

Interview with Norm Sutherland Part 01

Title Text: International Drillers
Oral History Interviews
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Text: Norm Sutherland
Son of Bloss Sutherland (Borneo, 1920-1932)

[Norm sits in front of a background with three-pole derricks on it.]

Norm: And he was born in 1892, in Oil Springs, worked here, in fact he worked in the local butcher shop as a teenager. That shop is still there, not as a butcher shop. In 1914, it was actually 1915, he joined the 70th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Petrolia, and then was sent to London for training, and a few months later was shipped overseas with the 70th Battalion, which was then joined up with the 18th Battalion, and served for some three years until the end of the war. He was wounded at one of the major battles, came back, and on return to Oil Springs, he purchased an oil property with some 38 oil wells. I believe that property is now owned by the Morningstar's. So, coming back in 19—basically 1919, he then travelled to Borneo where he worked with Royal Dutch Shell as an oil driller. Why did he go out there? I think he was looking for a job to do, plus with the influence of all those others that went before him because as you know, a lot of the drillers were going out in the late 1800s, before the turn of the century they were already going overseas. He returned to Canada in 1925, and had been corresponding with his future wife, my mother, Ola Cecelia Heffernon of London. So, they were married in 1925, then went back by ship, which is the way you travelled then, to Borneo and I can remember my mother saying, because she made more than one trip back and forth, she said [*laughs*] when she really got

seasick, she would prefer to die than continue on. But anyway, that was just a little side issue. My father then returned having worked, as I say, for Royal Dutch Shell and something I must say about that company. Even all those years ago, they had what was called a provident fund. A provident fund was where if you saved money, and you put in we'll say 100 dollars a month or whatever, the company matched it. And so that was the money that my father was able to bring back in order to buy the oil property in Oil Springs here, in 1932.