



# ARCHIVES

---

Newsletter of the Petroleum History Society

October 2014; Volume XXV, Number 5

---

P.H.S. Lunch and Learn Meeting – Wednesday, October 29, 2014

## **A Day in the Life of an Oil Rig Worker**

*by Anna Brooks – Multimedia Journalist, Lacombe Globe*

Anna's overview of her talk to the PHS: When it comes to the oil and gas industry, what is seen on the news, in heated debates and splattered on picket signs everywhere are really two simple, yet antagonistic concepts: pro-oil and anti-oil. While this distinction - which is essentially comprised of the capitalists and the environmentalists - is one apparent to almost everyone in Alberta, there is an important voice missing that sheds valuable insight on what has evolved into a highly controversial industry. Spurred on after interviews with about a dozen oil rig workers, Anna's short novel *Nothing but Sky* investigates what many have not yet bothered to investigate. What does a day in the life of an oil worker, the workers that keep this billion dollar industry in motion, look like? She's not referring to CEOs and other big business gurus that never have to leave the comfort of their leather armchairs; She's talking about who society has dubbed "the rig pigs," the men who toil day and night running oil rigs. She hopes to relay to us what sort of struggles she faced as a young, female journalist trying to probe into an industry that is media-airtight, what conclusions she reached after interviewing oil rigs workers, and in her opinion, perhaps the most important question of all: how does working in such a lucrative, yet inherently dangerous environment affect or change someone?

***Please see page 2 for Anna's biography.***

- Time: Time: 12 noon, Wednesday, October 29, 2014.  
Presentation approximately 12:30 - 1:00 p.m.
- Place: Calgary Petroleum Club, 319 – 5th Avenue S.W. – Viking Room (check marquee)  
Business casual dress
- Cost: PHS Members \$30 and Guests \$35 (most welcome)  
Cash or cheque only at the door. (In advance by credit card or email, advise with RSVP.)
- Lunch: Soup, sandwiches, cookies.  
Gluten-free? Vegan? Advise with RSVP.

**R.S.V.P. if you wish to attend to: Micky Gulless, 403-283-9268 or  
[micky@fuzzylogic.ca](mailto:micky@fuzzylogic.ca) by noon, Monday, October 27, 2014, if not sooner.**

**Those who RSVP but do not come, or cancel after the deadline, will be invoiced.**

**Those who do not RSVP by the deadline may not get a seat.**

## The Bull Wheel



**Next Luncheons:** Our luncheon slate is shaping up for November 2014 and the Spring of 2015. We are seeking speakers and interesting subjects. If you are considering making a presentation, please contact Clint Tippet, President P.H.S., at 403-208-3543.

**Speaker Biography – October 29:** Anna Brooks is a born and bred Calgarian. She graduated with a degree in journalism from Mount Royal University. During her post-secondary years, she was editor-in-chief of the Calgary Journal, a community-wide publication produced out of Mount Royal, while also freelancing for BeatRoute Magazine and writing fiction for Freefall Magazine. After undertaking a journalism project for a field school in India, the delights of her travels pushed her to move to Thailand the following year to work as a writer and photographer for Citylife Magazine in Chiang Mai. Her interests in agriculture, oil and gas and the uniqueness of rural Alberta have led her to her current position - a multimedia journalist at the Lacombe Globe, a small newspaper in the heart of central Alberta.

Anna's journalistic interests typically revolve around the stories, voices and faces that she feels are ignored, or unjustly represented. Some projects she has previously worked on include an award-winning multimedia investigation of the sex trade industry in Alberta, an inside look into the disappearance of rural schools in central Alberta, and of course, her book entailing the personal and psychological struggles workers face in the oil and gas industry.

**Call for Volunteer Assistance:** The Petroleum History Society is a purely volunteer organization and we rely on the input from and the assistance of our members. Amongst the activities in which you might get involved are: suggestion of a topic or speaker for an event; write or suggest a story for our Archives newsletter; write a summary of a speaker's talk for Archives; write a review of a petroleum history book, article, movie, TV show, event, blog, tweet or other media for Archives; offer old photos for use in Archives; help taking money at a luncheon or event; coordination of RSVPs for an event; help with postal mailouts; help in recruiting new members; welcoming new members; staffing booths that the PHS may have at various events. Thanks to Membership Director Micky Gulless for identifying and compiling these needs. Please contact Clint at 403-208-3543 if you are interested.

