

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Ralph Will

INTERVIEWER: Jack Peach

DATE: September 1981

JP: . . .with Ralph Will and the date is Thursday, September 24th, 1981 and we're talking in his office in the Dayon building on the 11th floor of the Dayon building, which is at 6th Ave. and 4th St. W. Ralph Will is going to talk to me because my name is Jack Peach. I have one small correction to add to that that Ralph brought up and that is that the Dayon building is on 5th Ave., not on 6th. So Ralph it's your turn really, to take over the microphone now and to tell me all about your beginnings, where you were born and how you got into the business?

RW: I was born at Akron, Colorado, in 1902, August 20th. I was born there on a ranch, had 4 brothers and 2 sisters and we were raised on the farm. I'm the only one that broke away from that station. I run off when I was pretty young, after I'd finished grade school in the country school. I worked my way through high school and then, I taught school at a country school 2 years and I worked off a business course by correspondence during that time while I was teaching school in the country. Then I went to work at Ford garage in the Model T days and I worked there and I decided that I wasn't doing too well so I decided that I wanted to go to university. So I took off and went to Norman, Oklahoma and enrolled there in the university in 1925. I got a job washing dishes and waiting tables, which I did for a couple of years and joined ??? fraternity. There I was given the job of house manager, bought all the supplies for the fraternity and managed the help that we had in the fraternity house. I graduated in 1929 with a bachelor's science degree in geology.

JP: What made you take geology?

RW: I'd been a farm boy all my life and knew nothing but good hard work. I decided during the time that I was teaching school, I liked teaching school but I didn't like the inside work. When I was working in the garage I had worked summers as a mechanic, then a place came open in the office and I applied for it and they gave it to me and I worked in that for a year. I like the work but I didn't like being inside. I'd been outside all my life, most of my years. So when I started university I first started out on my pre work, I intended to study law. I had the ambition to study criminal law. Then I thought, there's a continuation of the inside work, which I don't want, I better change my ideas. Of course, the first 2 years is all preparatory work anyway. So I decided I would study geology.

#047 JP: And that would keep you outside, guaranteed to.

RW: Yes, that's right.

JP: Did you ever follow up, just as a little side thing, did you ever follow up the criminal law as a hobby?

RW: No, no.

JP: You abandoned that?

RW: I just dropped it all together.

JP: Just wondered if in later years it cropped up, your interest in that.

RW: No. I went into geology, I finished 1929 with a bachelor science degree in geology. There was no way you could get a job in that profession. I was offered a job by 3 different companies, \$85 a month. Of course, they were laying off geologists by the hundreds. That was no good and I finally told the last fellow that offered me that job that if I could get a job working in a ditch I could make \$135 a month. And I wasn't too proud to do that. I had done nothing but work all my life anyway. But I finally, I met a friend of mine who I had went to school with, he had finished as a petroleum geologist and he had gotten a job with the United States Geological Survey. He'd been raised in the oil field all his life and he said, I can get you a job. I said, what's that mean, he said, as a roughneck. I said, what's a roughneck. He said, you're working on the drilling rig and I said, I'd love that. He said the only thing, it's 7 days a week, 12 hours a day. That's the only way that I ever worked on a rig when I was working on the labouring end of it, was 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. And overtime wasn't heard of. If I got a chance I worked doubles. If a fellow was missing on a crew I'd work his crew and then continue on my own.

JP: Did you get paid extra for the doubles?

RW: Oh no, just got regular. But I needed the money. He said, it's \$6.50 a day. That's \$195 a month. I worked with that particular company I worked with them 2 years and never missed a day. I worked a short while on the floor and then I got the chance to go in the derrick and that was \$7.50 a day.

#079 JP: Whereabouts was this, what state was this in?

RW: This was in the Oklahoma City oilfields. Then things really went bad economically, as you remember in '29, '30, '31 and that company that I originally worked for was owned by a brother of ??? Franklin, who was quite a developer at that time. Harry Franklin was his name and it was the Capital Drilling Co. Then things went pretty sour and I was off work for a little while and I knew Lloyd Noble of Noble Drilling Co. and I got a job working for him roughneck. Then I was moved around over the country pretty well. Went to east Texas then, from Oklahoma City, worked there for a few months. Then I was transferred up to the central part of Oklahoma where I worked on a well at Stroud, Oklahoma for Noble Drilling Co. Then they transferred me back to Oklahoma City on a well that they were drilling there and I worked there for a few months. This was in 1932 and they were drilling a wildcat well at Ozona, Texas and so I had the job to go with this rig to Ozona, Texas on a wildcat well. The superintendent left me to load up the rest of the rig on freight cars to send to Ozona and I billed them out and Lloyd Noble came out as I was getting ready to leave and he asked me when I was going to leave and I said, I'll leave about 3:00 in the morning to drive to Ozona. I had a Model A Ford coupe. So he phoned me about 10:00 that night and he said, they need a man pretty badly, a derrick man at Greeley, Colorado, would you just as soon go there. He said, I think it would be a better place to work actually and I said, yes, I'd like to go there, it's right near where I was born. So instead of going to Ozona I took off the next morning and I drove until I reached Greeley. Got myself a room there and ate at the restaurant of course, and I drove

out to the rig at midnight and went to work for them, for a driller whom I had worked for in

#119 Oklahoma City, by the name of Clayton Minehart. So along that day or that morning rather, I met a man by the name of Dorsey Straitus, who I didn't know at the time, was a half owner of the company in the Rocky Mountain region. Lloyd Noble owned one half. I suppose that Lloyd had told him that I would be up, I didn't know, and he came and saw me and I introduced myself to him and he said, who sent you up here. I said Lloyd Noble and he said, I didn't know anything about it and I said, he told me that they needed a derrick man here pretty badly and to report up here to Clayton Minehart, driller. Which I did. He seemed to be pretty mad about this and he finally said, do you know anything about mud pumps and I said, yes I do, I think I do, I've been taking care of them for a couple of years and I know something about them. He said, we have a pair of Gardner-Denver mud pumps here and nobody can make them run right, maybe you can do something with them, I'll buy you anything you need to repair them with and if you can't get them to run right I've got to send to Dry Creek, Montana and get a pair of mud pumps there that we used there. I said, I've never worked on oil well pumps but I'll see what I can do with them. I went out there and the crews there, he said, every man I've got here and all my driller have worked on these and I've spent over \$4,000 on them and they still won't run. I saw that they had replaced parts that they didn't need at all and good parts were laying scattered around on the ground. This well was just starting and they weren't rigged up to take care of this stuff properly. So I watched and saw the way they run it and it wasn't right at all. I got a square, which you're familiar with, they were 20" drill pumps and I measured that stroke and they were stroking 22". I knew that wasn't right so I pulled the valves in one pump and adjusted them down there, they had a 5/8" throw and I adjusted it down to 3/8" throw and they run perfectly. Instead of running with about 750 lb. mud pressure I put it up to 1,250 and of course, they doubled their penetration right away, as soon as you did that, it was easy drilling in that country. That was at Grease Wood Flats. So after that, Mr. Straitus, he had quite a bit of respect for me and we got pretty well acquainted and he talked with me about quite a few of the problems that he had, confidentially, even though I was just a roughneck still.

