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PK: I was born in Fyzabad in Trinidad and Tobago. Fyzabad was a small oil town where my dad and my older brothers worked for Apex in the early days. Then it was sold to BP. So I grew up understanding a lot about what happened in the oil and gas industry from that perspective. Also it was a town that produced a lot of musical talent and sporting people. It was a town that was really diverse in terms of the makeup of the population. It was people of East Indian and of African descent. What was memorable for me is that everybody got along so well – played together and did everything together. There were no racial behaviours back in that town. It led us to be understanding and tolerant of all cultures and all backgrounds.

Q: At what age did you leave Fyzabad?

PK: I went to Naparima College, which I have to say is still one of the top colleges in Trinidad. When I was finished with Naparima, I got a scholarship and did telecommunications engineering technology at John Donaldson Technical Institute in Port of Spain. I lived there for a year and a bit and worked for a company on Wrightson Road. Then I decided to teach school for a year and a bit with the Presbyterian school board in a town called La Romain in Trinidad. Then I left. I was 18 going on 19 when I moved to Canada, to Edmonton.

Q: What made you move?

PK: I lived in Trinidad in Fyzabad but I taught school in La Romain. My brother was going to school in Edmonton at U of A, and I got sponsored to come over as a landed immigrant back in 1973.

Q: So you came to Edmonton in 1973.

PK: Yes.

Q: What happened then?

PK: I moved to a little town that doesn't exist anymore, called Pine Point, Northwest Territories, which is 60 miles east of Hay River. It was a lead and zinc mine run by Cominco. I spent about a year at that place working in operations in that lead and zinc plant. Then I moved back to Edmonton and worked at the U of A in the utilities cooling plant for a couple years. Then I moved to Fort McMurray in 1977 to work for Syncrude, when the Syncrude plant was actually just being built.

Q: What did you study at John Donaldson?

PK: Telecommunications.

Q: Did that help prepare you for your job at Syncrude?

PK: Yea, there was so many learnings in Trinidad that prepared me for all the things that I accomplished later on in life. It started back I guess with the environment, with the parents. I'm not sure pushing is the right word, but encouraging us to give our best at all times and to try to do as best we can with whatever we did. That was one aspect. The other aspect was that we played a lot of sports growing up. Playing in a team environment really helped us to work with people and to communicate with people, which were all basic building blocks for setting us up for success later on in life.

Q: How did the job in Fort McMurray come about in 1977?

PK: That was a funny story. One of my friends was going to the Manpower office to look for a job, and I just went along with him just to hang out. Somebody just called me in and said, oh are you here to apply for a job at Syncrude? I said, well what the heck is Syncrude? I had no idea what Syncrude was. Then the guy said, well let's get your name, and can you come in on Sunday morning for an interview? I said, Sunday morning? That's kind of an odd time. So I said, okay I'll come. So I went and I applied, I had the interview, and right after the interview he said, can you

start tomorrow? I says, no I don't think so. I needed some time off. So ya, I applied there and I was successful in getting a job to go up to Syncrude.

Q: When was this?

PK: This was in 1977, February or March of '77. I worked as an operator to start with, operating in the plant.

Q: So you delayed your start date for a few days?

PK: Yea, for a couple of months. We took a month off, and Sylvia and I took a train from Edmonton to Toronto and spent a month around Ontario and going to Montreal just hanging out and doing stuff before the big move to Fort McMurray.

Q: So you moved your family from Edmonton to Fort McMurray?

PK: Yes.

Q: Did you have children?

PK: Not at that time, no. It was just Sylvia and I.

Q: You were hired as an operator?

PK: Yeah, I started in operations. So I worked hands-on as a control room operator controlling the plant. Then I switched over to instrumentation, so I did some studies at NAIT and became an instrument tech. But shortly after that, they promoted me to being a supervisor and I progressed doing several different leadership roles in planning, supervision, accounting, and management. Then it kind of culminated in being a start-up manager on an \$8 billion project as the process automation manager. That was from 2001 to about 2007. That was one of my key accomplishments at Syncrude.

Q: What did you have to do as a start-up manager?

PK: Manage people. it was managing a lot of people. The team was made up of Syncrude people and Honeywell were the contractors contracted to do the work. They had hundreds of people, thousands probably, involved in getting the engineering, the construction, the commissioning, and start-up, and eventual handover to Syncrude of all the computer systems and control systems for that project. It was massive; it was pretty big.

