This is Myrtle Bergren interviewing Mr. John Carruthers on May 25, 1979 for the Coal Tyee Project.

MB: Well, Mr. Carruthers, how old are you?
JC: 77 (years)

MB: And where were you born?
JC: In England.

MB: And what did your father do?
JC: He was a miner.

MB: How many generations back were they miners?
JC: Well, my grandfather was a miner and my great-grandfather was a miner, so I guess, that's it.

MB: And where abouts was this?
JC: This is in Cumberland, England.

MB: When did you come out?
JC: 1909.

MB: Did you come by yourself?
JC: My mother brought the family. My dad was here two years before us. He was here for two years before he sent for us to come to Canada. And he was here in 1907 and we 'ld come in 1909.

MB: What made him come out?
JC: Well, my dad was a very independent man, you just read that story about my uncle in the old country, and he wasn't go na be taken any from my uncle. It was a mistake at my opinion. I thought my dad was wrong in coming here because we had more chances to get somewhere in the old country. We wouldn't have to come here. Although I got no regrets, as far as I guess, that's the way it had to be. But my dad was a very independent man, and he could have been well off and we could have been better off in the old country. I mean, we had a better chance. One thing is sure, I don't thing I'd ever want to go down the coal mine, and the only reason I went down the coal mine is because my dad joined the army in 1917 - I was 15 years of age then - and you know, like father, like son, you know, you follow the
footsteps. I believe, really believe that in the end I went into the army, I would never have went into the mine. I would have continued with my education, I'd passed to go into highschool. In those days, you know, we didn't have highschools. We lived in the country. When you lived in the country, you had to pay to go to highschool, and when he went in the army, well, I had a lot of chums, that was workin' the mines, so I decided to go in the coal mines.

MB: Well, what mine did he work at when he came out?

JB: When he first come out? At Brechin. Well, actually, when he left the old country, he'd come to the States. He come to Washington and worked in the mine in over at Black or somewhere and then didn't like it, so he'd come across to Fernie. When they come to Fernie, they worked in Fernie for a little while, here, this chum, a fellow by the name of Mike Kelly, they landed in Fernie and they worked there for a while and then found their way over to Nanaimo, and that's where he stayed when he come to Nanaimo. The first mine in Nanaimo was Brechin mine. And Brechin mine closed after that big strike in 1914, Never did open again.

MB: Well, he crossed the States by train then, did he?

He came across the States?

JC: Well, I suppose so, I wouldn't know that because we were in th old country. I don't know what the transportation were, I guess it would be train, ah?

MB: So, what kind of education did you have?

JC: Well, I had a Grade 8 education and I could have went to highschool, I guess, but I figured, well my mother needed the money and so I 'ld go to work, like all kids in those days. And the mines were the only thing that was. There was very littly else. I did do other jobs before I went to the mine, mind you. I fired a shindle mill when I was thirteen.

MB: Fired a shindle mill?

JC: I was a fire man. I'd become a fire man for a shindle mill here in Nanaimo.

MB: Yes.

JC: And when I left school in June, you know, for the summer holidays, that
MB: What did that consist of?
JC: Holdin' saw dust into the fire and make it steam and boil to run the mill. For a dollar a day. I was on the shift twelve hours a day for a dollar.
MB: Did you have any hopes for your future life?
JC: No, I figured, when I went into the mine that was it. You know, in those days, you know, you're gettin' a job in the mine all this is forever. Knowing that I know now, I would never go down a coal mine again.
MB: Why?
JC: Because, I don't think, coal miners were treated right, in the first place. You know, people that give their life to go down and work in the dark are subject to all kinds of ... well, they lose a certain amount of daylight, ah? Eight hours a day, you go down the mine. Even at one time we worked six days a week, sometimes seven, you know, in the early years there was a steady go. And well, you would like it, because you were gettin' the money, which was when we look at now, was peanuts. No miners ever come out rich. One of the sad things about mining, in my opinion, was that, when they instituted the contract system. When it was necessary to have a partial contract. I used to argue this with my dad. You know. My dad and I used to have a lot of arguments about justification, as far as coal mining is concerned. And it seemed that, to guarantee production, it was necessary to have a partial contract. So, this is part of dividin' rule, in my opinion, having one section of people on contract makin' money while the other ones are all on basic rates makin' peanuts, ah? So, very few men ever come out of a coal mine, I'd say are well off. I remember, arguin' with my dad. about these things. And, of course, he got the opinion, that I was a little bit of a Red, ah? But, I remember my dad tellin' me how gullible workers can be when it comes to new work in the coal mine, they would let the miners decide how much they wanted instead of the bosses saying what they were gonna give 'em. Because the miners would always be less than what the bosses would give them anyway in the first place because they didn't have enough to know how much they were worth. And they always underestimated their price although they were given
the opportunity to name their price on a new section that they were
gonna mine, you know. They always put it on tonnage, so much a ton or yard
or whatever. I remember my dad telling me about this. I remember, when I was
a kid, I would say; "well, how stupid can they be, you know, to do this". But
this is my opinion. I’ve always felt that the miners were never paid for what they
were doing. The sacrifices they were makin' to go down in the bulge of the
earth and mine coal with their lamp on their head, you know. And nobody will
ever know, how many people suffer with industrial deseases from coal mining.
There never got nothing reported. Because you get little minor hurts all the
time and they keep adding up and you get these hurts and you never report
them. As a matter of fact, in the early days you were afraid to report an
accident. It had to be a really serious accident before you 'ld report it.
Before, it would never come into the light, you would have to go on
compensation. You know, this is one of the sad things. Boy, you would back
off of reporting because that is a strike against you for your job. It was
not worth it. Anyway, I mean, that's the way, I figured, coal mining is a sad, sad thing because they were never paid, as far as I'm concerned.
Like the partial contract all the time created that division, that differential
that was the basic thing, you know, basic in equality, ah. And then, of course,
with me, it was a necessary evil to have a job, ah. But there was nowhere else
to get out. I did get out. Well, I did get out after 1925, when I started
in Reserve mine when I was fourteen. Well, I was still fourteen, just gonna
be about fifteen, when I started, really in Reserve mine, and I worked there
for about 3 years, and this was in 1917 when the World War was on, the First World
War. My dad went into the War and of course they were short of drivers, you
know, real scarce of things like that, and so I was transferred from
Reserve when I was sixteen over to Protection mine to drive a mule over there.
So, I went drivin'over there until I got hurt, as a matter of fact, and when
I was ready to get back to work, I thought, "hell I'm gonna go down see Mr.
Hunter," who was the general manager of mines here, I went down to ask if I
could go back to Reserve. It was wet over there. There was water drippin' all
over. So, I finally got back to Reserve, and I stayed there, I think it was about - I run hoist. As a matter of fact, one year in July was a beautiful day and I was, what they called a shaft hoist, that's a small shaft inside the mine, it was a hundred and ten feet with a round cage, and I'd run this hoist, you know, lettin' the coal down from one level to another. And it was a nice day in July, and I met a frien of mine who was workin' on the ol' Princess Patricia, that's one of the boats.... Remember the old Princess Patricia?

MB: Humhum.