#169 JP: You'd earned your spurs though. He'd have respect for you as you say.

RW: Oh yes. So a year later, I worked on that well and then they transferred the rig to Lance Creek, Wyoming and I worked on the discovery well there, in the Lance Creek field. Then that operation shut down for just a little while and they transferred me down to Craig, Colorado and there I was working for Noble again. I worked about 6 weeks till they completed the well there and then they transferred me to Earlsboro, Oklahoma and worked on a rig there. I worked there for 6 days and the superintendent came out and he said, they want you at Franny, Wyoming. Well, in those days they didn't pay any expenses for moving or any time while you were moving. If they had a job for you it was up to you to go to it if you wanted it. If you didn't, there were a lot of other fellows that did want it.

JP: Yes, and you had to make the trip fast because you wouldn't get paid travelling time.

RW: So I travelled day and night. If I got too tired I slept a little bit and then drove on. I drove through that Texas and Oklahoma country during the dust bowl storms and at times, you couldn't see even by lamp light and you'd have to drive with your lights on all day. Then you'd have to stop sometimes because you just couldn't see.

#192 JP: Yes, we had that here too.

RW: Yes, it was bad. Then I went up there and they gave me a drilling job, in 1933. I had talked to Mr. Straitus, they'd had trouble keeping crews that were sent up there from the south and as soon as it got cold they'd leave, before the winter hit. I told him, I'll be honest with you, you've got men roughnecking that should be drilling, that know more than those drillers. They're young fellows and they'll stay here during the winter. Well he said, that may be a good idea. So I drilled on that first well at Franny, Wyoming and finished and they transferred me down to Hiawatha, which is south of Rock Springs, 70 miles. 70 miles from a post office where we were there. I worked there for awhile and then was drilling on a well and Mr. Straitus called me from Casper and he said, how soon could you get to Lovell, Wyoming. I'd just come off of a 12 hours shift and it was noon and I said, I think I could be up there by midnight. Well he said, make it up there as soon as you can. So I went up there and they were starting a couple of new rigs on wells and I found out that they had hired all their crews and drillers. The winter before I had an opportunity to go to work for \$400 a month for Humble Oil and Gas in the Gulf Coast as a driller. So I talked to Mr. Straitus about it and he said, I don't think I would do that if I were you because we're going to have a lot of work coming up here and I think we could do better here for you. Of course I was drilling there, making \$17 a day when I was drilling. I got up there and found out they had all their crews and the superintendent that was there, he wasn't there, he was over at Sheridan for something or other. So I was pretty tired and pretty worn out so I phoned Mr. Straitus at his house at midnight. I said, Dorsey, I just arrived here at Lovell and I found out they've hired all their crews and all their drillers and I'm not going to go back to roughnecking. I thought that he was offended because I'd told him that I had this opportunity to go to the Gulf Coast. He said, have you seen Blackie Manning, who was the superintendent there, and I said, no, I haven't, he's not here, he's over at Sheridan. Well he said, you stay there till morning and see him. I said, okay, I'll do that. I couldn't leave before morning anyway because I hadn't had any sleep in about 36 hours. So the next morning then, Manning came in and woke me up, I was at the hotel and handed me keys to a car and he said, this is your company car, you're to look after these rigs. So that was my start there. I had a rig at Franny and one at ??? and one at Lovell.

#253 JP: And a company car. Great.

RW: Yes. So I went on from there and we had to start a new rig at Dry Creek, Montana which was 60 miles north. And we had to start one 135 miles south, at Grass Creek, Wyoming. My boss came up and he said, now, you look after these 3 rigs here and you set up a man as your tool pusher we called him, superintendent some call him, to look after those rigs.

You can look after these 3 rigs here and then one day you go down to Grass Creek and help your man down there and then the next day you go down to Dry Creek and help your man up there a little. I did that for quite a little while, for a couple of months and I didn't get any sleep. So he came up and he realized I guess, the problem that I was having. So he said, now I want you to go up to North Dakota and check that rig up there occasionally. The tool pusher I had up there was a fellow by the name of Kruger. The men who I set up to look after Dry Creek, Montana was a boy by the name of Red Dejarnett, who I'd roughnecked with and another boy I set up at Grass Creek, Wyoming was Cody Spencer.

#282 JP: A familiar name.

RW: Yes, you would know him. And Gene Denton was a young engineer for the Ohio Oil Co. there at Lovell and that's where I became acquainted with him. His work was in finishing wells there at Garland and at Byron, but he was working for the Ohio Oil Co. I had worked there then, for less than a year and one day a general letter came through that as of August 20th, I would be. . . we had a drilling superintendent in the southern part of the country by the name of Gibson, who was looking after all those rigs in that area and a general letter came through that starting August 20th, that I would be in charge of the whole area. They had 16 rigs running there and a big shop.

JP That's a nice birthday present.

RW: Trucking equipment. He didn't realize it was my birthday. So I worked there for a couple of years and there was beginning to be quite a problem between the 2 partners of that company, Lloyd Noble and Dorsey Straitus. They both, they were going to go to court and split that company. They both expected me to take their side, I knew that. I didn't like that idea and thought about it quite a bit. In the meantime, before this time, some people here had gotten hold of me and wanted me to come up here for an interview and check over their equipment and try to make a deal with them, it was Phil Burn that had phoned me.

#322 JP: Oh I see, up here in Canada. So Phil Burn comes into the picture.

RW: Yes. This was in 1936 when he first called me. I was interested of course, and they told me that they would make me a better deal than what I had down there. So I hadn't had a holiday since I started working oil field and I had worked there and had been through some pretty rough problems there, with the killing of a well at Garland. Actually a well that had been given up by Red Adair. It had been blowing for 2 years and it was depleting the gas pressure in that field, in Garland. So just as an example, on that rig they made a deal with Paul Stock, who owned the well, and Paul Stock made the deal providing I would stay with it personally and supervise that job. We had to drill in that well that had been blowing like that and the hole was full of drill pipe and what happened, briefly was, we drilled dry and side tracked and got down to 2,700', which was as far as I could get because it was crawling around that drill pipe, around casing. I got it to that point and got ready to start to kill it. There had been wells drilled all around this in territorial days, cable tool shallow wells. We had put tanks over some of those old wells where the gas was blowing out around, way out around the main well. I started to kill that and had mud mixed, quite a bit of it and one right beside the derrick floor, the old casing that was in

that old well jumped up and down, cut a hole through that 250 barrel tank and set it afire and burned up the rig that I was working with. So then I took their surveys that they had taken of the well that they had drilled and moved down 175' to the northeast. . .

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Tape 1 Side 2

RW: . . .and erected a rig there and drilled to contact the Madison limestone. Then they cut water from an irrigation ditch, into the suction pits and pumped water in that well. I figured we'd hit the bottom of where their old well was about that point and we pumped water in there for about a month and reduced that gas flow from 60 million down to 1.5 million cubic feet a day. Then I went in and cut the old drill pipe off in the well that I had drilled and put a connection on it and set up mud tanks and mixed Rawlins Red, which is a henatite??? mud to 20 lb. a U.S. gallon. We had 20,000 sacks of baroide mixed about to as heavy as we could get it, which was about 16 lb. to the U.S. gallon. Then I had 2 sets of boilers set up, 2 sets of 4 each. We pumped that mud in and we stopped the gas flow but we still didn't have the hole full. Then I cut mud from the old reserve pit all in there and finished off with water to fill that hole and we pumped in then, 20,000 sacks of cement and that killed it.

