



ARCHIVES

Newsletter of the Petroleum History Society

March 2017; Volume XXVIII, Number 3

P.H.S. Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony – Wednesday, March 29, 2017

Oil Sands Development – A Backward and a Forward Look from the Manning Perspective

*Keynote Address by **Preston Manning***

Our well-known speaker kindly provided the following introduction to his talk:

In the early 1960's, two gentlemen in their late seventies walked into the office of Alberta Premier, Ernest C. Manning, claiming they could build a commercially viable oil sands extraction plant in the province when all previous attempts to do so had failed. The one gentleman was J. Howard Pew, head of Sun Oil, scion of one of the wealthiest families in the United States; the other was Clarence Thayer, his chief engineer.

As a twenty year old with an interest in all things Alberta I was privileged to sit in on a number of the discussions between my father and Pew on this subject which eventually resulted in the opening of the Great Canadians Oil Sands plant at Fort McMurray in 1967.

It is always a privilege to meet with Albertans who cherish the history of our great province, and I look forward to sharing my recollections of the origins of the commercial development of the oil sands.

Please see page 4 for a condensed version of Mr. Manning's biography.

TIME: 4:00 p.m. – please see page 2 for detailed schedule

PLACE: Calgary Petroleum Club, 319 – 5th Avenue S.W. – McMurray Room.

COST: Members and guests (most welcome) – \$20.00 (new charge).

DRESS: Business dress casual, ties not required.

Please RSVP if you wish to attend to: Micky Gulless at 403-283-9268 or micky@petroleumhistory.ca by noon, Monday, March 27, 2017.

The Bull Wheel



Call for contributions and speakers: The Petroleum History Society values your input. If you have an article that you'd like to see in *Archives* or if you have a talk that you'd like to give, please get a hold of us. Contact President Clint Tippett at the address indicated on page 3.

Free Student Memberships Available: The Petroleum History Society offers free membership to full-time students until the end of the year in which they graduate. They will receive the same benefits as regular members – *Archives* newsletters and invitations to our events. Membership applications are available at: www.petroleumhistory.ca/about/index.htm#join.

Members Alternate E-mail Addresses: We like to keep more than one e-mail address in your membership record in case you change e-mail suppliers or work e-mail addresses. However, if you wish, we can stop e-mailing to both your addresses. Just send an e-mail to micky@petroleumhistory.ca advising which one is your preferred address.

Petroleum History Society Elections: These elections will take place during the Annual Meeting. A slate of candidates will be presented but there is always the opportunity to add your name ahead of time (please contact us) or to volunteer on the spot.

Petroleum History Society Financials: P.H.S. Financials for 2016 will be e-mailed to members. For those of you without an e-mail address, copies will be available at the annual meeting on March 29, or you can request a mailed copy from Micky Gulless at 403-283-9268.

Annual Meeting Agenda (please note that a \$20.00 charge has been established to help us defray the cost of the meeting at the Petroleum Club including snacks):

The agenda for the P.H.S. Annual Meeting on March 29 will be:

- 4:00 p.m. Meeting commences
- 4:05 p.m. President's Report
- 4:20 p.m. Treasurer's Report, related business and election of auditors.
- 4:30 p.m. Election of P.H.S. Officers and Board for the 2017-2018 term
- 4:45 p.m. 2016 P.H.S. Awards
- 5:15 p.m. Keynote Speaker: Preston Manning on "Oil Sands Development".
- 5:45 p.m. Questions, Answers and Discussion
- 6:00 p.m. Mix and Mingle with snacks and cash bar – please stay and join us.

Books of Note:

Glass, M. 2015. Alberta Utilities Commission – 100 Years of Service to Alberta 1915-2015. 97 p. This volume focusses on the history of one of the major regulators in Alberta. It nicely complements the work done by P.H.S. Member Gordon Jaremko on the Energy and Resources Conservation Board and the Alberta Energy Regulator. The back cover explains that *“The Board of Public Utility Commissioners was created on April 17, 1915 to ensure supervision over services that affected Albertan’s daily lives – such as electricity, natural gas, milk, telephone rates, stocks, shares and even apple imports. The board continued its important work as the Public Utilities Board in 1960, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board in 1995, and, since 2008, the Alberta Utilities Commission.”*

