

LEWIS HOPPER



Canadian Well Driller

December 30, 1928 – July 5, 2018

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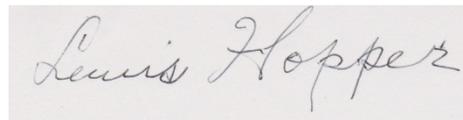
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Dedication

To my family: Joyce, Rick, Bern, Moe and Scott and their families and also to Manitoba’s Well Drillers.

As one of my editors said: These are the stories that I remembered and were good enough to include showing the many happy times and successes of my life with all of you.

With respect, love and joy to all.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lewis Hopper".

1928–1959 - Early Years – New Brunswick

Water well drilling has been a Hopper family profession from the middle of the 1890's to today, from my dad to our second son and several nephews who are also drillers. My father Arthur even used the old spring pole method. We were raised on bush property 6 miles from Hillsboro, New Brunswick. Dad made his living as a driller in the summer and operating a saw mill in the winter. He and mother Gertie had thirteen of us I am number ten of thirteen and son five of seven. We were Inez, Ron, Omar, Frank, Millie, Alice, Russell, Ruby (died at three months), Margaret, Lewis, Don, Arnold (twins) and Nettie. Surviving are Alice, myself, Don and Arnie.

I arrived on December 30, 1928 named John Lewis Arthur but registered without the John which I didn't know until I was around age 80 and applying for a passport! I'm told Dr. John Lewis, a black man figured it was time to come and see Mum, the snow was high and weather bad, he got there for my delivery but it took several changes of horses, wagons and some walking as well. He told Mum I would never make it to a teenager as I was 20 inches long and 1 inch around and now here I still am 89 years later.

I have very few memories of my father but do remember that he drove pretty wild horses, at least to me as a little guy. Dad died helping a fellow mill operator, he fixed their mill on a Sunday and then went over again on Monday to check the operation, and a stick flipped out of the mill and stabbed him in the throat. Dad's native helper wouldn't go with him to work that day, he said something bad is going to happen and he didn't want to be there. That was in the winter of 1934 I think. The sawmill site was forty miles away from home and it was bitter cold, he was frozen by the time his body was returned in the open wagon. I didn't know the location of that mill until the 1980's when we were back for a visit. My only memory of Dad was of trying to open his eyes and make him wake up in his coffin.

Mum raised us with lots of integrity, we were taught from day one to do the best we could – every time. Times were tough when we had Dad and much harder after, Gertie sold our property for money she needed to survive as a widow. The new owner took all marketable lumber off and wanted to gift the property back to her, as he had made a tidy sum but Mum wouldn't accept. Years later we kids

tried to buy back the home place from his son when the owner died but were refused. I once asked Mum why she never committed suicide and she said she didn't have time! I don't remember how old I was before knowing what a great Mum and wonderful woman she really was.

Mum did remarry and our step-father Ern Gayton was part of the family for about 30 years until his death. He had been Mother's boyfriend or a great friend before she married Dad. I think he worked for Dad at one point. After Dad was killed they remained friends until the last of us married then they married as well. His job and home was at Marionbridge, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. He and Mum had a great life.

I went to high school in Stellarton, NS for a couple of months then quit grade 9 after a scrap with the teacher. I never was smart enough to back down and am still the same today! Our family car was a 1936 Terriplane that I drove to town when I was 12 years old for shopping; we also had an Aubrine coupe. When growing up I snared rabbits and sold them to a fur farm for \$0.25/pair. One was only \$.10 so I always took 2! Porcupines had a bounty of \$.50/snout. Weasels at the fur farm ate a lot of rabbits and ruffed grouse.

Of my family 6 boys became drillers while Arnold was a mill operator. Our sisters were smart enough to stay away from drillers and mill operators! Inez died at 18 of typhoid; Alice married a hydro man who had also served in the navy. Millie married a farmer from New Brunswick. Margaret married an air force man and moved to Drumheller where they farmed, she had worked at Eaton's prior to marriage. Nettie married a fur farmer at Salisbury and did very well.

Ron - was the oldest boy, he and Omar and took over Dad's operation – he died in 1959 of a heart attack. They later split and each operated their own companies. Ron bought out Trask Well Co. Mr. Trask was the first president of the Nova Scotia Water Well Association. Ron had Dad's old Austin rig plus some homemade ones. Trask Well Co had several rigs, cable tools and diamond drills. They did a lot of town and city work plus commercial. At that time well casing was almost impossible to get. Late in the war he pulled the old rigs out of the bush and the government paid to rebuild them on a cost plus agreement as they needed lots of new wells on new army bases. Some of those rigs were still being

used when Ron died in 1959. I worked for him in Halifax when I was 16, my first time away from home and I was homesick. I was there for 3 months until Ron showed up – he had a guy running the rig and I was the helper. I asked for the car and went to the trailer and got my gear, I quit! Jack Shay was the operator that I worked with; he would let me have 1 egg for breakfast as that was all he ate. If the truck wouldn't start to go to work I wouldn't get any pay, Ron was pretty upset and told him so as Jack got paid every day. Jack lived about 30 miles away and travelled by train, he would buy a ticket, then board and hide in the toilet and return his \$2 ticket for cash on arrival. I told him that I hoped he worked for me some day so I could get even. He was loaded, owned property, apartment buildings etc. and didn't need to operate that way. The local diner saw how poorly I was eating and told me to eat what I needed and come to work for them on the weekend to pay back what I owed for food; it was a good arrangement and kept me fed.

Omar - was also a driller he worked out of Hillsboro for years then moved to Moncton. He only owned and operated 1 rig, a cable tool. He built his own, with some pretty modern additions which the rig manufacturers then used in their rigs. One well we drilled in Moncton was found using a witcher from Quebec. It produced 2gpm, the witcher was happy; he said he got a shock when he went over water. I told him I hoped the next would produce 200+ gpm as the shock would kill him. He didn't like that and gave me hell. We had told the city the area was noted for low volume wells with 2-5gmp but they chose to use the witcher anyway. Omar was married with 4 kids; he wasn't fit enough for military service so worked throughout the war. He died after collecting his first pension cheque at age 65.

Frank – During the war he was a trainer at the local base and gained some good people skills that were useful in the years after that. After selling his share of Hopper Bros Well Drillers to Russell, Frank headed first to London, ON and then onto Saskatoon, SK with International Water Supply Ltd. In 1965 Manitoba was looking for an experienced driller to join the provincial team. Frank had done work in Manitoba for International and was approached to consider the job. As well as his experience with a variety of equipment and geology they liked his ability to work with the drillers in Manitoba. His wife died young leaving him with their two girls. They spent several years with Mum as he couldn't manage them

and working too. As adults they ended up making their lives in Winnipeg. He died in 1974 in Winnipeg following a heart attack.

Russell – Like Frank, Russell was also a trainer for the military at the local base. About 1946 Frank, Russell and I formed Hopper Bros Well Drillers. My vehicle was a Model A truck which was my share of Hopper Bros if I worked for 3 years at \$12 per week plus expenses. Our company truck was a 1947 Studebaker. At that time we drilled throughout NB, NS, PEI and QB. Frank sold out to Russ and Russ said he didn't have any agreement with me so I was out. That was about 1952. Russell operated the business until he died in the 1980's. Russ bought most of Ron's equipment in the 1960's. Russell and I were very similar in build and disposition Joyce says.



Russell and Nettie with the business truck one of several Studebakers.

Don – worked for a while with Trask Drilling and also for Hopper Brother's. Most of his career was spent as a mechanic with Toyota in Moncton.

Arnold - was badly injured in a mill accident in 1959 just before I came west – he recovered but it took a year. The injury was because the company put the mill together incorrectly and then caused him catastrophic injury when an attempt was made to run it. He returned to the company after recovery then was fired because he could no longer do the work – no Workman’s Compensation Board in those days! After that he went to work for the school board working with challenged kids in the classroom and driving a bus for them as well.