JP: That is a big job. That outdid Red Adair then.

RW: I lost 45 lb. in that job, couldn't eat and couldn't sleep. The H2S gas and all the sleep I got, I had to have somebody sit beside me and put a chemical solution in my eyes. As long as your eyes were open it didn't bother you but you close them and you couldn't stand it. And I couldn't eat, the only thing I could keep down was milk. I would have each crew to bring me out a couple of quarts of milk and I drank that milk and slept right there. Had a little house built, doghouse really is what it was and I slept in that. But we got it killed.

JP: You'd feel that rather a triumph wouldn't you, that was quite something.

RW: It was a long job and a costly job.

JP: Now what happens to a well like that Ralph? Is that well operating now, under control?

RW: The relief well that I drilled, then after we killed this well, then we went ahead and drilled it through the Madison lime and it's producing today.

#038 JP: Isn't that great, and you saved the pressure on the field.

RW: Well, from where it was. It had dropped from 2,000 down to about 1,350 per square inch. After we'd completed that well and cemented it off and it was a success, then we went ahead and completed the relief well as a producer. And I went in to the hospital and I stayed there and I slept for 48 hours. They kept packs on my eyes. I didn't need the nourishment too much. But then I went back, I'd rented a room at the hotel when I went up there and I thought I'd be coming back there at night to have a sleep. As it happened I didn't get back there for 6 weeks. And I went back to my office in Calgary and I'd had 4 or 5 calls from Phil Burn here, who I'd never met and we made a date for him to come up there, to come to Casper to see me.

JP: You said a moment ago you went to your office in Calgary, you meant your office in Casper.

RW: I meant my office in Casper.

JP: Right, we haven't gotten to Canada yet.

RW: No. So a couple of days before he was to meet me, Phil phoned me and he said, you'd better come up here so that you can see the equipment and see the conditions and one thing and another and see if you could tolerate this set up. So I told me boss, Mr. Straitus, I'd like to have a holiday, I hadn't had a holiday since I started working the oil field in fact and he said, just as soon as all the rigs are in condition. I said, there's a couple of them that I want to set casing on and there's one fishing job that I want to clean up and complete then I'll take off. He said, whenever you're ready you take off, take your car and go wherever you want and don't call me, just don't call me for a couple of weeks. So I came up here and I met Phil and his board of directors and I went and inspected the rigs and told them that there was so many things that I wanted to change that I didn't feel right for their operation. He said, that would be fine and so they had a contract already written up for me to sign when I came up and it wasn't to my liking. So we had a conference on it and they changed it and I signed it. I signed a 3 year contract when I was here.

JP; Now, was this with Anglo Canadian or . . . ?

RW: Yes.

JP: It was. What year was that Ralph?

RW: That was in 1937.

JP: '37, with Anglo Canadian. I see.

RW: This was in July. I went back to Casper then and gave my resignation notice. So Mr. Straitus was pretty much disturbed.

#082 JP: I bet he would be.

RW: He said, I'll match any deal they made you and I said, no, I wouldn't have considered anything else and I don't think you could afford to pay me that kind of price or you'd have been paying me more money. So he said, I'll do a little better than they did for you and I said, no, I promised these fellows and I've always stuck to my word and I'm going to make the change. So I went ahead and made the change.

JP: Probably because I imagine, you wanted to have a new challenge in a new area huh?

RW: Yes. And I was interested in more money. I didn't realize at the time, I didn't go into it that much but after I'd paid my income tax here, I hadn't been paying any down there, I wasn't as well off here as I was down there.

JP: Exactly, this is the thing that shook many people who crossed the border.

RW: I hadn't taken that into consideration. Nevertheless, I didn't regret making the change. It was quite a challenge. The equipment wasn't right and wasn't properly balanced and drill pipe wasn't right. Matt Newell bought his and it wasn't right, I knew that. The program that they were following, all of them was just unbelievable. I just couldn't imagine it.

JP: Was Grant Spratt around at that day?

RW: Yes, Grant Spratt, he was working for the government, the Conservation Board when I came here.

JP: He had been general manager though of. . .

RW: And then he came in in 1938 as general manager for Anglo Canadian.

JP: Ray Milner was on the board too wasn't he?

RW: Not at the time I came here. Phil Burn then, made a deal to sell Anglo Canadian or his stock and he owned about all the stock in Anglo Canadian, to Nesbitt Thompson, and then Nesbitt Thompson, as Phil relinquished his presidency, Nesbitt Thompson then put Ray Milner in charge, in his stead. Then Phil Burn, or Nesbitt Thompson had hired Grant Spratt as general manager of the company.

JP: Where did Drilling Contractors Ltd. come into the picture?

RW: That was a company of Phil Burn's.

JP: They were partly owned then, by Anglo Canadian?

RW: It was owned and controlled by Anglo Canadian.

JP: By them, I see. What did they have, they had how many rotary rigs?

RW: They had 8 rigs.

#120 JP: 8 rigs altogether, oh. When you came up?

RW: They didn't have that many when I came up. They had 5 when I came up and I brought the first diesel rig into Canada. Then I bought 2 rigs from Dorsey Straitus, who owned Rocky Mountain Drilling Co., rigs that I knew. I bought 2 rigs from him and he was happy to sell them and the company here was glad to buy them. He had them written down so it was a tax advantage to him and it was a good deal for the company here because we bought them at a price much below the price of new rigs.

JP: That gave you 7 then.

RW: 8.

JP: Did you have any cable tools or were they all. . .?

RW: Yes, they had one cable tool rig but I didn't know anything about cable tools. I never worked on them and I just didn't know them. I hired a good man to look after that rig to complete the commitments that we had for it.

JP: Now where were you drilling, when you came up here and took over, where was the drilling taking place?

RW: Turner Valley. Then Phil Burn drilled some wildcat wells. I drilled 2 at Pincher Creek and 1 at Bearberry, which is west of Olds. In later years I drilled another one out there, fired that with oil to drill it.

JP: That was at Bearberry?

RW: Yes. Then during the time that Anglo Canadian was operating Drilling Contractors, we drilled wildcat wells all over the country, at Princess and ??? was the first one, and at Bearberry. Another one further west of Bearberry, out in the bush.

JP: Was this all Anglo Canadian then that was doing all this exploration?

RW: Yes.

JP: Now Phil died what, in '29 didn't he, '39 rather?

RW: '39 I believe it was.

JP: What made him do that do you know?

RW: When he was really going good he had set up a trust account, an irrevocable trust,

couldn't be broken by him or anybody else, for his family. Phil was a wildcatter at heart, and he drilled a lot of wells, wildcat wells. He run out of money so to speak. He tried to then, . . .no, this was later than that that he did this. It was just a couple of years before Leduc came in.

#163 JP: Yes, of course, it would be.