Gough, B. 2014. The Elusive Mr. Pond – The Soldier, Fur Trader and Explorer who opened the Northwest. Douglas and McIntyre, 230 p. \$34.95. Those of us in the petroleum industry have generally been exposed to Peter Pond’s adventures through his early identification of the oil sands in the vicinity of what is now Fort McMurray – specifically his notes of 1778 concerning *“springs of bitumen that flow along the ground”*. The dust jacket of this book explains that *“In 1779, Pond was a founding partner of the North West Company, which entered onto fierce competition with the Hudson’s Bay Company for control of the North American fur trade. He was a gruff man, not to be crossed, who left his position with the company in 1788 after being implicated in two murders. Much of Pond’s life is shrouded in mystery. The second half of his memoirs are torn from the original journal and he died in obscurity without an obituary or marked tomb.”* The book is puzzling in a sense, however, because it does not seem to mention Pond’s bitumen-related observations and, indeed, explicitly states on p. 98 that he left no record of his observations, leaving it to Alexander Mackenzie to describe the oil sands almost a decade later. The author remarks on p. 168 that *“A few bars and at least one shopping centre are named for Pond in Fort McMurray”* without making the hydrocarbon link – although it might be argued that Pond’s contribution to regional exploration in general and the fur trade specifically are more of what’s being honoured. Unfortunately Joyce Hunt’s volume on the early days of the oil sands does not investigate this matter of early oil sands observations.

Prentice, J. with Rioux, J.-S. 2017. Triple Crown - Winning Canada’s Energy Future. Harper Collins Publishers Ltd. 339 p., \$32.99. This book was “written with his friend and colleague [Rioux] shortly before [former Alberta Premier] Jim Prentice’s unexpected death in October 2016. *“Triple Crown is a heartening and inspiring book and a lasting tribute for a man who did so much for Canada. In Triple Crown, Jim Prentice makes a powerful argument for the inadequacy of current Canadian energy policy and asserts a new and forward-looking vision to convert our nation’s vast resources into a secure, prosperous and environmentally responsible future that benefits all Canadians”*. Hopefully someone picks up his quest.

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Preston Manning – A Brief Biography



Preston Manning, P.C., C.C., A.O.E., is Founder and President of the Manning Centre, which he established in 2005.

Born in 1942, Preston is the second son of long time Alberta Premier Ernest C. Manning. Growing up in a political household he became intimately familiar with western Canadian political history and the operations of his father's political party and government.

He graduated from the University of Alberta with a B.A. in Economics and provided consulting services to the energy industry for twenty years before entering the political arena.

Preston served as a Member of Parliament from 1993 to 2001. He founded two political parties - the Reform Party of Canada and the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance - both of which became the Official Opposition in the Canadian Parliament, and laid the foundation for the new Conservative Party of Canada. He served as Leader of the Opposition from 1997 to 2000 and was also his party's science and technology critic. In 2007, he was made a Companion of the Order of Canada and in 2013 was appointed to the Privy Council.

He has received honorary degrees from the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Tyndale University College, York University, University of Toronto and Carleton University.

Mr. Manning resides in the city of Calgary with his wife, Sandra. The Mannings have five grown children and eleven grandchildren.

REMEMBRANCES (with thanks to the Calgary Herald)

Dietrich, James (Jim) Joseph. Born March 25, 1948 and passed away March 5, 2017. Jim was born in Toronto, Ontario where he spent his early years skiing on the "mountains" of eastern Canada, before graduating from Ryerson Polytechnic Institute. After working in and around the Toronto area for several years, the combination of bigger mountains and less traffic drew Jim to Alberta and he settled in Calgary in the early 1970's. He worked in housing construction initially, before moving into the oil and gas business as a "Dirt Guy." He spent a large part of the 80's and 90's working in the field, where he continued to build his reputation as an honest, hardworking and loyal colleague. Over the course of those years he made and developed numerous lifelong friendships. He eventually transitioned from the field into the office, as his then-teenaged children became more demanding than the field contractors. Jim had spent the last eleven years of his career as Construction Superintendent, first for Duvernay Oil Corp., followed by Tourmaline Oil Corp., where he was proud to be finishing his career and was happily winding down towards his retirement. Jim's adventurous spirit fueled his love for the outdoors. He enjoyed hiking, skiing, camping, mountain biking and canoeing throughout the Western Canadian wilderness.

