



ARCHIVES

Newsletter of the Petroleum History Society

December 2020; Volume XXXI, Number 4

P.H.S. COVID Edition - Part 2

Best Wishes for the Holiday Season

A message from your President and Archives Editor

We have all been feeling the effects of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. It is still altering every aspect of our lives – both personal and professional. Many have speculated that given the long term implementation of social distancing and other health measures that we may never get back to “normal” in things like downtown office towers, transportation and even interactions with other individuals. We will see. Hopefully the new vaccines will help us along.

In the meantime, I am pleased to announce to you that the P.H.S. Board has decided to suspend the requirement for dues for the 2021 membership year. Everyone who pays dues annually will be deemed to have “paid until” December 2021. P.H.S. Membership Director Micky Gulless will look after this and also sort out any complexities such as multiyear memberships. Thanks for that Micky!

We had anticipated that the Petroleum History Society would resume operations this Fall. Obviously that didn't happen. We decided to err on the side of prudence. Stay tuned. We shall meet again! Thanks for your continuing support.

In the meantime, please visit our website at www.petroleumhistory.ca and continue to feast upon the voluminous material that is preserved there. Micky, whose creation this is, has provided instructions to guide you in searching for specific items or topics. Alternatively, just wander through the back issues of *Archives*, Doug Cass's bibliography or Micky's compilation of Old Companies. You are sure to find lots of interesting things. Or just read this issue!

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 Tippet at the address indicated on page 4.

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.

P.H.S. Board: Just as a reminder, the P.H.S. Board is currently as follows:

President – Clinton Tippet

Vice-President – Bill McLellan

Past-President – Micky Gulless

Treasurer – Micky Gulless

Secretary – Ross Gourlay

Directors – Doug Cass, Penny Colton, Wayne Dwyer, Judy Frame, Ross Hicks, Ian Kirkland and Bradley Parkes

Auditors for 2020 – Tom Field and David Hargrave

Projects: The P.H.S. Board is open to suggestions for projects that support the preservation and communication of Canadian petroleum history. Some funds are available. Please take the initiative and send us a description of what you think should be undertaken or supported.

The Last Straw. A recent ad from the Canadian Legion promotes a replacement for the vilified single use straw. It is a reusable 9 inch telescopic stainless steel straw with a silicone tip and cleaning brush. It comes with a compact carrying case and attachment clip. Only \$9.99 plus tax, shipping and handling. Just the thing to waste more of your time (and money).

What do you say now Victoria? An article in the National Post of November 10, 2020 indicated that “*COVID could infect whales via wastewater*”. This kind of ups the ante for Victoria, B.C. given their flood of untreated sewage being pumped into the ocean in a time of pandemic.

Money to burn. It was recently suggested that the mining of Bitcoin could be the cure for gas flaring. The process of creating Bitcoin consumes huge amounts of electricity. The idea is that natural gas could be burned in a useful way to produce said electricity. The Texas-based company that is promoting this concept is installing 70 units, each with a capacity of 1 megawatt gained from about 10 million cubic feet of gas per day.

Say again? In the testing of sour natural gas wells, a problem is that high levels of non-hydrocarbon components tend to inhibit combustion. The solution is generally to add flammable gas like propane to the mix with such additions termed “dilution gas”. Unfortunately a report from the field indicated that they had been adding “delusion gas”. Who are they kidding?

Sonya Savage: I don’t know about you but I hadn’t heard of Sonya Savage, Alberta’s Energy Minister, before Jason Kenney appointed her to his Cabinet. The Minister earned her credentials, in part, through the authorship of *“Bill C-38 and the Evolution of the National Energy Board: the changing role of the National Energy Board from 1959 to 2015”*, as published by the Canadian Institute of Resources Law in 2016 (reference C.I.R.L. Occasional Paper #52).

Misery loves company. A heading in the November 6, 2019 issue of the National Post read “Oil is moving very slowly and this is going to get worse”. The reference was to sales of cannabis oil in an industry that has certainly had its share of ups and downs over the past years.