RW: Yes, was when that happened. So it was about '44 or '45 I guess. Leduc came in December of '46 I believe, or '47.

JP: February '47.

RW: '46 I believe. I'm not sure of that date.

JP: This was a matter of despair I suppose, for Phil at that point.

RW: Then he was short of money and he tried to break that trust and he couldn't. I'd often said, if he'd just lived until Leduc came in he would have been right in his heyday.

JP: Of course. Now you were with Anglo Canadian for some considerable time were you, with Drilling Contractors?

RW: I was with Anglo Canadian, or Drilling Contractors, until 1945. The rigs got to the point where they were pretty well stacked, all of them. I wanted to get on my own, had wanted to for 2 or 3 years but they talked me out of it and made me better deals and gave me a percentage of the profit on the contract wells.

JP: That's always pretty alluring.

RW: Yes. So then, in 1945, Jim Lowry wanted me to drill their wells for them in the valley. He wanted me to go into business on my own, he wanted me to buy rigs and just do their work.

JP: Do all Home's work?

RW: Yes. And I said, no, Jim, I would like to do your work but I'd like to do Anglo Canadian's and the gas company's work at Viking-Kinsella and that area, I drilled all those wells out there.

JP: Oh did you?

RW: Yes. I said, what I'd like to do is make a deal with Anglo Canadian to buy their rigs, I know their rigs and if we can work it out agreeably, I'd like to buy your rigs, they had 2 rigs. He said, that's fine, I'll fix that, I'll send you a copy of my letter and he wrote Ray Milner and told him that after they had completed the wells which they were drilling in Turner Valley, not to expect any more work from Home Oil. So then they had no work for any of their rigs, except they were doing the gas company's work.

#203 JP: Milner at this time was with the gas company?

RW: Oh yes, and was the head of Anglo Canadian too. So Ray called me and wanted me to come in, he wanted to see me. I went in and he said, we'll make a deal to sell you those rigs. I said, I'd like to make a deal to buy 5 of your rigs, I want the 2 diesel rigs and the 3 steam rigs. So I continued with Home's work and I said, I haven't got any money to pay down but I'll sign notes with you, for a 5 year period, for the 5 rigs. Then I want my option on the other rigs, 3 more rigs. So we worked it out, worked out a deal and a price and I got my money together, what I could scrape together and cashed in insurance and

established credit with the Royal Bank and the supply companies.

JP: It happens in everyone's life.

RW: So we went ahead with that deal and then. . .but I wanted my option on those other rigs and I had an option on the Home. . . because then I got an option on Home Oil Co.'s 2 rigs. That way I would be assured of the gas company's work and Anglo Canadian's work and the Home Oil's work.

JP: Were these turnkey contracts?

RW: Turner Valley was all turnkey.

JP: What did you think of those, was that a good way of doing things?

RW: Oh yes, it was good for us because I completely changed the drilling program. They were taken from 6 months to a year to complete a well when I came here. I changed the equipment and I changed the mud program and the bit program and the casing program. I didn't know when I came here but they owed every dollar for the drilling equipment that I was taking over and I was changing. And I went with Phil Burn to Vancouver to finance that, get money, borrow money to pay off Oilwell Supply for those rigs. We were dealing with 2 firms there, Dukes Brothers was one and the other was McDermott group. McDermott's took the deal to loan a million dollars to pay off those rigs. I had to go with Phil on that deal. That paid for the rigs and paid the bank some money. But Don McDermott and his father, who were the head of McDermott and Co. of Vancouver, agreed to put up the money after we talked to them. They asked me how soon we thought they could pay off the indebtedness and I told them, from what I'd seen and my judgement, we should have 3 years time to pay it off, with the option to pay it off sooner. The rigs were all busy. As it turned out we paid them off the first year.

#269 JP: Did you, wow. That was busy.

RW: That was through turnkey drilling. But I'd changed the program completely. These fellows didn't have the proper trucking equipment here and they weren't rigged up right. The rigs weren't rigged up right, they were taking from 4-6 weeks to rig up one of those steam rigs. I got them properly unitized and we would move and be operating in 5 days, and as little as 4 days. And changed the mud program and the drill pipe program. They were using 6" or 5 9/16 drill pipe and 4 1/2 is what we should be using. Then they were setting a middle string of casing, either 9 5/8 or 10 3/4, to around 5,000 or 5,500'. Which I eliminated altogether.

JP: Was this from their lack of experience?

RW: No, it was an old form of habit. What they were doing when I came here, they were setting 6 5/8 casing and drilling at least a 9 7/8 hole. I started drilling a 9" hole and setting 7" casing. The 6 5/8 had been discontinued by the manufacturers in the United States and they were paying 20 cents a foot more for that 6 5/8 than for that 7". 6 5/8 was 10 thread casing, it wasn't near as strong as the 7" with the round thread casing.

JP: So you brought up an awful lot of know-how, of course, you must have accumulated it in all your time down there.

RW: Oh yes.

#303 JP: What did Jim Lowry think of you as an operator, he would be quite tickled wouldn't he?

RW: He came down to see me after I came here and they were drilling their first well at Turner Valley. They had a new rig that they'd bought from Oilwell. They had a 7 3/4 steam engine on a drilling unit and after they got down to about 4,500' it didn't have enough power to turn the drill pipe. He asked me if I would take the time to come up, Phil Burn came out with him, if I would take the time off to come up and see what I thought of their location, what was the trouble with their drilling unit. So I went in and they had taken that little drilling unit off and were driving the rotary table with the draw works and the hoisting engine. The first thing that I said when I drove up with them, I said, Major Lowry, you've got a hole that's just crooked as hell. He said, how do you know, I said, I can tell by the sound of that engine. So we went in the rig and I asked him if he would have the driller quite rotating and pick the pipe up off the bottom. When they shut the steam off the rotary table just walked around backwards because of the torque in the drill pipe. He picked up the drill pipe, this was only about 4,500' and I said, it took about 20 ton extra pull to start moving that off the bottom. Major Lowry, I said, the hole is just really crooked. Nobody had surveyed and I had 2 surveying instruments, which I'd bought the first thing when I came up here, they were topical units. But they would only survey off up to 8 degrees and . . .

#350 JP: But at least you had that sort of control.

RW: Yes. He said, would you run your instrument in the draw. I said, really, it won't do any good because it will only register off 8 degrees and it's off more than that, it's got to be. I'd had experience that I knew that. He said, what would you advise, I said, you've got Dick Gibbons from Haliburton, get him to come up and bring a wire line and run an acid bottle. I've got a calibrator for acid bottles so we can measure the departures from the true vertical. Which they did, they surveyed and they were off. . . well, they went ahead drilling first I should say. I think they got down to around 5,500' and they got stuck. So then is when Jim had Dick Gibbons to come up and survey the hole with an acid bottle and it was off, as I remember, about 38 degrees.

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 1

RW: . . . on the next 40.

JP: What was Lowry like, you had a lot to do with him?

RW: He was a very brilliant man, very original in a lot of his sayings, very sensible. And very honest.

JP: He was a good man to deal with?

