Open Mike Show, Wed. Jan. 17, 1979

Radio CHUB, Nanaimo

Guests, Stan Anderson and Nelson Dean

Now, the lines are open on Open Mike.

Here is your host on Open Mike this afternoon, Larry Thomas.

LT: I don't know whether it is co-incidental with the fact that we had an announcement late yesterday afternoon about the fact that there going to be a new twin theatre built on Victoria Road right above the Douglas mine shaft, which I understand there's very little known about. And the fact that we have Stan Anderson, who who is, not only--

I don't know where he finds the time, frankly, he's very heavily involved with the Old Age Pension/Association and then all of a sudden he turns up as President of the Coal Tyee New Horizons Project, which is a group dedicated to "chronologically setting down forever and always" the history of coal mining in Nanaimo, is that right, Stan?

S: That's right!...xxx xxx correct, yes.

LT: Where are you finding the time?

S: Well, the Coal Tyee group is a pensioner group, mostly all pensioners, and retired miners. So consequently I was automatically implicated in it. In the first place it was brought up by Myrtle Bergren, one of the students at Malaspina College interested in history writing, and she asked me if I would be interested in it, and right away, as soon as I found out it was to do with the retired coal miners, and the pensioners, I automatically said yes. And I attended the first meeting, which there was 15 of us there, and I was immediately elected chairman to conduct the meetings, right off the bat, without even yes or no.

And then I was elected secretary-treasurer. So, we had our first meeting in the early part of December. There was fifteen members there, and plus faculty from the Malaspina College who have agreed to help us with the program. Now the program thus far is to write the detailed history of the miners, of Nanaimo, and Cumberland, Ladysmith area. Mid-Island area.

LT: Going right back to day one?

S: Right. Day one. The discovery of coal in Nanaimo area was first made in 1851. And it was made by a Nanaimo Indian named Coal Tyee.

I think that's how you pronounce it. And it was reported to the Hudson Bay Company, to a Joseph MacKay, in Victoria, who was a clerk at the Hudson Bay out.
The following year, in 1852 the Indian returned back to Victoria with a canoe, loaded with coal, from the Nanaimo area. The coal samples proved to be genuine and they were of good quality. McKay reported this to the Hudson Bay factor, James Douglas, who immediately set out for Nanaimo, which was known as Weytherstone Inlet (?) to investigate the discovery the Indian had reported. It was discovered that a large outcrop of good quality coal, bituminous coal, showed at high water mark. Right now which is near the Malaspina Hotel site. That was the first discovery.

The Indian was rewarded for his find what was more important, he was given the name of "Coal Tyee", or Coal Chief, a title which he proudly bore right up to his death in 1868. That is why we named our group the Coal Tyee Project.

The Hudson Bay Company started operations on the coal deposits on the northern tip of Vancouver Island as early as 1835. At Fort Rupert. They abandoned that program because of the poor working conditions for the miners, and the constant raids by the Indians, at that time.

In 1850, Governor Blanchard was forced to send help to Fort Rupert to quell the riots, and also to settle the labor disputes that arose out of the poor working conditions, for the miners at that time, Boyd Gilmour, a mine expert, came out from Scotland in 1849, and Robert Dunsmuir and family arrived in 1851 and were employed by the Hudsons Bay Company, under contract for three years, at Fort Rupert. And as conditions grew worse at Fort Rupert, they decided to close the mine and transfer operations to Nanaimo. That was in 1852. McKay from the Hudson's Bay arrived in Nanaimo on August the 20th in 1852 and took over the Nanaimo coal area, and in the name of the Hudson's Bay Company. In ten years from the start, Nanaimo boosted a population of some 500 white people and was shipping 18,000 tons of coal per year. In 1862 a new company bought out the Hudson Bay Company's holding known as the Vancouver Coal Mining and Lading Company, who proceeded at once to develop operations on a much larger scale.

Robert Dunsmuir came out first to work as a coal miner. All the coal companies who were operating were bought out by the Canadian Western Fuel Company in 1919. And then bought out again in 1928 by the Dunsmuir interests. The Dunsmuir organization started in 1871, when Lt. Diggle and other British naval officers decided to finance Dunsmuir and opened the Wellington mines.
Dunsmuir bought out his partner in 1883 and operated under the name of Robert Dunsmuir & Sons. In 1899 the company re-organized as the Western Collieries. And in 1910 as the Canadian Collieries Dunsmuir Ltd. It was the largest organization in the field. And they controlled collieries at Cumberland and Tsable River.

I could go on forever on information I have gathered but I do not intend to do so. But, about the middle of December, the 15th or 16th, we formed this group, at the Malaspina College, at the request of Myrtle Bergren. 15 members all told, and we discussed the possibilities of writing the history of the coal miners as it should be told, not leave it to some historian that is going to fictionize it or fantasize it as well.

Myrtle is a mature student at Malaspina College enrolled in the Creative Writing course, and has also been interested in labor history. A large proportion of the members present were all pensioners, and mostly retired coal miners. It has been estimated that some 4500 people were employed in the mines in Nanaimo, and at present not more than a little over 200 are left. But that 200 is spread between Ladysmith, Cumberland, Nanaimo, Parksville- Qualicum. And so what we are trying to do, we are trying to get it all together, the true stories, before it's too late.