Much ado about nothing. For the last several years the Federal Government has been quarterbacking a review of the Federal Moratorium on Arctic oil and gas development focused on the Eastern Arctic region of Baffin Bay and Davis Strait. The adjacent area of Lancaster Sound has been placed in a Marine Protected Area, as assisted by Shell Canada’s relinquishment of its exploration rights there. The moratorium review has had a long process of community hearings and technical input from numerous government agencies. As an informal observer it seems pretty clear where this is headed. There is pressure for a long period of pushing the pause button, if not turning off the TV entirely. There is virtually no industry involvement with only C.A.P.P. watching from the sidelines. The technical potential of that region was undermined by several unsuccessful seismic and drilling programs on the Greenland side over the last decade so there is no real appeal. In addition, the industry is pulling back from these frontier areas, if not hydrocarbons in general, and is unlikely that there would be any takers even if the shackles were removed. This is a good example of an initiative that couldn’t – or wouldn’t – be stopped even if the need for it evaporated.

Conferences update:

The Global Energy Show here in Calgary, previously planned for June 9-11, 2020, was pushed back to June 8-10, 2021 but as of earlier this month, has been postponed again until September 21-23, 2021. Let’s hope this works. The organizers, knowing which way the wind is blowing, have, as you will have noted, broadened the span of content to “Energy” from “Petroleum”. For those of you who may have been disappointed by the offerings of the last few years, this change will hopefully rejuvenate the show. I attended a huge industrial fair in Hannover several years ago and it I really an eye-opener to see the range of technologies being brought to bear on today’s problems.

The 23rd World Petroleum Congress still seems to be set to go in Houston in 2021 although the dates have been delayed until December 5-9, 2021. The 24th World Petroleum Congress is scheduled for September 17-23, 2023 here in Calgary. Organization is underway although there have been no recent updates on their website and the overall Congress website doesn’t mention this timing or location. Perhaps the pandemic has thrown a monkey wrench into this plan. The Turner Valley Oilfield Society is hoping to run a field trip to the Turner Valley Gas Plant as a part of the program with a recovery stop at the Eau Claire Distillery afterwards.

Equalization a dead issue? A new (December 2020) report from the Fraser Institute is titled “*The Great Convergence – Measuring the Fiscal Capacity Gap between “Have” and “Have Not” Provinces*”. It reveals that Alberta’s capacity has fallen substantially over the last six years and is now close to that of a number of other provinces. Not unexpected. Significant implications.

Investing with one’s head and not one’s heart. Much has been said about the decision by the massive Norwegian sovereign wealth fund to divest shares in oil sands- and coal-focused companies. At the same time the Norwegian Government has made efforts to ensure the competitiveness of the Norwegian petroleum industry through adjustments in its tax system – bringing on accusations of hypocrisy. One needs to ask, however, if this is a fair expectation. Any prudent fund manager needs to anticipate the effect that international political currents and government policies will have on stock prices. Divestment of stocks with poor outlooks would seem to be a no-brainer. The sovereign fund is acting in the long term interests of its shareholders – the citizens of Norway. The Norwegian Government is acting to preserve its current cash flow. Two mandates – two outcomes. As someone who has held onto stocks for too long out of a misplaced sense of loyalty to the industry, I will say that we are kidding ourselves if we think that we can avoid the current “downer” that is impacting the Canadian industry by hanging onto poorly-performing stocks. Unfortunately even the massive Norwegian fund doesn’t have the stroke to move the market by itself – and as they say “resistance is futile”.

The Buildings of Downtown Calgary: P.H.S. Treasurer Micky Gulless has alerted us to a radio series focused on the history of buildings in downtown Calgary. Tune in for the Dome Building at <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-97/clip/15810037> and the Petro Fina (sic) Building at: <https://soundcloud.com/josh-traptow/petro-fina-building-cbc-homestretch-dec-2020>

New Yergin Book: P.H.S. Member Bob Bott has provided some information on a new book by well-known petroleum author Daniel Yergin titled “*The New Map: Climate and the Clash of Nations*”. Sounds like a worthy follow-up to “*The Prize*” and “*The Quest*”.

Tearing their hair out: You will recall the unfortunate grounding of a bulk carrier on the island of Mauritius, the spill of its fuel oil and the resulting oil slick. It appears that there were no solid contingency plans in place for this and that people were having to do whatever they could to assist. According to the article in the Globe and Mail on September 5, 2020 “*Many people also cut off their own hair for boom-making, since it can soak up oil. One individual was quoted as saying “I don’t care. It’s my hair. It will grow back then. Right now, we have to help the country*”. Now that’s some dedication.

Editorial Comment: Please note that unless otherwise indicated, all contents of this newsletter have been created or assembled by P.H.S. President and Archives Editor Clinton Tippett.

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