MacLellan, Kenneth "Ken" Reid. Born March 23, 1952 and passed away February 16, 2017. Ken was born in Kamsack, Saskatchewan and at the age of five moved to Saskatoon. He attended Evan Hardy Collegiate and later the University of Saskatchewan. In 1974 Ken obtained a B.Sc. (Chem. Eng.) degree graduating "With Great Distinction" and was recipient of the Governor General's Gold Medal for Academic Achievement. Ken moved to Calgary to work as an engineer with Atlantic Richfield Canada. He was soon transferred to Tyler, Texas where he married, lived and worked. Upon Ken's return to Calgary and when Atlantic Richfield Canada was acquired by PetroCanada, Ken moved on. He stayed in the petroleum business until he retired from Pacalta in 1999 and then spent the next fifteen plus years traveling to Phoenix every winter as a "snowbird". Ken had many industry and flying friends. Aside from engineering, he loved flying, cooking and socializing with his friends and his family.

McCarthy, Joseph Weeden (Jerry). Born May 7, 1925 and passed away February 8, 2017. Jerry was born and raised in Edmonton. He attended Spruce Avenue Elementary School and Victoria High. After stints with both the army and sea cadets (the latter group known as the Warriors), he volunteered for the navy, mustering as a stoker second class. Three years later, he was an acting stoker first class – a meteoric rise that, as his wife pointed out, that he never let go to his head. He attended both the Universities of Saskatchewan and Alberta, graduating as an electrical engineer in 1950. After his service in the navy, he joined the army, serving as an officer in the R.C.E.M.E. He left the army in 1953 when given the choice of taking a course or marrying his wife, Torchy Detlor, in Regina. Torchy accompanied him in his long career as a pipeliner, which saw him lay thousands of miles of pipe in countries as far away as Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, India, Russia and the USA. He worked for such companies as Cotter Brothers, Williams Brothers, Marine Pipeline, Majestic Wiley, Perini Arctic, Pitts Price, Fluor Engineering, AIC, Enserch, Underwater Construction, Charrington Drilling, FNC Lavalin and Colt Engineering. He was active in his professional associations, both the A.P.E.G.G.A. and the P.L.C.A.C., serving as President of the latter organisation in the mid-seventies. He retired at the age of eighty-four after more than six decades of work, forty-nine residences and an uncountable legion of friends.

A Tribute to Harry Byrt (1926-2017) – Aviator and Driller

The following story is courtesy of P.H.S. Member Tom Field, a friend of the Byrt family. Thanks!

Harry was an oilpatch and aviation entrepreneur. He was born April 26, 1926 in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan and died February 18, 2017 in Edmonton at the age of 90. Harry co-founded and ran several oilpatch companies as well as an aviation charter and water bombing operation.

Harry was the last of five children born to Frank and Hilda, who had both emigrated from England. At age 17, Harry joined the Air Force with hopes of going overseas. He trained as a flight engineer on a Halifax but the war ended before he was deployed overseas. After discharge he arrived home, bought a war surplus truck and started a truck transport company.

His truck transport work introduced him to drilling rigs and he quickly saw where the future was moving to. He worked with many small drilling contractors and quickly progressed from roughneck, driller and tool push to superintendent. In 1947, while working for Caskey Drilling, Harry met his long-time friend, Dean Caskey. This started an oilpatch friendship that would last seventy years. Harry also worked as Field man for Failing Supply before being offered the chance to rescue a rig in foreclosure in Picture Butte, Saskatchewan. This was the start to Harry's drilling career. During this busy time, Harry met and married Bobbie Pike and the couple spent 2-3 years living in a small trailer on drilling leases in Saskatchewan and Alberta before buying and settling into a small home in Edmonton in 1954. For one of their early dates, he rented a small plane and the couple flew around the Leduc #1 lease.

In 1954, Harry co-founded Tri-City Drilling with George, Jack and Dick Simpson. That partnership soon expanded to include Bill Arnold. With Harry as President, the partners spent the next thirteen years growing Tri-City Drilling to a respected and capable contractor. The first orange coloured Failing 2500 rig went on to drill more holes than any other rig in Western Canada or Alaska. Although Tri-City was sold in 1967 to Chieftain Development, and was later bought by the Ensign Group in 1993, drilling operations continued under the Tri-City name for nearly fifty years. Harry was always proud of how many great employees remained to enjoy very long careers at Tri-City.