At the first meeting, as I explained before, I was elected president, and Nelson was elected vice-president, and Myrtle as the secretary-treasurer.

The aim of the group is to collect all the history of the miners in the mid-island district, transcribe the collection, organize the material into a written record, revealing the social, economic and historic impact of the coal mining activity on Vancouver Island communities. We will publish this in a book form. Preparation of the manuscript for publication is to be done with the help of a manuscript advisory group from the college. The original manuscript will become part of the permanent holdings of the Malaspina College, Library, available to the public as a original source material for future work. Preparation of the manuscript for publication will be done with the assistance of the manuscript advisory group from the college, namely, Clarence Marr, Dep't of History; Kevin Roberts, Dep't of English; Dale Lovick, Canadian Studies.

It is the intention of the group to publish the manuscript with a national publisher, and it is hoped to cover in some detail
the story of the coal mining from Ladysmith to Nanaimo and north to Cumberland, and Union Bay. All miners who have stories to tell, or who have pictures or mementoes etc., this includes the wives and widows of miners, who may have pictures,

Now we would like you to send your name in to Dale Lovick, Humanities area, Malaspina College, 900 – 5th Street, Nanaimo, B.C. Phone Number 753-3245. If you will send your names in to Dale, he will have a project workers who will get in touch to get your story. You don't have to write your story. Your story will be taken down on tape, and will be transcribed on to master tapes, and the tapes will become the property of the Archives in Victoria. They are supplying tapes for us to work with, and the manuscript itself will become the property of the Malaspina College.

The manuscript will be published by a publisher, in book form, by a national publisher. It is hoped to cover in some detail the whole coal mining industry.

Derek Reimer, Director of Aural History from the Provincial Archives in Victoria, has volunteered to come up here to Nanaimo on January 20th, Saturday, morning, at 10:00 o'clock, to conduct a workshop for project workers in the techniques of oral history. If any body is interested in taking part in this, any of you younger people who have tape recorders, or if you haven't, we might be able to rustle some up for you, cassette recorders, and if you're interested in attending that, it will start at 10:00 o'clock Saturday morning, and will go through until later on in the afternoon. This man Derek Reimer is very adept at this type of work, and will give a good training. And then we will send you out to interview these different coal miners, or their wives, or their widows. And if you are interested, give your name in to Dale Lovick, 753-3245. Or attend the meeting at 10:00 o'clock at the Malaspina College cafeteria.

Larry: Any chance you got yourself a tiger by the tail? U cab see what's going to happen. I think you can too. Are you going to be able to put this together in one volume, with the information you're going to get? Let's face it, and probably Mr. Dean will agree, that old coal miners like to talk, they can talk and talk and talk and talk. They can tell you lots of stories. I don't know how big you plan on having this book.

S: Well, if it takes two or three books we'll take it, but I don't think it will amount to that. It will be a fair-sized book. And the
college group will be editing it, and transcribing it down. I know
Nels has quite a few interesting stories, there's one that he told
at one of our meetings. I'd like him to tell it right now.
(to listeners)
L: Okay. We're going to have to take a break. We're going to
have to take a break. We'll get back to these fellows after the
news coming up at one o'clock.
(A good used car, .... etc. advertising)
Now we return to Open Mike and here is your host, Larry Thomas:
We are talking about the history of Mining in the Nanaimo area.
Matter of fact I did have one call while we were off the air, and
they were querying the date and time of that meeting, Stan.
It's at Malaspina College, Saturday, January 20, at 10 a.m. in the
morning.
Stan: We also would like a lot of the miners themselves, or as many
as we possibly could, and possibly their wives, to come, and do some
of this work. As well as some of the younger college people.
L: How did you latch on to Nels Dean here?
S: Well he's an old time miner. (laughter).
L: Just out of curiosity. You were saying this morning Stan, about
them putting the theatre up here on Victoria Road, Nels knows this
area, I think, -- that's the Douglas shaft?
Nels: Yes, there's a slope right down Nicol Street, and the drainage
used to come right down Nicol street on that slope. And the city
used to have to go in and timber that up occasionally. Now I think
they've done away with that drainage, and they've put it all in a
pipeline now.
L: That's right. When you're talking about drainage though, you're
talking about what? The runoff from the street that was going into
that shaft, and gradually just disappearing under the earth somewhere,
right?
Nels: Well, it'd come right down here/ -- oh, over here behind
Simpson's Sears the drain run out, now they got it all paved in
there now.
L: Right.
Nels: And that was all done away with. And they filled that in,
I guess.
L: Any history at all of the Douglas shaft in your own mind? Do
you remember it at all?
L: Was it still operating when you were mining or —

Nels: Oh no, no, no. It was all closed up. No. My mining days was at Cassidy, out at Cranby. And then when that closed down, I went over to Reserve. And then from there up to Cumberland.

L: Okay, now you're talking about Cassidy, I think everybody knows around the area. Where was the Reserve mine?

Nels: Reserve? It was right out you'd think you were looking at it when the pulp mill is there. When you're looking at the pulp mill you'd think you were looking at Reserve mine because it was just — as you go down to Nanaimo river, it was just off to the right — oh, down that road as you turn down towards Raines' farm.