Q: Physically?

PK: Physically, yes it was huge. And there were millions of dollars involved in the scope that I was responsible for. So it was a major accomplishment that not a lot of people have the opportunity to do jobs like that.

Q: How did that relate to other parts of Syncrude's productions?

PK: The way Syncrude worked is that you had the mining section where they dug up the oil sands. Then it went to the extraction plant where they separated the sand and the oil. Then it came into the upgrading area of the plant that actually broke the oil into gas and gas oil and different products. They removed all the sulfurs and all the impurities to produce a sweet synthetic crude oil that was shipped. My part of the job was all the plants that controlled all the equipment. You have controls and valves and computers. My job was to get all of these systems up and running, built and up and running. It covered all of the extraction, utilities. The utilities plant is the one that produces all the steam, the electricity, the water to run the plant. The job I did touched all the upgrading plants.

Q: Upgrading and production.

PK: Yeah, upgrading is a department, and that is for the production of the equipment.

Q: Did you play any part in recruiting workers?

PK: Yes. Part of my job as the manager was to hire people. I had supervisors at different levels below me, two or three levels. So I was involved in the recruitment of a lot of the folks into my department, and for the firing also, which wasn't the fun part of the job. There were hundreds of people that I recruited.

Q: Did you have to deal with contracts?

PK: Yeah, part of the job was making sure we evaluated different contractors, evaluate them and do the evaluations of the bids from the other contractors, then award to the winning contractors. That was a big part of the job also.

Q: Did contractors try to bribe you?

PK: Not me. At Syncrude we have very strict rules about conflict of interest, and as managers every year we had to re-sign the agreements that we would not accept any types of bribes or gifts. Maybe nominal valued gifts, like tickets to a game or something; we could accept that. We could go out for dinners, because you can reciprocate. So you could take those guys out too. But that was grounds for dismissal, any kind of conflict of interest, and that's immediate. So we were brought up that you don't mess with that stuff. But obviously there are people that may have succumbed to some of that stuff. But no, I was never involved with any of that.

Q: How many managers were running Syncrude?

PK: At the time, there were probably maybe 50 for all the different departments at the time, probably about 50 managers.

Q: Did you have to oversee any assistant managers?

PK: Well they didn't call them assistants. You have the workers. Then the workers had first-line supervisors and they had second-line supervisors and then the managers. So I was at that third level, and we reported to the general manager, who reported to the vice-president, who reported to the CEO. That was kind of the structure back then.

Q: You started all of this in 1977?

PK: 1977.

Q: Was this the position you maintained over the years?

PK: No. I first started at the worker bee level, and around 1987 or '88 I became a first-line supervisor and then a few years later as a second-line. Then, around 2001, I became a manager. You have to progress.

Q: Did the money grow as your position grew?

PK: Oh, for sure, yes.

Q: So, by 2001 you were handling billions?

PK: Millions. The overall project that we did was \$8.4 billion, but that was inclusive of everything – all the different departments, all the different equipment. But the piece that I was involved with was \$200 million; that was my scope.

Q: So you held this position from 2001 until when?

PK: 2007.

Q: Did you hire anybody from the Caribbean?

PK: Yes. During that particular project, we had several people from all parts of the world. They were mostly instrumentation people, because that was my scope, but also we had planners and people who plan the job, people who schedule the job, people who accounted for the dollars spent. There were people from Trinidad, from Guyana, from Jamaica, from Barbados. So it was all over the Caribbean that we hired, that I personally had a hand in hiring. There were a lot of people from the Caribbean overall that worked at Syncrude. When the plant was being built in the early days, there were a lot of contractors from the Caribbean that were part of building Syncrude. The Caribbean is noted for having really excellent tradespeople, especially welders. There were a lot of fellows from the Caribbean that actually helped to build Syncrude. You had welders and you had pipefitters, electrical guys, instrumentation guys. Also, after the plant was built, you have maintenance of all the different pieces of equipment. On an ongoing basis there were a lot of folks from the Caribbean who lived in Edmonton that actually came and stayed at the camps in Fort McMurray. There's still a lot of guys that I know that still do that. People from the Caribbean contributed a lot to the construction of the place and the maintenance of the place, and for the operations of the plant. As a matter of fact, there were so many guys in Fort McMurray that we had an all-Caribbean soccer team back in Fort McMurray in the late '70s and early '80s. You knew a lot of these guys who actually played. Cecil George was one of the guys, Stennie Noel – a couple of the guys that I know that you know of that played. Cecil did actually work for Syncrude as an electrician, but Stennie and some of the other guys that came up were trades guys. So in evenings we'd play soccer and we used to beat up everybody with pleasure. Also part of the plant, the running of the plant, there were a lot of West Indian people that actually worked for Syncrude. Again, they were from all over the Caribbean. Like people who worked as supervisors, in payroll, in the maintenance of the plant, the operating. There were fellows like Don Hill. There were guys from Antigua, people from Grenada. So there were a lot of guys who played a key role in keeping Syncrude running.