I started working for pay at age 12 in 1940 for a local mixed farm and mechanical outfit repairing equipment and driving tractors he made from Model A Ford trucks and cars. Also, he bought old cars and antique equipment. I owned my first car in 1941 it was about a 1926 Briscat, my next car was a Model A Coupe convertible with a rumble seat (I was a big wheel now!). I worked for that fellow for 2 or 3 summers and got paid daily, somedays \$5 which was big money, and some days not much. We levelled barns and houses etc. and worked farm fields with the home made tractors. He was a good boss and almost always nice to me but nasty to his wife most of the time.

I also worked in saw mills. My next job was with a mill operator, Harry Barryman in 1944 at age 15 from there I went to Charlie Parker, another mill operator – I couldn’t stand the guy and quit after a piece broke and took my hat off, I got blamed for the broken piece! He was a relative of mine – he wouldn’t look you in the eye. One winter he was going to fire the loggers as they weren’t working fast enough. I said you will not they are helping me break down the pile of frozen logs. The loggers had hauled out a pile of timber then we got a dump of wet snow that froze everything together, a helleva mess and heavy, heavy work to dislodge. They were hauling logs out and helping me break down the frozen pile at the same time. Without that help I never would have caught up. After that I worked at a service station in Moncton for a couple of years. I had bought a ’35 Pierce Arrow car in 1945 or ’46.

A few years later I was doing some logging myself and had downed a big log off of Calendonia Mountain behind where Joyce lived. It was 36 inches or more in diameter and it fell down a steep slope and onto the neighbor’s properties. I got the horse hooked onto it as the two of them were arguing over who now owned MY log. Against all odds my big Clyde pulled it out so it was still mine! One of

those fellows arguing over the log was also one who offered to help Mum when we were sick after Dad was killed.

I have been in the water well profession since 1945. From 1945 to 1959 my work was in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI and Quebec. One well in Nova Scotia was 24in x 1200ft drilled by cable tool. I also drilled once in Newfoundland in 1988 on a trip home using a Sullivan rig.

On one job in Nova Scotia I took a young black man that helped me on a lot of jobs installing pumps. The woman I had drilled the well for previously came out and said he couldn't work in her yard. I said okay and started loading the equipment to leave as I wouldn't work without him. She said what is he going to do, I said he is digging the trench from the well to the house; she said that would be okay but not to use him in her house. She came down in the basement at 10AM with a cold drink and some food. I started to go up the stairs with the treat, she said don't bother going up as he got his before you did. He worked harder than I had. She also apologized for being nasty when I brought him in the yard. He worked hard, was very mannerly and polite, and she said he can work inside if you want him too. My Mum loved this story and so did Joyce, we hired black folks quite often including as baby sitters for the boys.

When I first worked in the area, my driller was on another rig about 10 miles away and we got a bad electrical storm. I was rushing to get him and passed a black man carrying a big bag of flour. I turned back and picked him up, he said you had just passed me, I said yes I did then I thought you would think it was because you were black, he laughed and said that's exactly right.

My step-father Ern and I purchased the local Texaco Service Station in 1952. Ern hated that place – it just wasn't his thing at all, he couldn't take the bitching customers. We worked from 7 AM to 11 PM usually seven days per week. We sold it in 1954 and I got married, Ern and Mum moved back to his place in Nova Scotia returning to New Brunswick in the 1960's. When we sold the Texaco all the vehicles were gone except a motor cycle and he said to me how are we going to get home? I said on the motor cycle. When we got on he grabbed my ears and told me if I made one wrong move my ears were coming off. He was about 6'2" hands like hams and tough as nails from a lifetime of operating mills. After

Texaco I built a cable tool rig and went on my own drilling primarily in New Brunswick from 1954-59.

In his later years Ern continued to cut wood, he was happy in the bush. Mum and the family tried to get me to tell him to stay out of the bush. I told them to let him cut wood if he wanted to. If he fell and cut his head off it was his choice. He laughed and said "Lewis, I knew you would back me!" He was a great guy, the best Grampa ever. He died from a screw up by an immigrant doctor. Mother lived several years longer.

In 1957 I purchased a triple stage jet pump from McDougal Pump Co. and then had a call from them saying, "Lewis you have never installed these of ours before so we want to be there when you do to make sure is done properly." When he arrived I had 33ft of tail pipe on the injector, he said you can't use that, I said ok if I can't then this pump will break suction, are you going to come back and re prime it? Nope! Ok then, this suction is going to be installed and pull the water 24ft or so below the injector and run constantly at whatever the well produces with no suction breaks.

He approved the install and 2 years later he got a big promotion because the company changed these pumps over to shallow well injectors at 1/3 of the cost i.e. they bolted the injector to the pump and it became their regular shallow well pump. I thanked him for putting our name on it! Russ and I had been doing that for years. Grunt shows the engineer, engineer does the patent and makes the big money not the grunt!

On May 21, 1954, Joyce Prosser (Feb 29, 1936) and I were married. Joyce was from Shenstone which was 6 miles from Hillsboro. Our first two boys, Rick and Bernie arrived within two years. Life was busy. On Rick's first meeting with a black man, the fellow shook Rick's hand and Rick looked at his hand closely, the man had a good laugh and said, Rick the black doesn't come off my hand.

Many years after leaving New Brunswick we were back home visiting and went into Moncton to eat. When I went to pay I couldn't find my wallet. The waitress got the boss who had known dad well and then wouldn't let me pay even though I did find my wallet in the vehicle shortly after that.

1959-1975 - International Water Supply – Saskatoon

Frank was working out west by 1959 and his company (International Water Supply) was short of help, it was spring of the year and closed roads had put them behind. He called me to come out and help them catch up. Joyce, the boys and equipment were left at home and after we caught up the offers to stay from boss's Howard Hainstock and Chris Larson kept coming and getting better so I stayed and the family joined me in Saskatoon.

I flew to Toronto and met them there then we all came the rest of the way together in our '54 Studebaker car. Joyce's sister and family took over our house in New Brunswick and my brother Don operated the rig until I sold it.

The Maritimes and near the Rockies both had nice soft pure water, you would feel clean in a shower. Until I came out west in 1959 I hadn't seen problems with minerals in ground water which were common on the prairies. In the Maritimes the biggest problems were hard water or salt water. When I arrived in Saskatchewan I got some real surprises. In south central Saskatchewan where I started, if I drank the water I had to know where the next bush or toilets could be found and both were scarce in that country!

My first job for International was at Bengouch. I had dressed up a bit to impress the local council and company. I went to pick up a sucker hose and slipped on a loose overhang and into the mud pit I went. Council all laughed when the mud on my face started to crease. I knew it had to look funny as hell. It made for a memorable start with the outfit.

Very few towns or villages had water systems. Horses and wagons were the primary water supply. Toilets were cleaned out and the waste hauled away by horse and wagon. It wasn't long after we started drilling that the guys hauling sewage would stop for a visit and park their wagon up wind. The stench was bad; they would just laugh and say we were putting them out of business. The worst offender was at Carrot River, SK (a real stinker). The water haulers delivered drinking water some days and wash water other days! Joyce bought our water from an outfit that operated in this way.

Anyway we survived dust storms, dry seasons, wet seasons, and the coldest weather we had ever seen. Joyce's first dust storm was at Imperial. There were times the temperature was close to -50. We gained a lot of good memories, good friends and much experience. In 1959 the company had started installing screened wells in some pretty highly mineralized water which caused the screens to plug off with iron, calcium and manganese. It became part of my job to clean the screens and keep the water moving and the customers happy. Iron and calcium were not a big problem but manganese was almost impossible to remove. While on the road with International I rarely stayed in a hotel – I was in the homes of customers, town foreman etc. I was called the bubblegum man as I would tell the waitress to give every kid who came in the door a couple of pieces of gum and I would pay for it with my bill. In the summer I would drive the service rig and my helper the service truck. For several years we owned a camper and Joyce would pull it with our one ton truck. She and the kids would camp and I had a place to stay.