JC: That's where he worked on. Anyway, I met him downtown and he said that he needed a man on there. On this day I happen to meet Joe Dean, a relation (an Austrian?). So, I met Joe downtown. He says, "Look it, John, you're just the man I want to see". He says," you want a job on the boat?". He says,"get out of the mines." ah. So I thought,"Jesus, that would be a good chance to get out of the mines"; you know. And here I'm runnin' the hoist, got a nice, cushy job down the mine, runnin' the hoist and gettin' driver's pay - I was gettin' full pay of it - so I listened to this guy and I says , "it would be a good chance to get out of the mine". So, I says, "I'm on afternoon shift and I'll take the trip over to Vancouver and see how it feels like", and I packed it all you know. So, I take this Trip to Vancouver and it just happen to be that I wasn't used to hard work, you know. And I'm only seventeen years of age and my hands were soft and trucking(?) we didn't have no elevato-s in those days, were all slip work, you know, work in the tides, and had a big cargo freighter on the boat, And I wasn't used to use all these trucks, you know, I'm tellin ya these trucks they had - these twowheel trucks -. I made this trip and my partner at Reserve mine had to work a double, you see , when you stayed off your partner always had to fill in for you. So, anyway, I make this trip and, boy, after I got all the freight off, boy, do I tell you, it was hard work, I saw the Chinaman on the boat who looked after the men, and he says to me, he says,"you go and stay home tonight, I get your bunk made for tomorrow," you know. I says,"O.K."., and we lived just up on Kennedy Street, I said,'Chinaman home,"you know. I lived on Nicholsen Street rather. So I says to my mother, I says,"Look at," I says,'Get me up early because I got to get
back. I didn't tell her whether I quit the mine or whether I gonna go steamboat, you know. I says,'You get me up, because I gonna get there, we got to get these bags on.' I had it on my mind I was gonna quit, anyway, and then go on the boats. But when she come to wake me - boy -, I says,'Mum forget about it, I'm goin' back to the mine.' My back was aching, my hands, I could hardly, you know (laughter). I was so sore tryin' to do that job, you know. So I says,'Forget about it.' I went back to the mine, and just to show you, how the news goes around fast, ah. I went back to the mine on afternoon shift the next day, to my job in the mine, and my boss, who was Dave Brown, who went to the States lateron, Dave Brown was the manager of the mine, and he happened to be late in the mine. He used to come down through, and I used to let him down the shaft, down the level to go home, and he come in the engine room, and he looked at me and he says,"How did you like your job on the boat, Johnny?" you know. Imagine, so fast. I says,'Jesus, man, can't a man go to Vancouver for a trip without you guys gettin' to know?' He says,'I know the trip,' he says,'you had to Vancouver,' he says,'pushin' that truck.' You see, how fast people squeal on you, tell, you know. That's exactly what happened. He says, 'your'r better in on your life goin' of working on a boat,' He says,'I thought you had more sense than that.' I says,'I did too.' Normally, I would have gotten fired, you know. But the war was on, ah? We had a different situation then. You know, jobs were more secure then, you know? You had a chance to talk back. Bosses were all different then. They were not gettin' in to the point, were I will get into later. Bosses were more human, ah.. Let's put it that way. So, anyway, I continued on until I --- they closed the mine down. Reserve mine closed down --- I just forget the date on it, but it closed down. So I got transferred down to the company's mill. The company had a mill where they used to cut all the timber for the mines and buildings and whatever. They used to cut all lot of stuff. So I get transferred down there. And it was the 1st of July and the head man in Nanaimo, called Dave Mortishaw, he was really in sports, and he used to run the Pastime Club. This Pastime Club was a pool room and have a gymnasium down there, we had boxin' training. People trainin'
down there. He was quite a sports, and anyway, he put on a big special
day up on that field, that's Robins' Park now, he put on that
day with horse raisin', bicycle raisin' and a lot of sports. So, and here
we had to work at the mill at this day. So I said to some of the boys, I says,
"Dave is puttin' on this sports, why don't we gonna ask the boss if we can get
off for half a day, at least, to go up to the sport." So, they said, Ya,
that's a good idea, Johnny, what about it?" So, I guess, me and somebody
else went to see this Jack Cunningham, who was the boss, and we went to
see him and he said, 'Ya that will be fine, he says," you can have half
a day, and it will be fine." So, when we went to work the next day, nobody
took a bucket, expecting to go home at twelve o'clock, you know. But he'd
come and say, "Look at you guys are gonna work til 4:30." So, I just said,
Well, up your ..."you know, and I down the river, but anyways, I didn't care,
you know, you could quit a job. Things wasn't so bad then. But any,
way, this is what happened to me. The next day I went down and two men followed me. The rest
stayed. About nine men. They were scared. But anyway - next day when I went
to work, he says, "you stayin' right there in the cabin," he says, "until I get
the men placed around this mill", and I says, O.k." and stuck around and stuck
around until he come back and I say, "what the hell is goin' on here?" He
says,"listen", he says," I don't want no Bolshevik around my mill." I was
seventeen years old, I didn't know what the hell a Bolshevik was. I didn't know
what he was talkin' about. And he says," I don't want no Bolshevik around my
mill." So, anyway, I get . But it just so happened, that Reserve
mine was openin' up the next week. How fast I got to Mr. Hunt. I says,"I'm
goin' down to see Mr. Hunt," I says,"about this". So I started down to
see Mr. Hunt, and when I get to the door - and this is one of the things that
is very important, you know, you couldn't talk back. If you talked back to
a boss and he resented it you were finished. So, anyway, I went down to
see Mr. Hunt, and as soon as I got in he says,"Well," he says," I see you'r no
no good in saw mill, Johnny." Just like that. I said," I don't want to listen
what you got to say." He says,"Well, we openin' up in Reserve and you go back
there next week." You know, to Reserve. I lost a few days work all right
but this is the kind of ....
MB: What kind of a man was he?
JC: Who?
MB: Hunt.
JC: Hunt? Well, Hunt was a man that was kicked out of Fernie, they claimed. But I don't know. You know, I don't like to say things that is not authentic but as far as I can understand, he was kicked out of Fernie. He come here at the strike and startin' the strike up, you know, and got men back to work. But the men never got back.
MB: Oh, he did, eh. I never heard that.
JC: Oh, ya. He come back here and took over the General Management at the, what they call Reserve, and got things go again. He was a man who never had a First Class Ticket. I think, all he had was a Fire Boss Ticket. But he had been aware how to handle men, and handled First Class men. In those days - and this is a remarkable about people - people with a First Class Ticket kow-towin' to a man with a Third Class Ticket. It is that way yet, really, in some places. But, you know, I can't understand a man with a ticket like that - I would never, you know---if I had a ticket, I'd say,"look it, Mr, I got a ticket to prove what I am, but you haven't." You know. But with him, he had all the managers in the palm of his hand, he could just squeeze them and that's it.
MB: I heard, he had four-thousand men under him at one time.
JC: Certainly. Well, I guess, I could have, could have had that. Ya, he could have had that. He had a lot of power. He run the city. He run Nanaimo (emphasis)! As a matter of fact we had to vote for the doctor that he wanted us to vote for, at one time. At one time we had a men down here stationed, a First Aid man, it was well worth goin' to your doctor before you seein' that First Aid man. (chuckle) No kidding. And when we organized I'm tellin' you, when we organized, I was underground organized miner here. We held meetings in the Park here. It was an Indian then, you know. But we had to do that. Of course, this is after the war. you see. Things were getting to the point now when they were getting a lot of man power and they could just talk turkey again, you see. And I think, through his powerful - he had power, there was no question about it - he had a lot of power. And mind you, things didn't work that bad neither under
top of the company, I guess. And it was sad to see this First Class men, like, I can name a lot: Bill Roper and all, Cortney, all this men, they were just - they had to do what they were told, you know. But, anyway, we lived through it. Out of it all come organized labour. The miners in this town didn't organize for money. Money had nothing to do with it. We organized for recognition. To have some say in their affair, that's why they organized. That's common knowledge, you know. Everybody was pretty happy, and we used to - there was good times

We had miners' picnics here, were second and best. They were really somethin'. You put on a picnic that was out of this world. Newcastle Island. You should have seen the people. Or maybe you have.

MB: No, I haven't.

JC: You never seen 'em? But we used to have wonderful times, you know. And then one of the things you have 'em credit for was the football we had here, you know. We had some of the best miner football we ever had playing against the old country teams that come out here. They broke the stadium. They build the central sports ground where the Safeway and Simpson Sears is on right now, and give 'em it. Give 'em a sports field, you know. So, you know, there was good things come out of it. A lot of good things come out of it.

MB: And position was exactly what?

JC: General Manager. General Manager of the mines.

MB: Who did he have to be responsible to? Above him?

JC: Well, I guess, to the share holders. First, there was the Western Fuel Company, which was the Yankee establishment, and then the Canadian Collieries come in and I think the Western Fuel Company still has holdings here. This place we're sitting on here used to belong to the Western Fuel Company. All this land. All the way through, right through Hammond Bay Road, right through here, Walton, Ladysmith, you know, used to belong the Western Fuel Company.. And my wife's father bought 10 acres of lots. This is 10 acres of lot that we're on here. Of course we lossed a lot with the highway, you know, they windin' the highway. But all this people here were Finnish people. They all
bought their land from the ... And they worked in the mines, and bought their lands from, what's the Western Fuel Company.