Q: How were they recruited?

PK: The recruitment was done, like back in the '70s workers were hard to come by with the experience around Alberta. A lot of people who lived around Edmonton didn't even want to go to Fort McMurray. So Syncrude went across Canada recruiting. There were a lot of people from

the Caribbean with experience – some from Edmonton, but a lot from Ontario and Quebec – who had the experience from refineries and plants back in the Caribbean. So they were hired, and a lot of them moved to Fort McMurray. It was great, because then we had a Caribbean association also in Fort McMurray. It wasn't like a Trinidad association or a Jamaican association or Antiguan association – it was Caribbean. It was truly Caribbean, and we all worked together and did a lot of fun stuff, good things. Everybody worked and played together, all the Caribbean people.

Q: So they were recruited in Canada?

PK: Yes. I don't believe that Syncrude went to the Caribbean for recruiting. I know they went to Britain, because a lot of guys who came. . .

Q: Caribbean guys?

PK: No, mostly British guys. But I do not believe that Syncrude actually went to the Caribbean, but there were a lot of Caribbean people in Ontario that actually moved to Fort McMurray. And there were a lot from Edmonton too, and Calgary.

Q: Were they given moving expenses?

PK: Yes, it was actually really good. The incentives to get there: they provide the moving costs and there were housing allowances. What Syncrude had done in the early days, a normal house was about \$64,000 or \$65,000 back in the mid '70s. What Syncrude provided, there was a housing arm of the company called Northwood, and they provided a \$32,000 interest-free loan to help purchase a house. So there were really good incentives for getting people, which they had to have to get people to move. In those days, people always thought of Fort McMurray as a kind of remote place in the boonies.

Q: Was it?

PK: Well, when we first moved there it was 18,000 residents back in 1977. The roads were not paved. From Fort McMurray to a place called Wandering River is 120 miles. About 100 of those miles had no shoulders, I mean no shoulders. It was just a two-lane highway and it just dropped off. So it was very dangerous commuting between Fort McMurray and Edmonton. There were no paved roads. The area that we lived in, called Thickwood Heights, there was no gas station and no grocery stores; there was nothing up in that part of the town. It was just the downtown area that had one grocery store, Safeway store; oh no, there was a Co-op and a couple of gas stations. There wasn't a whole lot back in the day in Fort McMurray. So yeah, it was kind of in the boonies. We would come to Edmonton and buy groceries and bulk stuff to take back, because we didn't have a lot of choices. West Indian food, there was nothing. So we'd have to come to Edmonton to try and get some stuff on a regular basis. It's different now; you can get everything there pretty much now. They've got a Superstore there and you can get a lot of products now.

Q: After 2007, did you stay on with Syncrude?

PK: Yes, in the design of several projects. I was then a project manager, which looked after the engineering, the procurement, the construction, commissioning and start-up of different projects. I did projects in the mining area, tailings area, upgrading area, so there was a lot of work. Again, there were a lot of people from the Caribbean who were also employed and being part of those projects, and most of those were millions of dollars each. I worked as a project manager doing that work with Syncrude.

Q: Did you stay at that until retirement?

PK: I got transferred to Calgary in 2007 right after that major project. I worked out of the Calgary offices because that's where most of the engineering was being done for the projects.

Q: Were you in engineering?

PK: The first part of the project, you have to design the plant. So you design the plant, you buy all the equipment, you procure all that stuff, then you get it built. That's when we had to do field trips back up to the plant to make sure things were going well, constructed well, and start it up. That was up to 2013. Then I took a bit of an early retirement from Syncrude, and then I went to work for an engineering company, Hatch, which is a big company around the world. Part of that project, some of the jobs we did, actually I was lucky because it took me to Australia, to Brisbane, to help with some work there, the Hatch office in Brisbane. Still I worked out of Calgary.