**How do I Drill for Oil in my Backyard?** An article with this title appeared in the May 19, 2011 issue of *FFwd Weekly* by Cecil Adams under the byline *The Straight Dope*. It was a humorous attempt to explain to people who are not familiar with our industry what is actually involved in this industrial activity. A sample of the text is: *“What happens if you strike oil? You’ll need some steel well casing, a main oil pump (for example the familiar “nodding donkey” type), various other pumps and piping, electrical lines, an on-site storage tank and possible a spill-protection berm and liner, all of which is going to add considerable clutter to the landscape. Tell your whiny neighbours it beats a lawn gnome.”*

**Downtown Calgary Historic Walking Tour:** A very comprehensive brochure on this topic with a related walking tour route can often be obtained in the lobby of the Glenbow Archives. It includes the Stephen Avenue Mall. Although not particularly stressed in the document, many of the buildings included have some petroleum connections, for example the Palliser Hotel and the Leeson-Lineham Block. The booklet is issued by the Calgary Heritage Authority. Guided tours using it are available and originate at the Glenbow.

**C.A.P.P. News:** David Collyer, who has served as the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producer’s President and CEO since his retirement from Shell in 2008, is being succeeded by Tim MacMillan who is coming into the job fresh from his previous role as Minister of Rural Health in the Government of Saskatchewan. The P.H.S. has explored ways of cooperating with C.A.P.P. but nothing of a permanent nature has been established. We previously had a strategic partnership with the Canadian Centre for Energy Information but that group has been absorbed into C.A.P.P. over the last couple of years.

**New Books:** *“The Frackers”* by Gregory Zuckerman (2013) was published by Portfolio/Penguin. At about \$25.00 and 412 pages it is a reasonably balanced overview of the origins and development of this technology and the issues surrounding it. As with many issues, everyone and his dog wants to write a book about it and amongst those is *“On Fracking”* by C. A. Lane, published by Rocky Mountain Books. At \$15.00 and 127 small pages it is unfortunately very superficial and negative. It is recommended to those with short attention spans. Finally there is Fred Stenson’s new book *“Who by Fire – an Alberta Story”* from Doubleday – an historically based novel about sour gas.

**Archives** is published approximately eight times a year  
by the Petroleum History Society for Society members.

**Archives** is copyright to the P.H.S. 2014 – all rights reserved.

Back issues are archived on our website at <http://www.petroleumhistory.ca/>

Contacts: <mailto:info@petroleumhistory.ca>

President: Clint Tippett – <mailto:clintontippett88@gmail.com> 403-208-3543

Secretary: Helen Turgeon – <mailto:helen1954.rt@gmail.com> 403-239-4863

## Recent additions to the Archives at the Glenbow Museum relating to the Petroleum Industry

by Doug Cass, Chief Archivist, Glenbow Museum and Archives  
and Director – P.H.S.

Since I last reported to *Archives* in 2010 Glenbow has continued to add to its collection of documentation relating to the history of the Canadian petroleum industry. Certainly the largest and most significant addition was the recordings and transcripts from the latest phase of the Society's Petroleum Oral History project relating to the oil sands. Approximately 120 interviews were completed and are now available for research at Glenbow. The transcripts will be available on the Glenbow website in the next few weeks. Sponsors of The Oil Sands Oral History Project include the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Athabasca Oil Sands Corp., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Canadian Oil Sands Limited, Connacher Oil and Gas Limited, Imperial Oil Limited, MEG Energy Corp., Nexen Inc., Suncor Energy and Syncrude Canada.

Glenbow has also acquired the research materials of author Andrew Nikiforuk who has written a number of books dealing with current events in the Canadian oil industry. His dramatic Alberta based-book, *Saboteurs: Wiebo Ludwig's War Against Big Oil*, won the Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction in 2002. *The Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of the Continent*, which criticized the pace and scale of the world's largest energy project, was a national bestseller and won the 2009 Rachel Carson Environment Book Award.