Maureen ('63) and Scott ('69) were born in Saskatoon. I was away a lot and Joyce had her hands full at home with the kids. When Maureen arrived the boys were thrilled with their baby sister and spent lots of time including her in their play. Walks and carriage rides were never a problem. We lived at the back of the university campus near undeveloped land and one day she lost track of them baby included. When found the boys were busy making a fort and Moe was quite content supervising from her carriage, a good time had by all.

My boss at International Water Supply, Chris Larson was almost a prince of a guy. The day Kennedy was shot he said I couldn't go hunting the next week. I just said you will never see the day that you can tell me I can't go hunting! You can tell me I can't come back but going is my decision! The hunting trip had been pre-approved and all the arrangements were done to go. He just said I guess you can go and come back, who is going to look after this job? I said you may not want me back as Leo Feser (International helper) may do a better job than I would. He said that's a good recommendation for Leo, thanks.

Odessa, SK was interesting. I had been sent down there to diagnose pump troubles, I took a look and told them that there was a problem and to get their money sorted out and give me a call back. They called a few weeks later and said

it was fixed; I told them that if they had plugged the hole everything would be seized sooner rather than later. Two years or so later they called International for emergency help. I was working in Lloydminster and had been on the go for hours and hours, I was called off that job to go and look. Chris said drive to Saskatoon and he would meet me there and drive us to Odessa which was SE of Regina. When we arrived it was about 2AM and mayor and council were on site and in no uncertain terms informed me that I had to have it operating by 10AM. Each was then handed a putty knife and told to start scraping pipe. They were told that the pump was likely done and that it could be 6 weeks without a pump as I expected it all to be seized as stated previously. Every time I wanted a tool somebody was in the way. I finally told Chris that whenever somebody leaves to lock the door – nobody gets back in. A shouting match then ensued and among other things I said, “If you think I want to be here anymore than you bunch want me to, think again I just worked 32 hours, and got hauled down here for something you were told about two years ago!” When everyone had left, Chris said I needed to be more diplomatic. I said diplomacy means saying f*** off nicely and I’m not diplomatic! The next day the mayor and one councilor arrived in a much better disposition wanting to know how it was going. All the parts were out on the ground and the pump was seized. They were told that regular shipping for a replacement would be six weeks, air freight three weeks, or if renting then available the next day. We were told to stop at the hotel when loaded and ready to leave. When we got there the mayor said that a full steak supper and all the trimmings with wine were available to us. Chris said after the way Lewis talked to you last night this is quite a spread, the mayor said yes but we had it coming. Lewis had told us the consequences; we ignored him then ordered him to fix the resulting break. They hired the railway to haul water for the town until a new pump arrived in six weeks and was installed.

Once I bought a briefcase with my expense account and got that taken off my next cheque so for my next expense account I wrote them that for a company that wants quality not quantity you are a poor example. On my next cheque my briefcase was covered.

Whitehorse had great water I was up there twice to service their system which needed little attention – nice country.

At Grandview in the early 60's I stopped at a phone booth to call the boss in Saskatoon. There was a wallet left on the shelf. I took it to the local MTS office and gave it to the operator. I know it had at least \$2 in it. A young girl came along and went in and got the wallet. She said that the money was gone. I went and faced the operator and she lied and lied about not having it. I tried to lay charges but could not as it wasn't my wallet. The owner said there was \$12 in it a ten and two ones. I also went to the police and the MTS manager but couldn't do anything even though they didn't trust the woman. I went to see the wallet owner's parents. They knew the operator and wouldn't press charges either. I was a stranger and still believe they thought I was the thief not the operator.

International and I had a dispute so I quit and worked for a potash mine in '65 for 4 months. I returned to International on better terms for both parties. While working for Potash of America I had a crew under me. One shift I was showing them how to make up and install high pressure hoses (3000 lbs. working pressure). Someone behind me said I can't see what you and your crew are getting done. I just said maybe your eyes are in your ass and kept working.

When finished my crew said, do you know who you said that to? I said no, and I don't really care. They told me it was Mr. Morish the mine super and here he is coming back. He came up to me and said, I didn't appreciate your comment, I said I didn't appreciate his either. He showed me how many hoses the last shift had installed. I said if that is how you want it done we can do the complete job in a shift. I pulled the connections apart by hand and said the ones with red print were done by my crew and they will hold. He said take off the ones the other crew did and redo them. I just said no sir, you have them redo them. He said ok, and after that we got to be good friends. He paid for courses in hydraulics etc. I always stopped and talked to him; he just laughed and said everyone else would try to show him how hard they were working when they saw him coming. I just said that's not the way I do things, I do as good job as I can and hope you are satisfied.

Alf Toth was an engineer with International and he thought he was special. At one Yorkton job site he said I wasn't running the rig right. I put him on the platform then he said he didn't know what to do. He got off and I said next time tell me what you want done not what is wrong. He said that drillers should be

fired and engineers hired. I told him to get in his car and get out before he got thrown in a mud pit. At the hotel he told the desk girl to call Chris. Alf then told Chris what an asshole I was. At the hotel the girl overheard the call and told me I was in trouble when I got there and I said well call Chris for me. Chris wanted to know what had happened and I told him my version. Chris then said I had his permission to throw Alf in a mud pit next time!

Again at Yorkton on a Friday afternoon Alf showed up and said I am running a pump test this weekend. My partner Ron Tillapaugh said he had a wedding that weekend and I said okay. We got the pump set up and fast readings done then locked things up to go home. Alf said where do you think you are going? We said home, he said no you are running a pump test I said no, you said that YOU were running a pump test, WE are going home. He passed us 5 miles up the road.

Once I had some well rehab work to do in the Jasper area so Joyce and the kids came along in the service truck and camped while I worked. The truck was at the maximum load that small local mountain roads and bridges would take. We were invited to fish at a members' only lake with a very narrow access road, times were posted as to when a vehicle could go which direction – Joyce said it was a hair raising ride!

On one job two drillers and a cable tool rig were sent to CFB Comox on Vancouver Island for some well rehab work. The pipe was pulled and screen set then they fought over who was the driller and who was the helper. One jumped in the truck and tried to drive away pulling the rig over backwards!

Shortly before leaving International an Alberta oil company called us for help and I was sent out. The client asked what I needed from them and I said one good man, two would do but one who was good was a must. Did I need tools? No. We pulled the pump did a patch repair and I wired it up myself. Back in the office I told them it was patched up and to get an electrician to check the wiring and also parts would be ordered for them. They said, you are done? Yup. In one day? Yup. That never happens! When the parts were in they called International for me to come back and install them, I had left for Manitoba and they refused to have another driller so they put them on themselves.

1975-1989 - Manitoba Ground Water Section – Winnipeg

Before he died in 1974 my brother Frank along with various other connections within the well business urged me to apply for his job in Manitoba. I really wasn't too happy with the idea but eventually I did so and did fill the position. The job was to work with all the drillers in the province. Manitoba drillers used mostly cable tool, by then I had worked with cable tool, rotary, mud rotary, diamond drill and reverse rotary rigs as well as in water treatment plants and also had done some mechanicing. The very best aspect with the province was the ability to go out and do what needed to be done with little interference as long as justification was good. My boss Lock Gray was good because he trusted the drillers and the people he hired, Lock worked well with all of us. The first year was tough, some of the engineers were a real challenge as they felt they were worth lots more than me as a driller. All my life I treated people as equals until proven differently by actions. Education and seniority didn't amount to much if the knowledge and work ethic wasn't there. It did end up being a great job for 23 years.