Q: Did you move from Syncrude?

PK: Yeah, I retired. I was living in Calgary from 2007 but I still worked for Syncrude.

Q: Did they fly you up to Syncrude?

PK: Yeah, actually that was a big part of it, was that we flew in the company jet. Syncrude had two jets. So we flew back and forth between Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray on the Syncrude jet. It was kind of nice, because we didn't have to go through security and all that. We just showed up at the terminal where the Syncrude plane came, and we'd get on the plane and go up and back. It was kind of fun.

Q: How many of you?

PK: Each plane could hold eight people. So it was eight people at a time. They had four flights per day. But it was flying on a priority basis. So the senior guys had first dibs on the flights.

Q: So you had moved your family from Fort Mac to Calgary at this point?

PK: Yes.

Q: What year was that?

PK: Well I first moved down in 2007 but the permanent move was in 2009. That's when I sold my house in Fort McMurray and moved.

Q: What spurred the desire to move?

PK: Well a couple things: a business need, and probably more important, at that time my son had some serious medical issues. He was going to school in Calgary. So I was actually going to quit Syncrude to move to Calgary. They said, no, we'll create a position for you in Calgary. So that was one of the big reasons I actually moved – to be with my son in Calgary.

Q: So Syncrude created a position for you in Calgary?

PK: Yes. We'd still go back and forth, because Syncrude had an office in Calgary. They were really good. It was an excellent company to work for. They were very accommodating.

Q: In what other ways did they accommodate you? Did they support any of your cultural projects?

PK: Oh for sure. We had a steel band in Fort McMurray, and they hired the band a lot to play at functions. When Syncrude had celebrations, they would hire us to play. I was involved with the Syncrude social club, I was on the board of the social club. We got to organize and they supported the families. They provided tuition assistance and scholarships for the children of the employees. They did promote multiculturalism and the hiring of diverse people, including Indigenous folks. I was proud to be a part of that organization.

Q: And the steel band?

PK: They did hire us to play a lot of different functions.

Q: Are you still playing?

PK: Yeah, we would bring the steel band and Mas bands to Cariwest, which started around '87 or '88.

Q: We started in '84.

PK: Was it '84? I didn't realize that. For some reason I thought it was '87. We started coming from Fort McMurray around '87. We'd bring our bands down, and I remember our steel band won the competition in 1989 and 1990, the steel band, Panorama. That was fun. Cariwest was always fun. I know Cecil George was one of the key people that was involved from the very early beginnings of Cariwest. He was one of the guys I know was a driving force behind Cariwest. I'm not sure if he ever got the credits that he deserved.

Q: So the first time you came down to Cariwest was in 1987?

PK: I think it was 1987 when I remember coming down, yeah.

Q: Would you say that Syncrude had a social conscience?

PK: Oh for sure.

Q: Was that due to the influence of people like yourself who managed the company?

PK: I don't know if I had any part to play in that, but I think Syncrude had good principles. There were people all over the world that worked there. So there was respect for all the different cultures.

Q: Do you have any idea what it's like now?

PK: I'm not sure. I don't know if I'd want to comment.

Q: Do you have anything else to say about Syncrude before we move on?

PK: It was a really good company to work for, and there were a lot of Caribbean people that worked there in different roles. There were guys in leadership positions at Syncrude, and I can't recall all their names and stuff now. But there were a lot of folks from, like I say, all the islands and Guyana that contributed to the overall success and the production of the synthetic crude at Syncrude.

Q: Looking back at your career in Syncrude, is there anything you would've done differently?

PK: No.

Q: Anything you would've added if you'd had the opportunity?

PK: I don't really know, because we had a lot to do. We did a lot of things and had a lot of opportunity to help and come up with different ideas. I think we all collectively did a lot of good things, and I'm not sure I would've done a lot differently, to be honest. I think a lot of good things were actually done. One of the things we did, every year there was a barbeque and a Christmas party and stuff.

Q: The social club?

PK: The social club did a lot of that, but also part--so there were like 7,000 employees at one point at Syncrude. It was so big that when we had the annual barbeques it ran for at least a week, different nights. Only so many people could be accommodated. One of the roles we had to play as managers was they'd have two or three of us greeting all the employees as they came in. I can still remember the look on the faces of a lot of the people from the Caribbean, being proud to see someone like myself in front greeting them and stuff. It was something I was proud of too. But they were even more proud than I was to see a coloured person up there from the Caribbean being part of the welcoming team to all the employees.