L: What's left? Really? Of — all right we know that for instance the Morden mine — one of the superstructures and so forth is still there. But that's kind of unique, is it not? Because we don't really have that much above ground evidence any more around here.

Nels: Well I wouldn't say that very well. Not above ground, but way out at Cedar district there's plenty of coal under there, where Morden shaft was in a wrong place, really.

L: Really? Where should it have been?

Nels: It should've been over by the Wheatsheaf Hotel.

L: Oh really? --The City got a coal mine, and they don't know it?

Nels: Oh yes. They had plenty of coal over that way. And then they went down to Round Island and put a shaft down there and they got some coal too. Now Round Island is down where the Narrows is.

L: That's right. There's a shaft on Round Island?

Nels: Oh yes. There was. Now, whether they filled it in or not I don't know.

L: And there was a shaft that went under Nanaimo Harbour, came up under what? — Protection or Newcastle, one of those Islands.

Nels: That's Protection you're looking at. Right at that point there, run and the motor level ran right in front of your building here. And the stables for Protection was under the post office. And for the horses and the animals.

L: That would be all flooded in now, I would suspect.

Nels: Oh, it would be all caved in.

L: How many shafts altogether, Stan? You were mentioning a figure.
Stan: So far they've come up with a number of 65 shafts were sunk in this area.

L: Okay, now the project -- and I'll have you go back to this thing from last night, because it becomes a challenge, I think, for not only the people who are building the theatre, but also from your standpoint. They have been trying to find some history, some documentation, or mapping or blueprinting, or whatever, of that Douglas shaft. And they were saying now there isn't any -- and they've tried. Now no doubt you're going to try, because it looks like it's the oldest shaft we've got around here.

Nels: The only place you'll get that is Victoria, and I doubt if there's a record of it. There may be, but I doubt it.

L: So to the best of your knowledge then, as far as Mr. Dean is concerned, it was long worked out when you started mining, some number of years ago, I expect.

Nels: Oh yes, that's right.

L: And it was in fact used as drainage?

Nels: It was just a drainage for the water runoff, in the city.

L: The odd time Nicol street used to cave in, I guess, and they kept filling it up. (laughter)

Nels: Oh, you're right, yes.

L: Well, I don't know where we're going to go with that, but I think, as I say, that's the kind of project you can start and you may never get the answer. It'll be interesting trying.

S: Well, we have one man in our group, Syd Tickle, who is drawing a map, showing all the excavations, that were in this area. Syd belongs to our group, and was an engineer, or something. Syd Tickle.

L: So I suspect that in the case of this particular one, there would be no surviving miners left. I doubt -- anybody who worked there. There may be offspring, sons, daughters, or who may have family diaries or something about it.

Nels: I doubt it. You take Johnnie Baloni now, he's over 90, and he stays in the Occidental Hotel, and he's the only man alive from the old Prechin mine. And that was over by where the ferries come in.

L: Do you recall that closing down? -- No, you wouldn't.