The older boys, Rick and Bernie were grown and gone when we moved to Manitoba. Each of them did some drilling with me, Bernie then made a career out of it in Alberta and BC. Rick has lived in Saskatoon for many years. He is an industrial electrician at Key Lake uranium mine in northern Saskatchewan flying in and out for his shifts.

They say the apple don't fall far from the tree. Once in the 1980's Bern was drilling test holes and hit almost pure diesel fuel. He stopped and reported the find to the province (Alberta) and was told to pack up and move off site and say nothing. Later in the '90's he got a provincial government contract to drill test holes in upper shale. After drilling in several sites the department had him set up to fracture them as well. He did one and refused to do any more as the work was affecting the upper aquifers and would quite possibly screw up the shallow wells in the area. After that the province screwed him in any way they could to keep him from working. A fine example of what can go wrong when government and industry are in each other's pocket is the recent book Slick Water by Andrew Nikiforuk on the Alberta fracking industry and its impact on potable water supplies. We don't ever want to go that way in Manitoba!

Our youngest, Scott spent a bit of time drilling as well. He started cutting wood for Friesen's and fixing snow machines. He then drilled for them for about a year. On one job they had drilled a well on a nice property in the north end of Winnipeg and wheeled all the mess away by hand. Scott was hired to dig a trench by hand from the well to the house. All of this was to cause as little site damage as possible. I went over after it was finished to have a look. It was just wide enough for Scott to fit in to work. I called Big John and said the area was narrow and to send a slim man to do the equipment install. John being the guy he was he sent over a fella about 5'6" and 300 pounds as a joke. I offered Scott or me to run the pipe in the trench but he made his man do it.

Bern bought one of John's Big Mack water trucks to use in the mountains. Scotty was hauling water for Bern and couldn't hold the truck back coming down a mountain road. He said that he was never so scared as he was on that ride. When he got stopped after a final sharp curve he climbed out and kissed the ground. Bern and Julee both gave him shit for his dangerous driving until the brakes were checked and it was found that only 2 of 6 were operating – not too important around the Red River but a lot more so in the Rockies! Scott also worked for a couple of years for Paddock's then started his own business as support for local movie sets and manufacturing and selling paddle boards. Based in Winnipeg, he has been very busy and successful at both ever since.

Maureen Joyce was born June 13, 1963 and was perfect in my eyes, loved by all and loved everyone back. She couldn't do any wrong in my opinion but Joyce tells a different story. She started walking and talking at about 9 months. She first walked on a sheet of plywood near Ocher River by Dauphin Lake. I was working under my car and she wanted a kiss. I put my head out and she kissed me then planted her diapered ass in my face, we had a great laugh. We moved to Winnipeg in 1975, Scott was 6 and Maureen was 12 years old. It was a tough move for them but they found lots of friends very quickly.

When she finished high school she went to LaRonge and lived with Rick for a while working at the Gulf station – that was about 1981. Next was at Reds Camp and Tourist until 1986 followed by Morran Air. LaRonge Aviation changed to Athabaska and she was in charge of the float lease and departures. She quit when Athabaska and LaRonge merged in 1996 and moved to Regina for winters

then back to LaRonge in summers. That continued until 1999 when she got married. Kennedy is coming 16 and Carter 13. They now live on a few acres near Southy and Moe works for the school division and also as a home care worker. She had a bout with West Nile virus and we are very lucky to still have her.

We bought a 2 story Eaton's house in St. James; it had originally been a Red River area farm that the city had swallowed up. The realtor kept wanting to over sell to Joyce; that was fixed up by changing realtors! A few years after they had left home Rick and Bernie were around and wanted to talk to me outside so out we headed. As we approached the garage they each grabbed one of my arms and thumped me against the wall saying that they just wanted me to know that I wasn't near as stupid as they had thought a few years earlier, an endorsement I guess! Maureen and Scott were still kids and in school so there was the four of us in Winnipeg and Joyce started taking courses at the University of Winnipeg for general interest. Health Sciences Centre came to her bio chemistry class recruiting nurses, she liked the class and the presentation and it was time to pick a program so she registered for Licensed Practical Nursing. After completing that she went straight into Registered Nursing and that was her career until 2002. She was the only grandmother in her class and also had very good marks! When we moved to Brandon my niece (Alice's daughter) bought the house from us.

On the job, most drillers in Manitoba were changing from cable tool to mud rotary gear. It was a great time to start working for them. At that time the ground water department had a manager who worked with and listened to the drillers. Believe it or not they even hired experienced drillers to work with the engineers! Manitoba had problems with wells losing capacity. We made up a variety of tools and equipment including frost free packers, flow through packers, sand feeders, jetting tools, frost free hydrants, cutters, scrapers and also probably tried 90% of the chemicals that were made and recommended for cleaning wells up to 1988. Most worked well on iron and calcium but had very little effect on manganese. Some even ate the stainless steel cases off of the submersible pumps – but not the manganese.

When I came to Manitoba in 1975 there were hundreds of wells pumping sand, we repaired or replaced most of them over a few years. Arnold Pedersen's method of using a .018 slot screen and 10/20 or 20/40 sand was the perfect

solution. Once in a while on domestic wells we would use .015 screen which also worked well. In 1977 I had a call from a supplier to come and pick up a cheque as I had sent so many drillers to them for tools and equipment. I told them to send the drillers each a cheque as he must have over charged them. I'm not sure what happened with that. I told my boss Lock Gray what happened, he just said I knew you would do the right thing.

Another interesting incident was with Ivan Schmale, a salesman for Pritchard Engineering who was selling submersible pumps. For a while they were okay then became a real problem. Art Currie at Roblin asked me to come up and check one out. You could hear it screaming at least 100' before you got to the well and the pump was set over 200' below ground level. I said the clearances were not set properly when they put it together. He said they had sent some back and when returned they didn't last 2 weeks. He had already sent this one back once so I went to see their engineer Mr. Schmale. I asked to see him and was told he was busy, I said so am I but I have to see him as we had bad work on pumps. They phoned him and told him who I was. He came down in a hurry and said so this is the f***** infamous Lewis Hopper; I just said coming from a shit like him I would take that as a compliment! He said they never have a pump problem unless I am there. I told him my experience and insisted we see his pump man. The pump man had tried to get the Pritchard Engineering to give more clearance but they would not. When we finished our meeting Ivan agreed to go with an extra .025 clearance. After that there were no more problems and he became a supplier you could count on.

Lock hired people who knew their jobs. He had a lot of dedicated engineers and staff that really understood how important water was to everyone. Water and air are the two most important things we have. Water resources provided a lot of seminars on water, spent much time and money on communication, conventions, driller's picnics etc. The last great convention was at Bird's Hill Park, we even got a talk by the national water well association who stated that Manitoba had the best outdoor display they ever saw. In 1970 Ontario ground water came to Manitoba to see how to set up their department.

Within my first month on the job a well supplying water to Bird's Hill ski hill quit. I and a local driller repaired the problem and put the system back in service. The

next day an engineer from another department came for the report. He was told I did the job and would give him a report, he said that he would get it from an engineer not a well driller. He could not find an engineer that had the report and so came back to me. I said I had given one to an engineer and would not give him one; our relationship never got any better! However, most of the engineers were very good to work with.

Once I got to work with the drillers my job became very pleasant with most of them. The toughest driller I worked with was probably Big John Friesen. He and Frank never had seen eye to eye however, after he ran into a few problems and we worked together a couple of times we became good friends. Big John, Roy Waters and Emil Mankey were the drillers that counselled me to stay with water resources at one point when I considered quitting.