Q: Did you initiate any activities in the community?

PK: We moved in 1977. So, over the winter of 1977 we started meeting different people from the Caribbean. There's a few names I remember. There were two other Trinidadians, Danny Rampersad and Ruben Bahadoor. There was a guy Derek Cheung and there was a British guy Guy Spencer who was a town planner, city planner, and his son Mike Spencer. We got together and decided were we're going to start a cricket team. We had no cricket grounds or any kind of facilities, but we were lucky that we had Guy Spencer, who worked at the city. He was able to get a field for us to play, a playground. But then there was no cricket pitch. But being in Fort McMurray, you couldn't do a cricket pitch the way we know it in the Caribbean. So what we did, we got innovative. First thing we did, we chipped I believe it was probably about \$500 each from our pockets to buy equipment. We bought bats and balls and pads and a matting to play on. Then, in the spring of 1978, we ourselves dug up a pitch in the middle of the playing field and we ordered concrete and made a concrete strip that we could put the mat on. It'll beat the weather. So, over wintertime, we didn't have to worry about it. It was there. All we had to do was put the mats down. There were five or six of us that actually started cricket in Fort McMurray. It's mentioned in a book called *The Place We Call Home*, that was written by one of the local newspaper reporters. His name is Irwin Huberman, and he wrote this book about the history of Fort McMurray, and he mentioned our names in that particular book for being the pioneering guys who actually started cricket. That actually went on for several years that we had teams playing cricket. We had teams that would come from Edmonton to play against us; one in particular, Victoria Park. And there were guys from Calgary who would come to Fort McMurray, and we'd reciprocate. We'd come down to Edmonton and play, and then also to Calgary. It was fun. We even had the mayor of Fort McMurray back in the day come and do some official opening, I can't remember what it was, but some big celebrations that they had. We had a cricket tournament as part of that celebration in Fort McMurray.

Q: Can you describe what cricket is?

PK: Cricket is a game. For people that don't know what cricket is, it's not an insect. It's similar to baseball; it's the closest cousin I think. It's played between two teams, 11 people on a team. It's

with a bat and a ball and you try to knock the wickets down; you try to score runs. You hit the ball and you run up and down across. The middle of the pitch is actually 22 yards long. So you have to go from this end to that end to score one run. If you hit it and it went across the boundary, which is the perimeter of the ground, it's four runs. If you hit it in the air and it drops over the boundary, it's six runs. That's just to kind of keep it simple.

Q: It's a Commonwealth sport.

PK: It's big internationally. It's very big in England, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, and it's grown. A lot of countries in the world play cricket now. There's a World Cup I think going on. . . . I was just going to say, it's grown so much that women's cricket is actually pretty big now. There's a lot of international women's cricket that's going on also.

Q: Is the cricket team you created in Fort McMurray still going?

PK: Well I think it did kind of dissipate a bit, but just recently I had some communications that they're trying to get it going again. Some people contacted me to kind of give some perspective and some ideas on how to get things going. So they are trying to get it going again. I'll try and help what I can remotely for that. One thing I'd like to mention is in Fort McMurray over the years they had a winter carnival in January or February when it was cold. Myself and some other guys started something called ice cricket. What the ice cricket game was, we put a green piece of carpet on the ice. This was frozen, on the river. We had teams of six players on each team and we used a tennis ball, not a hard ball, and a bat. It was fun. We did get a lot of recognition for that for being, I don't know if it was the first ice cricket in the world, but it probably was. Back in the late '70s we had that as part of the Fort McMurray Winter Carnival. You probably never heard of ice cricket before, but we actually started that. It was fun. You'd hit the ball and people would be running. But you're running on the ice; so you'd be slipping and falling. There were a lot of people that actually came to watch the games, because it was unique; it was a unique sport. We gave out trophies and everything.

Q: Who played the ice cricket?

PK: We all did. Typically we had four teams: one from the West Indies, one from England, one from Australia, and I think one from India. But I think probably every year the West Indian team won, because we had some very talented players up there. Not just from the West Indies. We had one guy, Dr. Basnair, he played a high level of cricket in England before he came, and he played with us in Fort McMurray. He was a pediatrician in Fort McMurray. I believe he's living in Houston now.

Q: So you played with people from across the globe.

PK: Yeah, we had people from all over the world. Even when we played against Edmonton, we had guys from Australia, England, all over over, that played on our team when we played against Wisteria Park in Edmonton.