The Archives holds the organizational records of dozens of industry associations and professional groups and recently received a small addition to the collection of the Oil Wives Club of Calgary.

Glenbow also received a small donation of records relating to oilmen George H. Cloakey, Sr. and George H. Cloakey, Jr. George H. Cloakey, Sr. (1869-1950) invested heavily in the petroleum industry and moved to Calgary from Olds, Alberta in 1918. He was President of Seneca Oil and Gas Company. George H. Jr., 1900-1979, was the President of Britalta Oils and was heavily involved in the oil industry all of his life.

### An Early Promotion

An excerpt from the December 19, 1888 issue of the Calgary Tribune reads: "*Coal oil well. As reported in the MacLeod [presumably Fort MacLeod] Gazette: - news was received this week of the discovery of a good coal oil spring in the Crow's Nest Pass by Mr. W.S. Lee. Special enquiry confirms the news of this report, though at present we know nothing beyond the bare fact that oil has been discovered in large quantities.*" As nothing of this sort was ever actually pursued in that region (it is gas prone), one wonders about the source and motivation of those involved in these very early reports.

## Oil Sands in the 1940's

The following is an extract from an industry summary:

*"McMurray Area:*

*The Abasand Corporation is now exploiting the outcrops of tar sands in the vicinity of McMurray. These tar sands of lower Cretaceous age are exposed along the banks of the Athabaska River where they lie directly on the Devonian limestone. It is estimated that a billion barrels of oil are present in the tar sands cropping out along the Athabaska River and its tributaries. An additional 99 billion barrels of oil is estimated to occur in these sands beyond the reach of open-cut mining.*

*After several years of experimental work with a small pilot plant, the Abasand Corporation commenced commercial operations in 1941. The tar sand is stripped off by means of steam shovels and carried to a washing plant where the sand is subjected to hot water treatment which removes the oil from the sand. The oil in this tar sand does not occur in the interstices but forms a coating on the sand grains. The washed sand is clean, well sorted, fine-grained and white. The refined products obtained from the oil recovered from the tar sands are sold to various mining companies in the region several hundred miles to the north of McMurray. It is not possible to ship petroleum products 300 miles south to Edmonton from McMurray and successfully compete with products refined from Turner Valley crude oil. At the prices now being obtained by the Abasand Corporation for their products, they are able to show a profit on their operating costs, but the volume of business is far too small to permit capital expenditures to be written off. Consequently, they are operating at an overall loss and will continue to do so until a larger market is available.*

*Commencing on May 19, 1941 and up to the end of October 1941, the following amounts of oil have been recovered from the tar sand (numbers are for September 1941, October 1941 and May 19-October 31, 1941 cumulative: Oil sand mined: 4027, 2879 and 21,731 tons; Crude oil produced: 3440, 2591 and 19,519 barrels; Gasoline: 129, 73 and 1142 barrels; Diesel and Fuel Oil: 1162, 711 and 4190 barrels. [Presumably the rest of the volume was coke and other unmarketable products].*

*The amount of oil thus far produced is quite small. The plant has a capacity of 400 barrels a day at present, but as indicated in the preceding paragraph, the market is not sufficient to permit full scale operation of the plant."*

This view of oil sands operations in 1941 is extremely interesting as it demonstrates that these efforts at recovery were made in the face of normal commercial pressures such as competition with petroleum product like gasoline and diesel that were being refined from Turner Valley crude oil being transported into Edmonton. It is easy to forget that at many stages in the growth of our industry, conventional and unconventional resources were fighting for market share. Many impediments to the oil sands were present or created by conventional producers already facing oversupplied markets.



Bitumount Tar Sands Plant, Alberta, 1936.  
Photo NA-3394-57 courtesy of Glenbow Archives.



Abasand Opening – September 1936.  
Canadian Pacific Railway President Edward Beatty visits Abasand plant, Fort McMurray, Alberta. The Abasand plant, which processed oil sand, officially opened in September 1936 and was fully operational by 1941. Photo includes A.J. Smith, Vice-President Abasand Oil, Charles C. Ross, Alberta Minister of Mines and Paul Schmidt, Abasand foreman. Photo PA-3973-34 courtesy of Glenbow Archives.