Occasionally I butted heads with an engineer who could be a real asshole in that they knew it all and wouldn't work with us lesser grunts. It did however become a great job which was always very interesting and also challenging at times. I worked with some excellent engineers including Arnold Petersen, Marris Rutulis, Joe Koral and Frank Render who were all available for help when I wanted it. It was a two way street among these fellows, myself and the drillers. I gave what I could to them and got back lots as well. We sealed many wells at Sky Lake and Teulon. At Teulon the property owners fought the project until I explained what we were doing and why and also how easily we could shut them down. I'm not sure why but every time a property owner came in the engineer would say here is more trouble and wouldn't talk to them. At Sky Lake I even milked cows with one owner just to be able to convince him that the project would be an improvement to his hay fields and pastures. I have gone back to these areas and everyone was happy with the results. It took a while for me to learn that if you were with the government you were expected to be dishonest and almost useless.

One well owner near Teulon had a well problem which was a result of the work we did so I went to see him. The well was very old and the casing was full of holes. I explained to him that it would have to be replaced due to the drop in water level we caused in the area but it would have had to be replaced anyway as the casing was shot. He agreed to split the cost of a new well and hook up. Trying to convince the department to do a 50/50 was tough but we finally did

install a new well for him and let him choose the driller. Gene Pruden was his choice. My boss was in favor but the top brass was not, we could only be totally right or totally wrong, not 50/50. Cooperating on this one did the department a lot of good. Another 50/50 was east of St Rose where we installed a loading station too close a nearby private well. I agreed to install a new well closer to the house at 50/50. His comment was, are you really with the government? I asked why and he thought I had too much common sense!

Another was at Stonewall town where I thought we had the overland water going right one fall but a few hundred gallons went into a farmer's field where he had his crops planted. He showed up cursing me, I told him to go away and come back when he could be decent. When he came back I told him I would have a crop inspector investigate and make arrangement to pay for any damage we caused. I checked in the spring and the area we flooded was much better than the rest. I went to see if he would pay us for irrigation, he laughed and said no but he did say thanks anyway!

We had a driller at Dauphin report another driller in the same area operating without a license, my boss told me to go up and take him one. I refused and he sent another employee, I think the unlicensed operator should have been forced to come for it or be shut down until he did.

Another interesting one was an Interlake driller who bid low and got cheap pipe. He got the job but did not have enough pipe. Then he phoned my boss to pay more because his second lot of casing cost him more. My boss said ok but I said no way and called the driller. He showed up in my office, I said your ears are red I guess you are still upset. I told him if we did that for another driller he would be the first one at the minister's office. He backed off but said that on the next hole he was going to go deeper and charge us for it. I just said you will not be paid for extra hole. He finally backed off (tough little guy).

In 1988 we lost a young driller at Erickson, killed using acid to clean a well. His lady and family asked me to try finding a safe product. That same year I was at a well driller's convention in Halifax. There was a seminar on well rehabilitation put on by a European company using Carela products. After the presentation the speaker and I discussed the product. I told him if it was ½ as good as it sounded

we needed it badly in Canada. A few weeks later he phoned from Europe to set up a meeting with me in Winnipeg. We had a great meeting. He gave me some well cleaning products to test. I was then and still am very impressed with it. He offered me the Canadian distributorship. Due to my job with the province I couldn't take it on although with family and work connections throughout the country I was able to test it in any possible Canadian conditions. Three Canadian distributors were set up, 2 in Quebec and 1 in BC. I agreed to test it under many conditions, in pit wells, enclosed buildings, reservoirs, etc. both for safety and efficiency. I used oxygen meters and lit candles, all indicated oxygen levels were in the safe range.

I went to Traverse Bay to check a job and found a hole dug in the sand which was the aquifer for a large cottage area. It was filled with garbage, dry junk, old cans, etc. A cottage owner came along and told me it was done by Victoria Beach council. When I said what I did I was taken to 2 more pits on the same property also dug into the aquifer, one loaded with fur bearer carcasses and one full of sewage hauled in by trucks. I went back to the office and picked my boss up and showed it to him, he was also shocked that anyone would do this. We took pictures and did a report. That day, Mr. Top Boss, head of the department came into my office and said not to report it. We had a discussion and I was told (not asked) to back off. (Not a good choice for Hopper!) He and Lock went away on vacation and I went over the situation with an engineer. He added a lot to my report and we got it on record, however, the report totally disappeared. I went to the site later and found a large dyke made with clay on top of the aquifer. I couldn't get any information on who did it or approved it. All the sewage had been had been put into the dyke – a disaster waiting to happen! One mile south of the site had no ground water at all, why was the dump site not placed here? No answers! The sandy land where the dumping was occurring had been expropriated by the municipality for sand excavation and for dumping.

My next wonderful job was just east of Stonewall. Lock told me of a Mr. Hood who was giving environment a bad name over his polluted well and they said it wasn't – it was fine by the department. I went to his door and told him who I was; Mr. Hood's comment was great, another f***** government employee! Then he said you're the guy all the drillers told me to have check my water. We did, at the kitchen tap and it was foamy and smelled terrible – really bad.

I said don't even wash your hands in it, it's loaded with sewage. Lock couldn't believe how bad it was based on my assessment. Mr. Hood stated that he was impressed that there was a government employee that could smell shit! He tried to blame the horse barn to the west of him. I said don't blame anyone as I believe it's your own system. Your neighbor on the east will be next as the flow here is east. Lock and I checked it out and decided to talk to environment and work with them to solve the problem which we were very sure was the shallow bedrock and a casing that was not seated. A few days later we had a meeting at environment with Ken Hawkins manager of all health inspectors, hell of a good guy. Lock and I were waiting when the man above Ken maybe the deputy minister stepped into the room and wanted to know what my f***** problem was, I walked over to him and told him I didn't have a problem but Mr. Hood had a bad one. He said I don't think you know what you are talking about. I just said you think I don't know and I know that you don't have a clue; that well is loaded with sewage.

Ken's boss said he had a bacteria test done on the sample and it was clear, with no bacteria. I said all you needed was a note to the lab with the sample explaining what your inspector saw. They have a lot of experience; your next comment was that my mandate ended when the well went in then yours took over. I just said that when the water is being polluted and I know about it and do nothing I'm not doing my job. I'm not sure you know what your job is.

Later the top dog in my office came to me and told me I had to apologize to the DM. He was dialing the number and wanted to know when I would go. I told him to tell the DM to hold his breath until I got there. He indicated that the DM would quit if I did not. I said that would be a favor to the department as he is not qualified for his job. The next day my phone was out of service, Lock assured me it had nothing to do with the dispute. A few days later there was a letter from Mr. Hood thanking me for getting the problem fixed and that his neighbor next door east was now starting to have smelly water. It became obvious that I was being blocked from my job of working with the drillers. I went to see Lock and he wanted to know how I got the letter, my mail was supposed to be held as well! My phone was out for several days. It became very clear my job was on the line. I just told Lock he could shove the job up his rectum. Then I called Joyce to come and pick me up in about an hour.

Lock came by saw me packing up and said, what are you doing, my comment was what part of stick this job don't you understand? He said just give him a few minutes. He came back and said it's all covered we transferred you to work for Arnold Pedersen. I said I didn't realize I was in the army. I like Arnold but this is not the army, you don't transfer me anywhere. If you end this job and I applied for the job with Arnold it would be ok, but you don't put me anywhere else. He said don't leave yet I will be right back. He did return me to the same position; I asked if it would last at least a year, I don't remember a reply. Approximately two years later the head of my office had my position ended. Mr. Erv Griffin was the boss at Manitoba Water Services Board and applied for Arnold Pedersen and me to come and join him at MWSB, still filling basically the same positions.

Arnold Pedersen, an engineer and I did a lot of great work together; side by side with the drillers, learned a lot from them and taught them a few things as well. There was no one that could even come close to taking Arnold's place. Most of his wells were installed based on 20 minute pump tests. There were very few that were a problem, he saved the government millions. I don't think anyone will ever be able to take his place. He could be difficult but you also could reason with him and make it right.