MB: Humhum. They had 5 acre lots down at Harewood, didn't they?

JC: Well, in Harewood?

MB: 5 acres?

JC: Well that was called the 5 acres. I don't know where it got its name from. Now it's Harewood.

MB: Ya.

JC: The Harewood district. We used to call it the 5 acres. Then part of it was called Fairview. The Fairview district. That's where the cemetery is. Ya.

MB: Well, where did he live

MB: Humhum.

JC: He lived right on top of Nicol Street hill. The first house he lived in though was on, oh, it' just up Nicol Street, between Victoria Road and Nicol Street, that was his first house. And then they build a big home on top of Nicol Street. You ever seen that. You ever been up there?

MB: No.

JC: Ah. That's a nice place. They had Chinese gardeners up there and they had tennis courts, a big, a huge garden. And then Klammer, of course, he was the General Manager later on. He lived there. I don't know, who is up there now. I've been up there a few times while I was the chairman of the district here, I had to go up there on occasion to see about water and water supply. But, oh, that's a beautiful home. It was built by the ... they had their own workmen, you know.

MB: He lived to be way up in his nineties.

JC: Ya, he just died not too long ago. I went to school with his wife.

MB: Did you?

JC: Oh, sure. Hazel. I knew Hazel sure. She's lots younger than him.

MB: I interviewed her the other day in the hospital.

JC: Did you?

MB: Ya.
JC: Well, I should go and see Hazel, you know, really, I should. We didn't live too far on Franklin, just about on Franklin Street.

MB: Oh, ya. She told me about the house.

JC: She liked it. Up on the hill.

MB: Humhum.

JC: Oh, sure, sure.

MB: But she didn't know much about the business and her husband's life.

JC: No, she wouldn't. She was young. It's kind of a sad thing, you know. There was kind of sad feeling when she married him, you know. Some of us got the feeling that old --- that's her father, you know he had the best place in the mine, you know, and it seemed as he just pushed her in, you know. --- goin' back over the years itself more than

MB: I asked her how she met him and she said 'at a dance."

JC: Well, he was quite a guy. I think, he had a lot of personality, you know.

MB: He must have had.

JC: Oh, sure. Mind you, speaking about my family, we were all taking care by him. We had no problem in gettin' a job. My brothers, we all worked in the mines, and all. And had no problems at all.

MB: This is what Glen Miller told me. He missed a check one day, the first shift, he worked afternoon, Christmas or something, so he went to Jack Hunt and he paid him.

JC: Well, speaking for myself and my whole family, we never had any problems with him at all. Two of my older brothers were two of the biggest money makers that worked in the mines on contract. In Number 1 mine. They made more than the ordinary superintendent. You know.

MB: What kind of a social life would those people have, do you know? They never went to the beer parlours with the miners?

JC: No. No never would see 'em. They never fraternized with anyone. Miners were --- no. No way.
MB: So, who did they socialize with?
JC: Well, I wouldn't know. As a matter of fact, I wasn't too interested.
MB: Doctors?
JC: Could be. Ya. The upper class.
MB: I'm just trying to get about the class distinction at that time, you know.
JC: Oh, ya, you know. He was treated like some kind of a Prince of Wales, you know, this guy. One of the things that I do believe strongly was that a lot of the foreign element used to lift their ass to him, you know, on the streets, and we never do that.
MB: No.
JC: No, we never do that.
MB: Was it English people from England who did that?
JC: No.
MB: No old timers at all?
JC: No, Sir, no. You caught them doing that. Not to my knowledge.
MB: Ya.
JC: No. And then, of course, we had, what they called, a Slave invasion, you know, here. I don't know whether you knew about that, but, well, I think that is prior to this organizing. When this fellows come out they were used against other people and threatened with deportation, you know. And this was kind of sad, and I think, that we proved that these people become militant than some of the people that have been here for years. Because they were being pushed at war-time and threatened. So, when we started organizing, these people were the ones ... some of them were better organized than our own English speaking people at that time.
MB: Did the Chinese ever strike?
JC: No. We never, no. No, not at my time or any time. As far as Chinamen are concerned, the only place I've seen Chinamen work was by 'em boilers. There was no Chinamen working in the mines in my time.
MB: No. 1917 past, wasn't it.
JC: That's right. We outlawed them out of the mines all together because they were afraid that they were the cause of some explosions, you know.
MB: So, when did you start to become active in organizing?

JC: Well, prior to ... in the thirties, I pushed a couple of May Parades here, you know. (laughter). Sure! In the mines. Ya, no foolin'. And I became active because, well on account, like I said, wondering, the mines were forcing us to do something about it. And it wasn't money, it was recognition, and what we wanted, was to be able to talk back or something like that, and at that particular time, you couldn't talk back to a boss. He'd just say, "Get your bucket and go."

MB: humhum.

JC. We were threatened every day. We had the one boss here he was the kind of a man who would come around and say, "You better make it while the sun is shinin'," you know, "or if you don't make it, get your bucket and get out of here." You'r threatened all the time, there was no piece no more, you know, there was no under those conditions.

MB: Did you read to? Was the V2 going?

JC: Sure, we used to sit and read all kinds of literature. the V2. That's why we had this secret meetings in different places, you know, to get the literature.

MB: I got some copies from the Archive, I left them at home. From the old V2.

JC: Do you remember the, I just can't remember the young fellow and this girl - I don't think they were married then, they used to do a lot of work for us around here. Editin' the V2. Do you know who it would be?

MB: Dusty Greenwell gave me a name, but I can't remember it.

JC: Dusty was pretty young.

MB: Oh, yes. It would be --- his mother would have told him. Maybe.

JC: Ya. Well, ya. Anyway, going back into the organizing, we had quite a time organizing, here, you know, and two of our boys never did get back in the mine. There was blacklist, you know, and that.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 1.
BM: What was that what you were going to say?

JC: Two of the boys that never did go back in the mines was a young fellow of the name of Charly Dint and the other one was Fred Wilson. I don't know wether you know Fred Wilson.

BM: Oh, yes.

JC: Did you? Oh, well, Fred and I worked together. Fred and I worked together, you know. He was really dynamite was Fred.

BM: He ended up committing suicide.

JC: I know, I know. I'm sure sorry to hear that. Ya, Fred and I worked together in Number 1. We worked together when we were almost ready to take the fire boss and destroy him. That's how bad it was. You know, the boss got so bad, that ... the bosses organized the unions here.

MB: humhum.

JC: They organized the unions. The men didn't organize the unions. We were just, you know, forced by management, no question about it.

MB: What conditions did you work under as far as the ...

JC: Well, one of the sad things about... in the mines that I found was the treatment of the horses and mules, you know. You had to drive these horses and mules, and kill them, if necessary, to make the work. And that was, you know, kind of inhuman, the treatment there. And then again, by the same token, the horse was more valuable to them than you were,. If you killed a horse, then ... look out, you know. But some of the conditions, when you look back safetywise, you know, I would say that we were way behind the \( \frac{1}{8} \) ball in safety.

MB: Were you?

JC: Oh, sure. Certainly. I think, it's only just a while age that more men lose their lives. You know, because we took so many chances. And you were in the dark, you'r in the dark. It is different work in the coal mine now, working in the daylight were you can see the danger, you can spot danger more quickly, you know. There was a big risk going down in the
coal mine.

MB: How did you feel when you first went down?

JC: Well, pretty good. Pretty good, I was a kid, you know. When you are a kid, you just fall into a lot of things. If you were old enough you’d have more sense you wouldn’t do it. (chuckle) You know.

MB: Were you ever in any of the disasters?

JC: Yes, I was in Number 10 disaster. I was in the explosion in Number 10 were a few of us were killed. Ya.

MB: What do you remember about that?

JC: Oh, I remember, that I was pretty sick for a year after, ya. And I think we were pretty lucky to get out. As a matter of fact, I was just doin’ it today, I was gonna give you an idea of just what happened. Here is the shaft that they were putting, this is an airshaft going up to the outside for a return, for the return air, and this is a hoist, and this is a rope and here is the cars and here is the fire boss who was Chris Mills, and he had just got his ticket, and he is 33 years of age, he is a young fire boss, you know. I’m not saying, really, blaming him for this, but it could be that this would happen. I was sure it would happen here. And here is Jimmy and he is bringing the cars down. The other man, Jimmy is up here, and when he gets to here, there is a runaway switch here, so he is got to get off there and ring the bell, an electric bell, which sparked of the explosion, right?

