

TRIP TO FORT STOCKTON, TEXAS BY RUTH MARY PRICE,
HARLOW PRICE AND GERTRUDE WHITCOMB, May 26 to 28, 1963

Ruth Mary Price, Harlow Price and Gertrude Whitcomb arrived in Fort Stockton late in the afternoon of Sunday, May 26, 1963. Mr. Bullock had made reservations for us at a very elegant Ramada Motel. As soon as we notified him we had arrived he came and picked us up in his car, gave us a little sight-seeing tour of the town, and took us to the office of Horace Smith where Mr. Smith and Frank Fulk, the geologist, were hard at work even though it was late on a Sunday afternoon. We talked with Mr. Smith and Mr. Fulk who showed us maps of the production on the C. J. Price Pecos Land Company property. We talked with Mr. Smith and Mr. Bullock about chances of making leases on the sections of land where leases are soon to expire. We were told that interest in the oil business just at present is very low. But we were encouraged somewhat by Mr. Smith's words as we left - "Perhaps some companies can be interested in taking leases on that land when the time comes."

After leaving Mr. Smith's office, Mr. Bullock took us to his lovely home where we were greeted by his wife, a most charming and friendly young woman who made us feel completely welcome in her home. Then arrived the other guests, Mr. and Mrs. Fulk and Mr. Smith. Also we met Sarah, the Bullocks' sweet teenager daughter who had to dash off to play the Processional for her High School Baccalaureate service that evening. From that to the serious business of barbecuing by Mr. Bullock, with such delicious results! A perfect dinner was served in their lovely dining room, the piece de resistance being the steaks which Mr. Bullock had cooked outdoors. Surely never a pleasanter evening has been enjoyed by us cousins from Topeka and Dallas. The beautiful yard to which we withdrew after dinner looked like a Cecil B. de Mille Spectacular, only with charm added.

The next day, Monday the 27th, began early, with Mr. Bullock picking us up at our motel and driving us out to the land. On the way he showed us the main line of the Northern Natural Gas Pipe Line which comes from the Puckett Field and crosses our land. Later we saw that same pipe line on our own land. Also along the way he showed us other things of interest, such as an oil stalagmite looming up into the air, tank batteries and farms, and such pretty oil wells, none of which looked so pretty as the ones we saw later on our own land.

When we got to our land I was amazed to see acres and acres of fertile irrigated land with growing crops belonging to the Neville family. It was a pleasure to meet the senior Mr. and Mrs. Neville who were so hospitable to us. I am told by Ruth Mary and Harlow that it was these Nevilles with whom C. J. Price stayed when he first went to Fort Stockton, and it was this same Mr. Neville who acted as guide in driving him over the acreage which he afterwards purchased. Both Mr. and Mrs. Neville well remembered Mr. Price and were happy to see again his son and to meet his daughter and niece. They are hale, hearty and happy and well along in years. Mr. Harold Neville, their son, conducted us over the land and helped Mr. Bullock in locating the wells.

As we drove across the land, the locations of a road and a pipe line were noted by Mr. Bullock, with a notation to look up easements when we returned to the office. Later he found that easements had been given for the pipe line, but no permission for right of way for the road had ever been granted. He has since prepared an agreement for Mr. Brown's signature so that that land (which is now leased by Mr. Neville for pasture) does not revert to the county by reason of its public use for so long a time.

Soon we came to the important part of the land where those pretty wells are flowing. And when I say 'flowing' that's what I mean - they don't even have to be pumped. We made the tour of inspection of all seven wells - one Shell, three El Cinco, and three Texaco, including the one dual producer of Texaco's; also the gas well. That of course was the high light of our trip.

Comments by Harold Neville on crops, oil, sheep, chickens and neighbors were most interesting and enlightening to us. He, by the way, with his weather beaten countenance and his few but potent words, could make a fortune as a western cowboy moving picture hero.

After our inspection of the land and the wells we went to Mr. Bullock's office where we spent the rest of the day. One of the first things we talked about was the recently received division order from El Cinco for casinghead gas. Mr. Bullock said it was all right to sign that because we could cancel it at any time, but he did prepare a clause which we could attach to the division orders protecting us against any conflict between the order and the lease. That clause was similar to the one he had added to the original lease.

He explained that that small amount of money we had received on our May check from Shell on Lease No. 47501 was for casinghead gas which must have been recovered rather than wasted or burned as usual. It may be that the Railroad Commission has required recovery of the casinghead gas along with the oil.

Mr. Bullock took exception to the notice we had received from Shell Oil Company dated March 7, 1963, in which they notified us a paragraph "6" was being added to the division order previously executed. That was in regard to additional gathering charges. Mr. Bullock's idea was, as had been ours, that although this was a minor change, if it could be added to a signed division order, a more important or drastic change could be made later. Also he was not sure that they had the right to make such a gathering charge. He therefore put in calls and talked to several men at Shell and El Cinco about that and other questions. Mr. Mosojednik of the Title Section of Shell's Crude Oil Department, and Mr. Crocker, head of the Crude Oil Department, told him there had been an agreement between the Operators and Shell Pipe Line Company which is transporting oil from the El Cinco wells. Agreement from royalty owners is not necessary. That is why we had not been contacted previous to the action.

Mr. Bullock inquired the reason for the decided drop in production in April from the well on Lease No. 522001, and was told there had been an operating problem which no doubt would be rectified in the next check.

We listened on conference telephones to the conversations between Mr. Bullock and the various legal lights and heads of departments of El Cinco and Shell. I realized then, more than ever, how lucky we are to have for our representative a man of Mr. Bullock's knowledge, ability and reputation in the oil industry.

In the course of our day's talk with Mr. Bullock, one of the things we were particularly interested in was his telling how the management of one group of landowners in this section had developed. Early in the twentieth century a group of people from Iowa had bought many, many sections of land which they intended to develop for agricultural purposes by irrigation. However, the available water proved to be too salty for irrigation, the project was a failure, and although the owners tried, they could not sell the land at any price. Since then much oil has been produced from that land and the owners have received large returns. In order to handle their business, they formed themselves into the "Iowa Realty Trust Company". The owners appoint some of their members as Trustees. They have a manager in Texas (a Mr. White at present) who handles all details of the work of the company, and who makes policy and business recommendations to the Trustees who must pass on all matters, sign all contracts and leases, and so forth. The Trustees have an annual meeting in Fort Stockton and keep up on company business that way. Mr. Bullock handles the legal affairs of the company, much as he does for us.

We did a little thinking and wondering out loud as to whether or not it might be well for the C. J. Price Pecos Land Company to set itself up as a similar Trust Company with perhaps five or six of the owners as Trustees. Shares in the company might be allotted according to the proportionate ownership. That, at the time, was by way of being a passing conversation, but the more I think of it, the more sense it makes to me. We all admit that our present, somewhat casual but none-the-less satisfactory, set-up cannot continue for the coming generation. At least, it is something to be thinking about.

After that long and strenuous day on the land and in the office, I could think of nothing but going back to the motel and collapsing. Instead of which we pulled ourselves together and Ruth Mary entertained Mr. and Mrs. Bullock, their daughter Sarah, and all of us at dinner at the Sands Restaurant. Which wrote a very pleasant and friendly finale to our visit with the Bullocks, and our trip to Fort Stockton.