Nels: No, I wouldn't. My dad sunk the shaft over there. And -- oh I don't recall much about it, but I remember they used to ride in a horse and buggy to go to work. In Nanaimo. And thenエく Peck's had a hotel over there. Sid Peck, Claud Peck, and there was one other Peck. I forget what his name was now.
Nels: (cont’d). Peck’s Hotel was where the Japanese cafe is -- what do they call that?
L: The Grotto.
Nels: The Grotto is where the hotel was, yes.
L: And I guess it was just literally surrounded by wilderness at that time, eh?
Nels: Oh yes! It was bush. Oh yes. The miners used to stop there on their way home from work, have a beer, I guess, and carry on.
L: Now, were all these mines competing? Were there other companies or were they all the same company?
S: They were at one time. They were all competing, then they were welded into two or three companies and then eventually the Dunsmuir Collieries took them over. So there was no competition whatsoever.
L: From your standpoint, Mr. Dean, how thoroughly was this area mined out? Is there much left?
Nels: Oh yes. There’s a lot of coal left, you know here.
L: Under the Wheatsheaf Hotel? (laughter)
Nels: Right underneath there, there’s a lot of coal there. In fact one time I was in the Pink Lotus hotel, and there was a fellow come in there, and he wanted to know what I knew about the Cassidy mine, and I told him. He says The Japanese want to know,, and he says, they think they’re going to come over here and do some mining. Well, I says, as far as Cassidy is concerned, I wouldn’t advise them to go in some of the old parts where I worked, but I says, I kindof think a better idea would be go down to Boat Harbour and come back Under this way. In the airport.
L: Under the airport?
Nels: That’s where the coal is, yes.
L: Is there any surface evidence of it down there. Can you walk along and come across any evidence on the surface of this, or do you have to go underground for it?
Nels: No, you wouldn’t find any coal on the surface, but you’d see where there had been mining, and -- no -- over at Boat Harbour there, there is a little sign of an outcrop, and if they went where the outcrop is, and come back this way under the airport, they would get coal.
L: But you can bet your life that somebody else has got the mineral rights.
Nels: And you can bet them other mine is full of water, too! (laughter)
Nels: (cont') : This is how three fellows got drowned up in Peban mine.
See? The mine was full of water, and...
I: What year would that be?
Nels: Oh, I can't tell you now right now, offhand. The secretary's
    got all my notes on that, I told her -- I thought she was going to be
here today -- but however, it doesn't make much difference, but there was
two Shepherds, and Joe Carr, three fellows was drowned in that mine. In'
Peban's mine. They broke through into the old Extension mine. Now, this
Joe Carr, it was too bad he lost his life -- but the day before he just
said he didn't like the smell of this place. He said, it doesn't just smell right. So he went out there for his tools and he
got drowned while he was out there trying to take his tools out.
I: What caused the flood?
Nels: Well they broke through into the old Extension workings.
I: Which had already been flooded?
Nels: Oh yes, yes. The inspector, later -- he died, and I think he died
just through worrying over what would happen, because they should have
known better than go in there. This should have all been -- a long drill
hole ahead, and then if they'd hit water, they knew it was there. But
they didn't do that.
I: And just co-incidentally they were in there at the same time same
time as this thing decided to let go?
Nels: That's right. Well, I don't know whether he's still alive, now or
not. At Extension. I forget what his name is now, but it was comical,
the doctor went out there and three fellows they drowned --
I forget this fellow's name, but he managed to get out through the water.
Him and Fred's, Millar, he was a live on the Five Acres, and anyways,
when he got out he says Oh I'm all right. He went to the neck in
water, by the time they got the pumps going and everything, they finally
got him out, so he walked out himself, and when he got out he says, Just
nearly drunk of whiskey, he says I'm all right.
(I. laughter)
I: I don't know, I got a feeling we're going to get a lot of phone
calls now. Good afternoon? (telephone) Hello! -- You know you start
talking about some little incidents, and this jogs somebody's memory,
and the next thing you know, you're off. If anybody out there wants to
get in this on this it's 733421 is the number.
I: Stan was saying you had a story to tell, now we sort of got side-
tracked here, but that was before the one o'clock news. What's the
story?
Nels: Well the story was, up in Extension mine. And I got this through some of the ball players in Ladysmith. They played ball in Ladysmith, and around Nanaimo. And anyways, this Negro was hired to drive this mule in Extension. So this fellow he was a little bit of a ventriloquist, so he goes in ahead of where the Negro was going to work, and he puts his light out. Socks he hooked on to the cart and he hollered at the mule "Giddap!". The mule just turned his head, "Not movin'!". The Negro looked. He said "Giddap!" — "I'm not movin'!" — "No," he says, "and when you do he says move, I won't be here!". And he took off and he never come back.

 telephone L: Hello, good afternoon!

Woman caller: "Hello! I have lots of information about the coal mines, because I'm a coal miner's grand daughter, anyway, I'll say that. And I have a lot of information that he has written about, and he has passed away. However, I'm going to ask you if you have ever known a Mr. Robson, because Mr. Dunsmuir, — when the coal miners worked at the Wellington mines, Mr. Dunsmuir, he was one of the — you know who Mr. Dunsmuir is. But Mr. Robson was also a manager of a coal mines, that were developing in Nanaimo. And he did a lot for the coal miners. Which I hear very little of, but I have it written down in this particular little write-up my grandfather had written, and I have kept it as a memory. Now Mr. Robson was well thought-of by society. Whether it was Mr. Robson, or Mr. Robertson, however, he was the man who was interested in the social activities and the well being of coal miners, rather than just for profit only. He was interested in the welfare of unions as well as production in the mine, and sending out material. And he was very interested in people who are interested in humanity — the human side of living. And this man he was the instigator of setting the church on this (China?) road. The one that — the corner of Victoria road and Milton street. As a matter of fact, my mother was born on Milton Street, I was born on Milton Street, and it's a favorite coal miner's dwelling place.

L.T.: What year are we looking at?

Woman: We're looking at a way back. You see, my grandfather was married in 18 — around 1890, or 1891, (whistle from L.T.) and he worked — his living was through coal mining. And Wellington. Now, I can go through the different stages, but what I'm referring to is you see, I was about the time that this church was erected. On Victoria Road. And it was given to the coal miners, because in — at the time that my grandfather was there, there was no place, hardly a place to cash your cheque. You had to go to a beer parlor, and
my grandfather didn't believe in drinking. He - he - in fact he says he doesn't believe in a man (leaving) his family, and drinking. And having to go there with his pay cheque before he can come home, and cash it there. And spend quite a bit of money there, because obviously in a place like Wellington, there wouldn't be that many beer parlors if they weren't supported. And -- but that was the story. It's been a story that -- I mean I've lived here all my life, changes of scenery, around Nanaimo. However, I want to know about this Mr. Robson or Robinson, and he is the one that donated this particular church --

Stan: Yes, Madame, can I interrupt a minute?

Woman: Yes.

Stan: We would like to get your story, your name, and your phone number.

Woman: I've got to tell you something. I'm going to be so busy looking over things in my attic which I've been doing for weeks --

Stan: Well we'd like you to do that.

Woman: And I have my son-in-law coming from Pennsylvania on a science trip that's going to take him all across Canada, and I haven't got time until after the 11th.

Stan: Well that will be fine. What is your name?

Woman: I know Mr. Lovick very well, and I know some very fine people at the college.

L.T.: you know Mr. Lovick already, so you know who to get in touch with then.

