

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Bob Rintoul

INTERVIEWER: David Finch

DATE: June 2004

DF: Today is the 14th day of June in the year 2004 and we are with Mr. Bob Rintoul at 40 Woodmeadow Close S.W. in Calgary. My name is David Finch. Could you start today by telling us when and where you were born?

BR: I was born in Calgary on May 11, 1930.

DF: Happy birthday.

BR: Thank you, which happened to be Mother's Day.

DF: Okay. Who were your folks.

BR: My father was Robert Perry Smythe-Barry Rintoul and my mother was Evelyn Vera Rintoul (Burke).

DF: Tell me about them, what kind of people were they?

BR: Dad had come over from Scotland about 1924. His dad died when he was 6, so he was one of a family of sister Jean, brother Jack and brother Jim, Jim being the oldest. Jim was in the British Navy, Jack and my dad didn't get along. My grandmother brought Jean over first and then sent for the boys after, except for Jim, Jim had been in the British Navy since the First World War. My father was born on Sept. 27, 1910 and he was a hard working individual. My first recollection of how hard working he was, when I was about 3 years old I got up one morning and was looking out the window, it was 11:00 in the morning, I presumed it was that time and we hadn't had breakfast. We hadn't had breakfast for a number of days. My parents got up at noon and we had breakfast, it was during the Depression and I found out later that my dad had worked for the Calgary Transit System, at that time the Calgary Municipal Railway, and their union decided they would split the work 6 months on and 6 months off so everybody would get a job and my dad sold Christmas cards so we could have a Christmas, he repaired the roof on Knox United Church. If you ever seen the pitch on that you'd understand that was a pretty scary job, to keep the family going. I perceived along the way further, as I thought about this, as I became older, that maybe we couldn't afford 3 meals a day. So I talked to my mother one day and that was a fact, we got up at 11:00 so we only had to eat 2 meals a day. My dad worked very hard, he was very union oriented, had been since he was a kid. I guess he helped organize the first paper-boys strike in Glasgow. A man with great principles and this is why he had problems later in the unions. Of course, Doug has that information. My mother was born of a family, an old family, I've traced their history back. The first Burke to come to Canada was a fellow by the name of George Thew Burke, who came over to fight the War of 1812. As a matter of fact, his signature is on the Peace Treaty between the United States and Canada. He was also the father of Richmond, Ontario, just outside of Ottawa. There's a plaque there, we've been down there. So that would be my

great-
#037 great-great grandfather, 3 times. Subsequently, my great-grandfather came out west in 1889 and settled in the Melrose district, which is just north and east of Okotoks, right about where the overpass goes in now, off of Highway 2. He bought CPR land and I had quite a time tracing down the location of it because none of our family knew the location. At the time Dempsey was the curator of the Glenbow and through him I was able to locate it. It was quite a circuitous route. I was a surveyor so I went to the land titles office, they suggested maybe it was CPR land, I went to CPR who sent me to Marathon who was their realty end of it, who said, oh, we just sent those books over to Glenbow. And I went over, you know, they are books this size, 3' x 3'. Everything was put in there, there was no rhyme nor reason. And Dempsey had gone through them, he obviously has a photographic memory and he said, I think you'll find it here and I found it on about the 113th page, where the entry was for my great-grandfather. My grandfather of course, came out as a child, when they came out in '89. They had the driest years they've ever had in Canada at that time and in 1896 they moved down into the Porcupine Hills and my grandfather homesteaded there, as well as my great-grandfather. And my grandfather's homestead is still there, the Burton's, it's right at the west end of that road that leads out of Claresholm, to the west. It's called the Burke Creek Ranch. Then they had the wettest years they'd had and my great-grandfather got really upset with this so he left and he went east. My great-uncle, my mother's uncle, I guess you'd call him a grand-uncle, he went north to the Klondike and he made a fortune up there. He came back and he set a beautiful place up for my great-grandparents in Leamington, Ontario. I don't know whether you're aware of it but there's a special little eco-system in there that keeps it quite mild during the winter. So subsequently they had great parties down there. My great-aunt Effie, who was the youngest in the family, I got her to write the complete history and she did a beautiful job for me. They had a coming out party for her, etc. Then my great-grandfather wanted to move back to Alberta and so my Uncle Rob, who was up with my Uncle George, he built my great-grandparents a house here on what is now Olympic Way, and the house still stands there, in 1904. My mother was born in Claresholm, my grandfather, when he sold out to the Burton's, in about 1906, he bought a farm east of Claresholm and that's where my mother was born in 1909, on May 15th and she just died last June of 2003.

#071 DF: So can we get this story back to you then, what was your childhood like?

BR: My childhood to me, was great. We didn't have anything but neither did anybody else. We didn't even have toys, never gave any thought to it. Dad and a friend of his, Walter Quinn, who was a rig builder at Turner Valley, they went to the Stampede and they won a tricycle at the Stampede, beautiful thing, whitewall tires, the works. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. We never had a house, I always lived in suites. When I got older, I was a teenager and we were at 2416 - 1st St. W., we lived in the upper level of the house and there was a family below and another one that had 2 rooms there and we all used one bathroom, but I thought that was normal. I slept on the chesterfield in the living room, we only had 3 rooms, we had a kitchen, living room, dining room and my parents bedroom. And I didn't have a closet, and this was going to junior high school.

DF: Any siblings?

BR: No. So when I became a teenager I went to Rideau Park Jr. High School, of course, I was going to school with the Lougheed's and all those from up in Mt. Royal and Elbow Park and they had nice slacks and dress shirts and I had a pair of breeks???, I don't know if you remember breeks from the old days, they had a tie at the knee and then you wore long socks. I thought that was pretty inappropriate so I started going to work and I got a paper route and then I got 2 paper routes, and then 1943, I was 13 yrs. old and during the war they didn't care how old you were, as long as you could breathe, and I went to work for Safeway. I shopped out my paper routes for 10% on Saturdays, when I worked at Safeway, and then I delivered groceries for the Chinaman up on the corner and I cleaned windows in the different stores around there. And I played hockey for 4 hockey teams. Now my kids say to me, and my grandkids, how did you do it Grandpa, I really don't know. But I was a reasonable student. I could have been an excellent student if I'd wanted to be but I liked to jack around too much, enjoy life.

DF: How did you get into hockey?

BR: My mother and dad started me on bob skates, I don't know if you know what bob skates are, with the two runners and regular shoes, strapped on, on the Elbow River, up about 32nd Ave. there. That's how I got started skating. Then I learned to skate with regular skates and in 1942, '43, J. B. Cross of the Calgary Brewery outfitted 4 peewee, 4 midget, 4 juvenile and a junior team with complete outfits, except your skates and your jock strap. We'd go down to the old Victoria Arena, which was the only artificial ice at that time and we'd collect ourselves with our kit bags over our shoulder with our hockey sticks, there would be 2 or 3 thousand kids in there trying out. This was AAA hockey. So fortunately I made the Buffalos, peewee team. Jack Arbour was my coach. Jack had played for the New York Americans and we got excellent coaching. As a little aside, and I think it's of interest by today's standards, I had a habit, I played defence and I had a habit, if a guy was going to beat me to throw my knee out. I did it once and Jack Arbour, the coach, called me over and he said, Bob, you're going to seriously injure somebody or yourself. You do it once more and you don't play for the rest of the game, you do it twice, you don't play period. And I think that's important and I can't understand why we have to put up with the crap we have now with the way the refereeing and the way the NHL is. I realize it's entertainment but I think they've prostituted the sport.

#113 DF: They let them get away with too much.

BR: Yes, absolutely. So then I went on to midget and then juvenile. And you know, those old friends that I played hockey with, it's like a fraternity. Interesting thing, the other day I went to the Petroleum Historical Society Luncheon and Ken Gulstene was there, from Imperial and he said, I was at an Imperial retirement party, talking to a hockey player you played with that you used to protect. I said, was that Dave Hevington, he said, no, it was Johnny Anderson. I said, oh yes, I did as a matter of fact, he was one of our smaller players, I made sure nobody took any liberties with him and I'll be darned if not 3 days later I'm at Safeway up here and I ran into Johnny Anderson. I said, I ran into Gulstene, he said, yes, I told him, you used to look after me.

DF: So at the same time you were playing hockey . . .this was through high school?

BR: Through junior high and high.

DF: Okay, and where did you go after high school?

BR: I finished high school at Central High, I went to Rideau Park Junior, went to Central High School and I then worked for Safeway. They asked me if I would go to work. I was making \$145 a month, we worked from 8:00 in the morning till 6:00 at night, we got Wednesday afternoon off and Sunday off. I couldn't really see myself getting, they said they wanted me to apprentice, I learned a lot at Safeway, I learned to be a butcher, I learned to produce. At 18 or 19 yrs. old I was in charge of the inventory crew and we'd go in on Wednesday afternoon, they used to shut down on Wednesday at noon, go in Wednesday at noon, do the complete inventory, they'd leave their cash and everything in the tills, we'd do all the cash, do all the inventory, next morning when they came to work the store was back in shape again and we had the complete inventory. We did that about once every 3 months at all the Safeway stores in Calgary. That was an interesting job and it taught me a lot. Then when I was going on 20, my mother used to play cards with a number of women, 2 of whom had husbands who worked for Maclin Motors. The geophysical industry was really getting rolling then, that would be 1950. So Mom said, you know, I was talking to whoever it was and she said, they gave me 3 names to go and call on. So I went to Harold Farney of Farney Exploration, Cec Chesher of CEC and Jack McMillan of Northwest Seismic Surveys. I got a call back from Northwest Seismic Surveys. Jack Timmins, who was a co-owner of Northwest. He called me, that was April and road ban was on and he called me down. There used to be supplementary armouries on 8th St. and 16th Ave., you know that short block where that little park is there, there used to be an armouries in there and they had rented it for the road ban to work on equipment. So I went down there and I worked on equipment for awhile and they sent me to Edmonton with a fellow by the name of Don Carter, who had been with the company for a couple of years, of course, it had only been in operation for a couple of years, to go to the Carter Oil Lab, which was on 148th St., way out on the west end of Edmonton, it was out in the bush. Carter, being the parent of Imperial Oil. They had a lab out there and we took these Simplex cables, they were the big thing then, they were a little over 1/4 mile in length and they cost \$1,800 apiece. This was impressed upon us, \$1,800 in 1950 was a piece of change. That's what I was making a year. We got \$150 a month when we started with Northwest, if we lasted with them a month we got \$165. So when you got a raise in your pay you knew that you were alright. So I went up there and I worked with Don and I ran into, interesting stories come out of this, I ran into a fellow by the name of Alec Mair, who had worked with me in the Calgary Herald. He was then working for Imperial. He was an honours student in. . . oh goodness. . . and then he got his doctorate, I believe he's dead now. And of course, we knew each other, and he said, I'm going up on a horse crew in the Caribou Mountains, which was northeast of the current High Level. There is a subsequent story to this. So anyway, we made take-outs on these cables, we called them pigtails, and there was 3 of these for each station and each station was 110' apart. So you started out from your shotpoint, which was in the middle and you had 1/4 mile cable extending one way and 1/4 mile cable extending the other way. And every 110', pardon me, and in the middle as well, 55, 110, right on up, they had these geophones

hooked on. I'm sure you've got enough in your history about how the seismic works so I won't go through that exercise. So we made all these cables out and we then moved to Bashaw and that was the first place I started to . . .