Once I was called into Erv's office for my thoughts on how we ran jobs. I told him that as far as I was concerned we were a welfare agent for the consultants. He said explain that. I just said our engineer's put out a contract and the consultants want changes, when they don't work we pay them to revert back to what was usually called for in the original contract, my guess is that it's our engineers fault for accepting the change, not the stupidity of the consultants. Many things would be wrong with pumps, materials, etc.

I think Roblin's Veridox system (oxygen and water pumped down to break down iron) was a prime example of failed consulting engineering. It never did work and the consultant and I never did see eye to eye. I wonder how much that cost taxpayers over the consultant not knowing what he was doing, again bailed out by the MWSB? He was told but didn't listen. One north of McCreary, one southwest of Carman, all were problems and expensive.

One time the engineers had the top man in the Winnipeg office tell me I couldn't help the drillers install wells for irrigation. Then some of those same engineers wanted me to help them design and install them. I refused to help them; my job was with the drillers not the engineers. That boss also told me I couldn't be doing a very good job because the drillers thought I was ok. I said that if you want to do a good job you need them on your side in order to do a good job but that was over his head!

1989 - Provincial Lab – Winnipeg

The last few months with water resources were very interesting. Dr. Secla, head of the provincial water quality lab asked me to meet with her staff over problems that were never solved in the well field. She told her staff to introduce themselves and said this is Lewis Hopper and you don't know how many times he walked into my office that I wished he would drop dead, but we need a lot more people like him. It was a good meeting but I'm not sure we solved anything.

Another move was to take Jim Adams, a chemist from our office, to the provincial lab to work with the staff trying to find out what was growing in the water east of Steinbach, it was a thick clear slime, like mucus. Dr. Secla said it was not harmful but she couldn't name it. I asked if she would drink the water – I don't think she would! When Jim and I arrived, Will Greaves who headed the entire section came to talk to Jim and wanted to know what brought him there. Jim said it was the growth in the well water east of Steinbach.

Mr. Greaves said that's good as we have an old fellow by the name of Hooper causing all kinds of problems with well bacteria in the Stonewall area. I asked Jim to say nothing about me and the Stonewall well. I listened to Will and Jim talk sewage for a few minutes. I told Mr. Greaves that it sounded like he knew a lot about sewage. He said that he should as he was the manager. I said your staff has tried hard to satisfy me on some of these tests but I have one I am still not happy with. He asked where it was and it was in my vehicle. He went to talk to someone and again I asked Jim to say nothing. I brought in the sample and said I would open it so he didn't get it on himself. He assured me that he had handled more sewage than I had. He tipped up the cover and said its sewage.

I told him I didn't think it was straight sewage but very bad for sure. I said you just did the same as I did which proves nothing. He yelled for Barb (chemist) and out she comes and calls me by name. Mr. Greaves said take this sample and do a surfactant on it. He didn't pick up on the name. Shortly Barb came back and said Lewis where did you get this? I told her a well and she said it was full of surfactants. I said I don't know surfactants. She said detergents which would have to come from sewage. I said Mr. Greaves I have to shake your hand, Barb has tried to do tests I would be happy with and you made it a 2 minute job. He

said it surprises me that it wasn't done before. I asked him if he could take another surprise and he said yes. I said you know that old guy named Hooper; I think you will find its Hopper and that's me. No, no, no, he is way older than you! No, it's me, can you take another? I'm half way down, finish it! You know that well at Stonewall that's not polluted, this sample is from that well and this process has taken nearly 2 years.

He was stunned; he said they dumped your position over this? I have a job here for you whenever you want it. Not often do we find someone who will stand up for what's right.

We worked together for a few months; there was one problem in the Oakbank area he wanted me to check. I went and found it was a petroleum problem which would disappear before his inspectors got it back to the lab. He thought the well owner was a real bitch; I convinced him to go with me so he could meet her and see the trouble. He found out she was a very nice person with a problem. We worked on many problems. He was a great guy to work with.

1989-1998 - Manitoba Water Services Board – Brandon, MB

I went for my interview with the chairman, Mr. Cranston about a move to MWSB with Ervyn Griffin, the chairman was a very nice guy and we had quite a meeting. I warned him not to hire me if he expected me to agree to his ideas when I thought he was wrong, we would settle it face to face. He agreed saying if he couldn't hear no that he shouldn't have his job. He improved a few rungs on my ladder. I don't think he ever came to Brandon without us having a visit.

Before we left Winnipeg Joyce and I spent 3 months in Florida. Prior to leaving I did up my expense and mileage reports then the finance manager had someone do them again. A supervisor signed them and sent them in a second time and they were paid twice. We had told son Scott to put any cheques in the bank which he did, so we knew nothing of the error until we got back. The next thing I knew I was on the mat for double billing so there was lots of fireworks over that. Erv set it straight as nothing on the second one was in my writing. I wasn't very happy with the finance manager – he should have got fired.

Ervyn was a good person to work with and for. However he had 2 staffers who did everything they could to have him fired so they could keep clawing their way to the top of the ladder. I bought a house from Erv and they even used that to help force him out. One was a real jerk the other was out for promotions which he got. It didn't matter how, just use the other person if you can gain by it, not very Canadian in my books.

After one job at a Hutterite colony the farm boss told me he got a cheque from us for \$20,000 for work the colony was promised but was never done. Another job was given to an import that was paid about \$20,000 and then he screwed up the job. I complained and was told such amounts weren't worth bothering about, nice management!

I'm not sure why the companies and the government put up with me as long as they did, especially the government. It seems like they expected you to do exactly what they wanted whether it was right or wrong. That was never my roll and I didn't ever want it to be. But they sure seem to be getting there with their staff these days!

I believe in 1998 when I retired that Manitoba had the best drillers in Canada, 90% of them could go anywhere in the world and do a great job. The other 10% we wished would go! Of that 10% most quit drilling which was good. Manitoba has everything from hard rock to very fine dirty sand and those 90% of our drillers could construct sand free wells where drillers from elsewhere could not.

Manitoba was the leader, as a 40+ year observer here I believe that we have slipped well down the proficiency list. Why was Manitoba the best in Canada in those years? We had highly variable ground formations, driller knowledge and training plus good government staff and programs. We still have good drillers but there is almost nothing I can see that water resources is doing except trying to change rules and regulations to make the drillers responsible for problems which occur. I don't think they even have an inspector on the road. It is declining now due to hiring of credentials not experience, then folks do office work only and are not on the ground getting experience, and also too much focus on pipelines. They have their place and purpose but sound well maintenance and aquifer protection beats pipelines anytime.

As I told one recent staffer the only way for a minister and senior staff to do a good job would be to get proper information from him which was not happening. The reply was that all he has to do is make the Minister happy and he is set for life! He then said that we need water piped through the whole province so there wouldn't be any problems! All I could do was ask if he was sick or just plain stupid.

This conversation had all started over one man wanting a pipeline in Onanole. I was at a drillers and pump suppliers when this fellow said I won't need parts again as we are going to get a pipeline. When asked what made him so sure he said we know enough people in the resource branch to get whatever we want. He said that there were three polluted wells in the area. I checked it out with a local resident, two wells it seems were his relatives and one was at the school. I then called Manitoba Ground Water Section and said that those wells should be checked. MGWS said they knew who to call. I insisted that an inspector be sent out and water samples taken. The inspector came to Brandon and wanted me to go with him. I gave him a name of a fellow to pick up and take along as he was familiar with the area. I called the inspector a couple of weeks later and he was

told by his boss not to bother if I wouldn't go with him. After that time the pipeline was stopped as water and sewer could not be installed in the same trench. Not sure what has happened since. I wish I could convince myself that it got better!

Darrel Pupex was an engineer at MWSB and used me as reference for a job in New Brunswick, when a guy called the office he spoke to my boss, the finance man, who put him down then I was called for my reference. I said if you want a man who will do the job and has his own ideas, he is your man. If you are right, ok, if he thinks you are wrong, he will let you know. If you want a yes man he is not your guy. In recent years he was appointed a director, I was told that would have been sooner if he was more of a yes man!