## William Aberhart, Premier of Alberta 1935-1943

The following safety moment is based on Wikipedia

William Aberhart was born on December 30, 1878 in Tuckersmith Township, Ontario to William and Louisa Aberhart. The Aberharts were prosperous and were said to “live better than the average family”. The fourth of eight children, William Aberhart, Junior delivered milk to his father’s customers before school each day. He was a hard working but average student. Mathematics was one of his strengths. Though he excelled at soccer, he generally preferred solitary pursuits such as reading or teaching himself to play musical instruments.

On July 20, 1910, William Aberhart Sr. died in an accident at a pharmacy owned by Charles Aberhart, William Jr.’s brother. Prohibition was in effect but pharmacists were permitted to provide alcohol for “medicinal purposes”. Charles kept a bottle of whiskey for William Sr. in the store. One day a clerk rearranged the bottles and the illiterate William Sr. mistakenly took a swallow of carbolic acid and died within minutes. William Jr., by now in Calgary, did not make the trip east for his father’s funeral.

## The Ore Gangue, University of Saskatchewan

Nancy McKellar provided an overview of the history of this geological student group in the May 2012 issue of the Reservoir, published by the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists. Part of it is paraphrased here despite its mining connotation, because the U. of S. is also home to a substantial petroleum geology-related faculty and student body, both current and as alumni.

*“The Ore Gangue – For graduates of the University of Saskatchewan’s Geology Department, these words do not conjure up piles of slag left over from the mining of valuable minerals, but rather the student society that was the source of camaraderie and not a small amount of beer drinking while at university. The Ore Gangue is the oldest undergraduate society on the U. of S. campus. On January 18, 1934 a group of students gathered to form a geological club. A committee was formed to draw up a constitution and decide on a name for the club. The first regular meeting was held on January 23, 1934 and the name “Ore Gangue” was adopted. Starting in 1937, the Ore Gangue put out a yearly publication, The Concentrates, which highlighted the previous year’s activities and achievements. As well, that year saw the formation of an alumni group of Ore Gangue graduates, a group that remains strong and active to this day. For the Golden Jubilee of the University of Saskatchewan in 1959, the Concentrates put out an expanded version recording the history of the Geology Department, including the activities of the Ore Gangue. As well the 1984 issue of the Concentrates, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ore Gangue, contains much valuable information. The University of Saskatchewan Archives has several boxes of Ore Gangue materials including the Minutes of meetings from 1934 to 1964 and many photographs.”*

## PASSINGS

**Faye Mortimer.** Faye was born in Calgary on October 7, 1934 and passed away here on September 6, 2014. Faye attended McDougall, Ramsay and Hillhurst Schools, graduating from Western Canada High School, followed by secretarial school. For a short time Faye worked for a bank and McCosham's Moving and Storage. She then joined Mobil Oil in Calgary where she worked for nearly 30 years until her retirement. Faye was outgoing and social, belonging to the Desk and Derrick Club, Lakeview Ladies Golf Club, two birthday groups and the Native Calgarians Society. Faye was a Director of the P.H.S. until last Spring. She will be missed.

**Sean Callaghan.** Sean was born in 1957 and passed way in early 2014. He was a geophysical consultant and instructor. Sean was a Director of the P.H.S. in the 2002-2004 period. He hosted our meetings for a time in his offices in the heritage Grain Exchange building. He worked with the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists and the P.H.S. in a series of historical posters related to the geophysical industry.

**Taras Storey.** "Terry" passed away on December 27, 2013 at the age of 93. He was a member of the P.H.S. and a recent speaker for us on the topic of his adventures in the Persian Gulf's early exploration in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Terry had a keen mind and loved to promote ideas and interpretations that were not the current dogma. Your editor remembers him at technical conferences explaining his views to others at his posters. The fact that people didn't buy what he was selling did not discourage him – he seemed to thrive on looking at the facts in alternate ways and drawing whatever conclusions arose.

### Other Industry Personalities:

**Peter "Pete" Lawrence Gordy,** (ex of Shell), at age 84 on January 15, 2014. Foothills explorer involved in the Waterton, Jumping Pound West, Burnt Timber and Caroline discoveries.