#176 DF: Just a sec, you say you made these cables?

BR: Well, we made the take-outs on the cables. What they do is they have, it's just like a volt-meter on either end and you hook up, there's 98 cables in there, little wires and you hook up each one and then you have to trace them through and decide which ones you're going to cut the cable at 55 and 110 and then break those out for the geophones. We then went to Bashaw, that was the first place we worked. It was quite interesting because . . .

DF: So this was with Carter?

BR: No, we just went to Carter's lab. Northwest was working for Imperial, they were contracted to Imperial so they were able to use Carter's lab to make these. And the cables, I'm sure, Imperial said, this is the type of cables we want and you have to purchase them, sort of thing. So we went to Bashaw and it was quite interesting there because we got board and room where we could. As it turned out we mostly got room and we ate at the hotel, you know you could buy a punch card for \$5 and a good steak meal cost you \$1.25. We were one of the first crews in there and all the local ladies would get together and say, what time did your boys come in, oh, they came about 2, mine didn't come home at all last night. So you worked all day and you partied all night. Go to the beer parlour after work, the Alberta government at that time had a regulation that you had to shut the beer parlour down from 6-7 so the husbands could go home to their families. I don't think it worked very well but you'd have 2 or 3 tables of beer and they'd just leave them there and then you'd come back and drink them after.

#197 DF: What were you doing on the crew?

BR: I started out as a jug hustler, which was planting the geophones and hooking them up and then I was the reel man on the back of the reel truck, and this Don Carter, he drove the reel truck and I pulled the cable out off the back and placed it along the line so the jug hustlers could hook up. We worked there until June and Imperial wanted a crew near Fort Vermillion. Now June, in the north, is a very, very wet month. So Don Carter and myself in the pickup with all the geophones and the reels and what-have-you and the shooting truck, Jimmy Thompson and Scotty, I can't remember Scotty's name, he was just over from Scotland, he was the shooter's helper, we took off. Don was one of these guys, when he started out for a place he had to get there. We drove, we didn't even stop, we drove day and night. It was on the old road, we went up through Smith. When we got to Slave Lake we needed fuel and so we stopped in to get fuel and in those days these truckers used to travel up and down the Mackenzie Highway and the Alaska Highway and they would just go in and say, do you need fuel, you'd say, yes I need fuel and then they'd drop the fuel. At that time at High Level fuel was 75 cents a gallon, this was 1950, so it gives you some idea. So we stopped at Slave Lake, we started out and we didn't get a mile and a half from town and the vehicle quit. We checked it out and there was water in

the gas so we went back into town, buddy towed us back into town and a guy had sold him a whole truckful of water. So he drained out tank and gave us fresh fuel and away we went. We got up to Grimshaw and of course, the Mackenzie Highway was built by the people who had built the Alaska Highway, then they came over, they just had their 50th Anniversary 2 years ago. . .it must be more than that, it must be 4 years ago. They finished it just before we went up. They had on it what we called Texas pea gravel which is about the size of your fist. 18' wide top, we stopped at Grimshaw and here's a trucker working on his truck and he's got a little bear cub that he picked up up there. Then as we proceeded north a truck going the opposite way threw a big boulder, it went out of his duels and it went right through the windshield and landed in the seat beside us. Of course, we're headed north, we operated all summer with that. We got up to High Level and there's nothing there, the only thing that's there is a Christmas tree out to the left that had been shut down by Imperial Oil, Imperial Level #1. There was nobody around except this fellow, and we didn't know where to go, there was a road leading off to Fort Vermillion and then the Mackenzie Highway going north. So this guy came out of the bush and there was blackflies and mosquitos all over the place. But they were all around him but they weren't landing on him, we found out why when we talked to him because he just reeked of garlic. I guess that may not be a bad deterrent for mosquitos. Anyway, he said, no, he didn't know of anybody around there so we took the road, and it wasn't a road, it was just a trail. Because before the Mackenzie Highway was built and after the paddle-wheelers went off the Peace River, all the grain that was shipped out of Fort Vermillion crossed this to that old trail and it was done by Caterpillar tractor all the way into Grimshaw and then onto railroads. So this wasn't a road, it was just a trail. The shooting truck had a winch on it, we winched most of the way so it took us 24 hours to go 48 miles. Then we hit the Peace River. There's a little ramp there like you'd have for a small boat and we slept and the next morning the ferry came along, it had an old Model A motor on it and a cable across the top and he took us across the river, at that point it's probably a mile wide. Then we went across to the other side, no, they didn't know of any camp. We had something to eat there and turned around, came back, took another 24 hours to get back out to the Mackenzie Highway, went 2½ miles north and there was the camp. George Schultis was the Imperial supervisor out of Peace River and he was in the camp. He was a gruff old bugger, very dour as my dad would say in Scottish. We drove into camp and he looked at us and said, you're a day early. It was immediate dislike for Mr. Schultis. However later he and I became pretty good friends. So we were in camp. Then Imperial pulled in a big rig camp, they were going back in over that well again. So Schlumberger was there whatever else service people, and they never travelled back and forth to Peace River, they stayed for the duration of the well. So we had darned near 100 people in camp there. So we built 3 or 4 ball diamonds and we used to have baseball tournaments. And then ourselves, Northwest, we'd take off and go into Fort Vermillion, later when the trail dried out, we'd go in and play the government agricultural crew in Fort Vermillion. Now this was fastball, it wasn't baseball, it was fastball. So we had a lot of fun. Without a word of a lie, the bears used to come down to our dump all the time and they'd actually sit on the edge of the trees and watch us play baseball. They'd be a fair distance away but

it was remarkable. So we stayed there until October, worked there until October. Very difficult going, because there was a lot of muskeg. Working up there in the summer wasn't ideal, it wasn't portable equipment.

#270 DF: No track vehicles.

BR: No track vehicles in those days. And it was very difficult. Our operator was a fellow by the name of John Philipps. John was really a neat guy. In the muskeg he ran over this fancy cable we had and tore it in his duelly??? and then we had to spend all night repairing it. Because you did your repairs after you came in from work, you never got paid for that. And you had to put in your 220 hours. Once your 220 hours were in you got time off. If you didn't get them in, if there was rain or whatever, you never went south. We went south a couple of times during the summer, came back to Calgary. Rode out in the back of power-wagons. We changed around with somebody in the cab so we didn't have to ride all the way, we had a tarp over the back like a covered wagon. But we always got fed really, really well in these camps, that was the thing that held us together.

DF: So how many years were you in the field?

BR: I was in the field till 1957. But another interesting story and I was talking to a chap, Jack Underhill, they had a fire go through that summer, 1950, it was the worst fire they'd ever had up there. It started just north of Keg River cabins and then just south of us. Without a word of a lie, we didn't see the sun for 2 weeks, and the ash was this deep.

DF: How deep is that?

BR: 2', it was up to here on you, maybe, is that 2', pretty close.

DF: A foot and a half anyhow, it was up to your knees.

BR: Yes. And the road was blocked off, we couldn't get out to go for supplies, the only guy who could go for supplies was the Mountie from Fort Vermillion. So he'd come and get our order, bring back what he could. I understand, and I read in the paper, the smoke from that fire went clear over to London, England and blocked out the airport for 3 or 4 days. It was an awful fire. There was an Imperial Oil geological crew working out north and west of Keg River cabins and they got caught in this fire and they got to a lake, it was a shallow lake and they got under the lake and they actually used reeds to breathe through till the fire went over. And then Imperial had that horse crew I was telling you about when we were doing the cables, they were working the Caribou Mountains, we had 10 watt radios, which were remarkable for what they did. So those fellows at Caribou had to radio out to us and then we'd radio to Peace River for the requirements. They were working with horses and hand drills. And these were all fellows with university degrees, Roy Bily, Alec Mair as I said before and a number of others. Then when we left, we and they left about the same time in October and I met Alec Mair in Peace River, and these fellows had not been out, we'd been out, they hadn't been out since June. They looked around Peace River, they thought this was the greatest place they'd ever been in. Alec said to me, Bob, I've got a doctorate in physics and I'm not going to do that again.

#316 DF: So what were the most important things you learned during your years in the field?

BR: Self-discipline for one thing, on the work side. And being able to fix equipment with very little. To this day that's always been in good stead for me, learning to work with other people. It was a lot of fun, I really enjoyed it. I subsequently became a surveyor and a party manager, I was a party manager at 23 years old. And if you want I'll take you through the rest. . .

DF: Well, I'd kind of like to get to your explosives career too.

BR: Okay. Well, let me take you for a fast trip, what happened. . .

DF: Through the geophysical.

BR: Through the geophysical because it's kind of interesting.

DF: Highlights, yes.

BR: I'll give you the highlights. From Fort Vermillion we moved back and worked at Camrose and then in Camrose, the following summer, that would be 1951, I was working in Camrose and we had a slimhole crew, 2 or 3 of them. I'm sure everybody knows what slimhole crew so I won't describe that. As I was a surveyor by then they sent me to Biggar, Saskatchewan. Took the bus over from Camrose to Biggar and I worked e-logging and surveying on that crew and I also looked after the books. Then from Biggar we went to Medicine Hat and that's where I met and married my wife. We met on a Tuesday, I proposed on a Thursday and we were married 2 weeks later, 1951, November, we were married on November 3rd. From there we went back to Calgary and from there we went to Oyen, Alberta for the winter and I'll tell you, that was a rough winter, it went to 58 below for 2 weeks there. Then from there we went to Wilke, Saskatchewan and worked there. Then while we were in Wilke Nola found out that she was pregnant. Then the crew was shipped to Glasyn, which is north of North Battleford. That was pretty rugged, they had a power plant that turned on at 7:00 in the morning and turned off at 10:00 at night for the town. Lived in the hotel, just a space heater on each floor. I then got a call from the head office, they wanted me to head up back into the Peace River country, they had a surveyor that had quit and they had a feeling that he had cooked his notes. So they wanted me to go up there and check it out. This was on a fly crew, this was when portables first started up. This was the winter of, this would be about February of 1952. So I went up to Peace River and I flew up on a Ford Trimotor, that's the first air flight I'd ever had, web seats and landed in Peace River and Gene Cook met me. Gene Cook eventually became my party manager down the road. He'd been a teacher, been in the forces, took DVA, got an engineer's degree and was working for Northwest. There were 58 crews working out of Peace River that winter. Rooms were hard to get, we stayed in this rooming house, there were 10 beds at the same house. He and I were both big guys and we slept in a single bed, finally got up at 2:00 in the morning and headed out to the crew which was out east and north of Keg River Cabins. And they were working on a, it was a fly crew, they had a 9 man crew, they were using D-2 and D-4 cats to pull the recording trucks and the drills used D-4's. They had a mining drilling company make up the drills, they were auger drills, those were the first auger drills. We had a cook and we had 2 sleeping trailers, a cook trailer and the equipment. And the D-2 and D-4 camp, and we had to move camp about every 3 or 4 days. So I got in there. . .

