This is Myrtle Bergren interviewing Bill Crawshaw on Feb. 13, 1979.

When were you born?

BC: 21st of July, 1890.

MB: Where at?

BC: In a place called Swinton, that's Lancashire, England.

MB: How long did you go to school?

BC: Well, I think I got into Grade Five. And I went to work on the pithead when I was 12 years old.

MB: What age were you when you came to Canada?

BC: Thirty.

MB: You came by yourself?

BC: Yes. I came in 1920. Did you come by yourself?

MB: I sent for my wife after. I left here in the Old Country, you know.

MB: What gave you the idea of coming to Canada?

BC: Well, it was in the papers, you know, where they was advertisin' for miners, 'ere.

MB: In Nanaimo.

BC: Yes! And I think it was $7 a day then, and that was good pay to what we were getting in England, you know.

MB: What company was that?

BC: It was the Western Fuel.

MB: How did you get the money to come out?

BC: Well, I'd been saving money, you know. Because I intended to leave there anyhow. After the war was over.

MB: Why? Why did you intend to leave England?

BC: Well, I didn't see any future in England. And I am glad now that I did leave. There was twelve in my family, and I was the only one to leave the country.

BC: What did they all do? Were they all miners in your family?

BC: My brothers was all miners. My sisters worked in the cotton factories.
MB: What kind of a life was that?
BC: Poor. Poor.
MB: Did you see many accidents over there? Mine accidents?
BC: No. No, I didn't. No. --They had strikes over there too, you know.
MB: Did they have a union over there?
BC: Oh yes. A union there, but there was no union here when I came.
MB: What did you think about that?
BC: I didn't like it. But when I was here I guess I had to go with the rest of them.
MB: You must have been surprised when you found they were so much behind here, as far as organization --
BC: In the mines.
MB: I understand the people from the Old Country were ahead of people over here.
BC: In the mines, they were. See, here, you daren't talk back to the boss. If he told you to do a thing you had to do it. Or you wasn't there. And you couldn't tell him you wasn't going to do it. Because then you was fired at once one mine. The company owned all of them, you know. You never got a job for months and months.
MB: Wasn't it the same in England?
BC: No. No, no. Different altogether.
MB: You must have had a strong union in England then.
BC: It was a strong union -- always was.
MB: What was it called?
BC: The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation.
MB: Did women work in the mines in England?
BC: They worked on top. --Not all the mines though, just a few.
MB: And children?
BC: No, I never saw no children work, just -- married women.
Worked on the pickin' table, pickin' rock out o' the coal.

MB: What were the conditions like over here then? Did you find them better or worse than England?

BC: I found it jist better here.

MB: What way?

BC: Well, when I landed 'ere, I thought, Gee, the best country in the world! Because -- there was lots of people out of work too, you know -- because of the strike -- they wouldn't give them a job. You know. Kept 'em walkin' around for years. But you could always go on the beach there and get crabs, fish -- you're never stuck to -- didn't have to starve.

MB: What year did you come out?

BC: 1920.

MB: And what month of the year was it?

BC: I think it was January.

MB: Was there snow?

BC: There was snow all right. But not very much.

MB: And you still thought it was the best country in the world, when there was snow on the ground?

BC: I did. We've had snow in England, 3 and 4 ft feet of snow there too.

MB: Where did you live when you came to Nanaimo?

BC: I lived on W Haliburton Street here.

MB: Did you come by yourself, or with other men?

BC: I come by myself first.

MB: And no other men with you?

BC: Nobody.

MB: That was quite a break, wasn't it, when you left England? And how long did you say you were by yourself before you sent for your wife?

BC: Oh, about six months. My wife and daughter.

MB: How did you happen to find a place? I suppose there were quite a few boarding houses, here, were there?
BC: 'No, there was -- my wife, she had two brothers 'ere. See.
So that's how they got me the job too, when I arrived. I got a job right away. They'd been 'ere for, oh, years and years before I came.

KB MB: So you had someone to meet you then.

BC: Oh yes! I had someone when I landed, you know. So I was lucky there.

KB: Where did you get to work, first?

BC: Reserve Mine. That's out in the Cedar district.

KB: You mean the big strike in 1912, that these people were still out of work from that?