A fellow in Killarney designed the pill for septic tanks, another man got the inventor drunk and bought the system for \$1000 and made a fortune. The buyer bragged to me about it after the fact. I was not impressed!

In 1994 I was hired by a Winnipeg engineering firm to go with Reid Carruthers to Managua, Nicaragua, to oversee the firm install a water system. The trip was okay but I would have preferred to work directly with the locals myself, the same as at home. The house we stayed in was between the homes of the Sandinista rebels and the Contra Army. There were 2" long worms in the showers and sinks, tarantula spiders as well. The centre of the roof was wide open and the stove was rat infested. The engineer, Matt came back from a Catholic celebration with large noise makers some 2" diameter by 6" long, some a foot long. He wanted to set one off in the cook stove and I suggested we try it outside first. We dropped it between our place and the one that the Contra's were in. It blew a hole in the gravel pad and immediately the army had rifles pointed at us. I don't think there would have been much left of the stove if we'd tried it there! We were not allowed outside without our watchman and his rifle. It was a great experience!

A few years later I was asked to go to Africa for the same purpose, we couldn't agree on a price and I never went.

Drillers

Working with Manitoba's well drillers was a great experience. Drillers John Friesen Sr and Emil Mankey and I worked on a lot of wells with great success using surge blocks and air, Big John thought his Dad may have done that but didn't have an air compressor in those years. Mud rotary was just starting when I joined water resources which really made my job great. Screen and sand-packing properly really helped install sand free water wells. People would complain about pumping sand and Big John would just say not everybody could have a beach in their bathtub.

Arnold Larsen once paid for his drilling license, only \$10 at that time and the cheque bounced. The department was going to put it in for collections. I almost got fired as I tore it up and gave them cash.

Paul Slusarchuck Drilling had the newest drilling equipment, it was mainly designed for bedrock wells – they had a reputation of deep holing.

Wilf Hnatiuk from Dauphin called and said I got you this time Hopper, you won't get this one. I went to the job, an out of control artesian and said to install a pump. He did and lowered the water to below the flow. I said now it's not a flowing well set your grout line and seal it. I could have bought him for a penny! He is also the guy that bet me he could mix 18 bags of neat cement in a forty five gallon barrel. I told him to use his head as you can only do six bags not eighteen if he put it in dry, he backed off.

Friesen Drillers had mostly mud rotors, one top drive rotary and cable tools. They expanded very quickly and used screens and proper sand packs. Old John was tough, he would do almost anything when I first worked with him to try and prove me wrong, eventually he became easier to work with. His main comment was Hopper; I was doing this when you were in shitty diapers. His boys and son in law were always eager to try new methods, great to work with. Young John would work with me on a new method to remove sand in wells then take his Dad out to show him how to do it. A few days later old John would take me out and show me how to do things the young John way. One was setting 2" screens inside of 4" or 5" casing and sand packing them and getting sand problems cleared up. I

would laugh and he would know I had already done that with his boy. Young John was very good at letting them think it was his idea, he always said don't give them too much information, keep it to yourself. It worked for him, he was always great to work with and also a family friend. James was just the opposite, he would say I don't know, yet he could do almost anything just by quietly taking it in. Ryan Rempel was his son-in-law and at Homewood a new well was needed. Arnold Pedersen and Maurice Dickson who I considered the top engineer and driller went to install a new well and they couldn't get water. The council called me and said there is no water. I told them to call Friesen's and tell them to send Ryan out. Young John said I will send James, they said no we want Mr. Rempel. He said ok I guess you were talking to Lewis Hopper. All went well and Ryan installed a well that pumped 10gpm, really good for that area. He was a driller that could install sand free wells in areas where no one else could.

Once I had a call from Big John Friesen to help him acidize a well at a school in St. James. I told him not to do it as acid in limestone is explosive, very dangerous and I would not work on it and he shouldn't either. Someone convinced him that it would improve the capacity a lot. He tried it, and it blew back, and he got sprayed with the acid. He was close to our home so he went over and Joyce let him use the tub. A bit later he decided to try another one north of Boeing in a bush area. Again I would not help. I went to the site later in the day; he laughed and said how high do you think it blew in the air? I said by the pipe lying on the ground my guess would be at least 100 feet. He said probably 150+ and he didn't think he would ever try it again. He said Hopper, every once in a while you seem to know what you are talking about! He was a guy you couldn't help but like, great guy as were the whole family.

M&M Drillers of Rivers were great drillers. They were still using the old mud rotary system. Good on service work, high capacity wells and turbine pumps, son Jeff has run the business since 2007, Maurice died in 2015. They are very good at sealing artesian and old wells. One well west of Rivers was started by M&M, it flowed at 1200 gpm with an 82' head on 5" casing to 140' plus or minus. The department pulled them off the job and sent them elsewhere. Well control was lost. Beamish with his cable tool was sent to finish the job. He called and said where he was and he thought flow was 180 gpm. I said it could be much more possibly 1000+. I went out on Saturday AM and met him and the land owner, the

flow was as I expected 1200 gpm. I told them it would probably cost up to \$20,000 to get it under control and Beamish didn't have the equipment to do the job, he would have to get another driller. There were stones up to 4" diameter coming up the casing and also outside of it as often the flow in the casing would quit. We would bump it with a sledge hammer and get it started again. The property owner Mr. Phinney was told to do the same whenever it would quit. About 2 weeks later he called all excited because the casing went down the bore hole when he hit it. I said don't worry about it as a lot of other problems were showing up, beavers damming the outflow then those dams breaking up and flooding Rivers golf course. The department said Phinney would have to pay to deal with it or Beamish would. I told him they may as well bite the bullet as Phinney could move his trailer off and let the RM have the lot. The Beamish rig would be worth \$1500 to \$2000 and they could put him out of business and own it too.

Lock Gray, the RM and Erv Griffin got together and got the money to seal it. The department put out the tender, M&M Drilling and Cousens were the lowest. Cousens was I believe \$5/hr. below M&M. I went with M&M as the RM would help him and the local machine shop would do anything they could for him. Cousens told me they were upset with my decision. The job went great and we got it under control, one RM councilor came to the job site and said Arnold Pedersen and Maurice Dixon said I couldn't do it without a relief well. The 5" casing was my relief well which they didn't think about. We had a lot of good help. Phinney was of no help and I told him so. Not even a thank you or a coffee until after I gave him shit. Doug Beamish was pleased so a real mess worked out well in the end.

Ransoms Drilling was at Boissevain, they use a cable tool and mud rotary for both irrigation and domestic wells and have vertical turbine pump sales and service and also well servicing. They have lots of good service equipment and experience. Ransom said when he met Joyce that he always wanted to meet the woman that put up with Lewis!

AM Bruce Drilling of Ashern used mud rotary and offered pump sales and service. They are a family operation, good people, very honest who do great work. He did a contract for me to seal an old well. The owner was away but said the pump was

all off. When we got the pit cleaned out we found a pump that was running! I went to check and no one was home. When I came back a woman was giving him total abuse, I said why didn't you tell her we were told everything was off? It was ok he said, he was down in a hole and it went right over his head.

Cousen's Drilling of Virden was the fastest driller in Manitoba, and was scary to watch, they started in the oilfields, sometimes completing three or four wells in one day. It was very hard to get them to use silica sand. I had to supply it for a couple of jobs to convince him to use it. He is the one who was upset when I used M&M Drilling to seal a well at Rivers when he was the low bidder. He is a great guy and forgave me under the circumstances.

Waters Drilling in Roblin – His boy was the nastiest person I had to work with on the job; off the job he was good. His dad was a special friend; their work was good.

Wescan Drilling in Dauphin could be very difficult to work with for the first day or two, after that except for 2-3 wells that he didn't repair he was ok.