**Gerald "Gerry" Gordon Lewis Henderson,** (ex of Chevron), born June 10, 1926 and passed away March 14, 2014 at age 87. Industry leader involved in the Kaybob South, West Pembina and Hibernia discoveries.

**Edward "Ted" Irving,** (ex of the Earth Physics Branch, Government of Canada) at age 87. Paleomagnetism expert.

**Jack Century,** (ex of Amoco), born April 5, 1930 and passed away on April 18, 2014. Active explorer and environmental geologist.

**Maclean "Mac" E. Jones,** (ex of Bennett Jones), passed away March 16, 2014 at the age of 96. Prominent Calgary lawyer and business director.

**Peter Alfred Ziegler,** (ex of Shell), passed away July 19, 2013 at the age of 84.



## **A Tour of The Canadian Museum of Making**

On September 14, 2014, on a beautiful late summer afternoon, members of the P.H.S. were treated to a tour of this impressive facility built by P.H.S. Member Ian MacGregor at his Wild Buffalo Ranch, west of Cochrane. The museum had previously been the topic of a P.H.S. luncheon talk by Ian and so the groundwork had been laid for the tour.

The facility features a huge collection of historical equipment and tools as well as a large technical library and meeting rooms. All are beautifully laid out with comprehensive signage.

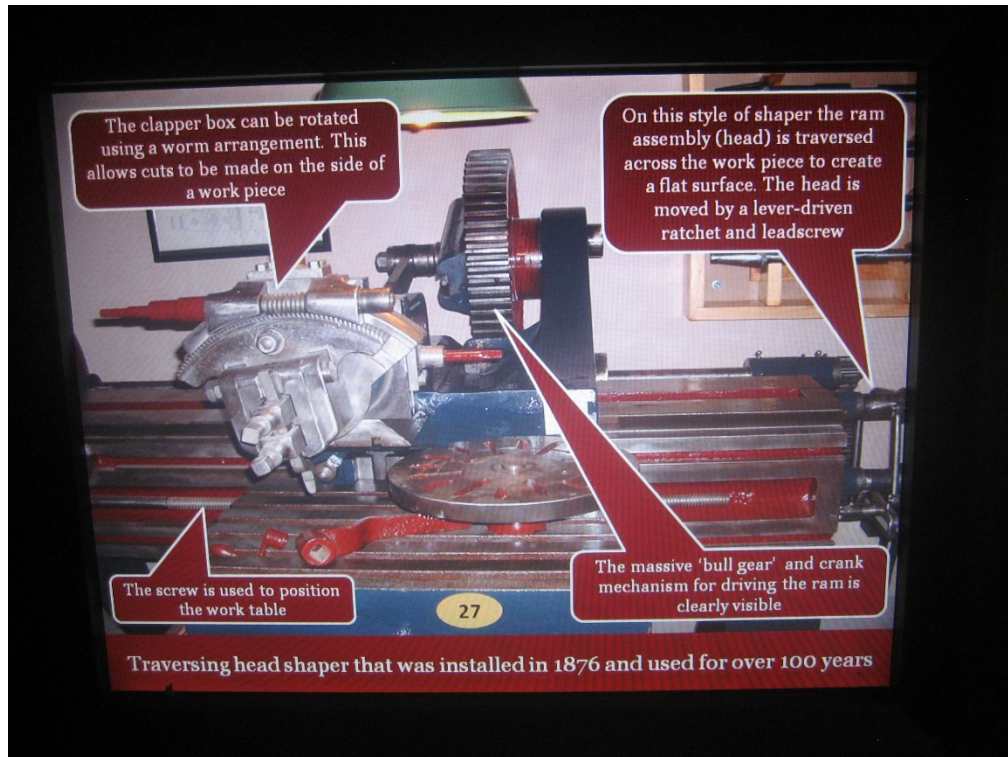
The P.H.S. wishes to thank Ian and Debbie Mutton, his executive assistant, for making this opportunity available to us.

We should note that tours are available only by prior arrangement.



P.H.S. members and their families enjoy the vast array of equipment and tools that Ian has on display.





Example of the explanations provided inside for the equipment.



Wichita Falls (Texas) well spudder (1929) at the museum.