Q: What other cultural activities did you do in the community?

PK: We had the steel band, Carican. It doesn't really exist anymore, because since we moved to Calgary some of the players left. My wife and kids both played in the band. My son started playing when he was three or four years old, started playing pan, and he played with us. Even when we played at competitions in Edmonton he was there. We actually practised in my basement, is when we actually practised. So I did help teach and tutor a lot of folks. We had people from all over the world that actually played as part of the band, but also people who we taught. I think it was 1989 I got an award from the mayor when they had the annual celebration for cultural achievement. I have a nice little plaque and they had a nice dinner and stuff where they presented that. It was a shock to me. I was invited to this dinner and we went there, and when they were announcing the winner of this thing I was looking around to see who else was there. I didn't realize it was me, because I had no idea. They had nominated me, but I had no idea. So that was another key achievement back there.

Q: The mayor of Fort McMurray?

PK: Yeah, the mayor of Fort McMurray.

Q: When was that?

PK: In 1989.

Q: What steel band do you currently play with?

PK: I play with a band called Pan Dynamix. We played yesterday.

Q: Do you play regularly?

PK: Yeah, regularly. I started with them about three or four years ago. The good thing is, my son also plays. He was born in Fort McMurray but you'd think he was born in Trinidad, because he is so wrapped up in the culture where he performed as a judge, which I was very proud to have him there.

Q: What else would you like to talk about?

PK: I think we covered most of the stuff. I can't think off the top of my head what else, unless you had some other stuff. . . . Now I'm working as a project manager for a company called Equinox Engineering. Right now it's actually doing a lot of projects.

Q: What is your role?

PK: My role is a project manager with this company called Equinox Engineering. It's doing a lot of different projects, a lot of them in northern Alberta, northeastern B.C., even some in Australia. A lot of the jobs that I'm on deal with liquid natural gas, LNG plants – building new plants, building pipelines that are going to send some of the products out to Kitimat, B.C. and then ship to wherever in the world they want to send it. So that's my current position.

Q: So you're still working.

PK: I actually just started back about five weeks ago. I got a call from this company, because some of the folks over there knew me. I got a call that said, what are you doing? I said, not a whole lot. They said, well can you come in and have a chat with us? So I went in and had a chat, and within an hour HR called me and said, we're gonna make you an offer to come work for us. So I accepted and I started work five weeks ago with this company. I'm glad to be back out contributing again, because it's fun stuff – managing people, managing projects is what I enjoy. I have seen a few people from the Caribbean already involved with the company, and the company is actually growing. So I suspect there'll be a few more hired. Right now the bulk of the work is in LNG and carbon capture things to help the environment; those are the projects that are being driven right now.

Q: Is it contracted to any of the bigger players?

PK: The company I work for is an engineering company, and we're doing work for a whole lot of different companies. They have projects with Suncor, with Enbridge, with Petronus, Pacific Camry – there's more than a dozen different companies, some big and a lot of smaller companies, that have these deposits all over that they are actually developing. Part of the company I work for is as a contractor to these companies doing a whole bunch of different projects right now.

Q: Do you find that satisfying?

PK: For me it's fun. It keeps the brain working, too.

Q: And you're in your 60s now?

PK: Yes. My birthday is coming up very soon, August 27<sup>th</sup>. I'll be 69. But I'm always told I'm too immature for my age, by my wife. That's her assessment; it's probably true.

Q: So you'll keep going as long as it interests you?

PK: Yea, while it's fun I'll keep doing it. To me, it has reenergized me, to be honest – getting back out and having a routine again is nice, getting up and going out, having something to look forward to. If this place was warm all the time, it would probably be okay and I could find things to do. But the winter months are kind of boring, because I don't do a whole lot of outdoor activities. I golf in the summertime, but you can only do so much travel.

Q: Have you been asked to contract back to the Caribbean?

PK: I was asked a few years ago to probably get involved with some of the work that was going on in Guyana with some of the deposits. But I'll be really honest. I'm not that interested at this point. The main reason for that is probably a lot of the crime and the environment back in the Caribbean. It's not what I remember growing up in Trinidad. I'm not sure I'd feel safe going back and living out there, from the stories on the news and stuff. If I was asked again I'd probably think about it, but I'd probably not be interested, to be honest.

Q: Do you think that workers starting out today have the same opportunities you had in the early days at Syncrude?