BC: Out of work. They wouldn't give them a job at all. Quite a few 'ad to leave the country altogether and go to Australia or somewhere. And New Zealand, you know. You'd 'ear about this talking to people, you know. I wasn't 'ere at the time.

KB: Were your two brothers-in-law living in a boarding house?

BC: No, they 'ad their families 'ere. So I lived with one of them when I first come. They 'ad a cabin down on Wharf street, you know, where the shopping centre there is now. So I went in that cabin there first. The two of my brothers he went to live with 'is own brother, and gi give me 'is place. Till I got settled.

KB: What was your first job in the mine here, at Reserve?

BC: Diggin' coal.

KB: That's what you were in the old country?

BC: Yes.

KB: What did you make a day? What was your wage?

BC: We was on contract. At Reserve Mine. I think around Reserve was the only mine/that was on contract them days. You know, to start with. Makin' 7 and 8 dollars a day. That was big money, because the wages was only 4 and 5 dollars.
MB: So the ads that you saw in a paper in England, they were true?
BC: Oh yes. They wanted lots of miners, even if they wouldn't give them a job. But I didn't know that when I landed, when you read the paper there.
MB: Did they pay you by the car?
BC: The cars was a -- one-trolley -- cars. And we used to get 80 cents a ton. So we used to build the car up. More than a ton. So we'd just about average a dollar a car.
MB: So that means that you dug about 8 tons of coal a day?
BC: Well there's always two men together.
MB: How much coal could a miner dig in a day?
BC: Well, it just depends on -- see there's some seams only two and three feet, and 20 feet high in Reserve mine; and 12 feet, and -- if you get the cars, two men can load 20 cars. If they can get the car in. But you got to shoot the coal, then you got to look after your head too, besides. Timbers, you know.
MB: Were you ever hurt?
BC: No. I was hurt in Number 10. Last year I worked. I got three ribs broken. Piece of rock come down off the roof. I just connecting the hole there to fire a shot. Connecting the wires. A piece come down and hit me right on the back.
MB: Did you fire the shot?
BC: No, the fire boss did. But we used to connect the -- see, he had the battery at the other end of the -- well -- you know. So we used to connect the wires for 'im. Save him walkin' backward and forward. It was 'is job to do it. But we did it, you know. To rush. Just as I was connectin' this wire this piece o' rock come down and, right on the -- three ribs. The last year I worked in the mine, after fifty years.
MB: How big a piece of rock was that?
BC: It don't 'ave to be very big, you know, when it drops about ten feet.
MB: What happened then? Could you get out yourself, or —
BC: No, on the stretcher. They won't let you walk. Oh no.
MB: They had, say, rescue teams, or what?
BC: First aid.
MK: After 50 years. First time I ever got 'urt. I quit in 1952. It were in 1950, 51. --After all them years. Never got 'urt at all.
MB: You were lucky. What about your lungs? Did you ever suffer from emphysema or anything?
BC: No. Them's that worked in the rock, you know, thems the worst that got that.
MB: Some mines were dustier than others, is that what you mean?
BC: In Reserve mine, there was lots of sulphur, in the coal. Just one section, I happened to be workin' in that too. You worked one day, you was off the and next. And you worked one day, you saw all the colours of the rainbow. You daren't look at a light at all. --All the colours! You look at a light, and you see all the rings round colours, everywhere.
MB: And why was that?
BC: Sulphur! In the coal. When we come home, -- now this is somethin' I don't know if anybody's told you. We used to get tea leaves in a rag. Get it in a rag -- cold water. Put it over your eyes. Cool your eyes off. And you'd like that all night. And the next day. Then the next day after that, you want to work again. You'll work -- same thing again.
MB: What actually is sulphur?
BC: I don't know. It's in the coal. They don't know. --Went to the doctor's, he couldn't do nothing. I used to put a drop of cocaine in your eye. I daredn't put too much in, you know, 'e's scared to damage the eyes. I think that Dr. Brown is 'ere now, 'e's the one that did it.
BC: 's retired now too. 'E put a drop of cocaine in, you know, see if that would help. It just cooled your eyes off for a while, but after a while the same thing.

MB: Was there much gas in Reserve mine? Blow-outs, or--

BC: No. There was one blow-out. Two men got killed. --Just one. At Granby mine there was lots -- lots of men got killed there.

MB: Did they have any accidents that you can remember? At Reserve? Over the years, at all?