Edwards Ralph & Son from Medora worked slow but were very meticulous and did good work. They were expert at getting boulders out of the way and keeping equipment running well. It is now in the next generation and still doing a great job.

Watkins & Argue of Clearwater used mud rotary drilling gear; they do a lot of work most of it turns out ok. My biggest problem with them is their witch stick; I called it the Lincoln stick.

Formation Drilling in Dauphin has good mud rotary equipment; does good work and covers a big area, good reputation.

Emil Mankey of Steinbach was probably the most down to earth and honest person I ever met, he and his son did a lot of good work. His son took over from him.

Stonewall Drilling often told me that I would go broke in business as I was too honest.

Paddock Drilling in Brandon were and are the best large diameter drillers in Manitoba. Les Connor is a leader in large diameter well construction and also is always the first to try a new system. They always had good crews. Tim Paddock was great to work with as well; they sold to Friesen's before the flood of '11. Their new building south of Brandon was ready to move into but the roads and bridges were closed to heavy equipment so it was several weeks before they could change locations.

Karl Stasiuk from Gimli called me once for help on a flowing well after I retired from the province. I said you probably know more about flowing wells than I do. The reply was maybe but I have reached the point where I am not comfortable doing this kind of work on my own anymore. I now know what he ment!

1998–2018 – Hopper's Well Service – Brandon

Over the years I tried to get the drillers to stand up and speak out, most thought the engineers were much smarter than they were and made drillers look stupid. A large company in Saskatchewan once had plans to fly a big drill rig to a site in the north. The engineers and supervisors marked all the wires and hoses and where they would cut the rig apart (much work). They brought out the welder who looked it all over before starting and said I don't mean to be disrespectful but why don't you just remove the mask, take the rig off the truck and ship it? He wasn't an engineer but had lots of common sense! It worked well. Don't ever think you are below anyone; engineers got their education studying what the working class learned and gave away. Someone was then smart enough to get it down on paper so it could be studied to become an engineer!

While in Manitoba I looked all the time for a Studebaker to buy – there were several in the province but no one would part with them. Arnold Pedersen knew I was looking so he and Eric Carlson went on the computer and found one at Colorado Spring in Denver, Arnold then told some of the driller's he had found one. One driller said buy it, we will pay and sort out who wants to chip in after it is here. Arnold said afterward how much fun he had talking to all the drillers about the purchase. The owner met the crew at the border for a look see and the deal was made. The border guy said what are you going to do with this and was told that a driller was retiring and that it was a retirement gift from the industry. The guy said wholly whistling – just pay the tax and get going!

At that time we had regular driller's picnics and the 1998 one was at Curran Park in Brandon. Son Rick had lined up a fly in fishing trip for the two of us so I was not going to be at there. We kept getting all kinds of calls to convince me to go then shortly before leaving Rick called to cancel the fishing trip. Someone had called son Scott to get me there, Scott spoke to both Rick and Joyce so Joyce knew something was up but not what, a roast likely! Stude was presented to us at the picnic, business sign included, we were in complete shock! Nobody could start it as they couldn't find the starter. They told me to take it for a ride so I fired it up and they said the old buggar does know how to start it! Scott and Lisa came to the picnic as well. Stude has given us a lot of pleasure since then at various events, show and shines, a wedding and even in a fund raising calendar.

Letter to Well Drillers Newsletter summer 1998

Drillers are great: a pleasant surprise

Dear editor: In June 1998, I retired from the Manitoba provincial government after more than 23 years of working with the water well drillers and government departments. I have been in the water well industry since 1945, except for owning and operating a service station in New Brunswick for two years. I like the mud better than the grease, so I went back to drilling again.

I came out west in 1959 with International Water Supply and worked with them until 1974. In January 1975, I started working for Lock Gray at Manitoba Water Resources. I was with The Manitoba Water Services board from 1989 until I retired.

When I retired, Arne Pedersen, my co-worker at The Manitoba Water Services Board, drilling contractors and a supplier got together and presented me with a restored 1942 Studebaker pickup. I had been looking for one for the past few years with no luck. The presentation was made at our annual drillers' picnic in July.

I was very pleased when one of the drillers said it was also in memory of my brother Frank, who worked with them from 1965 to 1974 before he passed away. Needless to say, both my wife, Joyce, and I were in shock and disbelief and as some of the drillers said, "Hopper was speechless."

Thank you everyone for such a wonderful surprise. Also, thank you to all the drillers, their wives and children – some of the kids are now drillers – for filling my 23 years with the province with so many great memories and friends.

I hope to be driving the Studebaker this summer. If I stop at your rig, please don't get mud on it. It is beautiful!

Again, thanks everyone.

Sincerely, Lewis Hopper

When I retired from the MWSB and set up Hopper's Well Service I used Carela extensively to clean wells with very good success. I have only had 2 that gave me some problems and did not return to original capacity. Using safety measures as advised by the company plus provincial regulations and common sense there were no obvious problems or concerns that I could detect. My advice to everyone is that most of these products are acidic and need to be respected as such. Carela is also the only product I have used since 1945 that worked on manganese! My success rate on cleaning wells with Carela was 98%. Reservoir

cleaning results were also very good however some reservoirs did need to be pressure washed before application to remove non mineral surface residues. Joyce and Scott each helped me on a reservoir job in the 2010's along with Kim Poppel and her husband Mark. I met Kim when she worked at the local conservation district and needed some advice on closing abandoned wells. She and her contractors did a helleva good job on closing wells for aquifer protection.

I would like to see someone get Carela products back in Canada. There is not anything as good or as safe that I know of for well or reservoir maintenance and rehab. The current stumbling block is high annual registration fees.

It seems to me that currently we are at the point of go big or just go! Well drilling included? Too much unproductive government involvement? Looking back at the industry across Canada over nearly 90 years is pretty good, the view ahead not so much.

That is my status, that I have drilled wells in every province. After retirement in 1998 I continued consulting as Hoppers Well Service Ltd. I bought a rotary rig, sold it to Friesen's after a few years and upgraded to a service rig. The service rig was sold in '05's but I carried on assisting the province and drillers as needed and also reservoir and well cleaning with Carela, it is a really excellent product. I charged the same as I was earning when I retired in 1998 plus mileage which seemed fair to me. As well as my former colleagues I added to the mix by doing some consulting for Conservation Districts who at that time were also under the umbrella of MWSB, some of the CD's offered well establishment and well closing programs. The business was wound up in 2017 at age 88.

We moved from the house we purchased in Brandon from Erv Griffin out to the Brandon Hills in 1995. We have a nice little acreage facing north onto Lake Clementi with many great neighbors over the years. Our heat was baseboard only so we had geothermal installed and added a wood stove. The cost was reasonable and provided cooling as well. I started the holes with my cable tool and Lee Robins, installer and neighbor came along and said what the hell are you doing? I will come and do it all and drill into the basement for less than the cost of that outfit! And he did, along with his girl Kortney who could work as hard as any man. The unit was replaced in 2016 also with Lee and it cost more for the update than the entire system in 1995. Lee is a good shit, trustworthy, available when

needed and provides excellent customer service. We need more like him and his family around.

This project you are reading started after I read Slick Water which Lock had referred me to. I told one of my friends that the book would almost fit a lot of things I went through with upper government officials who had friends that could get special treatment. She said put it on paper and see what comes out. Lots of time was spent editing my nasty work. Thanks to my editors and all who reviewed my scratchings before they went to you.

There are lots more stories but time, memory and ambition are running out. My glass is half full and its' been damn good water.

Thanks to all the Manitoba Drillers and International Water Supply my lifework with water quality has been mostly great, along with the love and support of Joyce and our family.

Shut up Hopper, it's somebody else's turn!



Joyce, Lewis and Stude for Seniors 2016 fundraising calendar