before I left we had a medical department put together in Edmonton. One man was kind of told off to look after our end of the business.

SB: So you mean all the medical . . . ?

LN: Well, he'd come out and visit and bring his nurse with him. As a matter of fact, at Redwater, at one point there, we ran an out patient clinic. We had so damn many girls getting pregnant and having families and no doctor in attendance. So I went in to talk to our guys and they tried their darnedest to get a doctor to come out there but there wasn't enough work for one man every day. Nobody in his right mind, except this drunk came out. So I forget this Englishman's name but either he or the nurse came out twice a week. They'd drive the 40 odd miles out and we set up an office in one of the bunkhouses and these ladies would come in for their pre-natal examinations and things like this. We also were fortunate enough, 3 of the girls in the town site, our private town site, were all ex-

nurses. And this helped a deuce of a lot. We had a couple of premature births that happened when the doctor wasn't around and one or another of these nurses officiated. I remember one lady, she was talking to a neighbour, they were having coffee and she suddenly said, oops, it's coming and she slipped down on to the floor and had the baby right there. In the meantime this other gal, she's tearing up the street to get Mrs. Holm. She came down and by the time they got the doctor down from Radway, Mrs. Holm had everything under control. The baby was perfectly okay. Kind of a cool arrival on the linoleum. That was one little incident. But these clinics were an interesting little thing and we'll talk about it a little bit the next time. Suddenly this doctor said, god bless me, there's a lot of pregnant women here so I thought, that's funny, I only know of about half a dozen you see. Well, it turned out that the townspeople, who really had no business there, they heard of this, so they're all arriving too. Instead of having half a dozen girls come in and talk to the nurse or the doctor, we were getting so we had 18 or 20. Well, you know, we were, as they say today, caught between a rock and a hard place. You couldn't kind of brush them off and this English doctor wasn't the kind that would anyway, he was very conscientious about it. And he had a whale of a nurse, she was a great gal, she could organize and handle anything. So we had the Imperial women and the Redwater women. They never got charged for all this pre-natal care or advice or a damned thing you know. But eventually it had to come to an end because, I think our doctor resigned and went to Australia. Then the thing had to change a bit. But by this time I'd got word from Calgary that they were building a big exploration department in Edmonton. Unofficially I was told that I would be moved into Edmonton and I'd be the personnel manager in this exploration group.

SB: This is probably a good point to finish for today.

Tape 3 Side 2

SB: It's February 12th, 1985 and I'm interviewing Lauder Nowers. I guess last time we were just discussing your activities at Redwater and then you were transferred to Edmonton as personnel manager for their exploration department. Do you remember what year that was?

LN: Yes, that was the spring of 1950. They were putting together a new exploration district, a very much larger one than had been contemplated and it involved the movement of a lot of professional people from Calgary and other areas, to Edmonton. It meant the opening of an exploration office in Dawson Creek, and we had to put all this together. My first job was to supervise the planning of the interior of our office building so that we could house all the landmen and scouts, geologists, geophysicists and keep everybody happy. Jack Armstrong was the manager of the exploration department and he had a full compliment of all the necessary people to run an exploration group. Actually this made a much greater movement out into northern Alberta and the Territories, from an exploration and drilling point of view.

SB: What had spurred that on, do you think, were the other fields drying up, like Redwater?

LN: Oh no, at that point Redwater was booming, Devon was booming. Devon was only at that

time, about 4 years old, 5 maybe. Redwater was only 2 years old so they were at the peak of their production. When I moved out of Redwater into Edmonton we had nothing to do with that, it was purely an exploration and drilling supervision department. The drilling department was separate but we told them where we wanted them to drill and how to go about it and all this kind of thing. We got into a very large exploration program out of Dawson Creek, so this is why we had to have the office in Dawson Creek, which was developed. It meant a great deal of travelling on my part. I was out in the field about 505 of my time. And I just kind of got warmed up to this when I got moved to Calgary as Assistant Personnel Manager under Hugh Sterling. At this point we had, in round numbers, about 2,400 people on the payroll, from southern Saskatchewan to Dawson Creek in the north. This took a great deal of expansion in our employee relations department and much more activity in training and supervision of training and developing training methods of needs with the various managers at Regina, Dawson Creek, Edmonton.