BC: No.

MB: When did that mine open, Reserve?

BC: Well, it was open in 1916, I know. Then it closed down for a while, and it just opened up before I went there, in 1920.

MB: And that was Western Fuel?

BC: Western Fuel. Yes. --And sometimes you made more than a hundred dollars in two weeks. You got two cheques. They wouldn't give you a cheque no more than a 'undred dollars.

MB: Did the war have much effect on coal mining here?

BC: No. No. In Reserve they was workin' six days a week then and -- three shifts. You worked Saturday afternoon and then you'd go back Sunday night.

MB: That was a boom, really.

BC: Oh yes.

MB: It's funny, working so hard, and then -- a lot of people not working/

BC: That's right. A lot of the ---- they'd six slackened off, you know, two and three days a week. So it closed down, Reserve did, in 1927. So they shipped us up to Cumberland. Went working there-- two days a week. Working up there and try and keep a 'ome in Nanaimo, same time.

MB: Yes, I was going to say, did your wx wife go up there?

BC: No, no.

MB: How did you get up there, in those days?

BC: There was four of us. We all batched together. And there was two of them had a car, so we went up in turns, you know, in the car.
MB: There wouldn't be much of a road, I don't suppose, in those days?
BC: No, it wasn't too bad.
MB: What company was it at Cumberland?
BC: Canadian Collieries.
MB: And what was Cumberland like in those days? What was the impression you had of it, when you went?
BC: Well, I didn't like it, because I -- we'd work on Monday, and we'd stay there, waitin' for that whistle blowin' -- you know, see if there's any work the next day -- and we might work Monday and Friday. 'Angin' around there all day, you know. Two days.
MB: Was it a busy town, or --
BC: Oh yes. There was two mines there. Only a small town, there was two mines them goin'.
MB: They had several boarding houses?
BC: Yes, but we was batchin' at the lake. Comox Lake. Lots o' cabins there, you know, so -- we was lucky to get a cheap cabin.
MB: And were there any accidents up there when you were there?
BC: No. No. --Chinamen was workin' in the mines then up there then.
MB: Down below? --Someone told me that there was a law passed, early, there the Chinese could not work in the mines. Here.
BC: I don't know if they worked here. They worked on top 'ere. But in Cumberland they were down the mines.
MB: Were there many Chinese up there at the time?
BC: Yes. There was a Chinese town like there was here, you know.
MB: Did you ever get to know any of them?
BC: No.
MB: What other nationalities were there? In the miners.
BC: Oh, they come from all over the world, you know. Well, the Yugoslavs started coming here in about 1925. Something like that, '26.
MB: And what other nationalities?
EC: Well, there was all kinds. Norwegians. Didn't see no Swedes in the mines. They always used to go in the bush. They was all wood men, you know. Swedish people.

MB: Italians, were there?

EC: Oh, a lot of Italians.

MB: What kind of miners were they?

EC: Oh they were good miners. Very good. Oh yes.

MB: Did you go up to Extension very much when you lived here? Well I didn't go up there until.

EC: Wait, I started to work there, you know. Yes, I used to know some people there. (name, can't hear it) he's dead now.

MB: What mine did you work in up there?

EC: Number Ten. And there was another mine up there, I forgot about it now. See, we got to see the superintendent when I was in Cumberland. He come up there one Friday, and we got talkin' to him, asked him if he maybe couldn't get us back down to Nanaimo. Because we couldn't keep it up. So he says You come back on Monday. It was Friday. We come back Monday and we got a job again right away.

MB: In Reserve?

EC: No. South Wellington. They called it Alexandra mine. So we got a job in there. Then when that finished, we got down Number One.

MB: That finished, did it? Alexander Mine?

EC: Yes, but there was another mine opened up after. Number Ten.

MB: How do they know when it's finishing?

EC: Well, when the coal runs out, when it's all rock...

MB: I have heard that the mine at South Wellington wasn't very deep under the ground. Was it? Someone told me that a house went into the -- you know, fell in -- that something was going on underneath, and the house caved in --

EC: Yes. From South Wellington to ---- even the railway track caved down.