#381 DF: What kind of drills did you use before augers?

BR: Rotaries. The regular ones, the augers were strictly for fly camps because they were easy. For my survey truck I had a Fordson tractor with a bogey wheel and tracks on it, which had a propensity when you went up steep hills, to fall over backwards so you had to be pretty sharp. We often fell through the muskeg and it was a bugger getting that stuff out of there. What happened was the surveyor had got up to this hill to tie in the survey he brought in and he just kept on going rather than going up here. That was very evident. Imperial in fact were looking at drilling a well in there and of course, that changed the whole parameter. Anyway, we didn't get out of there till April and my wife was some upset because we were just newly married and she was pregnant. So I came back to Calgary and that summer I did a lot of survey supervising. I went down to Lethbridge and I taught up some surveyors down there, I went up to Barrhead, they had a problem with a surveyor up there. I went up to Foam Lake in Saskatchewan. One of the other slimhole rigs had . . . another company, and we did the e-logging and the surveying on it that summer with a fellow by the name of Doug MacMillan. Then I came back from there and Brenda was born, our first child was born on August 31st, 1952. So that was the summer of '52 I did all that. And there were some other places too that I went. Then in 1953. . .

DF: Okay, we can't go year by year, you have to tell me the big picture, like by the end of geophysical career you were doing what?

BR: By the end of my geophysical career I was a party manager. Hopefully I wanted to be a supervisor, field supervisor, I was working for Accurate Geophysical at that time. I went to Jamaica in between and worked down there on a slimhole crew for Northwest Seismic, in 1956.

DF: So take us to the end of your geophysical career.

BR: Okay, the end of my geophysical career was 1957, I was working for Accurate, I had a crew on the Isogan River Valley, when they were building the highway from Whitecourt through to Valleyview. Before then you had to go around through, up the other route through Slave Lake and that before they built that highway. And I was talking to a fellow by the name of Dick Strazer who had come from the United States, he was going to Alaska, his car broke down, he was near Valleyview. Mel Reber in Valleyview, Mel's not the right first name, I can't think of his first name, he asked Dick if he would come in and work with him. He had the power plant, he had the telephone system and he had the bulk agency for BA at that time, British American. He asked if Dick would come in and work with him and he did and Century Geophysical, in those days the explosive business. . . CIL were the only manufacturers in Canada. They set up, usually distributors as such, were small hardwares that would look after the guy that was looking for stumping powder and that sort of thing. Gordon Black with Explosive Ltd. and he owned Western Canada Hardware subsequently, at that time he owned Hoyt Hardware in Lethbridge. They were a distributor so when the geophysical crews came into southern Alberta he was able to get explosives from CIL and his commission was 50 cents a case, which was not very much. Dick went to CIL and they said they wouldn't do it. He said, okay, I guess I've got to go to Anti??? Combines or wherever I have to go to do it and they decided they would sell them at 50 cents. This fellow at Century said that he would pay him a premium if he

would get it in because, when you ordered explosives from CIL in those days you had to order it 2 weeks in advance and these people from Texas and what-have-you, if they ordered it at midnight, they wanted it at 7:00 in the morning. So Dick did this and he did very well but he only had a \$58,000 line of credit at the bank which was not very much. I'd gone up to see him and we got talking about Jamaica, what a difficulty it was to get explosives in Jamaica etc. and he came down one day and he came to camp and he said, I want to hire you as my sales manager. He said, I'll be very honest with you, I'm going to try to sell the company somewhere down the line, you can either go with me on a new venture or go into the explosives with the purchaser. So I went with him, we lived in a trailer in Edmonton at that time, I wanted to get out of the geophysical business because I was someplace and my wife was someplace and my family was growing, my daughter was growing, she was going to school. So I got a car, I got a membership at the Petroleum Club in Edmonton and I got a membership at any golf course I wanted, which was the Country Club. So it was a whole different ball of wax. So I went to work for Dick.

#479 DF: Who was your competition in northern Alberta at that time?

BR: There was no competition in northern Alberta at that time.

DF: And what was Dick's company's name?

BR: Continental Explosives Ltd. So I decided that I was going to get some business, the Trans Canada Highway was going through Banff at the time, so I drove out there and I very quickly found out I knew very little about the explosives business. I knew lots about the geophysical but I knew nothing about the construction. So I had a CIL handbook and I got a room in Banff that night and I sat and I read the whole book that night. Then I went back and I could talk reasonably intelligently with these superintendents. I didn't get very much business out there. But Dick had his own airplane and the insurance company that he had it insured with also had the insurance for one of the pipeline contractors on the Trans Canada Pipeline in 1957. The company was Majestic and he knew the general manager of Majestic in Edmonton. So we went to see Majestic and Majestic said, okay, fine, you go down and see my spread superintendent in St. Anne, Manitoba. So I flew down there and went in to see this guy, he was a big gruff Texan, he said, what can you do for me. Well, you're working in the muskeg down there, there was a low in the seismic business so I said, I'll take the 4,000 lb. Explosive magazines, you put skids on them, take the wheels off and you pull them in. Every day you bring it down the road we'll fill it up with explosives and then you take it in to the muskeg, peel the muskeg off and you can break the rock. He said, how much will you charge, I said, \$1.50 on top of the regular price. Well, he said, there's an old explosive magazine down the road here they used when they came through with the Trans Canada Highway. I said, yes, but I can give you better service, I'll put a man down here. So I went home. I had a 2 way radio in the car, my wife called me and she said, Majestic wants you. So I called him and he said, I want you down here at 7:00 tomorrow morning. So I hopped in an airplane, you know, in those days it was Norstars, 2 props and I fly into Winnipeg and I get in the car, I sleep on the side of the road, I get there at 7:00, it is raining, the creek's coming up. The

superintendent's name was Dusty Killingsworth. So I drive in through their camp, don't forget this is the first job now I'm going to sell explosives and here's this guy in there and the whole thing is just a sea of mud. He's over in his trailer so I go over to his trailer, he's got 2 great big Jesus dogs in there and they're having breakfast. He said, now, what are you going to do for me and I told him, he said, you've got a deal, now we drink on it and he pulled a bottle of Black Label Scotch out from underneath his bed and he said, you're not leaving till it's gone. So I drove out of there and had another sleep on the highway before I went home. So that was the story of getting started in the pipeline business.

End of tape.

Tape 1 Side 2

DF: Okay, so that was your start in the pipeline business.

BR: Yes, well, in the explosive business.

DF: Yes.

BR: There's not a pipeline or a dam or a road in the mountains that I haven't supplied some explosives. Either with Continental, subsequently with Explosive Ltd. who I went with when he sold out or my own company.

DF: What made you do the transition, I mean you mentioned the family life, but you'd had enough of geophysics?

BR: Well, yes. Well, what happened with Accurate, of course, Northwest had gone by the boards by then, became ??? Anderson Seismic Co. and I didn't want to be out in the field all the time. And I wanted something where I could park the family, I'd even thought of maybe a battery operator. In Honolulu Oil I knew G. Paul really well, who was with Honolulu Oil at the time. He said, come on in and see them and I talked to, I keep forgetting this chap's name, he was a Liberal and he had his own oil company subsequently, I can't remember it now, but anyway, that didn't materialize. So this explosives deal just was ideal for me. I travelled a lot but at least I had a home that I could come to within a week.

DF: So how long did you work with this other guy?

BR: I worked with Dick until that fall., that fall of '57, he sold out to Explosives Ltd., Gordon Black's outfit. So Dick was quite a character and I decided I'd probably get in more trouble staying with him than if I went with Gordon. So I went with Gordon Black. I went with them as operations manager.

DF: For all. . .

BR: From then until 1967.

DF: But for the whole company?

BR: Yes, for the whole company. Situated in Edmonton originally and then I moved to Calgary, came back to Calgary in 1960.

DF: Okay, and what were the highlights of that period?

BR: He was established and I don't know, I think Gordon Black's dead now and I really don't care, my dad had a saying, he's tighter than a muskrat's ass and that's water tight. Nola, my wife used to say, you're making so much money for these people, you should really

start your own company. I enjoyed my work there, I travelled a lot, like I went out in the spring and went around to all the branches, I went out in the fall. I did a lot of selling as well. I knew a lot of people in the geophysical industry because of my days in it.

DF: That's a good question, so you were selling to geophysics. . . ?

BR: Geophysics, construction and mining.

DF: And what different kinds of construction for example, road?

BR: Road construction, dam projects, up in the Arctic, on the mainland, sump pits for the big rigs in the permafrost and rocks, when they built Inuvik, I travelled down the Mackenzie River with the president of Yellowknife Transportation from Hay River.

DF: On what boat?

BR: They had a little LCVP landing craft. It took us 2 weeks with the current.

DF: Any stories there?

BR: Yes, I became a very good friend of the construction manager up there. That was a consortium, no one company would tackle Inuvik, because Aklavik was sinking into the ground, into the muskeg, so they moved across the river and built Inuvik. Standard General Construction, Mannix Construction, 5 of them got together because they just wouldn't tackle it.

#038 DF: Now why did they need, why did they need explosives in the muskeg?

BR: They were on the mainland there, as well as the muskeg. Muskeg is frozen very solid and that was the only way they could get it out reasonably. But there, they needed explosives in Inuvik for the airstrip and roads and what-have-you because it made rick-rack out of the rock. As I say, I made a very good friend of the construction manager who was from Mannix and I got a lot of business from him subsequently. One other thing we did too, and this is a fantastic story, when I was with Continental Explosives, the next big job I got was the inland pipeline job out in the interior of B.C. In that case CIL had an explosives plant on James Island, just out of Pat Bay. The rail cars, they brought all their explosives over by rail car to the mainland and then out into distribution. Well, if the tide wasn't just right the cars couldn't. . . it was really tricky. So Dick said, look, we'll get our own boat, we'll look after this. So he and I went to Seattle and bought an LCVP landing craft.

DF: What does LCVP stand for?

BR: I guess Landing Craft. . . I think the last would be people. All I knew was the designation. And I know it had a 670 Jimmy diesel motor in it. We went down there and it's open eh, all you have is the motor in the back and what-have-you. So we went down to Seattle, bought this thing and travelled at night up the shore because we didn't have any rights on it, nothing. Got in to Vancouver and took it into a shipwright there and had him outfit it and put a wheelhouse on the back, a little galley, a couple of bunks and then we had enough for 40,000 lb. of explosives, put a tarp over the top of it. Well, we started out at, you know, they're very slow these ships. . .