Woman: Well if it's the same Lovick that's been there for years. And like Mr. Lane, I think he's about the finest man up there.

Stan: Bob Lane.

Woman: Yes. But I'll get in touch with you after February 11th, because I have so many other things... It sounds very interesting, and I was looking over at my husband, he was going to burn a box of things, and I looked over memories which covered many years, and I
came upon a coal miner, and a picture there...

Stan: Well this is what we want, information.

LT. Well, get hold of Mr. Lovick, would you, ma'am? All right. Thank you very much. Bye bye.

Another phone-in (man): I was just listening to this gentleman speaking, and I was just wondering -- I heard how the Collieries had leased everything around the earlier years. I wonder, has there been any drop of those leases? Or do they know of any areas that are open in this district at all?

Stan: None of them are open. What are open are owned by private companies.

Nelson Dean: The part that I have against that was that two men -- you could go out and work, and make money, mining coal. But the union said you had to sell it at $22.50 a ton. Now who wants to pack coal in and pack ashes out at that price? Now I know a miner here in Nanaimo, and he's the last mine he was in, he had 14 feet of clean coal, but he just closed it up, he couldn't sell it. Nobody wants it. And he had to pay the company, that is the Western Fuel Company and the Canadian Collieries a dollar for every ton he took out.

Larry: Which is really pretty reasonable, really.

Nels: But who wants to buy coal at $22.50 a ton?

Larry: Course it's probably a bargain at that price today.

Nels: Oh, I don't know about today. But I know I went out and I got a sawdust burner, and I put a sawdust burner in my house, and now I got an oil burner.

Larry: Let's carry on with this for a second. Could anybody economically take coal out, and put it on the market in Nanaimo today?

Nels: I believe you could, if you weren't forced to sell it at $22.50 a ton. Now, this is what the union turned around and said. Because, we mined coal for 91¢ a ton, and then it was sold on top for $22.50, so you can figure out the miner wasn't makin' money.
Larry: He sure as the dickens wasn't! Does that answer your question, sir? -- Yes, thanks an awful lot, Larry. -- Okay, sir. -- We'll take a break. Back in just a minute.

(Advertising break. End of Side 1)

Side 2 - starts with advertising break.

And now here he is, your host on Open Mike, Larry Thomas.

Larry: Just before we get back to the phones, I'm sitting here with Stan Anderson, and I kind of got my tongue in my cheek and I says The last time you were down a coal mine was a foggy Friday, because I don't think you ever , but you were, you tell me?

Stan: I was. For a very brief period. I'm not a newcomer here in first Nanaimo. I came here in 1927. My grandparents first came here in 1882. On my mother's side. And anyway, work was a little slack, around Nanaimo here, and I got a job -- first of all I was deliverin' milk, then I was drivin' a truck, and anyway, those jobs petered out, and I got a job to go down Mine Number One. I went down, and they'd just killed a man down, he was an awful lookin' mess, and that was enough for me, I turned around and followed him back up again. That was the extent of my coal mining.

Larry: That was it, eh?

Stan: That was it.

Larry: A whole hour and a half.

Stan: (laugh) That was the extent of my coal minin' -- though I've been interested in the coal mines.

L: Okay, let's get back to the phones. Good afternoon. Hello!

Phone-in (man): Hello! My God I'm going to turn into a lump of coal I've got some information that may help. just sittin' here waitin'! (laughter) The hotel run by the Peck family down on the waterfront was known as the Pinkon (?) (ask Nels).

And one of the Peck boys is still alive, and living in Nanaimo, and that's Tom Peck. He's in his 80's and he's living in the Legion Senior Citizens' Housing Complex.
L: That would be the one down on Comox Road?
Man: That's right.
Nels: I knew there was three of them.
Man: That's right. Now the other thing is the Beban Mine disaster happened, I think in 1932. And as it was said there were three drowned, but there were also a couple of guys trapped in the mine, and they had to stand up to their necks in water for several days --
Nelson: No, no, it wasn't several days, they were only there for a few hours. Now I've been sitting here thinking, and one of them was Senini. The one that was up to his neck, and he come out, and he says, Gimme a drink of whiskey. And I'll be all right. And he walked out.
Man: Well I was up there at the time, and I can remember the -- they had to bring in special pumps because of the steam driven operation --
Nels: You're right there.
Larry: What year was that?
Man: About 1932, as I recall. Now the other item was, the consolidation of the various mines had pretty well all been completed by the early 1930's, but before that there was competition. You had Pacific Coast Coal Company, it operated the Morden Mine. The Western Fuel Company was the big producer here in Nanaimo, and they had bought out the new Vancouver Coal Company. And then there's the Lantzville Colliery, which was bought by Canadian Collieries in 1926. That was a separate mine. The mines at Cassidy was known as Granby Colliery, and they were owned by the Guggenheim family, and the coal from Cassidy was taken by rail to a point just south of the City of Ladysmith, and loaded on the barges and hauled up to Anyox, and used in the smelter at Anyox.
Nels: Yes, you're right there.
Man: And I think Cassidy closed down about 1928 or 1929.
Nels: No, a little later than that. '33, I believe.
Man: Well, they may have gone that long, I've forgotten.