MB: Humhum.

JB: You see, these cars come down here and go around to the air, go right outside, there is a big site in here. He is just takin' these cars down to get some empties to go up there to load again. You see, when they got started they need him. And this is exactly what happened. All right now. So, I'm down here. I'm workin' here. What I was doin' I was lentin' a siding here. See, I was a truck layer. I was putting in lenting a side right in here and Bob Good, one of the Good's, was the mechanic for the hoist in here and he was repairing this hoist, and my helper I got an other
truck layer with me and a young boy, a driver as a helper, and the fire boss is just into the door here. He is just inside examining in here, the other fire boss, when this thing happened. Now, what I want to show ya. This here is all solid, eh. This is all solid, that's all solid, and this is the road goin' up there and it goes right out there. Now, when that explosion happens, it goes to the air. Right? And this is the air coming in from the surface. So, when this explosion happened, it went right out there.

But --- if this had been cut through here, this block of rock, well, it's is rock-coal, was opened up and lined up with this, that explosion would have went straight down to there. Would have went down right through the mine; would have picked up more momentum, wherever there was gas and would have kept goin'. And that's the only thing that safed us, in my opinion. Now, that's not authentic, but that's my opinion, that that's what happened.

MB: And Jack Gilmore was on the Draeger team that time?

JC: Well, they'd come in later, ya. Draeger and Jack.

MB: So, what happened then immediately?

JC: Well, what happened. See, the fire boss come through here and he got a hold of us. As soon as we felt that explosion, we knew that there was something wrong. See, the air was cut off here right away. With the explosion going out to the air, it just blocks it right of and momentarily you can't breath, and you feel like kind of gas. Well, that's what happened. The fire boss heard that and he come through, a fellow of the name of Archie, he is dead now. As a matter of fact, I'm the only survivor, alive, left. They are all dead. But this fire boss come through. He says, 'what the hell is goin' on?' So he says, "come on," and he gets us and he takes us up right out up in to here, into the road where the explosion had gone out. Well, when we go up here, there is a lot, I don't what we could call it, dust and stuff, and we are having a hard time. Well, I'll tell you right now, I was hangin' on a'old and the goin' down there (chuckle) because we had a little bit of
smoke collected since ... So we get up in there. We went out and as soon as they back truckin' in here and found he was killed right here.

So, I'll be right out the shaft, this is the way to go, right out to the surface. And I went out and as I'm goin' out, I meet Bill Frew -- the manager coming in. Now, the only thing that saved Bill Frew in my opinion, was that, when you go up here, out this level, that's what they call the main and tail going out, and after you go out so far, then it starts to rise, what they call the diagonal slope, that's the main slope goin' out to the out side. So, we go to the outside and Bill Frew - right up on this slope there is what they call a pump station, a pump is acting up. So, when he was coming down, he heard the pump acting up, so he goes to investigate the pump, and he is foolin' around with the pump for a while, but suddenly he realizes that there is something wrong. He said this particular place where the explosion happens. So, I'm on my way out and I meet him. He says: "hat's goin' wrong?" I says; "well, I think we had an explosion." So I says, "I'm goin' out to get Joe Wilson." Joe Wilson was arriving at the lamp cabin, and this is a long way, and I'm in my shirt sleeve. I never even put my shirt on, we just stood there, workin', you know. So, I go all the way to the lamp cabin to get Joe Wilson. And in his car we come right around South Wellington Way come in to Number 10 mine. You wouldn't know about that. But anyway. The lamp cabin was from here to oh, almost over to the fire hall, all the way, where I had to go and Joe just arrived when I got there, and when I told him, well, he kind of panicked too, you know. and we got down there. Anyway, I figured that Joe Wilson went up in here. He goes up into here and he and I think he got a bit of gas too, because Joe died shortly after that, you know. He was just a young man too..

MB: Is that right.

JC: But this is exactly what happened there in Number 10. But, of course, I guess you can ... I have to say, you know, sincerely, that inexperience, as far as -- it could have happened to any fire boss, I guess -- but the thing to do is
to examine for gas before you .... Nevertheless, if gas was there, there
should never have been an electric bell up here, it should have been a
pull bell., you pull, instead of...you know and then they wouldn't have
got that spark, you see. That spark that....
MB: That happened on a Sunday morning?
JC: Sunday morning, ya. And I was out. I used to work a lot of Sundays.
Puttin' in extra work on sidings. Things like that.
MB: On Saturday night, they had worked and hurried up and set the shut off
or something?
JC: Well, nobody expected them to blow through. They didn't expectin' them to
blow through to make, that's what they call an air shaft.
MB: Humhum. And Jack says he wasn't called to the inquest.
JC: He wasn't called?
MB: He wasn't called to the inquest.
JC: See, one of the things is, they try to cover up everything, you see.
I had occasions where ... one of the worsed things you could do in a coal mine
is report gas, you know, they hated that. The boss doesn't want to be, you know
have anything to do with things like that. It has to be said, I think, that
lack of experience is responsible for all these deaths that are caused
in the mine, you know, or neglect or just , eh, exploitation, I guess.
MB: Because they might go down there too.
JC: Ya. they don't seem to realize that's their lives too. You know, instead
of your's, you know.. And of course, mass production was all production,
you know, the emphasis put on production. They don't care about people's lives.
Apparantly. You know, this is my impression anyway.. Like I say, you know,
all the chances that people take to make a livin'. Just to make a bare
existence. I don't mind if they are makin' hay, eh. If you were
really compensated, like a hockey player, goin' out there breakin' his
neck for a million dollars, that's fine. But what about the people that is
playing hockey for little and then break their leg, eh? And get nothing.
Like my son in law. I got a son in law. he's been off now playing for Harmac
and broke his leg and had to have it rebroke again (chuckle), because he is in
that 10% that don't heal right away. You know, a slow healer. But, you know,
when you start comparing, you know, all these things, a lot of things don't make sense. Especially in these days and age too, now, when I find, as far as organized labour, like I say, I was president of the miners' union. But one thing I say about the miners' union, that the differential never changed. I don't know, if you people are familiar with the differential that is takin' place now, which is dividing a lot of the working people.

MB: Yes. Humhum.

JC: Do you realize what I'm talking about?

MB: Yes, I do.

JC: Ya. The differential. That's what I'm concerned with, because it's sad when you look back over what was there when you, when I left. When I left the miners' union in 1938, the first agreement was signed by the miners' union and we had a lot of adjusting to do to start and correct basic wage. The dollar differential was created at a $1.61 a day. $1.61 a day, not an hour, a day, between the high and the low. O.k. I'm saying between a miner and a driver or a labourer, eh. So, you take that now: from 1928 to 1939 when the mines were finished, the differential was still a $1.61, believe it or not. $1.61. I give you a comparison. When I was the president of the ... when I founded the Schoolboard employee's union when I left the mines in 1952 to go to work for the School District as a janitor in the senior highschool, which I become the supervisor later on, when I went there when I was the president of the union, I took the Schoolboard union out of the City union and formed our own School Board Employee's Union, and I was the president for over nine years before they made me a foreman, the differential was 34 cents an hour.

MB: O God

JC: between a maintainance man and a janitor. You know what it is today? I got the figures. It's over $2.48 an hour between the high and the low. And that is over $.5,000.00 a year, more money than they earned in a year.

MB: Right.
JC: The differential is more than they earned. Now, this is all stupid unions they got, as far as I'm concerned.

MB: Well, it's the same in the logging industry, the chokermen and the....

JC: Absolutely. They are dividing their own membership. Dividing their own membership. And as far as I'm concerned, the unions have been used by management. Management is been using the unions, you see, we couldn't win that way. And if these people had stayed the same way as the miners' union, the differential would be the same. I'm not against the differential. But how much? But how much do I get differential. It's insane. The carpenters are gettin' that much better and these helpers are gettin' worse. So, you know, it don't make sense.

MB: Well, now, 1938, when you were starting to organize, what about the Chinese and that, did they get less?

JC: Ya, they were under wage.

MB: Could you raise that up or what?