PK: That's a tough question. I'm not really sure, but I think it still is there for people with the right-- I still believe attitude is really important and having the work ethic. Probably it's not that tough a question; it's got to exist. Also because a lot of folks are retiring now. So the demographics are really changing. The reason I hesitated at first is because I don't believe there is as much development in oil and gas in the industry as there was when I was starting out. Also back in the day, a lot of people did not want to move to places like Fort McMurray. So the opportunity was greater then. That's my humble opinion. But there will still be opportunities; I don't know if as much as there was back then.

Q: Were you one of the founding members of the Caribbean Association?

PK: No, I will not take credit for that. But I did help. My wife was more involved with the groups when they formed. There were people from St. Lucia, from Barbados, from Grenada and Guyana. They started it. I contributed. I will not take credit for being a founding member, but I will take a little bit for helping sustain the cultural groups and promoting and encouraging growth.

Q: Were there a number of different groups?

PK: No, there was just one Caribbean Association, but people from all the different islands. That's what I really liked about Fort McMurray and the people that actually live there. We were really fortunate, because it didn't matter where you came from or what you looked like. Everybody worked together, and that made it so much easier. It was fun, and that's why they were so successful. The other thing is, remember we all came from someplace else. When we first moved to Fort McMurray, nobody knew anybody. We all came together, not just Caribbean people but people from all over the world. We had good friends from Ireland, from England, from Australia. But the Caribbean people really pulled together and did a lot of good things.

Q: Do you have photos from the soccer or ice cricket?

PK: I do have some in Calgary; we do have some pictures. It was fun, the ice cricket and the soccer. It was fun. I can dig some up. I used to captain the cricket team too, and there were a lot of pictures in the newspaper with myself in there. Sylvia saved a lot of them and she made an album with some of those pictures, with actual newspaper clippings.

Q(Don): When you first worked at Syncrude in '77 when it was just getting started, how has it expanded from then until now? How has it grown over time?

PK: When I started in 1977 the plant was actually still being built. The plant didn't start up until the summer of 1978. The town, like I said earlier, was about 18,000 people who actually were residents, but there were some huge camps that housed the construction workers. On a Friday evening . . . Bechtel was one of the chief contractors of the plant, and on Fridays at the end of

the day all the workers, most of whom lived in Edmonton and probably Calgary, headed out on the highway. This was a narrow road and they called it the Bechtel 500. Cars just left the plant and were just booting it out of town. So Bechtel 500 is what they called that with all the workers coming out. In the city itself the names of the different areas in Fort McMurray they called like Area 1, Area 2, Area 3, Area 4, Area 5. That's what the names were; they got names after. There was an area, Beacon Hill and downtown that were the two original areas of Fort McMurray. Suncor was built in the late '60s; so they had the main employees. Some of the employees back in the day lived in a trailer park in Fort McMurray. So there were a lot of mobile homes, trailers. Beacon Hill had some houses also. Area 5, which is called Thickwood Heights, was very small. It wasn't Suncor; it was GCOS, Great Canadian Oil Sands – they had some houses there. But when we moved there Thickwood Heights was very small with a lot of trees and bushes. But Syncrude's housing at Northwood started building homes in 1977 and '78 to start housing some of the Syncrude employees. They started expanding and they started this brand new area called Abasand. First it was a multi-apartment complex that they built, and there were two or three of them. Then they started building houses. So the growth really started in 1978 and it started growing around 1981 when they started building more homes in Thickwood Heights. You can see the big growth from around 1978 to about '84 or '85. Then it slowed down a little bit because of the economy and how things went. Then it started booming again because new companies started forming around Fort McMurray, like CNRL, which is another company that was built. Suncor started expanding. Syncrude started expanding a new mine. So they needed more people to operate and maintain the plant. So it started growing. I'll just back up. Back in the day, whenever you went to the grocery or you went shopping, a five-minute trip took two hours, because you knew everybody in the stores. You'd be chatting with everybody and you knew everybody. But then I moved to Calgary. I still had my home in Fort McMurray but I was on loan in Calgary from 2001 to 2004. When I moved back for a few years there, I could tell there was a big difference. You'd go into the grocery and you hardly knew anybody, because there were so many new people that actually came to live in Fort McMurray. But what I would say is in the early days I totally enjoyed living in Fort McMurray, because it was a really small-town environment. You knew all the parents, because our kids played piano and soccer and hockey. So you'd go to the rink, and it was a big social event. The friendliness of the people was something I still cherish and wouldn't forget. We were busy. It was a small town, but we did so