In 1968, Harry took some time off and became an accomplished glider pilot at the Edmonton Soaring Club. In the early 1970s, Harry purchased Mercury Flights Limited where he was able to blend his love of flying and business. The company provided charter flights, medivacs and water bombing out of the Edmonton Industrial Airport. After selling out to R. Angus Caterpillar in the late 70's, he opted to remain as a pilot. He eventually logged over 10,000 hours in the air. At age 62, the drilling bug bit him again, so he and partner Ron Innes bought Garritty & Baker Drilling. This was Harry's return to his drilling roots, this time in geo-technical drilling. Over the next few years, he coordinated the refurbishing and expansion of the drilling equipment and, of course, painted everything orange. During this time, the two partners added Don MacKenzie as the third and final partner. Just as business was settling, opportunity knocked and Harry, at the age of 70, and his two partners bought Penfabco, a business that built pressure vessels - again, a whole new learning curve. He continued actively working there into his 80s. Harry's three kids often asked their dad when he would stop working, to which he always replied, "Stop work? I've never worked a day in my life." To Harry, every day was a new and happy adventure; never a chore.



Harry Byrt, circa 1950's (courtesy Byrt family)

Harry also restored and flew a World War II Cornell trainer, a big project he took on with friends. This plane now sits proudly in the Wetaskiwin Air Museum. With friends, he also enjoyed constructing from scratch a homebuilt Rebel aircraft.

Harry was a great family man, and found time for many family vacations and leisure activities, including flying, gliding, ski-dooing, skiing, canoeing and even participating in a boat race down the Mackenzie River. He and Bobbie travelled extensively throughout their busy lives, and always kept their door open for friends and family.

His wife Bobbie often wondered if he would ever have any free time. For Harry, though, it was all free time! He will be missed.

35th Anniversary of the Sinking of the Ocean Ranger

We were reminded of this tragic event by P.H.S. Member Tom Field. It marked a low point in the development of the resources of Canada's East Coast Offshore, in this case specifically being the delineation work for the Hibernia Oil Field discovered in 1979. Thanks also to Wikipedia.

Ocean Ranger was a semi-submersible mobile offshore drilling unit that sank in Canadian waters on February 15, 1982. When it sank it was drilling an exploration well for Mobil Oil of Canada Ltd. (MOCAN) on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, 267 km (166 mi.) east of St. John's, Newfoundland, with 84 crew members on board. There were no survivors.



Background

Ocean Ranger was designed and owned by Ocean Drilling and Exploration Company Inc. (ODECO) of New Orleans. The vessel was a self-propelled large semi-submersible design with a drilling facility and living quarters. It was capable of operation in up to 460 m (1500 ft.) of water and could drill to a maximum depth of 7600 m (25,000 ft.). It was described by ODECO as the world's largest semi-submersible oil rig to date.

Constructed for ODECO in 1976 by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in Hiroshima, Japan, *Ocean Ranger* was 121 m (396 ft.) long, 80 m (262 ft.) wide, and 103 m (337 ft.) high. It had twelve 20,000 kg (45,000-pound) anchors. Its weight was 25,000 tons. It floated on two 122 m- (400 ft.) long pontoons that rested 24 m (79 ft.) below the surface. The vessel was approved for 'unrestricted ocean operations' and designed to withstand extremely harsh conditions at sea, including 100-knot (190 km/h) winds and 110-foot (34 m) waves. Prior to moving to the Grand Banks area in November 1980, it had operated off the coasts of Alaska, New Jersey and Ireland.

On November 26, 1981, *Ocean Ranger* commenced drilling well J-34, its third well in the Hibernia Oil Field. *Ocean Ranger* was still working on this well in February 1982 when the incident occurred. Two other semi-submersible platforms were also drilling nearby: *Sedco 706*, 13.7 km (8.5 mi.) to the NNE, and *Zapata Uglund*, 30.9 km (19.2 mi.) north of *Ocean Ranger*. On February 14, 1982, the platforms received from NORDCO Ltd, the company responsible for issuing offshore weather forecasts, reports of an approaching storm linked to a major Atlantic cyclone. The usual method of preparing for bad weather involved hanging-off the drill pipe at the sub-sea wellhead and disconnecting the riser from the sub-sea blowout preventer. Due to surface difficulties and the speed at which the storm developed, the crew of *Ocean Ranger* were forced to shear the drill pipe after hanging-off, after which they disconnected the riser in the early evening.