DF: So why was this better than this other ship?

BR: Because we could go right on to shore and load it, we didn't have to wait for those tides to cross. They were really slow, finally on a Saturday afternoon, we called CIL, they said,

we'll leave the key in such and such a place because they knew that nobody would be there. We started out and all of a sudden it started to list to starboard. Of course, my days at Sea Cadets didn't hurt me. So we tried the electric pumps, they weren't working, the man pumps wouldn't work. We went down and they were all clogged, there was diesel, there was shavings and everything down there, we had to turn around and go back to Vancouver, get them to clean it all out and then head back out again. We got out there about, we went across the ferry route to Victoria and we got out there and it's starting to get dark. We loaded the 40,000 lb. in. We'd had a truck driver, believe this or not, in Fort St. John by the name of Audie Nordstrok. He had his captain's licence for the Norwegian Navy, so he came along, Dick Strazer and myself went over there. We start up Active Pass and when you get to the top of Active Pass you come out and the currents come in there pretty good and you've got all your buoys, you've got the line them up. We had ship-to-shore phone and we had a depth sounder. Dick says, I'm getting awful tired and Nordstrok crawls in the top, he said, you were in Sea Cadets, you can run this thing. So here I am, I've got the buoys lined up front and back, they're lit by now because it's dark. We get up to the top and I look at my depth sounder and I've only got 3' of freeboard. These are flat bottom boats which was fortunate. I get over a little bit to get around, make my turn into the main part and what's bearing down onto me but a Black Ball ferry. I got by him, we ran out of fuel, we stopped at an Esso Island out in the Fraser River and they fuelled us up and then we went up and there was two trucks waiting to take the explosives over the mountains.

- #080 DF: What kind of explosives, I mean pardon my ignorance here, it's my job to ask stupid questions but nitro was earlier than you right?
- BR: Oh yes, that was straight nitro, yes.
- DF: Okay, by the time you came along what were you dealing with?
- BR: Nitro was used in the wells because that was the most efficient way to do it. Long before then they had realized that nitroglycerin by itself was too dangerous and they used a number of ingredients, glycol, sawdust, guar gum, you name it to make sticks of explosives, which were less volatile.
- DF: Right, but when you arrived in the geophysical industry, what were you using?
- BR: That's what we were using.
- DF: And what was that called?
- BR: At that time it was called. . .
- DF: Is that what we as the lay person think of as dynamite?
- BR: Yes. It was cylindrical, it was in usually, 5 lb. sticks, about 2 1/4" in diameter. It was crimped at the top, you put a cap in it, a detonator into it to detonate it.
- DF: So how did that product change over the years?
- BR: Oh, it changed dramatically, especially after I got into business for myself.
- DF: Okay, how and why, why did it change?
- BR: Because if you had a nitroglycerin explosives plant you were bound to have explosions sometime. There was just no way around it. The one here in Calgary, CIL's blew up.
- DF: Why?

BR: Because some grit got into one of their mixing bowls, caused a spark, bingo. And it can happen so easily, you're dealing with human beings, human beings make mistakes. So they came along with what they called water-gel explosives. I started my own company in 1967, Ace Explosives. Now I've got to give you a little history on the explosives industry. CIL was owned jointly by Dupont and Imperial Chemical out of England. In 1955 the Anti-Combines Act in the United States made Dupont divest of their ICI stock and their Imperial Oil stock, which they did. So that meant ICI owned all of CIL in Canada. In 1956 Dupont came back into Canada and built a plant in North Bay, Ontario and they were there in time for the 1957 pipeline. I wasn't dealing with them then at that time. They didn't do a great job, they got some mining work down east, mostly ex-CIL people, left CIL and came over with some from the States. So that's that little history. And then Dupont moved in in 1957 or so and started their own plant which caused a real furor with CIL because CIL just went bonkers with competition, it was just unbelievable. But in 1967, started my own company. I distributed CIL for. . . I had a partner Stan Graham, he and I both left Explosives Ltd. and started our own company. As it turned out I bought Stan out about 2 years later. He was the kind of guy that if you made \$10,000 one month he'd spend \$20,000 the next month and that just didn't work so I bought him out. He subsequently became the Conservative candidate successfully for the Salmon Arm area in Joe what-do-you-call-it's government.

#121 DF: Joe Clark?

BR: Joe Clark, so he lasted about 6 months. Mulroney subsequently appointed him to the. . . what is it when these guys go to jail and then come out. . .?

DF: Oh yes, the Parole Board.

BR: Parole Board, right. So anyway, we dealt with CIL to start with and CIL were reluctant because Explosives Ltd. were putting the pressure on them. By then, I think we were making about a buck and a half a case or so on explosives. So we knew what we had to do, I had to raise money because we had to compete against Explosives Ltd., who now had bought out Continental of course, and they had them all over Alberta and into northern B.C. So we went to some of Stan's friends and they all fell apart and I went back to Harold Farney, who was a good customer of mine and had become a good friend and J. C. J. Fuller, John Fuller, he ran Nance. I went to those two and said, we need \$250,000. Now this is 1967. Well, how much money have you got, I said, I don't have any money. So I went and borrowed \$20,000, Stan had \$20,000 in it and I had a deal with them that the first 49% of the company was at a given cost to purchase and the last 51% was negotiable. So Stan and I parted company. The company really took off after that. I'm not saying that. . . it was probably a number of circumstances. I built the plant out at Rockyford, I built that out there in 1979-'80. I bought my partners out in 1979.

DF: But Farney and Nance came in with you?

BR: Farney and J. C. J. Fuller, just the individuals, individual money. They got 3 or 4 other guys to back it, they asked me if they could, I said, sure, but I only deal with you two. They were great people to deal with.

DF: So why did they go into business with you?

BR: They subsequently told me they knew it would work. John Fuller, I talked to him and he was a real candid guy, I talked to him later and he said, I knew you'd get rid of Stan, you and he should never have been partners. And he said, I knew you wouldn't pay us back in 5 years but if I didn't invest my money in things that they told me weren't going to be 5 years I wouldn't invest in anything. I have my money in the bank and I don't make any money in the bank. So as it turned out I bought them out, I brought in an independent auditor and the shares were worth between \$79 and \$119, that's damn near 50%, I paid them \$119 and bought them out. I said, I'm going to spend \$1 million out here, you guys aren't interested in that I'm sure at your age, bought them all out, they were happy, they made money. Then I paid my employees 15% net profit before tax, I paid all their benefits, at one time even their CPP. Now I learned that from my dad because my dad told me, I sat at his knee as a union man and they used to have poker games and I learned what turned a working man's crank. And that's an interest in the company and they didn't have to worry about their benefits. And I had no problems, you know, I had great employees. I also had worked in companies where people build themselves little dynasties. How big a company, oh, I have 5 people working for me, or I have 10 people, we had 25 people in that organization and when I sold out to my employees at their request, we were doing about \$18 million worth of business a year. That was 1983-'84.

#166 DF: So you were going into direct competition with. . . ?

BR: Explosives Ltd.

DF: So tell me about that?

BR: That was interesting. CIL didn't want to supply us but they had to because they were the only manufacturer. Dupont wasn't out in western Canada. When you put an explosive charge in the ground with a seismic it's in water normally so it will float back up so they had what they called a drive point on the end with 2 wings sticking out of it. It was made out of metal. This was just regular steel, whereas everything else had to be bronze so it wouldn't spark and I could never understand why that was ever allowed. CIL and Explosives Ltd. made a very bad mistake. I knew the guy in Montreal who made all this stuff so I went down to get a supply and he wouldn't sell it to me and I said, why and he said, because they put the crunch on me. If I supply you, they'll go get somebody else to manufacture, he said, I've been doing business with them a long time. So I invented one out of plastic, moulded plastic, it worked. I got a patent on it and then I went to the chief inspector of explosives and he and I became very good friends subsequently and I said, I have a plastic one, now get rid of the metal ones. He said, you're absolutely right. Explosives Ltd. tried to go out and make them themselves and they couldn't do it because I had the patent and they had to pay me royalty. I have a copy of the first royalty cheque. So it got pretty interesting.

DF: That had to feel good.

BR: It was. And you know, if Explosives Ltd. had treated us properly they would never have had the problem. There was nothing I liked better than taking dollars out of Gordon Black's pocket and we ended up, in some cases, better than 50% of the business. Because I was well known and our company was built on principle. If we made a mistake we

admitted it. I remember one case with an organization, one of our drivers had taken out construction caps rather than seismic caps. Construction caps have a delay in them, seismic caps are instantaneous and it was Seismotech, it was at the time when these fellows were doing shoots and then selling them to the oil companies, so their money was on the line. We used to take inventory every morning and my seismic manager came to me and said, we really made a mistake, and I said, well, we've got to call Seismotech and we'll tell them we'll pay for the extra shooting. It cost us \$57,000 but we did it. Whereas when something happened with CIL or something happened with Dupont or, in a lot of cases, Explosives Ltd. they tried to blame the user. Well, you should have known it was construction. Well, that's not the case. So that's how we built our business, on trust. If a customer said he wanted something there at 7:30 our driver was sitting on his door at 7:00. We had good equipment, we made some of our own explosives.

DF: How do you do that?

BR: I used to take a gang every April out to Skoki Lodge skiing, cross-country skiing, every March or the early part of April. One of those fellows was a good friend of mine and a supervisor for an oil company in town. Back in the mountains and the foothills they used to shoot surface shots because they couldn't drill holes economically. The method they were using was kind of happenstance so he said, if you can come up with a method that would better the method we're using now you'll make a fortune at it. So I went back and we got together with Dupont and we assembled the product in our plant out at Rockyford and we did very well at it.

#213 DF: What was the . . . ?

BR: Well, I had . . . you know, it's really hard to remember now. I was just thinking, this is the first time I remember talking about that.

DF: But it was a product that you could use on the surface?

BR: Yes, that's correct. Then I got all the uranium business in northern Saskatchewan. Those people are still good friends of mine, I got to know them through Canada Tungsten when I was dealing with them up in the Northwest Territories. That was a big job, we had to truck it so far and then they took the truck over the winter road. So I built a manual and every truck driver, every employee of theirs that was involved, every employee of ours had this manual, so if something happened here, this is what you did. So I had all the uranium business for quite a number of years up there. As a matter of fact, in July we're going to visit one of the fellows that was assistant manager up there. So innovation. That's another thing, you asked me what I learned in seismic, innovation. Being able to do something with nothing. You tear the gas tank off your car and you're out in the middle of the bush, what do you do. Well, you take your windshield washer deal off and you take your air cleaner off and you set it up and you somehow meter the gas in, you always carried extra gas and that's how you got back to town, if you didn't you froze, pretty simple.

DF: Good. So you were building a company, on innovation, on customer service, what else?

BR: And equal price, we never cut prices, we charged the same price as our competitor.

DF: So rather than cutting the price you offered something else and what was that?

BR: The service and innovation. And I think, giving our people a piece of the profits.