Larry: You were down in the mines yourself?

Man: Me? No, I was up the ladder -- I used to help to take the pay around to all the mines, so I know somethin' about it.

Stan: Well, maybe you can give us some information to one of our project workers...

Man: In due course, probably.

Stan: We'll be contacting you.


Good afternoon!

(New phone caller - a woman): Yes, I'm from an old time family in the Nanaimo. My dad worked for the Western Fuel Company, in/diamond drilling. That man's name in the Western Fuel Company was Robins, not Robinson. And it's old Bill McGregor, that was a friend of my dad's, that worked there ... John McGregor, a foreman out here, mine manager at South Wellington, and I'm from an old time family, my dad came here in 1881. So if they want any information to do with anything, I think I can speak to them, you know, give them quite a bit of information.

Larry: Where can we find you?

Woman: I'm really from Vancouver, but I'm staying at 754-6894. And I'm one of the Emblems. Okay. Bye now.

Larry (to Nelson): You know somebody by the name of Emblem?

Nelson: Oh sure.

Next caller (a man)

Larry: Good afternoon!

Caller: Good afternoon! (this is George Edwards) -- I just heard you say that John Baloni was the only man left that worked in Brechin mine! I worked with John Baloni in Brechin Mine. I worked in Cassidy, I worked in Lantzville, I worked in all the mines!
Larry: Well who's this calling?

Caller: George Edwards!


George: Beg yer pardon?

Nelson: I know ye!

George Edwards: Yes. And the men working under the -- from Nanaimo to Protection Island, you know, there was an incline down there, they worked in there, and they didn't need a watch when it was quittin' time! You could hear the old Patricia goin' over, and then they'd go down and put their coat and hat on, and get their buckets and that and come home. They could hear the engines goin' over.

Nelson: Yes, that's right.

George: Hey?

Nelson: You're right!

George: I worked in quite a few of the mines!

Nelson: I thought Johnnie Baloni -- I was told at the miners' meeting, that Mrs. MacKay put on there at the Christmas dinner, I was told that Johnnie Baloni was the only one alive.

George: No! -- No, I worked with John. -- And could you tell me the time the strike was in Wellington, the big strike?

Nelson: Oh, I can't tell ye that.

George: Well my father -- my father -- there was a bunch a scabs come in Wellington, and my father was sent down to Frisco to boycott the scab coal! When they had the strike.

Nelson: What year would that be?

George: Oh, that's a way back. I'm -- in March I'll be 87 myself.

Nelson: Oh, that's before the 1913 strike.

George: Yes, it was in the big strike at Wellington.

Larry: Where do we find you? What's your phone number, Mr. Edwards?

George: 758-6315.

Larry: Thank you sir!
Thank you very much! Bye!
Nelson: We had his name down, we were gonna get in contact with him to attend some of these meetings, but we never did.
Larry: It's amazing, probably, the number of people around that have been long long ago forgotten about, really. Good afternoon! and Corbin Caller (woman): Hi. My father mined in Beban, my grandfather, and all of them. (asks is there is a place where she can take her children to show them what their grandfather used?)
Nelson tells her about the Museum.
She wants something in the schools. Stan says we are going to get some of the miners talking in the schools.
Lady: I don't remember much about what my father did, it was a hard life.
Good afternoon! (Another caller)
Man: About what you're wantin' to know, right behind the old fire hall, there was a building there -- it's been tore down recently, it had a second hand store in it and so forth, in earlier days. Now, underneath that building, the time that the Douglas mine seam there -- and I shoud say, I'll get back to it -- further out in the end of Victoria Road, there was a mine shaft there, to the Gordon estate, and that connected right through. Now, down below the Salvation Army, as you knew, Terminal Avenue was all filled in with mine rock from Number One mine. And in order to keep that mine drained, they had a wooden flume, out to Commercial Inlet, which was behind the Bank of Montreal.
Larry and Nelson interjecting, Yes, right, etc.
Man: Now, that mine rock caught fire, and it burnt in there for years. In behind there. And it also burnt the wood flume. The wood flume it collapsed, and it sealed off the water that drained out of this mine. And in the winter, it accumulated, and built up until it formed a lake at the end of Victoria Road, in the Gordon estate. And it flooded a couple of houses. Now, the pressure of the water, found a thin spot behind the building, that was behind the Fire Hall. And
it broke up through, and the water run underneath the building, and they had to leave the Fire Hall doors open, back and front, to let the water run through. And it ran, and it ran down Commercial Street, --Victoria Crescent, I should call it, and down past the Salvation Army, and it found its way eventually to the salt chuck. And it broke through, it was that think, at that point. Now, on the Victoria Road side, on the high side of the building, they had drove -- had dug out some dirt, and there was a hole there. And they went in, there, afterwards they had drained it. And to drain it, they had to put a concrete pipe all the say from the Salvation Army out to behind the Bank of Montreal. When they filled that parkin' lot they got there now, they had to extend that pipe, and you'll see the water bubbling up by the boat place.

Larry: Down in the inner harbour now.

Man: Yes, well of course the harbour went right through there.

Larry: Yes, right.

Man: In any case, it's not very thick there, and I remember talkin' one time to the chap who owned the Paisley (?) Dye Works, which was the next buildin', and he said he was diggin' a water line in, and he poked through.