#057 SB: Was in house training a fairly new thing at that time?

LN: Yes, in a way it was. We'd always done some but it was more in the production side where the need for training was more apparent because you had men handling hazardous materials and doing more hazardous work and this type of thing. Training in proper work methods and this kind of thing became a big part of our work.

SB: I guess also management training was beginning to develop was it?

LN: Yes. This went on, it was primarily started from Toronto and supervised from Toronto. Courses of course, were made available for senior people at various universities and that kind of thing, in Canada and the United States and then the company put on very active managerial and supervisory training. But that was primarily, overall supervision of that came from Toronto and we had the work to do on the spot.

SB: Did you notice a change in the type of person that they'd look for, you know, for a managerial position. I guess in the early days people who had a lot of field experience behind them would probably have been better. Did you notice that changing over time where they looked for a different type of background for management positions?

LN: That depended on the technical requirements for the job. As an example, in the drilling department, we in effect grew our own supervisory people, our tool pushers, our drilling supervisors were acquired through our drilling crews and experienced men who had worked, a lot of them in Turner Valley in the early days. The good ones were chosen to head up these supervisory groups. But at the same time we needed and acquired more engineering supervisory groups too. We had, well, one example was Scove Murray, Bob Teskey. . .Bob Teskey headed up the whole drilling activity and he was . . .I don't know what Bob's engineering degree was. But it was necessary to have a man like that running this thing. Drilling methods were changing, drilling tools were changing, and motive power and things like that. We had to have mechanical people with real qualifications, not just experience. We had a motor mechanical department in the drilling end of it that was supervised by a mechanical engineer and he had graduates from SAIT and places like that to assist him. The whole drilling activity took on a different tone with the invention

of new materials and tools. The kind of working by the seat of your pants went pretty well out the window, it became a very planned thing. For instance some of the exploration techniques of well logging and things like this that we had never had before became a normal thing. This made your drilling operation, from the point of view of drilling the hole, a much surer and safer and better operation. It didn't necessarily mean that you were going to get an oil well. Even that, the well logging that they had, you might pass an area that you didn't think was very good in the old days. But this way we could test any formations on the way down, which was an impossibility in my day.

#116 SB: I guess another thing was people had to get used to documenting everything, where in the old days they'd say, you could make a deal on a handshake.

LN: Well, this was something that I never got into. But we had contract departments and land departments that handled this type of thing. This is something really, that I shouldn't get into but we went from a mineral rights ownership position to a partnership. . . I can't think of the word at the moment but where you pooled land that you had with other companies and drilled wells to see if that particular holding had an oil field in it, or a possibility of an oil field in that particular area. This became a big part of our business was this contracts and we had a special contracts department that was separate from the land department. This changed a lot of things because we had part interest deals all over the place, farm ins, farm outs and this type of thing. And this changed the attitude and changed the office procedures a great deal because of this.

SB; Was it around that time that Royalite was bought by the Seagram's was it, yes, it was split off from Imperial?

LN: Actually Dominion Securities bought it but Dominion Securities was, I believe, owned and controlled by the Seagram people.

SB: Oh right. Did that have any affect on the personnel department, did you have an influx of people or anything like that?

LN: Not really. That was quite a long way back. They took Royalite, which was at the time of transfer, a kind of smallish. . . the subsidiary had shrunk. We had a couple of gas plants and of course, the holdings in Turner Valley, all of which were sold. The people went. . . and Dominion Securities then sold the thing to, was it Gulf. And all the employees went with it. And they gave them a very good deal. Some of them elected to stay with Imperial but the great majority went along with the company, the Royalite company. But that didn't really affect things a great deal.