DF: How did that work?

BR: It worked really well.

DF: Because here you're a capitalist and an entrepreneur from a labour background, so how did you marry those two? I think it's very interesting.

BR: It is interesting. My dad and I didn't always get along. He was a crusty old Scot but I learned from him. And this is now blowing my own horn but my mother often told me, my grandfather, ever since I was a kid, I was always asking questions, I was always interested in what was going on. Like, I wanted to know how he knew where his land was. He was blind and he took me out, he had my grandmother make us a lunch, he had a farm where the Sir John A. Macdonald High School is now and he took me out in the field. We got one of those steel survey pipes in the northeast corner and he felt up and down the thing, he said, feel this, those are Roman numerals, this is the northeast corner of such and such. When I went surveying I remembered that very distinctly. I'm interested in everything, still am, still learning.

DF: But, how did your labour background come into play when you were on the other side, when you're the owner?

BR: Well, as I said before, when these labour people used to come around and play poker at our place I used to sit and listen to them and I knew what they were interested in, what was . . .

#255 DF: Okay, so what is it that the working class man is interested in?

BR: He's interested in a good wage of course, good benefits, and somewhere he can park his hat, he knows he's going to be there for awhile. And good relationships with the people he works with, that come out and pat him on the back when he's done a good job and take him into their office and kick him in the back when he needs it, in a constructive way. Like I used to bring fellows into my office, my wife and I would go around and take the profit sharing cheques and visit everybody, have dinner and visit with the family and I would have the wife and if they had kids out for dinner. Then we'd go to the office, give them their cheque the next day and I would point out what we'd done that year, what he'd done that year, what he hadn't done that year and ask for his input. The other thing that I did. . .

DF: The profit sharing was based on what?

BR: It's a fairly lengthy deal. I had worked on it for a long time, I spent three years with my accountant who was Price-Waterhouse, on developing this so it was good taxwise, it was good for the employee, it was good for me. It was on a point system, you got between 1 and 9 points on longevity, your position with the company, how well you'd done the past year and then, that point system, you took all the points for everybody, totalled them up and totalled them into the amount of 15% and then you knew how much each one got.

DF: Okay, so how well you did in the past year based on what?

BR: Based on the net profit before tax.

DF: No, but that individuals. . .?

BR: No, net profit to the whole company. The point system was for the individual. So you

take your profit and loss statement, you got your income, you've got your costs, and then before tax and before I had taken anything out of it except wages, that was the pool, 15% of that went into it. And we had girls working in the office making \$4 and 5 thousand a year above their wages. And we paid good money.

DF: How long was this in effect?

BR: It was in effect from, let's see, it started in '67, from about 1972 through till when they bought me out in 1984. And then it was carried on subsequently by them and then they sold out to their supplier and it carried on then and then the supplier sold out to a development bank out of New York and they cut it out just last year I hear.

DF: Were there any busts during that time period, when things weren't so good?

BR: Oh yes, two or three of them.

DF: Okay, and then what happened then?

BR: What happened then was, we had to sit down and we had to pare. . . and they knew this up front, right from the beginning, we had to pare the number of employees. We had two or three busts. We would cut back from 25 to maybe 11 or 12 or 13.

#295 DF: On what basis did you cut people?

BR: From the people who had been there the least amount of time, and mainly the truck drivers. And then you know, our operation manager would take loads out, I'd take loads out. Our operations manager was a woman as a matter of fact and she and her boyfriend would go out and take a load of explosives out. Subsequent to that I decided that we would use contract trucking, and a lot of things evolved. Like at one time you could only take 10,000 lb. in a truck. Well, that was increased to 40,000 lb. Then we were hauling directly out of North Bay so I used contract trucking. So the only truckers that I had were the truckers from the branch out to the different locations. And interesting, like it was difficult to determine the salaries, and our profit sharing, of our salesman, particularly in the seismic industry. Because they'd talk to a crew here, sell them something and then they'd move over there to someone else's district. So I pooled all that, all that was pooled. One of the fellows came to me one day and he said, Fred's not pulling his weight, I said, what do you want me to do about it. He said, I want you to talk to him, I said, I'm not going to talk to him, he's taking money out of your pocket, you talk to him.

DF: Good point.

BR: It makes a hell of a difference when your peer pulls you up on the carpet. I had another fellow who was working as our operations person here in Calgary and I was out to the magazine to him one day and I said, gee, it looks like you got new tires on the truck, he said, yes. I said, where did you get them, so and so, I said, how many bids did you get, he said, oh I've been dealing with this guy a long time, he gives me good prices. So I went back and I knew the tires and I called 2 or 3 places and I could save \$50 on the tires so I called him in, I said, Wes, we could save \$50. Well, that's not a great deal, I said, yes, but 15% of it's yours. Oh . . . and the light went on. And it was just like a big family. We've had one reunion, they had a 35th anniversary reunion and then this gal who was our operations manager had her 80th birthday here a while ago and a bunch of the gang were there and we were reminiscing and they said it was just like a big family. And it was.

Christmas time we'd shut her down the last day for Christmas and we had our house out there and Nola and I would throw a big lunch and all the crew would come over and have lunch. And then I had a meeting every spring and I brought everybody in to Calgary and we'd hold it some place. The funniest deal was, I'd joined the Ranchman's Club at the suggestion of my insurance broker. I thought gee, it would be good to have this there and we got a room up there. But all these guys come in and they don't like to where ties and what have you and we had a sound system and we had a dance. They never said anything to me but that was the last one we had at the Ranchman's Club. It really wasn't their bag.

#335 DF: No. So just while we're on this topic, any other things that you did with the employees to encourage just that sense of harmony and so on.

BR: Yes. One of the things, one of the biggest problems in the explosives business was a massive detonation which would just kill the company. There were a number of different accidents around North America. One down in Oregon, with a fellow left a truck unattended beside a warehouse. He shouldn't have, the warehouse caught on fire, it caught on fire, it cleaned out half the town of Eugene. So I had all the information, all the articles, the paper articles, the write-up and about every 4th pay cheque they got a copy of that. Just to keep them. . .and it was one of my biggest fears in the explosive business.

DF: Did you eve have a bad one?

BR: I didn't, no.

DF: How come?

BR: As much luck as good management. I mean, I was tough, I wouldn't stand for any breaks of the regulations. And I was a good friend of the chief inspector of explosives, Joe Fraser. I started the Explosive Distributors Association for Canada. And we started the Explosive Distributors Association to improve safety throughout Canada. That was really an interesting exercise. I was also on the Board of Canadian Federation of Independent Business. John Bullock's outfit.

DF: Now did the safety of the product improve over time too?

BR: Yes, we got into water-gel explosives and that was the next subject. I kind of diversified there for awhile. Dupont were one of the leaders in water-gel explosives.

DF: What it is?

BR: That was a mixture of. . .there was no nitroglycerin in it, it was other chemical products that they developed over the years in which it could not be detonated by fire and it could not be detonated by impact, only by a detonator.

DF: Because those were the two main things that were trouble, weren't they?

BR: Exactly. And what happened was, it was a very slow intrusion into all the industries that used it. Because these old time blasters knew everything you know. And it didn't work as well and it didn't do this, and I was really a fighter for it. The first stuff we got from Dupont for the geophysical industry was a disaster. It didn't help us at all but we worked at it and worked at it and worked at it.

#376 DF: What was wrong with it?

BR: It didn't detonate properly, they didn't know how to use it properly. Subsequently,

through myself, I was always very intent on it and I worked with Dupont on this. I'm not a chemist but I knew what some of the problems were. We had a big deal at one of the main hotels here in which we put it out to the industry and I named it, it was Ener-Gel. Name means a lot, the old stuff was called Geo-Gel and I called it Ener-Gel, giving the impression that there was more energy involved. And subsequently it's used a lot now. In the mining industry, especially open pit, they mix the product right on and they have trucks, it's put in trucks and it's pumped down the hole. The big one was down at Kaiser, which I was involved with. And there's another deal that was interesting. Dupont did not have a union as such, they had an in-house union. And of course, they got the contract down there at Kaiser and that's one of the toughest unions in North America, the United Mine Workers. They weren't about to have it. They held off and held off and finally they had to accept the union but they didn't want to do it company-wise because then that would infiltrate the whole works. So they asked me if I would hire the employees and I would do the union negotiations. It was really interesting because these union people knew my background. But did I ever learn how to negotiate. It was a lot of fun. And Dupont, their top people, negotiators would come out, they had a hotel you know, and I'd got back at night. Because of this of course, I didn't have much to offer in the way of getting something in return other than, they pay me a very handsome retainer to do this. But through that I got all the accessories, the prima-cord??? and the detonators and all that stuff for their big plant, so it was pretty fair piece of change. But that was a lot of fun, I enjoyed that. But it was a tough union. So water-gels was used, and probably now pretty exclusively used. Of course, I've been out of the business now for 20 years. And it's changed dramatically. At one time there was only Explosives Ltd. and ourselves, which was Ace Explosive Distributors, now there's 2 or 3 others, 2 or 3 other manufacturers have come in from the States. Our company, Ace, I had offered them an opportunity. I wanted to retire when I was 65 so I started when I was about 52 or 53 to develop a plan, other than the profit sharing, in which the employees could own the company in 10 years. What we did, again, I worked with my accountants, and the tax people, we came up with a deal that I would put a third of the money in, they would put two-thirds in, I'd still pay the profit sharing and they would end up with the company in 10 years, they'd have bought out the company. So I gave it to my vice-president, who I'd hired from Dupont as a matter of fact, he was a chemist and vice-president. I went to Arizona for a month or so holidays in the winter and I said, take this out to the employees, talk to them, see if they're interested and I want to know by spring. When I came back he said, can we buy you out up front. I hadn't even thought of that. What I didn't realize was that my vice-president was about 45 years old and he wanted to retire by the time he was at least 60. I said, fine, but you can't pay me out of profits, it's got to be cash on the barrelhead. I had counselled them with the money they had from out profit sharing to invest it and don't pee it up against the wall, which most of them did. So all 25 employees bought me out. They went to the bank, I carried them on the land for a year and I lent them \$250,000, but that was a time when interest was 17-18%. And what money I made out of that, I went to the bank, I banked with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and you know, at times I had a \$3 million line-of-credit there you know, for operating funds. So I went

and I took this chunk of money and I put it in a term deposit at 17% for 5 years. They weren't going to give it to me for 5 years, I said, I'll take it someplace else. So that was quite a start in my retirement fund I'll tell you.

#456 DF: So what other things did you learn in your time at the explosives company?

BR: Well, I learned that, never say never.

DF: What do you mean by that?

BR: Well, in relation to possibilities of a massive detonation. I learned to . . .

DF: What were your precautions against that? You showed me a picture of your construction.

BR: Well, good construction was very important that you had magazines that were safe.

DF: What are the principles to safe magazines?

BR: In that case I buried them underground. If you had a detonation. . .

DF: How is that better?