Larry: My word! Is it that shallow there?

Man: *sigh* That shallow. Now, right alongside the old Fire Hall, or right close to it, on the curve, by Drake Street, an oil truck one time, back wheel went in. A hole. It pushed a hole in. And you could stand and see the mine timbers there. Props. Looking down the hole. And they filled it with gravel. They jacked the truck out of it -- this is a long time back, of course, but they jacked it out. That's how thin it is. And it went right up Nicol Street.

Now in the 100 block Nicol, in not quite the middle of the block -- I know the house, it's there, there was a mine shaft there. This is a shaft I'm talkin' about -- not a slope.

Larry: Yes.
Man: And there was a mine there. And they connected/up in that same seam. And -- there's a house built over it now, but on the corner of Milton and Victoria Road, on the north-east corner, there's a house. Now, that was over the air shaft. That was an air shaft there. So, I'm not sure of the depth. My uncle used to tell me, he used to sail little boats in the creek that ran down Finlayson Street from the water pumped out of that mine. (laugh)

Larry: Gee, you never know what you're -- what happened around here.

Man: But I don’t know the depth of the shaft on Nicol Street, in the 100 Block. It couldn't be very far down. It might be 80 feet, or --cause it would almost be in line with the one by the Fire Hall, but
which is only about 80 ft. elevation.

Larry: Well I know they were saying last night--we were talking about the theatre, that they'd run into this huge hole, and it was about 70 feet down, where they were drilling.

Man: I wouldn't have thought it was that far down, but I know when that hole went in Nicol Street, with the oil truck, they were able to go in this hole by the buildin', and go underneath and see how much there was there. And it's all open up through Nicol Street.

Larry: Course bearing in mind of course that where they're putting the theatre is a fair way up the hill, it's a pretty good grade, so

Man: Which side of the -- ax in the old school ground?

Larry: No, actually where they're putting it is right next to Sebastian's there, the -- above the Fire Hall, what, a good half block, I should think.

Man: I wouldn't have thought there'd be 70 feet difference there.

Larry: Of course this is just one hole that they put down.

Man: Of course that could be a hole that caved up. It could have caved up to that far, you don't know.

Larry: Well anyway, it's doggoned interesting when you start pokin' around what's underneath Nanaimo, you find out all kinds of weird and wonderful things.

Man: I mean this flooding happened in my time. And it wasn't that far back. That place burnt, and it stunk, you know, from the old coal mine dump burning. I don't know whether you ever smelt that or not.
Man: But I tell you what they did have to do to stop the fire from goin' towards the Queen's Hotel and the rest of 'em. They dug a ditch down, till they hit the ground again, and it was all done by hand, and there was about three or four platforms, and the men at the bottom would throw it to the platform above, with a shovel, and they'd throw it to the next one, and that until they got up to the top. And they dug this ditch right on through there, and then they went down to the sandbar, that was before the assembly wharf, and the coal company laid the track on to the sandbar, and then the men shoveled sand, into the side dump car, 4-wheel side-dump cars they had, and then they hauled it up and they laid the track alongside the ditch, and then dumped the sand in, till they filled it right up, and that was to stop the fire from goin' towards the business part of the town.

Larry: What year would that be, sir?

Man: Oh gee, that would be in the thirties.

Larry: Really? That recent. Not recent, but I mean recent in coal mining parlance.

Man: That's right. They had a -- another thing they had there. There was a rest room in that part of town, and of course the heat got too close underneath it, and the whole building all cracked. And had to be condemned.

Larry: Sir, could you leave us your phone number?

Man: Oh yes. And I have travelled in the bush, all round, and run acrost-- there's lots of holes still open. That's never been filled, and actually I took a group from Victoria historians, one time, and I met them at Cassidy in the south, at 7 o'clock in the morning, and 8 o'clock at night we'd got as far as Lantzviell, and that gave them 10 minutes at each hole, and that's the time it took travelling between them.

What's your phone number sir?------ 245-3075.

Ladysmith? Oh yes. Blackstaff (flagstaff?) is the name. Albert? Yes.
Nelson: I think too, that these kids should be warned in the schools, about the gas in the mines. Now these other two that got gassed in the mine, I'm sure they got gassed, and -- they sat down to rest. Well they got black damp. Well black damp lays right down near the floor. If they sat down to rest, they're going to breathe that in. And one half of one percent is fatal.

Larry: Okay. I was going to ask you about that black damp. There's a couple of different types of gas in the mines?

Nelson: Well, the methane gas raises up to the roof. And the black damp stays down close to the floor. Now one half of one percent is fatal, so you can figure, if they laid down to rest, they didn't need to breathe very much, and they're gone. Now I think all kids in the schools should take notice that -- stay away from these mine holes. Because there's gas in them. Gas is bleeding off from the coal. All the time, it's comin' out.

Larry: How did they ventilate/when you were down? Just forced air all the time?

Nelson: Oh yes. Fans. Big fans. And, I don't know -- Glen Lewis told me that they've had cats go up to that Harewood mine and fill the mine in, yet, these people they just go and dig a hole and go in anyway. And that's stupid! As far as I'm concerned. They shouldn't go near them at all.

