

Interview with Norm Sutherland Part 02

Title Text: International Drillers
Oral History Interviews
Oil Museum of Canada, 2014

Text: Houses in Borneo



Text: Norm Sutherland
Son of Bloss Sutherland (Borneo, 1920-1932)

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

Norm: The houses they lived in were on stilts because the ants used to come up—the ants just ate everything, so they were always on stilts and they had oil pots. And they had snakes. My mother said, “Oh snake in the house! Oh scary, eh?”

Text: Entertainment

Norm: They did do a lot of entertaining and in the jungles, you know, they had a lot of social life but it was sort of a, what would you say, a gated community or whatever, because you had to protect yourself against the Dayaks. Sometimes they got a little rambunctious. And you’ll see a couple pictures, they all dress up, and I can show you where my mother and father are in the picture, but they did do a lot of that and also I have pictures, I don’t have them with me, playing tennis and they all wore the whites. Nice tennis courts. I think, they might have had a golf course, I don’t know, but certainly tennis was a game they played. And I can remember my mother and father coming

back and when they bought the house in Petrolia, it had a grass tennis court on it. You never saw those. And it had a net and everything.

Text: Mementoes from Borneo

Norm: Well we had a big tortoise, about say big, it was all stuffed, we used to have that sitting on the floor, and then we had a little crocodile and it was all stuffed, and they were both brought back. They used to sit in our house. And then we had a great big, what do you call it, not a sword but what the Dayaks used and boy, you didn't want to argue with them because they would just lop the old head off. But we had one of those that used to hang on the wall. So—oh and another thing too, they were coming through Hong Kong, on the way back home one time, they had a stop-over of two or three days, and they used to make these big cedar chests, all carved. My dad saw these and said, "Oh I gotta have one of those!" So they commissioned this group of artisans to do it. They did it all in one night. And it was all carved, on all sides and the top. A beautiful piece of furniture. But it was a cedar chest, and they said that those car— all the carvings told a story. You'd have to have somebody tell you what the story was, but that was all done literally overnight so they could load it on the ship and bring it back to Canada.