BR: If you have a detonation you want the detonation to go up, not out. So it was built down in the hills, there was hills all around it. So that when the detonation hit those hills the energy would go up. I'll show you a couple of pictures upstairs. That's another story, I did a simulated nuclear blast for the U.S. Navy at Suffield. I can go on for hours, it keeps coming back. That's one thing, always make sure your vehicles are properly equipped and the electrical system is properly encased so that there's no chance of sparks, they're well maintained, you have good rubber on them. Shortly after I sold the company to these fellows they had an accident out west of Jasper, on the way out to a mine. There were 3 or 4 people killed. There was no explosion because it was water-gel. I consulted to them for a year. They were pretty down and I said, look, it's a bad situation but it's also an opportunity to get the word out that water-gel explosives are a lot safer. If that had been nitroglycerin explosives it could have been a massive explosion. And that's another thing I always used, there's always a positive in every negative. If something happens bad you look for what you can pull out of it that can be of benefit to you down the road.

DF: So your magazines are underground?

BR: Yes.

DF: And you had several of them, is that important as well?

BR: Yes, you don't want them too big. And they were all separated by mountains of dirt as well.

#502 DF: But did you separate them so that if one went up the other ones wouldn't?

BR: That's correct. And it's very strict regulations from the federal government on explosives, very strict.

DF: So is it getting a lot safer?

BR: I think it's always been safe. A little story about nitroglycerin. CIL had bought, years and years ago, turn of the century, had bought a plant from a guy who made explosives. In the old days guys would just make explosives. It had a wooden floor, which was a no-no.

DF: Why?

BR: Because the nitroglycerin leaches out and penetrates the floor. And nitroglycerin, you can't get rid of it, unless you use nitroglycerin destroyer and that stuff, you've got to use

tons of it. But anyway, they knew that this plant had been going since Nobel invented explosives, and they knew it was. . . so they decided to blow it up, the only way they could get rid of it.

DF: That's the only way?

BR: Yes. So they set charges in the old plant, they moved back down an old creek bottom about a mile and a half or a mile and they had a plunger. Pow. The plant went up and they went up because there was a water course underneath and the nitroglycerin had leached into this water course and come out, it was sitting on top of the surface all the way down and blew them all up. Very valuable lesson learned there. But that gives you an idea of how volatile it was in those days. And I remember when they used to bring through the nitro trucks to break the formations here. We knew it in Calgary, everybody in Calgary, and you know, there was only 75-80 thousand people in Calgary, everybody in Calgary knew the nitro truck was coming through. We'd go down to Macleod Trail if we could, or wherever. The other thing that I didn't tell you that I was involved. . .

DF: You went down to Macleod Trail to watch them go through?

BR: Yes. The truck go through, it would be in the back of an old Model T or whatever it was. Another thing that I didn't tell you, that I was involved in the first water flood down at Turner Valley. Back at one of our low times in the geophysical business, of course, it was long before I got started in the explosives business, we were living back in Calgary and George Blunden, who subsequently became exploration manager for Home Oil, he was our chief geophysicist at that time. We got this job, Anderson Drilling were drilling the water wells beside the gas or oil wells and I surveyed the location. I went out and I did the electro-logging to find out where the water formations were and then they used that well to flood the Turner Valley field.

DF: What part of Turner Valley was that?

BR: In around Royalite.

DF: So central.

BR: Yes. And that would be the summer of 1955 I would guess.

DF: Was Gordon Connel??? involved with that?

BR: Don't remember, don't remember anybody.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

DF: Okay. What else do you want to tell me about, what have you enjoyed most about your career?

BR: The best job I ever had was a surveyor.

DF: Why is that?

BR: Because I was my own boss. If I made a mistake there was only one person to blame and I hated to do things over again, so I made sure I did it right the first time. I remember as a young child, and I've used this with my grandchildren, I might also add we're great-grandparents as of last March which I'm pretty proud of. . . But in Grade 8 I went to Rideau Park Jr. High School and the woodworking area and the gals area was in a

separate little school, you used to have to come across the swinging bridge there on Elbow Drive there and walk over. We had a teacher there by the name of Elliot. One of our first projects was to make a leather frame for a picture. You ??? all the ends, you know, rolled out. . . it was absolutely perfect. Except there was cardboard on the back and where I made the stand I'd made a wrong cut so you could see the old cut on it and he gave me a B+. I wouldn't settle for it so I went and said, I think I should have at least an A and he said, no, you shouldn't, I said, why. He said, well, the front is perfect but the back isn't. I said, who's going to see that, he said, you are. So that's something I have used in my own business as well.

DF: Things you enjoyed about your career?

BR: Yes. I enjoyed party managing because it was good, lots of responsibility there. I met a lot of people, I travelled all over western Canada.

DF: Okay, back up. You've got to be able to tell me what you mean by the party managing. There's so many complicating factors and so many things that can go wrong. Day to day there's lots of things that change, so what systems did you develop to make that work?

BR: I've documented everything, all my life. So when I took over the crew, I took over from a guy that didn't know his ass from a hole in the ground quite frankly. He'd been hired by the president Jack MacMillan because Jack liked him. He was a good guy but he knew nothing about the geophysical business, never been in it. The drillers had a union. We were drilling 150' holes, we were working for Mobil Oil down in southern Saskatchewan, drilling 150' holes, we had a lot of lost circulation problems and they would drill 3 holes apiece. They had 3 rigs, 9 holes a day. And I was surveying. I'd go down on Monday, Nola was living with her parents in Moose Jaw, I'd go down on Monday, I'd do all my surveying on Monday and Tuesday, I had my rodman down there, he'd do all the tickets, all the information that had to go into the office and I'd come home with a bit peddler and stay home for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and go back Sunday again. I knew they could do more business. So when they came down and asked me if I'd be party manager I said fine. So I called the drillers in, I said, look, I know you've had a union and I know you and I have been buddies and we're all a crew but it stops here. The first one who doesn't gets fired, it's that simple. Every month I held a safety meeting in the morning before we went out and we aired all our beefs. I wouldn't stand for any crap and I was big enough to back it up. I remember a very good friend of mine, he and I had worked in the slimhole business, he came down there, he was a driller on a 1500 Failing and he'd lost the final drive on it. It was over springtime and I said, fix it while we're gone. That was the job, everybody painted their equipment and fixed their equipment to get ready after road ban was finished. So I went to Calgary on business, came back, everybody was ready to go. We go out and 3 days later the Failing final drive is gone again. I said to Merv, what happened here, he said, I don't know, it just went. I said, you've got brand new bearings and what have you from Failing Supply out of Edmonton, when you took that out did you knock out the bearings with a block or did you heat the housing. No, no he said, I hit it out with a block. Okay fine, I guess that can happen, I ordered another set from Failing. Three days later it was gone again. So I said, enough of this, so I got the man out of Failing, I paid for him to come down to assemble it. He

#032

looked at it and he said, I've got bad news for you, I said, what, he said, Merv heated the housing and he warped it. I said, that's what I thought happened after the first time, he's lied to me. So Merv went down the road. A really good friend of mine. He was very bitter over it. We made friends subsequently, many years later. He was an alcoholic and he subsequently committed suicide. But I wouldn't stand for any BS. Another driller, he got stuck in the snow and he tore up the winch on one of the trucks and he lied to me about it and I sent him down the road too. Then I got a contract driller in and I said, here's the deal, you have a job here as long as you drill more holes than anybody else. From that day on we had the highest production that Socony Vacuum had anywhere. That's the way I ran things. I was fair and I'd give everybody a break but I wouldn't stand for any bullshit. I think I got that from my dad too. I had high principles of my own, I'd never lie to anybody else, if I made a mistake I'd admit it and I expected the same from everybody else. So that's why I enjoyed party managing. If I had a problem I was able to solve it somehow or other.

DF: You said you were a big one for documentation, tell me about that.

BR: I find that when I write things down I understand them better. If I have a meeting with you and we're sitting across from each other I write everything down that you and I have discussed. When we're finished with that I show you the page and I say, is that what we discussed and you say, yes, I say, will you sign it and date it please. And I sign and date it. You can't get more intensive than that I don't think. And I did this with everybody, with customers, with Dupont. And I found that when you talk about things and things get lost, if it's down on a piece of paper it doesn't. I still do it. I'm on the condo board here, I still do it. I've been trying over the years to get out of doing these things, like I resigned from them and I end up back on the board again.

#076 DF: What other interests have you developed along the way? You were talking about cross country skiing, tell me about your outdoor pursuits.

BR: I cross country skied for a good number of years. I play golf, I've golfed since I was 12 years old.

DF: How did you get into golf?

BR: Well, my dad came from Scotland. When he was with Calgary Municipal Railway it was called then, they had a golf group that went to Shaganappi, the old golf course, the first municipal golf course in Calgary and he started playing golf. My mother then started, my mother started playing golf when she was 46 years old. She became a 16 handicapper in about 3 years, she was a natural and my dad and I, we couldn't afford golf balls so we'd go find golf balls and we'd paint them. In those days they had this fast drying white paint and I didn't know it at the time but you got high at the same time because of the chemicals that were in it. You'd go into our kitchen in this little suite that we had and you'd have 15 or 20 golf balls hanging with a thread and pin in it from the ceiling, drying. So he and I . . . we had no car. . .

DF: Why were you painting them?

BR: So that we could see them. It was during the Depression or during the war, yes, I was 12, 1942, you couldn't buy golf balls either. So they'd get all scuffed and so you'd paint them

white so you could see them better. We had no car, I had the first car in our family. I saved \$500 to go to university and I decided I wasn't going to go to university. I was an excellent student in junior high school, I was a so-so student in senior high school. I just lost interest. I played hockey for 3 or 4 hockey teams, I was doing all this work, I had a girlfriend, I was a character, I loved life and I decided I was going to waste my time so I didn't go to university. And I guess it's worked out pretty well. I don't know whether you could do that today, I think you could, I think somebody that has the initiative and wants to get out and hustle his buns.

#100 DF: I wonder though, I think people of your generation, you had a lot of breaks after the war.

BR: We had the best. . .we talk about this now, we were brought up during the Depression so we learned what a dollar meant, or a nickel as the case may be. We were just that much too young to go into the war. Now I was in Sea Cadets and was in the Naval Reserve and you learn good discipline there. After the war there was lots of jobs available, then Leduc comes along. If you couldn't make a good living in our days you were a poor s-o-b. And here's another thing, and I keep digressing but these stories come in. My wife and I decided one day that the money that we have is really not ours, we're just stewards of it and that we better use it properly. So first of all we set up five year programs, we set up a scholarship for a doctor on the Siksika reserve, we set up a lab at the cancer centre at Foothills Hospital university, a fellow who was doing . . .Tikei Tamoiki, a Japanese fellow, one of the top cancer researchers in the world, he came from Japan to the United States and the University of Alberta got him. He had property beside me out in Rockyford and . . . They talked him into coming here and I found out in talking to him. . .and he was doing DNA work then and he was using tinker toys and he had this thing set up in his office and he had 4 or 5 researchers. To get the extra money for computers he had to go out and lecture. I said, this is stupid so we provided all his computer upgrades for him for 5 years. Then we've set up an endowment at the McCaig Centre here because we both have arthritis, I got involved with the arthritic people. Where were we before I digressed to that point? We were talking about party managing, what I liked about party managing.