RW: Yes, yes. His word was good. The fact of the matter is, when I was contracting I drilled practically all my wells on a letter, I didn't have a formal contract. At one time I came in from Leduc and I was running anywhere from around 5-7 rigs for Imperial Oil at Leduc. We were drilling those wells pretty fast and I had over 80 contracts piled up on my desk

and instead of going back up to Leduc Monday morning as I normally went, unless I was up there for casing jobs or fishing jobs, it took me most all day to sign those contracts. We'd gotten along fine and I'd never had a formal contract on any of those. I drilled all those well in Turner Valley for Home Oil and different companies. I drilled some for Imperial Oil and some for Brown in Turner Valley. Commonwealth and I drilled of course, all Anglo's wells and we just had a letter. Some of them I didn't even have a letter. They'd phone me and they'd tell me that we wanted to drill. And of course, we were operating turnkey there, in Turner Valley that is. They would just give us a spot where they wanted the well to be drilled. I'd know the engineer that surveyed the roads in, we cleared the right-of-way and built our own roads and built our own pits, built our own derricks. We fringed the casing, cementing and everything and we built all the Home Oil's tank farms and production lines and all that in Turner Valley.

JP: This was a good way of doing business was it, Ralph?

RW: It is, it takes quite a bit of personnel, your own geologist, your own engineer and all that. I did my own geological work on all the first wells when I first came here. Till we got more rigs running and I had to hire geologists, mud engineers and whatnot.

JP: But it was a whole different thing when you moved to Leduc.

RW: Oh yes. That was footage operation.

JP: For whom?

RW: For Imperial Oil and for Home Oil.

JP: What took you up there to Leduc?

RW: Just contracts.

JP: Do you remember the first one?

RW: Yes, it was Imperial Oil #4.

JP: In Leduc.

RW: Yes.

JP: Talk about the Leduc picture then. Did you have anything to do with Atlantic #3?

RW: No. That was drilled by Denton-Spencer.

JP: Was it? We talked about Cody Spencer back away, he being one of the first familiar names when you were talking about them, he was Commonwealth wasn't he?

RW: It was Denton-Spencer first and then later it was . . .and they got production out east of Wetaskiwin, I've forgotten the name of that field. Now let me see, Commonwealth Drilling was Frank Reeves.

#044 JP: Oh yes, of course.

RW: Commonwealth Oil Co. and Drilling, the 2, they got into contracting.

JP: There was Reeves and Doris Rooney, his daughter-in-law.

RW: That's right.

JP: Now they were competitors of yours?

RW: They were at last, I drilled their first wells at Turner Valley. I drilled 2 wells there for them.

JP: For Reeve?

RW: Yes. It was originally, Reeves and Mr. Young, what was his name?

JP: Was it Dave Young, D. J. Young?

RW: Dave, yes, run a bookstore.

JP: Yes, Dave Young, D. J.

RW: And then Reeves got him out of it some way. Then let's see. . . .

JP: I was saying Cody with Commonwealth, of course, Cody was General Petroleums.

RW: Yes, Cody was General Petroleums at last, yes.

JP: Then in Leduc you had others, such as Cantex, Commonwealth, people like that?

RW: Yes.

JP: What was the Leduc picture like as far as you were concerned?

RW: It was very good as far as I was concerned. Made a pile of money in there.

JP: Very much more hectic than Turner Valley ever had been?

RW: It wasn't anywhere near as difficult. I have no idea exactly, but I guess I've worked in at least 40 different fields in the United States, and different part of the United States, from Texas to Montana and Turner Valley was the most difficult of any field that I had ever worked in. I'd worked in fields similar but nothing as bad as Turner Valley. Turner Valley was bad for crooked holes and all those wells, until I brought in surveying instruments and of course, the Conservation Board got on that right quickly, until I brought them in they didn't require any deviation surveys.

JP: They didn't need them at all, they didn't ask for them at all?

RW: No. And I naturally kept mine with my drilling reports and they picked up copies of these reports and saw what I was doing and then they required it, made it mandatory.

JP: Now your records, they were the ones of your own drilling company at that time were they?

RW: No, they were Drilling Contractors.

JP: Yes, contracts for other companies of course?

RW: Oh yes.

JP: I was thinking about your drilling company itself, because somewhere, didn't McIver Drilling come into this picture?

RW: That was after I had operated. . . in 1950, I owned all the stock of Drilling Contractors, except 2 qualifying shares, one for secretary and one for treasurer. They'd been endorsed back to me of course. At that time my accountants advised me that I had quite a bit of earnings in the bank and everything was paid for and I was going to have to give that earnings to shareholders, and I owned all the shares. So I proceeded to explore all that I could and I decided the best thing to do, and I had to do it in pretty short order, was to sell the company. To save my hide. Because by the time the government took 90% of what I distributed, I wouldn't have anything left.

#088 JP: It was getting too expensive to own it.

RW: Yes. So I talked to my lawyer about it, which is Allen and Porter, Allen and Mallard it was at that time.

JP: ??? Porter?

RW: Yes. And I talked to my accountant about it, which is Henderson, Tear. I used Tear mostly. I talked with them about it and I said, I've explored everything that I can and I

think the only thing that I can do is to sell the company. I don't want to sell the company, I'll sell the stock in the company. Not the company but the shares. He said, how are you going to do that and I said, I'll form a company of my key employees and I'll sell them the shares. So I formed a company, McIver was working for me and he said, put my name on it. I said, you had very little to do with it but it doesn't make me any difference, and we won't have any trouble getting a company of that name. So we formed a company and I sold the shares to McIver Drilling Co. For less than the cash I had in the bank, an accrued footage. I formed a company of 12 of my key men and so then we had to operate 6 months to get a performance record before we could make a public company out of it you see.

JP: And it did become public, it was on the Toronto Exchange.

RW: Then it became public and we made it Hightower Drilling.

JP: Oh I see, then it became Hightower.

RW: Yes, that's when it became Hightower. And I undertook with the underwriters, I said, I'll stay then with the company until we have paid in dividends, what we sold the stock originally to the public for, which I did.

JP: Little believing that when you came up here this would develop. Now back to Leduc, was McIver or your own company, Drilling Contractors, which was the one in Leduc, active at that time?

RW: That was Drilling Contractors did all the original work there.

JP: It was the one really in on all of this discovery business, at least the early part.

RW: Yes.

JP: What was safety like in those days Ralph on the wells?

RW: It was very good I thought.

JP: I was thinking in comparison with what you'd been used to in the States? You had safety on your rigs that you were pretty hot about.

RW: Oh yes. You just had to take precautions, you had to watch those fellows. Instead of letting them start operations without chain guards and all that, you just had to be sure that it was all together.

#128 JP: What was your help like? Was it local help that you had on the rigs?

RW: Oh yes. When I came here they had a lot of . . . they had all American drillers on those rigs and after I got a chance to check them over I could see that those fellows actually, I knew, were not drillers when they came here because they couldn't hold a drilling job in the competition that I'd been in. And they were in here on 3 month permits at a time. Actually I came in that way. So I saw the immigration department and I said, now, I don't want you to renew any of those permits. Those fellows have got boys working for them, that goddamn it, are better qualified for those jobs than what they are. I've just got to ride herd and be on all those jobs all the time. I just had to work 24 hours a day to get those original wells completed. I left those crews as they were until those original wells were completed, that first 5. I said, then, when I started the new rigs, at a new locations, new wells, then I'm going to put boys on that are all Canadian boys because they live here and hell, I'll pick out the smartest ones of them and make them drillers. Which is what I did.