#156 SB: So before that we were talking about you were moved to Calgary, what year was that?

LN: That was in '51, February 1951 I moved to Calgary.

SB: So you only were in Edmonton a short while then?

LN: Yes, about 10 months or something. But I still had a lot of, just because I moved to Calgary, it meant that I still had a lot of contacts that I had to make with the exploration department, except in a little different way. As an example, at Dawson Creek, we moved a lot of people up there, there was no housing available in Dawson Creek. As you know,

it was a staging point really. So we had built 60 or 70 houses in Dawson Creek. In fact, we had quite a little subdivision of the town there and we built a big fine one story office and staffed it. George Shultis was the manager, during my time anyway and it was a very active place. In fact it became almost more active than the Edmonton office. But the Edmonton office kind of supervised it. And we went further afield in our exploration and we never got into the Arctic but we got darned close to it during my day.

SB: Did you get into the Yukon or Northwest Territories?

LN; Well, there was a little bit of seismic work done but to my recollection, we went up about, just about the Yukon border in some of the seismic work. Then the most northerly pool was the Zama Lake area.

SB: Was Jack Armstrong in charge of the department in Calgary as well or just. . .?

LN: Yes. He came back to Calgary and took over the whole exploration operation.

SB: Of all of western Canada would that be?

LN: Yes. Then the dates are kind of foggy now, but Jack was then moved down to Toronto. We had a representative of the western division was a senior man in Toronto. The first one I remember was Vern Taylor, then I can't remember who took over after that. But he wasn't on the Board but he had a contact on the Board that he talked to all the time. Then when Jack Armstrong went down there, he was our representative in Toronto, the senior man in Toronto for western Canada and then he became a Board member. Peter White was the senior representative at that point and then as we all know, Jack, after my time, became President.

#213 SB: What about Jack Webb, was he still with the company when you were with them?

LN: When I came back to the company after the war, Jack Webb was the exploration manager. An old, old friend from away back. Then he left us and went into his own consulting business and we brought a man up from the States, from the Carter Oil Company, which was a subsidiary of Jersey, named Ray Walters and Ray took over the exploration side of it. So we brought a lot. . . not a lot, half a dozen Americans from the Carter Oil Company who were experts in geophysical work. One of them was Frank Spraggins, who was the main planner and builder of Syncrude. He unfortunately died. We had a fellow named Harold Stoneman and a fellow named Roberts, Labbie Laberge. Labbie wasn't an American but he worked with those and was in those days. George Agnew was another. And we had . . .we're going back a bit on a tangent here but we had, I think our maximum was about 6 or 7 seismic crews and we had all our shot hole drilling outfits. A total of actually, 10 rigs at one point. We very quickly got rid of those and let the contractors dig the holes.

SB: Why was that, was there a problem with the. . .?

LN: I think actually it was cheaper. We sold our rigs to the contractors, these little shot hole things. And they became specialists in this kind of thing. It was easier to supervise the contractors than have a whole slew of people of our own to do this. Also if you changed your exploration policy or something like that, you didn't end up with a bunch of surplus people, the contractor did. Which was tough luck lots of times, but nevertheless it was the proper way to do business. That same, or a result of that policy I suppose, when things