DF: It's a good question, how did we get into this. Oh, I asked you about documentation is what I asked you about.

BR: Yes, that's right. So all this stuff I documented too.

#133 DF: Oh, then we went into your extra activities, outdoors, golf.

BR: Golf, that's where we were at. So I became a fairly good golfer. I was a 7 handicapper at one time, not too swift now, I've got very bad knees. I've got osteoarthritis in both knees but that's another story. Cross country skiing, I played baseball as a youngster, I ran the 2 mile in track. When we lived in Haysboro our son-in-law was running, got me running, I used to run a mile in 12 minutes every morning. Take our dog, I got my heartbeat down to 53. I've got my computer upstairs, I do all my own greeting cards, I have a digital camera, I do all my own photography, I do all my own pictures, I do all my own albums. I had a 1937 Ford car, the first car, that car I bought for \$500, I had to put a new transmission in

it, I did that myself. I love mechanics, I have a little workbench out in the back. If I have a problem, if I need a piece and it's not readily available I can jimmy something up to work. I'm writing my autobiography, I learn every day. I have a passion for learning. I did the Burke family history, it's catalogued in a book, we had a reunion, I gave one to all my cousins and my aunts and my mother and what have you. That was researched, Nola and I spent 3 years of 3 week holidays travelling from Dawson City to the border, from Victoria to Montreal. We went through microfiche at the museums and archives in Ottawa, I enjoy that work, I enjoy history. If it wasn't for our ancestors we wouldn't be here now. A little aside that you may enjoy, I decided, I'm a member of the Southern Alberta Old-timer's Association because my ancestors landed here before midnight of 1889. I go up there, they've got a gravel parking lot, they've got these old people, they twist an ankle, they break a hip so I offered to pave the parking lot for them. I got a friend of mine that I went to school with and played golf with who owned his own construction company, he used to work for Standard Gravel, got him up there to consult on the deal as his contribution to them. And we've had a fix with the city trying to get it done. So next thing I know Barry Erskine comes along, it's in his territory and he helped. But we had a meeting up there, and here I'm just trying to spend \$20,000 or whatever it is, and here are all these people, young people, 25-35 and I said to them, before Barry had arrived, do you know what the Southern Alberta Old-timer stands for or why it's here. Well, no. So I gave them the history of it and we had our historian there and he filled in and I said, without those people we wouldn't be here and you wouldn't have a job so let's get on with it.

#177 DF: Good for you. Tell me more about your hockey days. How far did you get?

BR: I got to Junior B. I loved to body check and I was a stay at home defenceman. I was a better hockey player than I thought I was. My peers told me that subsequently.

DF: What was hockey like when you were playing, tell us about the game, did you have the forward pass?

BR: Oh absolutely, yes, yes. It was very similar to what it is today except the rules were enforced. It was as tough a game. I broke this hand here, you can see this knuckle was shoved up into here. I've lived with that ever since. We had, I think, smaller teams. We had, maybe 3 lines of forwards, 2 lines of defence and goal keeper and a spare goal keeper. There was a forward pass, there was body checking. Nobody ever talked about not body checking until you were 15 or 16. And really, we had a rink half a block from us down on 25th Ave. and 1st St. West, that park is still there.

DF: Yes, but to be fair, today's kids, with full helmets and everything, they can be much more violent than you were right?

BR: Oh there's no doubt about it, but they shouldn't be.

DF: Body checking is different than hitting somebody over the head with a stick.

BR: That's lack of respect. I remember Bob Wiley, you know the good golfer, body checking me one time, my skates came up and he's got a scar right down here, that was my skate. But he body checked me. But that was terrible. And another friend of mine who is unfortunately dead now, he and I were playing defence, a guy shot from the blue line and

caught his eye, knocked his eye completely out. He wanted to play again, they said you crazy bugger, they took him to the hospital, put his eye back in. I took him to his mother at 1:00 in the morning and he never had to wear glasses. It's remarkable. But these things happened, you got the odd tooth knocked out but nobody went after anybody. There was the odd fight.

DF: You said you were a pretty big guy.

BR: I was 195 lb. when I was 15.

DF: How tall are you?

BR: 6'1½".

DF: But that's nothing compared to the big guys now.

BR: Oh no, and I was considered big.

DF: But now they've got guys 6'7".

BR: Oh, weight 240 lb. No, it's a whole different game, it's faster. I could have had a chance to go to the NHL but I didn't. I wasn't good enough, I knew I wasn't good enough so I never persevered. I was, as I say, a stay at home defenceman. Nobody could lift my stick. When I moved to Rockyford and we built the place out there they wanted to start a seniors hockey group so I said, sure, I'll supply the sweaters and the socks and I played. I played hockey up until I was 55. And they still couldn't get my stick off the ice. One thing I found out about these younger people, Old-timer hockey is 30 and over, it's pretty stupid but 30 and over. They smoke too much and they drink too much, I could skate rings around them at 55.

#225 DF: What do you mean, they couldn't get your stick off the ice?

BR: If I wanted to put my stick in front of the goal and they wanted to lift it off they couldn't do it. I was just strong enough. Look at my size, I've got big bones.

DF: Yes. Before we went on tape you were showing me in your trophy room there are some pictures there of a hockey team, the Canadian hockey team, tell me about your role in bringing that to Calgary.

BR: That was interesting. Doug Mitchell was my lawyer and you know Doug, he's been very active in sports and what have you. Father Bauer and he were good friends from the days that Doug played football I guess. He came out and they lost their home, I think it was near Hamilton some place and he asked Doug if we would consider bringing the team out here. So he'd put 11 of us together to do this, asked us if we would put the money up if they needed it, to bring the team out.

DF: Now which team is this?

BR: This is the Canadian National Hockey Team. So the 12 of us agreed that we would put the money up if that was necessary. It was really an interesting group of people, I'd have to go back in my notes to get their names. All from different walks of life. One of them owned a truck dealership in town, another was a coal miner, owned a coal mine in Drumheller, one was in the insurance business, a great multitude of people, we had a lot of fun. Brought the team out here, set them up. We were offered . . . what's his face, the guy that headed up the union for the players that ended up in jail. . .

DF: Eagleson.

BR: Eagleson was very active then. He came out here and he told us, one night at a dinner party that Hockey Canada were having for us that we could have the Atlanta Flames if we wanted them. Father Bauer recommended that we not bother with it, he said, the politics in the NHL were something that would drive us nuts. As it turned out, as you probably know, Skalbania picked up that and he sold it off to the Seaman brothers and Harley Hodgekiss and that bunch. Along the line I had a few bucks and I told, I know Doc and B. J. and the bunch real well from our days in the oil patch, as a matter of fact I damn near went to work for them one time, I said, if you need an extra mil or whatever I've got some money handy. Doc said, Bob, don't even think about it, I wouldn't even suggest it. The money I'm using is the money I've had, you know, multi-millions and he said, it's just like a bottomless pit, he said, don't even think about it. So we went along our way and Hockey Canada, if you saw that maple leaf there with the brass deal in the middle, that was a sculpture contest they had in the 1932 Olympics by Dr. Tait Mackenzie. He sculptured that, he won the sculpturing contest and it's all Olympic figures. Hockey Canada had a big dinner for us, when he brought that out I thought they were going to give one to Doug and I thought, gee, is that ever nice. They gave one to each of us. And then of course, we have the picture of the team that went to the 1980 Olympics and the banner that they signed. But we never had to use any of our money because when they came out, what we did was, we were in the old Corral at the time, and we're really the reason that the Saddledome was built. . . And we took the team around and I was in charge of this, it was a lot of fun, for exhibition games, like I'd take the Russians and the team to Medicine Hat. Father Bauer and I would go down to Medicine Hat, fly to Medicine Hat a couple of days before and get the scribes all built up. Of course, Alec Kaleta was the rink manager down there, Alec Kaleta was known as the Seabiscuit, he played for the Chicago Blackhawks. He came from the Crowsnest Pass. And he had all these pictures of him with Chicago and the Russian team, of course, they saw this and Alec was in his joy. He said to Father Bauer, you take my box way up in the girders. We said, no, no, he said, you go up there. You could see the whole rink from up there. And Father Bauer, you know I thought, like I did with explosives, I thought I knew a lot about hockey but I think he'd forgotten more than I knew. And he was showing me, at that time, why the Russians were beating us. The Russians could turn right or could turn left equally as fast. We could either turn right or turn left.

#307 DF: But not both.

BR: But not both and he said, that's half a stride. That'll get you. So that was interesting. We had a lot of fun and we had great parties and the boys were very appreciative of the work we did with them. Subsequently we had money left over from all these trips. . . I guess the disappointment was, we went to Edmonton to play the Oilers before they joined the NHL and . . . what the heck is the name of the guy who owned them. . . Pocklington owned them. . . the fellow that's now the manager for the New York Rangers was manager there for years, you know who I mean, Sather. Sather was there. They did not go out and promote the game at all, the only place they didn't do it, there was 4,000 people in that rink of theirs. And we were beating them in the last period and Sather put his goons out

against these kids, I've never forgotten it.

DF: That's too bad.

BR: Cowboy Flett played from him at that time, he was one of the biggest goons. So anyway, I was really disappointed in that. But we made enough money, we had money left over. We didn't want it particularly to go to Hockey Canada because we didn't know what they were going to do with it, so we supplied the sports room in the Saddledome. You know, interesting things happen in your life. Nola and I went there for the presentation of it and we sat up in the seats and sitting beside us was Glen Edwards, who was an orthopaedic surgeon in town. Glen and I went to school together. I had been on the Board of Heritage Park and his wife was also on the Board and so when we had parties at Heritage Park Glen and my wife, who weren't members of the Board and the Board would be over here talking. I didn't realize I had gone to school with Glen, Glen said, yes, I remember when you played hockey with the Buffaloes. So I said, what are you doing here because I didn't know what he did at the time, he said, I'm an orthopaedic surgeon, that's why I'm here. He's a real droll character, he's a great guy. My wife was going in for a spinal fusion about 10 days later and the doctor she had died the day before she was to get her spinal fusion. I got on the phone and I called Edwards and I said, I'm really in a quandary, he said, Rintoul, you've never been in a quandary, I said, oh yes I have. I said, Nola was supposed to go in and so and so has died and then there was silence on the end of the phone. I said, are you still there, he said, yes, he's a good friend of mine, I didn't know this had happened. The nurse had called Nola. Well, I said, I am concerned that Nola is going to have to wait a lot longer. He said, meet me at the Foothills tomorrow and I'll get her x-rays. He said, yes, she definitely has to have a fusion, I'll work it out, she was in within about 10 days or so, had her fusion. And it was through him that I met Cy Frank who heads up the McCaig Centre for osteoarthritis, orthopaedic and sports injuries. And that's how I got involved with them. But you know, it's amazing. And of course, back in Calgary when I was brought up there was 4 high schools in the city, St. Mary's, Western, Central and Crescent Heights and everybody knew everybody else. And you build this train of people. One of the things, you ask me about what I like to do, I like to learn about other people. When I would go and visit a customer the first time I'd try to find out where he was born and raised. Some of them you were intruding on and so you backed off, most of them are quite prepared to talk about themselves. They'd say maybe, Humboldt, and I'd say, I know so and so in Humboldt. That's another thing why I was successful because you build these relationships.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

DF: So we're on our last half hour here, any regrets from your career?