JP: And they turned out to be very good ones?

RW: Oh yes.

JP: When I was thinking about what to say to you I was thinking of such things as the [spotted drives]??? and some of the equipment that perhaps these greenhorns would not be used to on the wells. But as you say, you had chain guards and all that.

RW: Oh yes.

JP: Because the record of safety at Leduc was pretty good wasn't it?

RW: Oh yes. It was very good, I don't. . .we had small accidents, you naturally would with that kind of machinery but we didn't have a death or anything like that in all the time we were operating there.

JP: What about the R. W. Development Co.? How did that get into the picture?

RW: That was a little company that I started on my own. I had personally taken little interests in some of these wells, a small percentage. I had a little bit of gas production and a little bit of oil production. I thought, well, my son might be interested in the oil business, which he wasn't at all. I've taken him around with me on these rigs and he says, Dad, I don't want to work like you do, I'm just not interested in this work.

JP: So many sons said that to their father's, I was one. I wouldn't follow my father's line at all.

RW: Then I thought maybe my daughter might marry some fellow who was interested in the oil business but she didn't. So then, I drilled a few wells. I drilled on in Leduc, a farm out, which wasn't successful, in the river bottom, on an island in the river bottom. And I drilled some wells, a couple of wells at Nisku, I drilled I think it was 3 at Morinville. I drilled a discovery well over in Manitoba. . .what's the name of that place where they first got oil over there.

#178 JP: Over in Manitoba?

RW: Yes.

JP: Come on, I should have that too, Virden, the Virden area?

RW: Virden, yes. McIver. . .

JP: That was at Daily.

RW: Pardon.

JP: Daily, Manitoba, isn't that where you had the discovery well that McIver ???

RW: No, it was right at Virden, just 2 miles . . .

JP: Oh, just outside the town, yes.

RW: Yes. And I had a rig over there and I drilled some wells for, I've forgotten the name of the company but. . .

JP: Cal Standard was in there.

RW: No, this was a fellow, the head of the company, his name was Carnahan. I'd drilled 3 wells and they were supposed to drill, I believe it was 8 wells now. So they had some and they wanted to produce them for awhile and I had all the crews that I'd sent from here and a rig. And so the McIver's had this farm and I told him, I'd just take it 50-50. I'd drill the well, they furnish the land and the lease because it was freehold land and then we'd go 50-50 on it. It wouldn't cost them anything because I wanted to keep the crews there. So I

drilled a well and drilled a discovery well.

JP: Was this the same McIver of McIver Driller or just. . .

RW: Yes.

JP: Oh, it was the same. It was where his family ranch or something?

RW: His family.

JP: And it was a discovery well, I'll be darned. Did Scallion field come into the picture at this time?

RW: I'm not familiar with that, no.

JP: No. But you worked right around Virden?

RW: I lost all track of it. I drilled those ones for Carnahan and they didn't turn out all right and I drilled 3 wells there on the McIver farm for ourselves.

JP: That would be a pretty good family deal, the McIver farm.

RW: Yes. And then I drilled some other wells, several wells around there for different ones, and then I pulled that rig back. I worked it up here, closer to home.

JP: Was this the furthest away venture that you'd undertaken, Virden was as far afield as you went? The rest of it was all back. . .

RW: The rest of it was all in Alberta. Well, then after I had completed the deals for Hightower, eventually we had gotten up to that point and I was straightened around from that, then I was contacted by the Canadian Petroleum Association to take charge of the handling of the seamless tubular goods for the Dominion of Canada. The man in charge of all the seamless tubular goods and the refining and construction was Oliver Hopkins of Imperial Oil.

#224 JP: What year was this Ralph, approximately?

RW: It was approximately '51. With Oliver Hopkins I made first . . . they contacted me in C. D. Howe and they wanted me to take this and I didn't want it actually. Then I figured the industry here had been pretty good to me and so I probably should do something for them. So I finally agreed, I told them I hadn't had a holiday since I'd been in Canada and I'd promised my wife and my daughter that we'd go on a holiday. So they said, that's fine, you go ahead, take off. I talked to Mr. Howe. And as soon as you get back then contact us. We were gone for about 6 weeks and came back and they had set up the worst program that I could ever imagine. They had said, we would have to handle this casing and tubing and drill pipe, that we'd have to get a yard and put a thief proof fence around it and then hire fellows to handle this pipe and look after it and build a building of some kind to keep records and one thing and another, to keep a man 24 hrs. a day on this job. And they had worked on this with that in mind while I was gone. I came back and I said, Oliver and I met with Mr. Howe and I said, we can handle it much easier than that. I said, I know every contractor in Alberta, I know every man's yard and how much pipe he has and what his rig operations are, I know that very well. I said, the supply companies, for god's sake, they want the pipe and if we can get it for them let them stockpile it and keep it in their

#266 yard and handle it and it won't cost the government a dime and they won't need to hire all that personnel. I said, then any pipe that goes out of the yards of Oilwell Supply or

National Supply or any of those companies has to have my okay, that's all it needs. I said, we don't need all that office, I'd like one stenographer and then one man that I can train to handle this job because I don't want to stay on this job. I said, I'll stay with it for a year and C. D. said, what salary do you want and I said, I don't want a salary, in fact I won't take a salary. He said, what's your reason for not taking a salary, if you don't want a salary I'll give you an honorarium. I said, no, I don't want that, you can give me \$1 for the year's work if you want but I want to train a man to do this work and it's just that simple. Well, we couldn't hire a stenographer, we had to hire a government stenographer and I just wanted a small office with a desk and some chairs and a typewriter is all we'll need and some few office supplies. I had bought some stuff, very little, probably \$45-50 worth of stuff at the end of the first month to get started, pencils and erasers and whatnot, little stuff and I sent the bill in and I got letters back from different departments of the government that I should requisition all this stuff. So I phoned C. D. and I said, now, I'm just not going to requisition this stuff, no more than we have to have. I said, I made arrangements with the printers to send out all the notices and print all the forms that we need and I can get that done and our stamps and supplies and that stuff that we need and he said, how much do you need a month for this. I said, \$35 will cover it, with the supplies that we have now, we don't need very much. Stamps is one of the biggest things.

#313 He said, I'll send you an honorarium, I'll send it to R. W. Development, I don't want to send it to you personally but I'll send it to R. W. Development, I said, that's fine, and then you just pay the things and if you need more than that let me know. And he said, if you run into any problems with people who come in and demand pipe and whatnot, other than regulation, you handle it the way you think it should be handled, it's entirely up to you. I said, that's fine, I can handle it. We got going all right and then I got a letter from some department down there in government and they sent me a mimeograph machine, which I didn't need at all. I had a stenographer there you see. They sent it air express and I set it over in one corner of the office and left it sit there. To operate that machine I've got to hire another girl. For god's sake it won't cost \$100 to do all the work we need outside of the stenographer, at the printer's. I'm not going to operate that machine, I don't want to get a bigger office. I had all the room that we needed. I put the office in the Lancaster building because that's where my office was. They wanted me to put the office in the post office, I couldn't do that. They had furniture down there, I picked up all the furniture that we needed, they'd got hundreds of thousands of dollars in the basement, good furniture. But anyway, we got started and I had a few embarrassing experiences but we got along very well. The fact of the matter is, I stayed with it for 2 years and then I hired Dick Gibbons.