JC: I show you. I have an agreement here.

MB: Did you have Chinese working down here too?

JC: No.

MB: Just in Cumberland.

JC: I can't remember. I didn't know much about Cumberland in that day.

MB: Yes, they did. But that's long ago.

JC: Here you are. Chinese Labour: All common Chinese labour $8.16 per day of eight hours, Chinese trimmers $1.11 and 3/8th per hour. Chinese trimmers, they worked on the surface. So, they were under the agreement too, you know, they were members of the union. As a matter of fact, we've got Chinamen that are getting the union welfare pension.

MB: Is that right.

JC: Sure.

MB: What is a trimmer?

JC: Well, that's trimmin' coal when they were loadin' ships.

MB: Oh, that's the first time that I hear that term.
So, you had. There is still Chinese around here. Old time coal miners, or?

JC: You see, there is the agreement signed by myself.

MB: Oh, yes. Signed on behalf on the united mine workers of America, district 18, Edward Boyd, William Uhr, he is now the president of district 18, Boyd is dead, of course. Cameron is dead, Bond is dead, Brice and I are still around.

MB: What year was this by the way?

JC: This is 1950 to 1951 agreement. I just wanted to give you an idea, when we started talkin' about the classification what they created over the years now. All the different classification for the benefit of the high \[ \text{categories in here. Here is the coal miners. Now, the highest paid man is a rock man. A man that's drivin' the rock tunnels = $11.96. That was their wage. The drivers and rope riders, that is the haulage on the coal or rock or whatever, you see, that's $10.35. That is a differential of a $1.61, and that is all the differential there was. Now, let's take a look in the categories now. All these surface men. All these different classifications. Read them all. They're paid less than miners underground, which it should be. You know what I mean. The highest paid man on the surface, and we have what, let's read something, you have blackssmiths, locomotive engineers, locomotive firemen, conductors, head breakmen, hoistlers, wharf labourers, electricians' helpers, machinists, truck drivers, boiler makers, riveters, boiler maker helpers, blacksmith again, carpenters, all the categories that are really high paid people now, and the differential was no difference between these people and the miners. This is an industrial philosophy. This is a craftphilosophy, this is industrial, you see. And these people were all happy, they were all happy with this.}

MB: This was when all

JC: That's right, CIO, ya. And these people, well, they could see what they were, mechanics and electricians. But what do they get now? These people are way up there $.35,000.00 a year now.

MB: Yes.

JC: You know. These people. These kind of people. We classify them, you see.
You see, one of the things, that I accuse the management myself using the unions to gain their own ends. Now, I'm not talking about the owners, I'm talking about management. Management never were organized, right? We was the only people that organized. So, they used us as an organization to gain their own ends. And by reclassifying, say, for instance, I'm a manager, or something, and I'm not satisfied with my salary, the only thing I got to do is to get somebody, that I'm boss of, in a higher bracket. Once he get in a higher bracket, then yours is automatic, isn't it? It's that simple. And that's what's been goin' on for years. That's why we are so lop sided, that it smells.

That's my candid opinion!

MB: Now, there is something in here that I saw: Posslers, what are they?
JC: Posslers?
MB: Ya, that's in there.
JC: Posslers, (Hasslers) they would clean out boilers and that on the locomotives.

MB: Oh,, so nothing to do with animals?
JC: No, no, no. It's blow jobs (downs). When they are blowin' down they're cleaning out the locomotives. There is every category you want, in here, you know: painters, pile drivers, brick layers, plumbers
MB: Car greasers
JC: Everything. We had all these people under this one agreement. We sent an agreement for everybody. And they were happy with it. Now you got a muligan of agreements.. Lot of the surface categories here they can get out on strike every time they want. And this issad, you know.
MB: So, when you got your agreement signed, did you have days off to go to conventions or anything like that.
JC: Oh, yes. Sure, we had that on the agreement. Oh, ya. No problem about that.
MB: And where did they have their conventions?
JC: In Calgary, Alberta. That's district 18, Alberta. District 26 is in Nova Scotia. The Eastern provinces. You see, Canada was split in two districts. John L Lewis, of course, was the boss of the whole lot. We were governed by John L. Lewis, the international.
MB: Is that right?
JC: Oh, certainly.
MB: I thought, John L. Lewis ...
JC: No, John L. Lewis is CIO. Absolutely. He is the man that hired ...
You see, all district representatives, like district 18 and district 26, they were appointed by John L. Lewis, they were all appointed. He was strictly communist, I guess. Sure. But it worked. It worked good. It worked good, as far as I'm concerned. Like I say, the differential, the differential $1.61, my good God, it's $2.00 and $3.00 and more, the differential today is an hour, not a day, it's an hour. $5,000,00 a year differential between, if you are the carpenter and I'm your helper, so you got $5,000 more every month (year), I'm gettin' better very time. Every time there is an a percentage increase, I go up and you go down. You got an increase but you are still goin' down, because I'm goin' up higher.
MB: Did any of the... from district 26 come over here?
JC: Oh, ya. Every time we went into negotiation, they'd always come. We always had representation, when we went into negotiation. When we had our district convention, we'd have our wage scale convention in Alberta, eh, and all the local mines, Valley, Fernie and all those locals would come to the convention, all the delegates from each local would come into that convention, and they would do their demands, eh. Maybe one local would come in with $3.00 a day more. Another one $2.00 a day more. Another one maybe a $1.00 a day, whatever. And the convention, the resolution committee, which I was on every year, we would turn that down and arrive at a figure for everybody, and then we'd take it into a convention and have it passed by all the delegates and then we are homefree.
MB: So, the miners back East had the same wage scale as the miners here?
JC: Not necessarily, no, no, no. We never had nothin' to do with 'em back there. They were a separate unit all together. District 26. Ya.
MB: Were they lower then?
JC: I don't know. I guess, they could be lower back there. Because, you see,
we never had any coordination at all with district 26. Unless there was an internation convention where they went to Illinois to have an internation

MB: This is why I thought the standard of living was better out here.

JC: Always, always. I think they were lower than we were, to tell you the truth, ya.

MB: And the reason was because of the miners?


MB: So, everybody benefited when the miners got a pay increase, stores, businesses, everybody?

JC: Absolutely. Surely. Especially the stores because they up the prices as soon as everybody gets an increase, don't they? You know, what I mean. As a matter of fact, they are way ahead at you.

MB: I know. (laughter)

JC: The are way ahead at you. That's why the miners, the workers have to go up. But I think, in this day and age, you know, when we start talking about the cost of living and then the other wages, like the cost of living is goin' up 8. something, and wages are only goin' up 7. something well, that is not a true indication at all. Everybody is not makin' $30,000.00 a year, you know, they forget about the people that is unemployed, the people that is on old age pension, you know. I'm not suggestin' that we are not better of today what we were 30 years ago or 40 ago, we are. I agree. I know, I wouldn't go back to the hungry 30ies or stuff like that. But by the same token their is a lot of basic inequality, and the differential is too great. I swear by that. I can't conceive unions that are so gullible as to go out and negotiate contracts on a percentage basis. You know, specially, less use the word "essentiability"(?), eh, essential, if we were all essential to that industry, why should there be such a big differential. We all shop in the same stores, we all have the same desires, you know, we all like bacon, and it's all the same price for everybody. So, you know, to me, that's why I think that we had gone wrong, and I have to submit that I had a little bit to do with it when I was the president of the union too,
I didn't believe in the percentage increase, even when I was with the School district. Like I told you, when I left the School district in 1961, I negotiated a contract for 1962, and the differential was 34 cents. 34 cents an hour.

I got it right here. 1961 was 34 cents an hour, eh. Ya, the yearly differential when I left was 707.16 per year between a maintenance man and a full time janitor. And today the differential - I just interviewed a guy, as a matter of fact, I went up to Barsby School, and met a friend of mine who was in charge, as a matter of fact, I was in charge of that school once myself at one time, and write up CH contract, and this is what I'd come up with. There is the differential now: 2.45 $ per hour as against 34 cents.

You know, this is terrific, you know. And this is the differential: $5,112.00 a year according to the agreement. That's really more money than we ever got when I first started high school (working) in 1952, I worked there for $185.00 a month. $185.00 a month. Well, I had to a lot of work in the union, boy, to get that straightened out. People that were working in the six room school were getting more money than we as a full time janitors in the senior high school.