started to slow down, and the frontier exploration narrowed down we found ourselves with, back in the early 70's, with a surplus of people. Mostly technical people because the fields we had discovered and the gas we'd discovered, we had people permanently employed in all that kind of thing but we had a surplus of geologists and geophysical people. And we had to do something about that. When I came down to Calgary I got, not the first thing, but the second year I was here I got mixed up in this big reassessment of our technical staff. Which was something very new, I had never heard of a lay off, nor had anybody else. We had to lay off and retire, I think the total number was about 50, primarily geology and geophysics. That was the first kind of incentive retirement program that the company had put together. That took a great deal or work and an awful lot of travelling back and forth with Toronto because this was something new, it was different. We felt that our recommendations were sound, these men had worked well for us and through no fault of their own they were going to be booted out on the street. And it was a sad kind of a thing in lots of ways. But I think in retrospect, the great majority felt they were fairly well treated, after they kind of got their feet back on the ground. Most of them got jobs right away or fairly quickly. Some of them elected to be consultants and did extremely well. It turned out far better than if they had stayed with the company, from an expertise and money point of view, many of them. I remember 3 or 4 of them, no names, who started a consulting geophysical and geological firm that . . .it was one of the best in the country. And we had at that particular moment, we had people who had acquired pension benefits but were too young to get them until they reached 65. These people were paid I think, at the time, quite generous separation allowances in the form of cash amounts, like 15, 25, 30, 40 thousand dollars and wisely invested this pay off. Now whether they all wisely invested it or not, I can't say. But I used to keep track of a lot of them and I don't think I can remember one that suffered from this. Some of them, it was the best thing that ever happened to them.

#327 SB: I guess you get a feeling of security being with a major company like Imperial and it's hard to take.

LN: The first blow was terrible. I might interject there, just at this time, the company made a decision to consolidate all the accounting practices of the company into a western comptroller's office. They had one in the east so these two big amalgamations of all the little tiddly accounting departments became the complete consolidated accounting for the company, one in western Canada and one just on the fringe of Toronto.

SB: I'll just switch the tape.

Tape 4 Side 1

LN: And this gave me an insight into geology and geophysical work that I found very, very interesting. I used to go out to some of the nearer geophysical crews and see them at work and they'd explain to me what was going on and all this kind of thing.

SB: How did you feel working with Jack Armstrong, was . . . ?

LN: Great, just great. He was an easy man to work for if you did your job. If you didn't do

your job well, you didn't need to worry because you didn't have one. Jack was a tough boss but he was fair. At least I found him that way. But if you did slipshod work or something he didn't put up with you for 2 minutes. He wouldn't necessarily can you but he'd got you off his payroll.

SB: How do you feel about the future of the industry and Imperial, do you think there are going to be any major changes in the next little while?

LN: Well, of course, the big change is the development of the, some people refer to it as synthetic oil, the heavy oil end of our business. We have a big interest in Syncrude. And the Cold Lake expansion, this is something completely different than anything I was ever mixed up with, or anybody else was for that matter. Those are going to be, as far as Alberta is concerned, those are going to be the backbone of the future I think, because there's enough of that stuff up there to keep us digging it out for 100 years probably. I think it still is the biggest known oil reserve in the world. But it's an expensive tough thing to get out. But they'll get it out, I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see some sort of atomic fusion applied to some of it, to get the heat to get some of that oil out of there, particularly at deeper depths. The Cold Lake thing is very interesting. Of course, I saw, our early experimental wells, I was with the company when that still was. . . and I used to go up to Cold Lake and look at these guys drilling these little short holes you know, 8, 9 hundred feet deep. And we'd have a battery of boilers driving live steam down and high temperatures. But now, they're doing the same thing basically, but the generation of hot steam is an awful lot better than it was in the beginning. This is quite something. The you know, we're still mixed up in frontier oil. There will be, regardless of the fact that Beaufort doesn't look as good as it did, my experience in the oil exploration end of it, you never know where you're going to find this stuff. Even now, they're finding little pinnacles and drilling, getting 4 or 5 hundred barrels of oil out of them, that were passed up by our old geophysical methods. They're reworking an awful lot of geophysical stuff. And I think they're going to come up with. . . I don't think, except in parts of the Arctic, I don't think they're going to come up with great amounts of conventional oil, but they're still going to find a lot of it.

#058 SB: Are there any other things you'd like to mention before we finish off, do you have any anecdotes you'd like to throw in?

LN: I don't think so, Susan. Some of them I can't really remember. It's 50 odd years now since I ran into the place where there were more things happened probably, in Turner Valley than anywhere else. Or they seemed odd to me at the time.

