

# The last living Bakken

“Lorin was always so quiet, I mean quiet,” said James Grubb, Lorin Bakken’s sixth grade teacher. “But he was such a pleasure to teach in school.”

Grubb, a Powers Lake, resident, was one of many who showed up to the Mil-



**JASON SPIESS**

*For Bakken Breakout Weekly*

lion Barrels, Million Thanks Celebration held at the Neset Consulting Services offices in Tioga this past June. Like Grubb, attendees were treated to a day of many oil-themed activities, including the opportunity to converse with the last living Bakken family member — Lorin Bakken.

Ever since North Dakota’s recent energy activity the name Bakken has been synonymous with oil, so, meeting and interviewing the mild-mannered oil icon was quite the event in itself. Lorin is the last living decedent of the famous Bakken family to which the formation is named, and is undecided on how he will leave his legacy.

With the future undecided, the past is what we focused on. Lorin said his grandparents, and their 8 children, homesteaded in April 1907 about four miles northeast of Tioga.

Lorin is the only child of Henry and

Lois (Ulvin) Bakken and the grandson of Norwegian immigrants Otto L. and Mary (Olson) Bakken. He added, his uncle Harry married Mildred Schenstad in 1951 and they had two daughters and a son. The two girls died in infancy and the son died at age 2 from “pneumonia.” Leaving Lorin the sole Bakken descendant.

According to Lorin, Henry O. Bakken and his uncle Harry O. Bakken had a full partnership their entire lives, and never knew which brother the formation was actually named for.

“This formation and everything started with H.O. Bakken,” Bakken said. “But they don’t know which one it was (Harry or Henry), or if it was both of them, so they expanded it to both of them. That’s the story I’ve heard.”

Lorin added the Amerada Petroleum Co. began drilling on his family’s land in July 1951. A few months later, in September, they discovered oil in that well.

“They had a great big barbeque out on the farm and program and everything else on Sunday, September 23, 1951,” Lorin said.

Lorin says he has lived in the Tioga area his entire life, between the farm and in the city. Currently he lives in the bright lights of the city of Tioga.

“I was born in the old hospital in Stanley, N.D.,” Lorin said. “Other than that, I have been here (Tioga) all the time.”

Lorin graduated from Tioga High School in 1972 and worked on the farm until he moved into Tioga October 1992. Since then, the family’s rural land has been able to create an income to provide

an urban life. Currently that land has three purposes — oil, crops and cattle.

“I have other mineral rights in other wells too,” Lorin said. “I also rent out my land for other things.”

— Last living decedent of the Bakken family, Lorin Bakken

Lorin said there is only one well producing Bakken crude on his family’s original property, and has other incomes generated from other producing wells and agricultural rentals.

“I guess one came (into the Bakken formation) in 2010 and that one is producing now,” Lorin said.

A Bakken well on Bakken land with Bakken mineral checks. That mixture money and fame would be enough of a recipe for most to reach new levels of traveling, the spotlight and national media interviews. Not Lorin. He doesn’t own a car or take lavish trips across the globe and rarely interviews. Rather he dines regularly at the local senior center and uses Tioga commerce for the majority of his day-to-day living.

Lorin keeps life pretty simple, and likes it like that. With that said, he has noticed a few changes the past five years. Lorin said the “most shocking” part of this oil boom is the scale of growth in virtually every sector.

“The workers keep coming into the community and there is tremendous growth of the buildings, is something else,” Lorin said. “And the oil traffic is something else again on Highway 2. And the railroad coming through town is busier too. Everything is busy again.”

Lorin said he will never forget the day he moved into town. Trucks buzzing through, building going up and general sounds of construction as far as the ear could hear.

“Growing up our nearest neighbor was miles away, now our nearest neighbor is a few feet away,” Lorin said.

With all the activity happening in the small towns of North Dakota, thoughts of moving back out to the peace and

tranquility of the farm has crossed his mind. Thus far the thought has only crossed his mind as he understands this desire is common amongst the people of North Dakota.

“Once you are a country person, you’re always a country person,” Lorin said.

However, Lorin said today’s oil activity is a little different than when he grew up.

“In the 1950s and 1960s the town was growing and Tioga used have about 2,000 people,” Lorin said. “So I was used to it. But with all this other activity starting now and the way Tioga is growing, it’s a little bit shocking.”

So what’s in a name? For Lorin Bakken, quite a bit of rock, money, oil and fracking fluids. With all the mixed press across the planet, preserving the legacy and reputation of the Bakken name is something every person thinks of. When asked how he would like the Bakken name to be treated. Lorin simply replied.

“I hope that the Bakken name continues to be used fairly and treated with respect. My family and I have been so honored by all of this.”

□ □ □

Jason Spiess is a multi-media journalist and host of Building the Bakken Radio. Building the Bakken Radio can be heard in Bismarck on SuperTalk KLXX 1270AM on Sundays at 10am CT. To see if your listening area carries the radio program or see the entire Building the Bakken Media Network, visit [www.buildingthebakken.com](http://www.buildingthebakken.com). Spiess can be contacted at [jason@buildingthebakken.com](mailto:jason@buildingthebakken.com).



PAUL FLESSLAND/For the Tribune  
Lorin Bakken waves at the Million Barrels, Million Thanks celebration at the Neset Consulting Services offices in Tioga, on June 25.



PAUL FLESSLAND/For the Tribune  
Lorin Bakken’s sixth grade teacher and Powers Lake resident James Grubb (right), is seen at the Neset Consulting Services offices in Tioga, N.D., on June 25.