BR: I often said I had one regret and that's that I didn't really try out for the National Hockey League. I remember taking a manager's test one time, back in the days when they were doing this sort of thing and that's the only regret I had then and that's not a regret now. I have really no regrets. I have no regrets and I have no apologies to make, that's the way I feel today. I've lived a great life.

DF: So when would you have tried out for the NHL, what was going on then?

BR: Gordie Howe was there at that time, it would be about 1948. Bill Gadsby was there. Nola and I went . . . at that time one of the Chicago management was there, they'd come to Calgary, as a matter of fact, Nola and I, we were there when they shut the Chicago rink down, the last of the old Chicago rink. This fellow was standing as we walked through and I said to Nola ???, he really looked at me and I thought, you know, if I'd said anything we could have probably got a seat in the owners place or whatever, but I never said anything to him.

DF: So you were scouted?

BR: Yes, I was scouted. I wasn't a good enough skater. I was tough enough and I had a lot of other abilities, but I didn't feel I had a skating ability. And I had a girlfriend too and I really thought a lot of her. It was just before Nola, I went around with her for about 3 years. She never asked me to do anything but I thought a lot of her and I think that was one of the things. I like girls, I always liked girls.

DF: What year did you retire?

BR: 1984.

DF: Did you really retire or did you continue working in the business?

BR: No, I really retired. I gave up all my boards, I was on a number of boards, I was on the board of LK Resources, I was on Canadian Federation of Independent Business, I was a charter member of the Bank of Montreal Small Business Advisory Board for western Canada, and I was the only non-customer. The vice-president and I had met when I had been a customer of them and he asked me to sit on that and a couple of others that I was on.

#029 DF: What have you done in retirement?

BR: I've tried to help out some young people. I tried to help my son out and really, he doesn't have the entrepreneurial acumen to do what I thought he should be able to do. He never wanted to come into business when I had the business which was just as well because when I was on the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Ed Benson brought down a very debilitating budget for small business and insurance and trucking and that. As I was Alberta representative for the CFIB the local Chamber of Commerce put together a meeting with the news people and what have you and they asked me and they asked somebody from the insurance business, Bill Andrews, and they asked somebody from the trucking industry. I called down to make sure we weren't crossing over what we were doing and I agreed with what their conclusions were and I was reasonably verbose about my comments, I believed in what I was talking about. I got a lot more press than what I really wanted but then the Chamber of Commerce for one of their monthly deals did a do on me and Harold Millican came to me and said, do you want to run as a Liberal. He said, I guarantee you, you'll get elected to the seat I've got available and I said, Harold, thank you for the offer but I might get elected the first time but I sure as hell wouldn't get elected the second time. He said, why not, I said, because I'd tell the people the way it was, most politicians promise and never produce. I can't be that kind of a

person. I've helped some other young people out, some have done reasonably well, others haven't done so well but I always insisted that they pay me back. I had a system set up so that they knew that it wasn't a free ride. I'm very active with this Calgary Senior Oilman's Golf Tournament, those were mostly production and big rig people, and some geophysical people and I've been the chairman a couple of years. I have enjoyed that. I enjoy working at the church, Christ Church, Millarville. I've been on the condo board a couple of times. What else have I got involved in since I've retired, probably a lot more than I'm thinking about. I have a hard time sometimes remembering what I have done. I've already written my obituary, it's in my computer under GRR-Dead. GRR are my initials, Gordon Robert Rintoul. I've told the kids and Nola knows where it is. And I say in there that I've had no apologies and no regrets. I was in the Alberta Trucking Association, I was on the board of that for a number of years, which I enjoyed thoroughly. One of the things that I'm really enjoying, with this being involved with the McCaig Centre, they wanted to throw a reception for us for this endowment we set up, we keep adding to it every year and we said no, for our friends and family, no, we're not that way. Well, they said, do you mind if we put a plaque in our board room, I said, that's all right. So apparently they have a very good artist at the University of Calgary who drew this beautiful western scene and then under it they have the plaque, Nola and Gordon Robert Rintoul Endowment. They made a replica for us which you'll see upstairs, but through that we met the Dean of Medicine because he was there when they dedicated this. He and I have so many interests. He took us out for lunch that day to his favourite restaurant, which was an Italian restaurant and they've been here for dinner a couple of times, he and his wife and he asked us to his golf tournament, we were there last Friday, Grant Gaul, and he's a great guy. We like cars and all this sort of thing. And what I liked about it and what I told people, it's given us another avenue to meet different types of people in different occupations and different environment.

#078 DF: Let me ask you a tough question though, in Alberta, extraordinarily rich province, billions of dollars in excess income this year in the provincial treasury, why is it that people like you have to pay for health care? There's been lots of other philanthropists who have done it too, but why isn't the government paying for it?

BR: My attitude about that is really quite simple. I don't think the government has to pay for everything. I think the government, being what it has done for the last number of years in giving so much away has influenced our society today. I don't think our society is as self-sustaining as it was before. I remember very vividly my mother having to have an operation. It was during the Depression and we couldn't afford it, and we had some friends by the name of Hays. He was an engineer on the CPR and he had a regular job. He knew about it, we were at their place for dinner and Jim Hays took, I think it was \$500 and he put it on the dining room table and he said to me did, Bob, that's for Evelyn. You don't see much of that anymore. That's for her operation. I have very little respect for the Liberal government because I feel they have prostituted themselves in many ways. I have a great deal of admiration for Klein, I know him well, I knew him when he was a TV

reporter. I was the first cottage owners president at Siksika out at Hidden Valley, which was then called Siksika Vacation Resort. That's how I got to know him. I knew him when he was here as our mayor. He's a working man's person. I don't think the government should have to supply everything for everything and our young people today expect everything. They expect it now. I have grandchildren, I have children. And there was a big difference between my age and our children's age. That era was a complete turnaround. My wife and I didn't give our kids everything, they worked for what they got. They didn't have a fancy allowance, they went out. And I offered them a deal, I'd pay half if they paid half for their education and that's how it transpired. Now subsequently, I must admit, since we're reasonably well off we have helped our children considerably. As I said to my wife, why should we wait till we die, my mother lived to 94, goodness knows how long we're going to live and by then they're 75 or 80. So we've set up a net education fund for our grandchildren, we put \$2,500 a year for each grandchild since the 70's. Every year I give discretionary money to both our families, \$20,000, they do what they want with it. And we help them. We paid their mortgages off, we carried their mortgages when they first got their house. How many kids even our children's age can say their mortgage is paid off. But our son now, that may have influenced him a little bit. Our daughter, no, she's a self-sustained person. As a matter of fact she said to us, we're not going to need your money when you retire, would you mind if we contributed it to the University of Alberta. Yes, I do, I want it to go to the University of Calgary. So we'll deal with that when the time comes. No, I don't feel badly about contributing to the health deal. When I see what they do down there and the massive dollars that are required. This Cy Frank, he's got 80 some scientists working in there, trying to find out all they can about arthritis and joint problems. And the Canadian government set up an organization of which he heads up as well. This man is really very busy, he's an exceptional person. I don't mind at all. I have no quarrel. I have quarrel with the Liberal government, I think that they've lied to us and that's what's bothered me as much as anything. Now we go to the States, we live 5 months in the States so we get a lot of their politics as well. I have a saying, we pay a high price for democracy. Think about it, we do. One of the prices we pay is our system. I often wonder whether a benevolent dictator is not a bad organization. We had relatively that when Manning was Premier of Alberta. He didn't stand for any guff. If one of his cabinet decided that they were going to take some extra bucks out of the oil industry to line their pockets he got rid of them. So you know, a benevolent dictator, as long as he doesn't get too full of himself, may not be a bad way to go. You know, you think back to my organization, we've talked about paying the profits, I paid profit sharing, I paid for the benefits, I expected 110% loyalty, nothing less. Nola used to say to me, so and so, we'd get the odd person in who'd be there 6 months or whatever we required before he got into this and they'd screw up and try to diddle you and she'd say, doesn't that bother you. No, it doesn't bother me, because it's going to happen, we've got human beings. But on the whole, it worked very well.

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

BR: Well, the only other thing that I wasn't actually aware of until today, I looked at a paper

weight I have, I was Secretary Treasurer of the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists in 1971 and I guess that's your peers. I told you I was co-founder and director of the Canadian Explosives Distributors Assoc. And I'm sure there's other things that I've done that I've probably forgotten but. . . I've had a whale of a life.

DF: Good for you. It's good to see you're working on your autobiography and we'd certainly like to have a complete copy of that when it comes about.

BR: I gave you. . .

DF: You gave me part of it, yes.

BR: I gave you part of it. I'd like you to look through it and if you have any suggestions I'd certainly like to hear them. What happened when I got involved with the university and this arthritic situation, the gal up there who works for the university as a procurer of money, she asked me if I would address an organization they started of all the organizations trying to raise money so they could feed off each other, get ideas. They just started this here a couple of years ago and she asked me if I would address them from an individuals point of view. She said, you know, we get a lot of money here at the university from companies but we very seldom get money from individuals and I would like to know why you do this. So I've actually been asked that a couple of times. One of the things that I brought up is, you know, when you take a look at my life, many of my cohorts have a better education than I have, a lot of them have as much experience, most of them have worked as hard as I have but they haven't ended up where I have. Why is this? Well, I believe there's another force out there and I think it's God. You can call it what you want, you can call it what each individual wants but you can't do it all yourself. Nola's been a fantastic help to me, without her we'd be nowhere, fantastic help. I've had business associates and I'm not particularly proud of them, who've said, I've done it all myself, to hell with everybody, why should I give buddy here, why should I do this. And they're wrong. It was really amazing because this had an impact on that meeting, you could see the people. I had a number of people come up after, I asked if there were some questions, there were a few, and mostly women and they said they'd never heard anybody ever stand up and declare this. But I really believe it.

DF: On that note, I'd like to thank you so very much.

BR: Thank you for coming down and working with us.

DF: Thank you for letting me into your home and on behalf of the Petroleum Industry Oral History Project and the Petroleum History Society, I'd like to thank you and we'll end the formal part of the interview at this time.

BR: You're welcome.

DF: Thank you very much.