MB: Boy.

JC: You know. I was cleanin' over 40 rooms (14?) a day, up there, for $185. I sure worked hard on that. But anyway. So, that's it. So, I left the mines here in - when the Number 1 closed, when the Number 1 mine closed, I was looking after the railroad from Number 1 mine right through to Protection. That was my job looking after the main road, the main motor road. Ya, I looked after that for three and a half years.

MB: What was that job then?

JC: Truck laying. Looking after the repairs of that truck, keepin' that truck in repairs. That motor was running through from Protection mine to Number 1 to be hoisted. And I looked after that for three and a half years. And when it caved in and it started to spill and they had to close it down, I - they went after me to go to Reserve mine before this happened - and I wouldn't leave Number 1 because it was in pretty bad shape, they were takin'
what they call the counter pillars out and the main road was eaving off so we had to do a lot of re-laying, you know, grading, you know, and re-laying and puttin' the truck right that the motors could run through there otherwise they wouldn't make it. So, I stayed there just a little bit too long. So, what really happened, when the crush come, Bill Frew was the boss, you heard of Bill Frew, Bill come to me and he said,'Well, he said,'you might as well go to Reserve,' he says, they......

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 11

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JC: September, is Labour Day, we never recognized that day. We recognize Mayday, cause that's Mayday in the old country, in Great Britain. But they figur, well, that's Mayday in Russia too, but that didn't face on us, because the workers in Great Britain celebrate Mayday on the first of May. This labour day here, the first Monday in September, eh, that was the Liberal Government that brought that out in British Columbia. And we never recognized that, we always recognized the first of May, us miners. Miners' day is the first of May not the first Monday in September, brother. And I marched in a couple of parades in Nanaimo.

MB: Did you?

JC: Sure.

MB: What was the theme on your float then?

JC: Oh, God.

MB: Or one of them?

JC: We had the Indian, you know, a man dressed as an Indian, and he would be
Coal Tyee, and then big Sandy Anderson was a blacksmith on there, and a young fellow, Bill Bigs (?) was on there, and the only thing we had was celebratin' the hundred years of coal mining from Vancouver Island.

MB: Was he related to Hershel Biggs, this Bill Biggs?

JC: Could be, you know.

MB: Big family?

JC: Biggs from Northfield, oh ya.

MB: Now, what about the women's auxiliary?

Did you have one?

JC: Ya. We had a lady's auxiliary, I showed you the picture.

MB: How did they form that?

JC: Well, I wasn't the president of the union when they formed that. That was done before I became president. They formed it on their own. Owing to the constitution of the coal miners, you know. The united mine workers. They had to go accordin' to the constitution. I don't know whether they had a constitution of their own or not. We only had one little time for the miners and we had a strike in 1948 were they were down there and brought coffee and sandwiches, you know, while we had the strike on.

MB: Did you?

JC: Oh ya.

MB: What strike was that then?

JC: 1948, we went on strike for a while.

MB: The coal miners?

JC: Yes. Oh, ya. We had a strike in 1948. Didn't last very long.

MB: There weren't too many mines working then, were they?

JC: No. No. No.

MB: And, who were some of the ladies in that auxiliary?

JC: Well, I told you Mrs. Raffle. Mrs. Raffle was the president. And then, of course, the others was miners' wives. They had a lot of women in there. Actually, it was a social thing for them, you know. And I showed you the picture of the banquet they have when they
MB: They weren't any speakers or public speakers?
JC: No. It was just a social evening, you know.
MB: Hummm. And they didn't have a hard time to organize?
JC: No, no way.
MB: No intimidation.
JC: No, no way. There was nothing like that there.
MB: Because sometimes, I thought for a woman being in the auxiliary was a sign that her husband was doing organizing the union or being a union member?
JC: No, the union was fully recognized. We were a recognized organization before they ever formed any auxiliary. They had the liberty to do that without any harassing or anything, you know what I mean?
MB: Hummm. So, you were busy working underground trying to form a union?
JC: Before we come out in the open, ya. We had to do that.
MB: And they ...
JC: They weren't organized at all. We didn't have an auxiliary then.
MB: No.
JC: They didn't have a women's auxiliary during (the time) we organized. They established themselves well after we got organized, a recognized union.
MB: But I suppose, there would be some kind of get-togethers of like-minded people, like whoever you...
JC: I don't think so. Not what the women were concerned. I think the women were left right out there out of the organizing. There was no women involved in that.
MB: Is that right?
Well, Ellen Greenwell, before she died, she said, that in those days, she said, unions were all men's business.
JC: Certainly. We never bothered with women at all. We didn't trust women. They talk too much (laughter). This was all secret, you know. As a matter of fact, I had trouble - I had to go after a man that we thought was gonna
squeal on everybody, and I had to go and put him in his place. This is very sick because you couldn't breath organization in those days or else...
get your bucket and get out of here. So, it was really something. You know that we organized and come out in the open with less than around 30%.
MB: Yes.
JC: 30%.
MB: Yes. I heard that.
JC: That's right, absolutely. We had to take that chance whether ... either it goes or no.
MB: That was a victory.
JC: Ya, I belonged to a lot of unions before the united mine workers, you know.
MB: Did you.
JC: Oh, sure. I tried to form the one big union and I belonged to seamen's union
MB: Is that right.
JC: Sure. I paid union dues when I was workin' on the boats. All of us didn't pay union dues. There is only some of us.
MB: That OBU was that ...
JC: One big union.
MB: Is that the, what they call the
Well, how did you get into that?
JC: I don't know. Just a fellow come who organized it. That's all, comin' ask ya if you wanted to belong to the organization.
MB: You couldn't have been very old?
JC: And I was brought up with ... my dad organized in the old country before he come here and traditionally speakin' you had to belong to a union, you know, when I was a kid. I paid union dues when I was seventeen years old.
MB: In the OBU?
JC: No. In the seamen's union.
MB: There a not too many members of the old OBU left.
JC: No, I guess, not, eh. I think, George Price's father, I think was an
organizer for the One Big Union.
MB: Is that right? I always thought that they came up from the States, you know.
JC: Well, no. Yes, sure, they representative came probably from the States, ya. That is one of the things we have to admit, without the States, we wouldn't have organized yet. If it hadn't been for John L. Lewis, we wouldn't be organized here, as the miners. It's hard to say, some people think I don't know, I guess, I guess, the times and the time was right. I always say the time was right, we were kicked around, we were threatened in our jobs every minute of the day and this is the reason that organized labour took place. Otherwise it would never happened. Because it wasn't a matter of money. Wages wasn't we thought about. It was a matter of principle and dignity and people wantin' to look one another in the face. You know.
MB: Because some of these conditions where they worked 14 inch, laying on their stomachs and ...
JC: Sure.
MB: ... wet and water ...
JC: I wouldn't say that. Miners, sure, they might not like it, but they took it, they took their licks, you know. But they didn't want somebody comin' tell them to get a move on every time of the day, you know, and shuffin' them around and threaten them. It's this continued threat, you know. And somebody could come around and say, "Well, the mine is gonna close down."
Threaten with closures. When I started in the coal mines, I thought, this is forever. You know, this is a job forever. This mine is gonna last forever, you know. That's how stupid, I guess, I was in that time. [chuckle] But I lived through an awful lot of uncertainty, I tell you, before I quit coal mining.
MB: Can we ask you a few personal questions now? When did you meet you wife?
JC: When I met my wife? I met my wife when she was sixteen years of age.
MB: Where?
JC: Right here.
MB: humhum.
JC: Right here. She was born on this hill.
MB: Oh, for Godness sake.
MB: What was her name?
JC: Keast. Celia Keast.
MB: I've been talking to Mr. and Mrs. Keast. Maybe it's another. He was a miner.
JC: Joe?
MB: He is not very well. He has emphysema.
JC: That's right. That's my brother in law. Ya, that's Joe. He was in the hospital, not long ago. I was up to see him when he was in the hospital.
MB: I phoned him when he came out.
JC: Yes. Oh, ya. He was born on this hill too.
MB: He could talk that day but I could still hear him...
But I've to go and see her because he can't talk that long, he get's too excited, you know. Where did you live and you married?
JC: I build this house 1932. I build two rooms here and added on every time we had an addition in the family. (chuckle) (laughter)
MB: And how many were that? How many did you have?
JC: Three. We had three. We lost our first little girl. That's her there.
MB: Humhum.
JC: That's my wife there on the hill,
MB: Yes.
JC: Ya.
MB: So, you had a lovely place to live, you know.
JC: Ya. We stayed with her mother for a little while, you know, lived with her parents and I tell you the truth, you know. I've been out of work,...
This is in the hungry thirties when we got married, you know, this is hard times.
MB: Oh, ya.
JC: And I was out of work. As a matter of fact, when I left the boat, when I
quit working the CPR, I went to Britannia Hardrock. I went to hard rock mine. I worked in Britannia for fourteen months. I came down on a holiday, I was takin' a holiday, didn't quit, would come down on a holiday, and my brother was working at the Extension mine, and he was diggin' coal up there. And one of the truck layers was out hunting and he fell over bluffer (?) and broke his arm or something, and my brother was a truck layer, and they asked him to go out and lay truck instead of diggin' coal. Well, diggin' coal, you were on contract, eh. He didn't want to go layin' truck on basic rate. So, when I went down to Nanaimo, I phoned him, and he said, "My God," he said, "I was just gonna phone Britannia to get ya to come down here." I says, "Why?" He says, "Well, I want you to go to work in Extension, in Extension mine." I says, "What doin'?" He says, "Layin' truck." He says, "... He told me what had happened. I says, "Well, I don't know." So, I was gettin' tired of Britannia anyway. What had happened in Britannia, they had changed the mines one day. This was the depression days, you know. And they started cuttin' down, laid off about a hundred men, they used to have about a hundred surplus men, there you know, just for people goin' down to Vancouver talking trips and that. So, I had been workin' out on what they call Precipitation Plant, outside, I wasn't in the mine at all. So, when this new management took over, I had to go back in the mine to work. So, I was workin' drift, what they call the thirty-onehundred drift, a lot of smokin', you know and blastin', gettin' headaches and ... So I said to my brother, "Ya, good idea, I'm gonna quit up there." So, I worked in Extension mine for about four months, and then I had a hernia operation, I had to go to the hospital. So, after I got finished with the hospital, I went over to my people in Vancouver, so I stayed with my mother in Vancouver for convalescent, you know, after I got the operation, and when I come back, when I was ready to go to work again, Extension mine closed. So, there is no jobs. You couldn't get a job for a lot of money. So, anyway, what happened, I was ready to pack my back and start travellin', when my brother left there and he got a job as a
fire boss down in Number 1 mine, and he was workin' in a place where this
driver got his leg broke, a friend of mine too. He got his leg broke, so
my brother said,"Well, this is a job for my brother Johnny," you know. So
got to the management right away. So, he says, ,"Yes, to can dome at it for
two months," he says;"until the other guy comes back to work", so I got
a job through him gettin' his leg broke. That's how bad is was, you know.
So, that job turned out to be that I was there when Number 1 mine closed
down., cause as soon as I went down there, they wanted me to go truck layin',
of course. My brother was a truck layer, I had to be a truck layer, you know,
and I turned out to be the head truck layer for the Canadian Collieries, later.
Ya.
MB: When you worked in Britannia, did you have gas masks, or not?
JC: No, no, no.
MB: So, you just breathed it right down.
JC: Well, no. See, the had no way of ventilatin' the mine up there in
Britannia and the hardrock, you just had to try to get out of the dust
That was all mostly powder, powder smoke.
MB: Yes.
JC: So, you got out in the clear...
MB: But you would be covered with white rock or something, eh?
JC: Oh, I had a lot of headaches, you always got headaches. This powder-smoke
you know, gives you a headache. Especially if you are makin' primers up.
You see, what you had to do as a mucker, you always got all the powder ready
for the people who was gonna fire, you know. Like, throwin' the,
MB: Did I see 'mucker' in the coal mining...
JC: Well, mucking is, ... mucking were the brushers, goin' and fire a bunch
of shuts and then there is brushing and blowing up and muckers go in there to
muck it up.
MB: There used to be a column in the miners' paper called "The tired mucker"
didn't there?
JC: Ya. I think so.
MB: Ya, I remember that, ya.
JC: Ya, but when there was no work, I went to Cumberland and worked for a while
in 1939. I went up to Cumberland, Jim Quinn up there got me .... I met him down here at the Draeger thing. You always have the First Aid competition and the Draeger competition.