JP: He was your understudy?

RW: Yes, as an understudy and he did a good job with it and he worked with me the second year. Then Dick took it over after 2 years and I got my dollar and a nice letter from C. D. Howe. Which I have framed in my apartment.

JP: Sent to 400 Lancaster Building, which was your address, right?

RW: 900

End of tape.

Tape 2 Side 2

RW: Then as far as I was concerned that finished me with that group and the Alberta Petroleum Association gave me a very nice gold medal that I cherish very much and a wonderful plaque that I have at my apartment. It was after this, and I've forgotten just exactly the years, that we started the organization of the Alberta Gas Trunk Line. I was appointed president of Alberta Gas Trunk by C. D. Manning. That pre-work was a little embarrassing to me. Some of the companies, they had several of the companies that we had sold, we suggested selling 5,000 shares of A stock in Alberta Gas Trunk to give us money to get started and get going. Then I hired W. F. Connode to handle the company and it took just a lot of talk and a lot of work to get started. I was president of that for the first year, I was appointed by C. D. Manning and then the second year I was elected by the operators to continue with the thing. We finally got it set up and to the point to where the major oil companies that were required to take \$25,000 each of the A stock, non-voting stock, and the gas company and I can't recall who all now. I've just got to give you this by memory. It was during this time that the original company was set up and it was all subscribed for and we made arrangements then, to sell stock to the public. The amount of stock I've forgotten now but the stock was sold to the Alberta people for \$5 a share.

JP: And they leapt at it.

RW: It was gone in hours from the time it was open. Then I stayed on for the next year, during the organization of things till we got it started, then I dropped out.

#040 JP: But you got to know Bill Connode pretty well did you?

RW: Oh, very well, yes.

JP: I was talking to his widow the other day, we put quite a bit on tape. Margaret Halliwell, who used to work for Bill and Margaret Connode. Did you know Bill in the States at all?

RW: No, I didn't know him until he came up here consulting for Home Oil Co. is when I first met him. I knew of him but I didn't know him, I'd never met him until he came up here.

JP: He took over from you didn't he, in the Trunk Line?

RW: No, he continued with them as manager for I think, a couple of years. I just stayed, I was in it 2 years. It was again, a donation job, I never got a penny out of it.

JP: This was another job like the pipe job?

RW: Yes. But Bill, he worked for salary of course. He was with them, I believe, 2 years after I left it.

JP: How did you find it, as a job, it was not your cup of tea I seem to gather?

RW: Which is this?

JP: With Alberta Gas Trunk, did you like it?

RW: I didn't particularly like it, it just wasn't something to my liking. And then I had quite a few irons in the fire. I had taken my money that I had gotten from Drilling Contractors and I had invested in stock. I invested just in oil and pipelines and beer. And I traded very little in any other stock, I don't own a share of stock today. Eventually what I did, I just sold everything and bought government bonds.

JP: Oh yes. Is it too impertinent to ask about the beer, what companies?

RW: Let's see, there was Molson and. . .

JP: The Canadian breweries though?

RW: Oh yes.

JP: What I'm getting at is you'd become a Canadian by this time, very much so?

RW: I've been a Canadian. I made my first application the first year I was here. And I married a Canadian girl. I got my Canadian citizenship in 1942.

JP: My, that's a long time ago.

RW: Yes.

JP: Coming back with a few bits and pieces Ralph. One of them that I wanted to ask, we've talked of many, many people, who was Chandler of Newell and Chandler, do you remember?

RW: Yes, Shorty Chandler. He handled the management in the field of the operations and Matt Newell did all the contact work and handled the office here in town.

JP: And Chandler was the field man then was he?

RW: Yes. And then he was in an accident it seems to me, and broke a leg that never did heal. They hired his brother, which was supposed to be a field man and he wasn't a good man for them at all. Then they had to let him go. Matt Newell had worked in South America, under a drilling superintendent for the Creole Oil Co., which is Standard of New Jersey. Matt knew him because he'd worked for him and he had left Creole and Matt found out about it and he hired him to handle the field operations for Newell and Chandler.

#086 JP: You were a very close friend of Jim Lowry's, did he have any particular opinions about Matt? Matt did some drilling for him before you came along didn't he?

RW: It was while I was here. Matt's company supervised the drilling of Home Oil 2 with Home Oil's rigs.

JP: That was at the north end of the field?

RW: Yes, that's the north end. All the wells that I drilled for Home were in the north end of course. I drilled I believe 34 was the last one that I drilled and I had drilled all them except 2. Home Oil 1, I drilled 1A and then later they changed the one that I drilled there on that location, just 50' and started from another well and they changed the abandoned well to 1A and called the one that I drilled as #1.

JP: There would be very little of the drilling in Turner Valley you wouldn't know about, just about everything I'm sure you'd been in on somewhere.

RW: Yes, very little. Imperial Oil, they run I think, a maximum of 2 rigs there as I remember. Bob Wilkerson drilled a well after I came to the country and that's about all. There were some wells that were drilled by Head and Snyder equipment for some of the companies and Woodrow Wilson supervised the drilling of those, with those rigs.

JP; Jiggs Head was one of them wasn't he?

RW: Jiggs Head and Snyder owned those rigs that they had bought from Imperial Oil for a song a few years before.

JP: Grant Spratt's name has come into the conversation a couple of times. You had some quite considerable dealings with him didn't you, with Grant Spratt?

RW: Oh yes, he was theoretically, he was my boss after Phil Burn left. But I never had any interference in any way from either one of them. Grant did the contact work and made the contracts for Drilling Contractors until I took over, till I bought it.

JP: Another name that I had down here is Jim Scrimger, of course he was much later. . .

RW: John Scrimger.

JP: John Scrimger rather. This was with Bow Valley wasn't it, did it go McIver, Hightower, Bow Valley, is that about the direction?

RW: It was originally Drilling Contractors, then it was McIver and then it was Hightower. Then I helped negotiate the deal for the sale of the company to Bow Valley, to the Seaman boys. That give those fellows a pretty good bonus, I told them that would be their bonus for putting up with me because I worked hell out of them.

#131 JP: Did you work at all with Don Binney?

RW: I gave him his first job in the field.

JP: Did you? He became a ??? with me.

RW: Yes.

JP: That's a change. A fellow who's going to be a criminal lawyer became a driller and . . .

RW: He's a millionaire. Does those boys that I give part of the company to. There was about 4 of them that drank themselves to death. Joe Wark was the best man that I ever brought along.

JP: Now is Joe still alive, he is isn't he?

RW: No, no, he died. He died about 3 years ago. And Norman Vedders is now the drilling superintendent for this same group. I hired him first when he was 14 yrs. old, during the war. I had to get written permission from his mother and father to let him work on the rigs, as I did a couple of other boys that lived there in Turner Valley. I can't think of their names now.