much stuff besides work – a lot of cultural things, getting involved in sports and music with the kids. It was really nice. But when I moved back there around 2004 or 2005, I could see a big difference in the makeup of the community. You didn't know as many people anymore. But it kept growing, and I believe the population last time I heard was around 100,000 people. It was a major shift, and a lot of high rises came. When we first went there, the only tall building in the town was two towers that Syncrude had built, an apartment complex down by the river. Then they started building a few more. There weren't a lot of hotels or restaurants back in the day. It's grown a lot, because now they've got Superstore, a couple of them, a lot of groceries and all that. So it's grown quite a bit.

Q: When you were on loan from 2001 to 2004, who were you on loan to?

PK: I was still with Syncrude; probably on loan is not the right word. We were doing the engineering for the projects, but it was in Calgary. So I was working out of Calgary. I had an apartment down here. It felt like being on loan.

Q: At that time, were all the roads north of Fort Mac to the plants gravel roads?

PK: Yes. In the early days, it was just gravel. The streets weren't paved. I remember the grocery store downtown. It was not paved; there were a lot of puddles. Going out to the plant, it was like some holes and a little bit of gravel. It was not paved, but it's come a long way. I believe the highway from Edmonton to Fort McMurray most of the way is now a four-lane highway divided. So that's a long way from what I remember when I first moved there. It's changed. When I came to the plant, it was not paved when we first went there; it was just gravel.

Q: Now it's like a freeway.

PK: It's different. I haven't driven up there in a long time, because most of my trips were by plane. In the early days, we drove all the time from Fort McMurray to Edmonton. When I first moved there, I would come back every weekend to Edmonton to play cricket. We'd drive on a Friday and go back Sunday evening. Like you said, back then there were no shoulders on those

roads. It was dangerous, because I knew quite a few people driving on that highway who have hit animals, moose. One of the fellows that I worked with, they were driving from work from Syncrude into town, and they were in a Syncrude truck and a moose came through, and he suffered permanent brain damage from that incident. I know of guys on Highway 63 driving back and forth who hit animals on the road, and some succumbed to injuries on that road. It was not that much fun driving that road in the early days. I think it's a lot better now.

Q: In the early days, was the fly-in, fly-out culture as popular?

PK: No. Most of the workers who ran the plants like Suncor and Syncrude were based in Fort McMurray. That was one of the deals – you had to live in Fort McMurray. The workers who came, like the maintenance workers for turnarounds and shutdowns, mostly came out of the halls in Edmonton and Calgary, the union halls. So they would drive and they would stay in camp. There were no such deals as fly-in and fly-out. That came several years later with companies like CNRL and companies that were built a bit further north and northwest of Fort McMurray. That was not a thing back in the day, not at all.

Q: That tends to destabilize the community, because people who fly in and out don't connect with the community.

PK: I a hundred percent agree with that. In the early days, everybody lived in the town. You participated; you paid the taxes. So you contributed to the fabric of the society and also financially to the city economy. All the fly-in, fly-out guys that are going to camp, they'll come into town and use the facilities and all that, but they didn't belong or have a positive impact on the society. That's my opinion. It definitely has changed. I'd say in the early days it was a lot of fun, and you were really proud to be a part of it. Everybody got along so well. Like I said, back in the early 2000s is when you can see the shift, when they started doing a lot of the fly-in, fly-out. I think it's changed and I don't believe it's the same atmosphere.

Q: Have you had any experiences of racial discrimination?

PK: There always is that. But I found there was more of that in Edmonton and Calgary than Fort McMurray. There always was, but I don't think it was a big problem in Fort McMurray, from my personal experience.

Q: There was no issue with the people who worked under you?

PK: I can't say. People will always have biases. Some people would show it but a lot of people wouldn't display that type of behaviour in front of you. Maybe behind the scenes there's stuff bubbling, but it never got to a point where I had any real concerns about that type of behaviour.

Q: It never impacted your work?

PK: No. I guess when you're the boss. . . just kidding. I mean there always will be people who have biases and would demonstrate behaviours that are not always acceptable. But that's personal choices, and it works both ways. No matter what your background is, you have biases. No matter if you're black or white or brown, some people have their biases. But I didn't have any issues with that that affected how you performed your work.

[ END ]