At about 19:00 local time, the nearby *Sedco 706* experienced a large rogue wave which damaged some items on deck and caused the loss of a life raft. Soon after, radio transmissions were heard from *Ocean Ranger*, describing a broken portlight (a porthole window) and water in the ballast control room, with discussions on how best to repair the damage. *Ocean Ranger* reported experiencing storm seas of 17 m (55 ft.), with the odd wave up to 20 m (65 ft.), thus leaving the unprotected portlight at 8.5 m (28 ft.) above mean sea level vulnerable to wave damage. Sometime after 21:00, radio conversations originating on *Ocean Ranger* were heard on *Sedco 706* and *Zapata Uglund*, noting that valves on *Ocean Ranger's* ballast control panel appeared to be opening and closing of their own accord. The radio conversations also discussed the 100-knot (190 km/h) winds and waves up to 20 m (65 ft.) high. Through the remainder of the evening, routine radio traffic passed between *Ocean Ranger*, its neighboring rigs and their individual support boats. Nothing out of the ordinary was noted.

At 00:52 local time, on February 15, a mayday call was sent out from *Ocean Ranger*, noting a severe list to the port side of the rig and requesting immediate assistance. This was the first communication from *Ocean Ranger* identifying a major problem. The standby vessel, the M/V *Seaforth Highlander*, was requested to come in close as countermeasures against the 10–15-degree list were proving ineffective. The onshore MOCAN supervisor was notified of the situation, and the Canadian Forces- and Mobil-operated helicopters were alerted just after 1:00 local time. The M/V *Boltentor* and the M/V *Nordertor*, the standby boats of *Sedco 706* and *Zapata Uglund* respectively, were also dispatched to *Ocean Ranger* to provide assistance. At 1:30 local time, *Ocean Ranger* transmitted its last message: "There will be no further radio communications from *Ocean Ranger*. We are going to lifeboat stations." Shortly thereafter, in the middle of the night and in the midst of severe winter weather, the crew abandoned the platform. The platform remained afloat for another ninety minutes, sinking between 3:07 and 3:13 local time.

All of *Ocean Ranger* disappeared beneath the Atlantic: by the next morning all that remained was a few buoys. Her entire complement of 84 workers – 46 Mobil employees and 38 contractors from various service companies – were killed. The remains of the platform were found by sonar search over the following weeks, resting in an inverted position approximately 148 m (485 ft.) south-east of the wellhead, surrounded by major items of debris such as the derrick. The platform had capsized bow-first, turning over and striking the sea floor with the forward ends of the platform's pontoons.

A Canadian Royal Commission spent two years looking into the disaster. The joint Federal-Provincial Royal Commission on the *Ocean Ranger* Marine Disaster found that the crew were not trained, the safety equipment was inadequate, there were no safety protocols for the supply ship, and that the platform itself had a number of flaws. The Royal Commission concluded

that *Ocean Ranger* had design and construction flaws, particularly in the ballast control room, and that the crew lacked proper safety training, survival suits and equipment. The Royal Commission also concluded that inspection and regulation by United States and Canadian government agencies was ineffective. In addition to key recommendations for Canada's offshore oil and gas industry, the commission recommended that the federal government invest annually in research and development for search and rescue technologies, such as improving the design of lifesaving equipment—a commitment that has been met in every fiscal year since 1982.

Lawsuits arising from the sinking were settled out of court with a package cumulatively valued at \$20 million. A permanent monument to those who died was created on the grounds of the Confederation Building, the seat of the provincial government of Newfoundland.

A documentary film, *The Ocean Ranger Disaster* (2002), was released only in Canada. In fiction, Canadian author Lisa Moore's novel, *February* (2009), depicts the life of a woman whose husband died aboard the oil rig. Canadian folk singer-songwriter Ron Hynes wrote a song called "Atlantic Blue" (1988) as a tribute to the crew of *Ocean Ranger*. In January 2012, a non-fiction book, *The Ocean Ranger: Remaking the Promise of Oil* was published in Canada by Fernwood Publishing. The book's author, Susan Dodd, lost her older brother Jim with the sinking of the *Ocean Ranger* and watched, for years, as her parents pursued legal struggles with the oil companies.