SB: Sound like there was more of the romance involved in the industry in Turner Valley days than there is now.

LN: Oh yes. And even in our, you know, when I came back after the war, there was still a lot of excitement or romance if you like about the exploration that was going on. Things had changed of course, and it wasn't quite the hit and miss affair it was in my day.

SB: Was that a part of the romance, the hit and miss approach?

LN: I guess so. And there was . . . they used to figure. . . you know, that's where the word roughneck came in, that drilling crews were a bunch of roughnecks. And there was a

period when they were. They were a wild harem scarum, hard drinking bunch that didn't give a hoot for anybody but themselves and built this reputation. They built it more in the States than they ever did in Canada. Back in 1929, when there was quite an oil boom there, crews and men came up from the States and some of them were a bad lot. And they used to move, wherever the action was they went. But they had never been policed like they did when they arrived here. 1928 and '29 lots of them came up with guns and carried them. Well, it didn't take the Mounties long to disarm this outfit and tell them that maybe this was okay back across the line but it sure wasn't going to go over here. So the fellows that I came in contact with, in the main, were no different than they are today. But we had an element that were a wild bunch and they were. And another thing you see, the Depression, when I started in Turner Valley the Depression was still on. Men had been out of work for 5 years and it was impossible to get a job. But when we started in Turner Valley and got things going again, the fellows that came in there were the guys that wanted to work and they'd do anything to get a job and hold it. That's why I say, the great majority of fellows that I knew and worked with were, as far as I'm concerned, they were the cream of the crop. But the bums were there, but there weren't as many of them. They didn't last long either.

#103 SB: I guess they weren't as ready to work or put themselves into it.

LN: Supervision on the rigs was different to what it used to be in the early days, apparently, when the drillers were just about as bad as the crews. But I never saw a Royalite driller, we had 30. . . 10 rigs, 30 or 40 of them, that wasn't a first class guy, just great.

SB: You were mentioning that they used to wear bowler hats and . . . ?

LN: This was in the early days of cable tool drilling. The driller was. . .I've got that picture I showed you, they were pretty important guys and they made sure everybody understood that. It was a tricky thing too, operating a cable tool rig. In some respects it was much simpler than a rotary but it took a lot of expertise to handle that outfit and know what the bit was doing and that kind of thing. It took a lot of training. But they drilled wells all over the world with those cable tools. We had fellows in Turner Valley that had worked in Burma, South America. The far eastern oil fields had not been discovered in their day because the Saudi Arabian fields were relatively new, I guess there were little fields there that nobody gave a hoot about. The first Imperial fellows that went to South America in the late 20's discovered oil in Venezuela and Columbia and Peru, and we had our own oil company down there, called International Petrolia, which we later sold. So we had fair movement, this was before my time, of men back and forth between, Peru in particular and Canada and the States. But this International belonged to Imperial, it didn't belong to Humble Oil or somebody. Jersey naturally owned it. There was a lot of back and forth and their head office was in Toronto.

SB: So they had opportunity for more international exposure. . .

LN: Yes. I was offered jobs in South American when I came back after the war. But I decided that I'd had enough of roaming around. And I've never regretted leaving the drilling business. It was a very nomadic type of existence after the war, you were always a way the hell and gone off in the bush.

SB: It would be hard on your families as well.
LN: Oh yes.
SB: Well, I think it's been interesting and if there aren't any other things that you can think of I guess. . .
LN: Susan I can't at the moment. Things pop up every now and again. There are a lot of things I haven't thought of for a long, long time that have come up since you started these things. But I think for the moment we better shut her down.
SB: Okay. Well, thanks a lot for taking part.
LN: I've enjoyed it. You may, when you edit these things and get them put together, there may be some aspects you want some clarification on or something.
SB: Sure, that's great.
LN: Or if I think of something I'll phone and tell you.
SB: All right.