Larry: There was one little problem that you wanted to try and get answered, and that was on a shooting, you were saying?

Nelson: Yes, it was Ginger Goodwin, in Cumberland. I'd like to know if anybody knows the whole history of this, because I've been trying to get it. But, you see, Ginger Goodwin was an organizer for the miners' union. And what happened, he got called up INTO THE ARMY in 1918, I think it would be, and he was rejected, so he started to organize the union, for the miners. So after he got started organizin' the union, they called him up again. And he says ah, he says, I've already been there, why should I
So he took off out into the bush. So the orders were, from the police, Go get him, and bring him back dead or alive, and they shot him. And I knew the policeman's name, but I wouldn't mention it. But anyways, the miners' union used to hold their conferences down in Calgary. And here's this policeman sittin' there, and this hotel where they were holdin' their conference, and this fellow went up to the hotel desk and says if you don't get that man out of here, we'll blackball this hotel, and you'll get nobody in it! So they put him out. --Now I'd like to know a little bit more about that. I wrote to Vancouver but I haven't got a reply, ...

Larry: What year would that be?
Nelson: Yes, 1918, I'm pretty sure it was.
Larry: So that's something --
Nelson: Well, to show young people in this book that the history of the miners hasn't all been easy.
Larry: It's been very violent at times.
Nelson: Oh, it has. Sometimes.

Another call: This is Ronnie Walker. I worked, never in Nanaimo, I worked underground as an electrician. But I never worked in Nanaimo. I got thrown out of more beer parlors in Nanaimo, asking about the miners' union. I've got (Sandy) Goodwin's photograph right here, and I've got the history of that thing.

Larry: What's your number, Ronnie?
Ronnie: 753-8902. And (another name) was thrown in jail in New Westminster.
Larry: Okay, (Gordie) I'll have them get back to you -- we're just about out of time. But I've got your number here, 3-8902.
Ronnie: I have got this information -- I have spent so much time -- I got blacklisted in this goddam town because I was interested, -- and Old Mother Beeson? She married Richards? Richards had the hotel at Wellington?
Nelson: Who was that?
Ronnie: Old Mother Beeson? She married Dan Richards, who had the hotel where Dr. Giovando was born, when they had the strike there and she come into the cottage and her husband was (burst into tears) ... her husband .... and this gun was hanging up on the wall, pointed at him... and when they come into the house ...(unintelligible)

Larry: Okay Ronnie,

Ronnie: You listen to this please! (something like) You're a bloody good man (crying)

Larry: Ronnie, stand by the phone, -- okay, thank you.

Next caller. Good afternoon!

Yes, I'm an ex-coal miner from a round here. And peoples' memory slip a little bit when it comes to dates. The flood in Beban mine was 1937. And the reason I know that is because I was laid off in Protection in May of '37, and I was one of the men that struck the panel house (?) in there, and I went down to Cowichan Lake and it was around June or July of '37 when the flood come, because when I was told about it, it was quite a shock to me. And I realize I'd know some of the men that were in it. And there's one other man that's worked in Brechin mine, Tom Dickson, he lives in the Kiwanis village. He's my brother-in-law, so I know that.

Larry: Right, Stan knows him. He'll be on to him, I'm sure. All right sir, thank you for the call.

Stan: Yes, there's one more thing that I would like to make a note of. That is there's a lot of Chinese worked in these mines, as well. We've seen about some of the information that we can get from the Chinese, p

ladysmith, is doing a now, and we have appl health & Welfare, Ot. They have indicated the New Horizons in

Dr. Mar and Dr. L said to the New Horizons program, Dep't of National tawa, Ontario, for funding for this program. interest, and we have had Mr. Joe Zakreski, from Victoria, at two of our meetings, and he
indicated it would be no problem whatsoever for funding. Other funding will come from the Provincial Archives in Victoria, who want the tapes for the Provincial Archives to be kept in there when we have completed with them. And the Malaspina College are going to fund us as well, and will keep the original manuscript after we have published them in a book form. We also have a letter of support from Branch 4 of the B.C. Old Age Pensioners in support of this program. And we are being assisted by Mr. Jim Swan, of the Miners' Union, Barry Hardcastle, Syd Tickle is preparing a map of the old workings of this area. And Alistair MacLeod is helping us, Glen Lewis, Bill Cottle is also on the board. Bill Holdom, school board chairman, has also offered to help, and on the history project, and Mrs. Barbara Stannard, pres. of the Nanaimo Historical Society, has stated she would also help. So I think we got lots of help! We've got about 35 people so far, listed.

Nelson: Now I will mention about the Chinamen. The Chinamen...
Larry: We're going to be overtime, so you -- in the control room -- you may as well live with it!
Nelson: a little bit wiser than the white man. You see, now the white man, he got his wages cut, and so did the Chinaman, so the Chinaman cut two inches off the shovel!
(Great laughter)
Larry: I've heard that story before! Where can you people be reached?
Stan: 758-1091
Larry: and to Mr. Dean?
Nelson: 753-4419.
Larry: Okay, fellas, we're out of time! Glad you came in, very interesting, good luck on the project, keep it going, and let us know what is going on! Thank you! Okay, that's it!

Open Mike, 12:45 daily, Monday through Friday, on CHUB - CHPQ Radio.