MB: Pretty soon, now, eh. In May, isn't it.

JC: Ya. It is May. I think so. I guess, they have it every year. Jim Quinn, the manager of the Cumberland mining, Bill Roper, a relation of mine, he was the manager here for a while, he introduced me to Jim Quinn. He asked me if I would go up here. That was when they opened the million dollar mystery mine, what they call Number 8 mine in Cumberland. So, I went up there and put all the heavy steel in there and that and I worked fourteen months doin' that.

And then I come back in 1940, in Number 10, I worked there til 1952, well I worked in the Bright mine too, I put the truck down in the Bright mine, All truck work. Heavy work. I wouldn't go back.

MB: I know there is different gages.

JC: Oh ya.

MB: How much would one of those rails weigh?

JC: Oh, there is different kind of steel. I used , I used 12 pound steel in you could bent over string, you know. But I've put in 60 pounds steel in Number 8 mine in Cumberland. 60 pounds steel and 30 pounds steel in the ... all 30 pounds steel and 40 pounds steel, right from Number 1 right through to Protection, that's the main motor road. That's what I used to work with. 30 pounds steel.

MB: Now, what does that mean, 30 pounds steel?

JC: Well, that's 30 pounds to the foot

MB: So, and the trucks were...

JC: oh, 3 inch gauge oh, 3 foot gauge I should say. 3 foot gauge and then you had to bug your holes with 2 foot 6 gage. We used to have to bug your holes up and the men bring the coal down in small buggies and dump 'em in the shute and then they'd go down the shute and load into the big cars, you know.

MB: Humhum. Ya. There is a lot to know about that truck laying.

JC: oho, you better say, I'm tellin' you. I did some great jobs in Number 10 mine. I've put in there too. To keep the cars rollin' around.
MB: Is that right?
JC: Ya. But, like I say, if I had my time to go, I never would do that again.
MB: No.
JC: I put jobs in there, that I should have been chargin' a lot of money for.
MB: I'm sure.
JC: And not just gettin' a basic day tate, you know. Crazy.
MB: Because, that's really specialized work.
JC: Oh, absolutely.
MB: Everything depends on that.
JC: Darn right.
MB: All these switches...
JC: Switches ... thousands and thousands of tons of coal went around, ya.
And when you got
that's really something. Ya. Well, that's all over with now, as far as the coal mines are concerned.
MB: I dont' know about that. There is an awful lot of interest in it now.
Speculation, up there in Cumberland.
JC: Ya. I could appreciate that. They got some virgin ground. But if they thinkin' about goin' into old workings, they better forget about it.
MB: 90 foot seam up there, eh.
JC: Where about?
MB: North of Cumberland.
JC: Oh.
MB: North of Campbell River, pardon me.
JC: Is that right, eh.
MB: Hmphum. That is what it said in the paper.
JC: Well, as long as they got virgin ground, but no kid of mine would ever go in the coal mine.
MB: Why?
JC: Because I don't think ... it would be the last occupation I would look for.. Coal mining. Anything is better than goin' down there. The only people that I ever hear sayin' the like to go back in the coal mine is people that was on contract. Where there is a dollar to be made, you know, money.
They are the only people. That's the sad part about coal mining, as far as I'm concerned. That is one strike against it for me. The men were never paid what they should have been paid. They never got paid more than existence, in some classifications it still is existence, you know.

I don't know how they use the word essential. I think we are all essential. (Laughter of interviewer).

MB: Ya.

JC: Well, you hire a number of people to run your plant, there are all essential. There are all treated essential. That is the best equality you get. You know.

MB: That's right.

JC: That's right. That's my theme. My part in the union, I can say that I failed in some respect. Not enough the essentiability of parity. You know. That's what it amounts to is parity. And this is where the big trouble is today. This is where we are up, this is the thing we are up against today, is parity. People that are well off and people that are not well off. That's right. I don't think anybody can dispute that.