JP: Was Cales one of them, no he wasn't, he was with Royalite.

RW: Who?

JP: Glen Cales. Don't know if he got in the drilling at all.

RW: Don Binney was a nephew of Ray Milner. Ray Milner and Don's mother are brother and sister. Ray, very apologetically, asked me if I would give him a job and I told him yes, send him out and so I put him on what we called the bull gang, working around the tank farms and cleaning out the tanks and one thing and another for awhile. I started all those young fellows that way, Buzz Caller is another that I started the same way. Then as they got a little experience I'd put them out on these rigs when we were running casing to roll casing and help hustle it to the crew and all and familiarize them a little with the rig that way and then I'd put them roughnecking. Which I did with Don. Then I finally put him to drilling. After the war I put him to drilling on the small rig at the Kinsella-Viking area and then put him to pushing tools. He stayed on with the company and he invested his money well, took care of his money. Same way with Norman Vedders, the young fellow, he's a millionaire too. He's just a young fellow, he's 44 yrs. old now. But he started work for me when he was 14.

JP: That's a wonderful way to be. Now there's a fellow by the name of Layselle, who had a

lot to do with you?

RW: No. I don't know anybody by that name. I've heard the name.

#173 JP: Let's see what else. Oh yes, one question that I don't know if you can answer this or not. Do you know whether Bill Connode exerted any influence on Manning to have you brought in to Alberta Gas Trunk? It's a pretty direct question isn't it? However, I was wondering, you said that Manning asked you to come in there, I was wondering who was behind all that. Of course you were so darned well known.

RW: It was Jim Lowry.

JP: Was it? Because you were so well known that it's small wonder they asked you to come in.

RW: Yes, I used to know every fellow in the oil industry. Now, I know very few of them. There are none of these older fellows left, Matt Newell and Bert Ayers is another guy that comes over to the club there and that's about all I know. There was Danny Daniels and Harry Forester and myself, we were on the building committee for the Calgary Petroleum Club when it first was amalgamated with the Glencoe Club. We each bought a house down here on 5th Ave. to keep the realtors from having any idea what we were doing with them. And then we put them together and we were in charge of the building committee and had charge of the money so then we paid ourselves and transferred these over to the Petroleum Club for what we got for it and that was the starting.

JP: But it had to be a little devious in those days didn't it, because it was a . . . ?

RW: This stuff was going so quickly and we wanted to get something up on 6th or 7th Ave. close, but we couldn't find anything and we didn't take much time. We said, that might not be too far from town to interest these fellows.

JP: Isn't that amazing, not too far from town. Certainly out of the high rent district, it was then.

RW: Oh it was.

JP: Of course it was, in those days. One question about Alberta Gas Trunk, were the oil companies very happy about Alberta Gas Trunk? You say it was a certain embarrassing time at the beginning.

RW: That thing made me a lot of . . . I hated that damn job. I shouldn't say that so it will be recorded but the thing I didn't like about it was the way it was handled. It was all right, we met with Premier Manning, ??? a meeting at the very first stages to get the approval of the oil companies of this plan of the Alberta Gas Trunk so that we could keep control of the gas in the province, for the province, without the federal government having full authority over it. And the oil companies all 100%, agreed to it. But at the same time Trans Canada was being formed and most of these major companies double crossed the Premier in that they tried to get Alberta Gas Trunk instead of having Alberta Gas Trunk they wanted to throw it to Trans Canada, which the Premier was trying to avoid. I was aware of all this and sat in on those meeting with Ernie Manning and Bill Connode and then these guys double crossed him and they wouldn't come in with their \$25,000 for their 5,000 shares of stock. So I told them, goddamn it, I'll take any of your companies interest at a given price if you let me have it. Of course, that damn stock went to \$20 by the next

day.

#233 JP: Yes. But some of them couldn't see it could they?

RW: I don't know what their strategy was.

JP: Except Trans Canada Pipe.

RW: Except you see, they were committed to Trans Canada to quite an extent and they wanted to get this thing thrown into Trans Canada. Which they figured would be a better deal for them. But the thing that irked me so was the fact that they double crossed Ernie. There was only 3 of them that came across with their money as they had told the Premier that they would. That was Home Oil Co., Hudson Bay Oil and Gas, that was, what's his name, I can't think of his name. . . and I believe the other was Standard of California. It was either Standard of Cal or Sun Oil, I don't know now which.

JP: It was George Knox at the head of Can Standard and George Dunlap at the head of Sun.

RW: That's right. George Dunlap and George Bentley were running Sun at that time. I believe it was Sun. Then the others were being influenced by Imperial Oil. Then after Jim Lowry, he made a trip down to Toronto and got Imperial Oil straightened out after a pretty rough session. As soon as Imperial Oil went in the rest of them then all come in.

JP: You must have felt very independent, your particular position, not being on salary, you must have felt pretty independent about this.

RW: I was. C. D. Howe said, now tell me why you won't take a salary or an honorarium. I said, I'll tell you why very frankly, I don't like politics and in fact, I don't have any politics you might say. If they let me run it like I think it should be run for the good of the industry I'll run it. But if I have to take orders from a political standpoint, then if I don't take a salary I feel free to leave it and I will, I'll do that the very day that it pops up.

#280 JP: That was probably a, well of course, it was, a very wise decision indeed.

RW: Oh yes. I only had one really, or a couple of embarrassing positions while I was running that. I had a couple of fellows come in the office with dirty hats and all and they wanted 3 strings of casing for 3 wells that they were going to drill at Ribstone. I said, no, if you have permits for your wells I'll give you surface casing and then after you start drilling the wells, I normally don't let out any production casing but after you start drilling the wells I'll let you take one string of production casing out there and if you get production on one of those wells you can run it but if you don't get production you've got to deliver that casing back to Edmonton, to the supply company. They said no, we want that casing and we want it right now. I said, no, you just don't get it that way. I said, you've got to have a permit to drill that well and then I'll release the surface pipe to you. I'd forgotten their names, didn't pay any attention to it, didn't give it much thought. They left in quite a huff and they went back and reported this to Mr. Howe. So Mr. Howe told them that he'd turned that authority over to me and I was to run it the way that I thought it was to be run. But he said, if there is any particular complaint you can come back to me, or you can go back to see Mr. Will. I didn't know that they'd gone to see him for quite some time afterwards and he let me know that they had. Then I had a fellow approach me, I won't mention his name, who lived here in Calgary and he offered me a pretty good sum if I

would let him have some casing. I told him that I wasn't interested in that kind of operation. We never did have any words over it, any hard feeling but I knew that he was that kind of a dealer and I wasn't going to do that.

JP: Great to be in that position. Well, Ralph, I'm very grateful. I think we've covered a great deal of territory and I thank you so much for it and congratulations on having a wonderful memory for these things. Your particular ripeness, you and I have just passed birthdays together because I'm an August guy too.

RW: Is that right?

JP: Yes, the 23rd is mine.

RW: My wife's is in August, August 5th, mine's the 20th.

JP: Well, thank you so much.

RW: You're certainly welcome.