By the same token they are using the argument, they are better off than any country in the world. That's true, that's true. But it doesn't rule out that we have people suffer in this country the same as in other countries. Right.

MB: You don't have to go very far either to see it.

JC: No, way, no. That's right. No. I got two sons in law working at the pulp mill and I'm sure there is a two dollar differential between the two of them. See, one of the things that I believe in, that all of these classifications they use, that we mentioned here today, that anyone of us could have done any one of those classifications. All you have to be is a normal person. You don't have to be above normal to be a good carpenter, to be a good electrician, to be a stationary engeneer, or a locomotive engeneer. All you got to have is a, you know... to be normal, and to be able to read and write. To write an exam and study. If your father has been
an engineer, in all probability, you'd been an engineer. Just because
my father was a miner, I went into the mines. But if my father had been
a carpenter, I could have been a carpenter. I worked in Vancouver, when
I was convalescing, at that time, when I went over with the hernia operation
I worked for three months with a carpenter over there. I'd never build nothing
in my life. I went over and I worked three months with a carpenter in
Vancouver as his helper for $2.50 a day. This is in 1931. $2.50 a day.
Wheeling out, excavating. I wheeled out a man's basement, they were gonna
put a cement fundation there, in this whole house, and do a little renovating.
So, he asks me, if I dig out this basement. And I did that, for $2.50 a day.
Just getting back my strength after the operation.
MB: Ya, well, the miners played the most important role in building this
town.
JC: Sure, they did. We were the first to organize, paved the way for holidays
with pay, that's right. So we have that to be proud of.
MB: You have.
JC: Holidays with pay. Sometimes, I wonder, if that's been abused too, you
know. Sick leave. That's one of the most important clause in any
agreement, is sick leave. Wonderful thing to see that exploited (?) you
know. I put that in the School Board employees contract. A great thing
for gettin' back your health is knowin' that you are not going into debt,
You know (chuckle).
MB: You can be wiped out with sickness.
JC: Oh ya. Darn right. When you figured out our medicare program and for old
people now and pharma care and things like that, you know. We have made
a lot of progress.
MB: In your life time.
JC: In my life time, ya. But we had to organize to do it. A lot of people, you
know, I think, there are still a lot of people in this world, you know,
think that they get their pension cheque from some member of parliament's
pocket. You know, they are so illiterate, there is so much illiteracy, you
know... people really think that, that the government is paying right out
of their pocket, you know. These people are \textit{??} They don't figure it
comes out of taxes or it comes out of ... Some people don't know where it
comes about. And some people say, "Boy, that's a good government," eh. Look, what they give us. What to hell would you've got of them if it wasn't for the opposition down there. Poundin' the way to get those extra slices of bread.

MB: It wasn't handed to us on silver platter.

JC: No, you don't get nothing for nothing. You have to work at it. You have to work for whatever you get. And anybody that got any other idea about that forget about it. You have to work to get anywhere you want to get. So, I'm the kind of person that believes in a good opposition to look after my interest. After battlin' away all my life. I remember my dad telling me, when he come back in the First World War, when I had this affair down the mill, when I was called the Bolshevik, my dad said to me when he come back in 1919 from the First World War, he says, "Listen, son, I'm gonna tell you something, you're not gonna change this world, you know." He says, I'll tell you who it is: He says, "You know all these schools they build and all the universities they are building," he says, "People that comes out of there they gonna change the world." He says, "You don't have to worry about that, they will do it." Which is true, Education, you know. Without that, more people are gettin' educated, you know, every day, kids are smarter today. I see this with my grandkids. They are smarter than I ever was.

MB: Miners' sons and miners' grandsons...

JB: Darn right...

MB: ... going to university.

JB: That's right. What can you say.

MB: Miners were the ones that laid the foundations for it.

JB: Well, I guess, everybody has the attitude I will be doing more for my kid than I have, you know. Sometimes, I think, it's a little bit wrong to assume that, because you can spoil them rotten too, you know. (chuckle) And of course, one of the things, that I find out, that is against ... Well, you just keep your fingers crossed, eh, and hope for the best for the kids, you know, because they go to school and they have to mingle with
other children and you don't know what is gonna happen. There is good kids. I was with the School District for sixteen and a half years. I had a lot to do with kids. I love kids, you know what I mean. Every student that ever come to take to me, boy, I tell you, I used to give them the third degree I said, 'Look it, brother, don't me like me. I was a big fool in my life time. Don't you waste your life. Get in there and get to school. Get that highschool diploma, boy, whatever you do. Get that and then you can do what you want after that." I regret not goin' to highschool. I wish, I'd had that, because my experience and everything, like being in the unions, like, I was the head of two unions, and they I'd become the supervisor for the janitorial department for the school district here, and the worse thing I ever had to do was to go to Burnaby and take school. They send me over to take school, way out of my head.

MB: Was that right.

JC: Oh, ya. I spend two weeks over there. A week one time, studyin', which I say everybody should have, is human relations. That's the course, that I think, that every kid, that goes to school, should study human realtions. You study about humanity, and how to treat human beings and how to be treated themself. That's one of the courses I took. And then job evaluation, management, I took all those courses. I got my diplomas for them all.

MB: Ya.

JC: Cleaning. A diploma for cleaning. Well, I'd become the head of the janitorial department for the school district. I something think that they put me out there to get my out of the union. So they could save the differential.

MB: Ya.ya.

JC: I kept the differential down. Because I believe in straight across the board for everybody. How big a piece of cake you got, let's have a lot at it, and chop it up and give everybody the same. You set the differential when you begin. You see, if you are a carpenter and I'm your helper. So, we start of equal. You are the carpenter and I'm your helper. So, there is a differential established between us, because you are the carpenter and rightly so. But, let's keep it that way, forever, eh. Because you are not
goin' get me better. If you are gonna get better, I'm gonna get better too, and the chances are, you are gonna get worse because you are gettin' older, eh. And, you know. That's the way I look at it.

MB: Well, I guess, that's the end on that one on that side, eh.

JC: I should tell you a little story.

MB: Alright.

END OF TAPE 11, SIDE 1

TAPE 11, SIDE 1

JC: When I was looking after the motor at Number 1, sometimes the mine would be off two or three days. And this particular incident, if the mine had been off, and of course, the mules and all that were all down the mine and they have shortcuts for the mules on the motor, they build a barn closer to the workings. When the mines was closed down for three or four days, the would take the mules out of there and take them back into their main barns at the shaft bottom in the mine. So, in this particular incident, the mine had been closed down for about four days, and the men that look after the stables, look after the horses. You know, they have to go and work everyday to feed the horses and mules and so on. They take the motor --- like, instead of goin' and takin' one of the scows in Protection, they'd go down Number 1 mine and take a motor and ride through on the motor. So, this stable boss, we called a broken wale at the half-way, half-way between Number 1 and Protection, and the boss phoned me up to see, I was lookin' after the railroad and I had to go up and fix this rail, put a new rail in there, you know. So, I go out there, and this is on a Sunday, and I'm all by myself, eh, and this is one of the things that should never happened...

MB: No.
JC: Is one man in the mine by himself anyways...

MB: The inspector doesn't allow it, eh.

JC: Ya, that's right. But anyway. I go in there to fix this rail. Now, the mine's been closed down, the mules - the barn is right where, just about, well just down the yard from where I'm working on this rail. In the mines is lots of rats, eh. Lots of rats. So, I started to work. And I'm workin' on this job. I take the motor and go in there, get my equipment and my tools, go in there to repair this job. So, I decided to sit down and eat, I'm tellin' you. If you've ever seen rats and get scared of rats, boy, I'm tellin' you, they were there. The ground was littered with rats. The horses had been away, they got nothin' to eat, you know. And that rats is coming out of this barn, you know. They can smell my lunch, I guess, my open bucket, you know. Boy, I'm pickin' up chunks of rock and coal and throwin' at 'em, you know, they claimin' over the you know, I'm tellin' you, I got so scared, boy, I just closed my bucket and threw it in my car and I start workin', you know, to get the job finished and get out of there. You know. I can rats, but that's one time, that's the only time that I was ever scared in the mine, I'm telling ya. I couldn't work for all the rats around there. (chuckle)

MB: Well, that's a durn good story.

JC: That's a good ending for you. (laughter)