MB: How deep would that have to be under the surface?
BC: Maybe about twenty or thirty feet. And they 'ad men -- the company
'ad to send some men down, with gravel trucks fillin' that all in.
MB: This was where the tracks.
BC: When the train run over, oh yes.
MB: Would that take a period of time, or would it happen all of a sudden
one day, or what?
BC: Well, it just happened in one day. When it caved down below, it
caved right through to the top. And they other fellows came with gravel, solid
they couldn't just patch it up, they 'ad to fill it inside for the train
to come over again.
MB: Was this after the mine had finished?
BC: No. While the mine was goin'! Well where they put had to put this
gravel down, it spread out down below, too. In the mine. So they couldn't
touch that. That coal 'ad to stay there,
MB: Nobody was hurt then?
BC: No no. Somebody must have found out before the train come around there.
There was no accident, anyway. --And they used to come 'ome from the mine
wet through. From the water comin' out of the roof. They used to give
us 25 cents a day for that. --And there was no baths. You 'ad to come home.
There was a train comin'/down 'ere to Nanaimo. And by the time you got 'ere
you'd dried out. You 'ad to 'ave a bath as soon as you come home. But there
was no baths at the mines.
MB: So you'd be black as anything when you got home?
BC: Well you 'ad all your workin' clothes on.
MB: In your houses in those days, where did you ever put your clothes when
you came home?
BC: In the pantry -- or bathroom -- or -- any place, you know.
MB: But they would still be damp.
BC: Yes, you used to 'ave a line there -- 'ang them up on the line to dry.
For the next day. Everybody 'ad a line across their kitchen. You know,
them with a pulley on it. Sometimes there was three. I guess you've seen them
Oh yes. How people could live this long I don't know, after goin' through all of that.

MB: Yes! With no chest trouble or anything.

EC: I've got a cold now, after that flu, and I'm just gettin' over it. No, I've never 'ad no trouble! I've never been to the doctor in my life! For sickness.

MB: You have a marvelous constitution.

EC: 'Mm! Well, when we was kids, we used to get -- the women then, they 'ad to make their own bread, you know. They'd make round cakes, you know. Fill that up with treacle, or jam. If you could afford jam. It was treacle.

MB: How did you manage here for your lunches? Your wife would make up your lunch for the day, I guess? Were you on different shifts?

EC: Three shifts. You was normin' shift one week, and then you'd go afternoon shift, for a week, and then night shift a week.

MB: How did you manage to catch your sleep?

EC: Oh, you just -- in the summer time try and sleep in the daytime, when you were on night shift. I used to get to bed to sleep about from five o'clock at night till about 9 at night, time to go to work. That was the best sleep I could get.

MB: And then the shift started at what time?

EC: Eleven & o'clock at night.

MB: You had a family?

EC: Yes.

MB: They'd be making a noise around the house?

EC: No, they kept quiet. If they make a noise you wouldn't hear it. You were that tired.

MB: It was hard work, this mining?

EC: Oh yes. Well, like I always said, 'ard work don't 'urt anybody. It's proven it for me, anyway. Didn't 'urt me. I was never fired off a job in my life. When the nine finished, there was always another place.
EC: I worked in White Rapids, Number Eight. In Northfield. As 'igh as this table.

MB: You were on your knees then, eh? (laying on your)

EC: On your knees all -- and on your 'ead on the side. Couldn't put your 'ead up. You 'ad shovels there that they 'ad to be straight. No curve in the 'andle. No the shovel 'ad to be straight. Because you could only use it this way. I 'ad one shovel, you know. I should 'ave kept it. I don't know where it got to. Just a short 'andle. 't 'ad t'be straight.

MB: And you had that little light to go by?

EC: That's all. Yes.

MB: And you never knew when gas was going to come out?

EC: No, you could smell it. When I worked in the mine you could smell the gas. They 'ad air goin' along in the mine, you know. Big fan on top. Pushing the air right round everywhere.

MB: You could smell the methane, can you? Or is it the black damp?

EC: You couldn't smell nothing. That just -- sends 'em to sleep.

That's why these two brothers -- they didn't get lost in that mine. It was black damp that got them. They couldn't get lost. They tried to make us believe they got lost. They didn't get lost. They got too far in there and this black damp just got one of them and the other one would go and see what was wrong with him, and he'd get it too. So they both got it. It 'its you like that.

MB: I was reading in a newspaper about 1900, an explosion in Extension, and the black damp. An...

EC: No, you won't go far, when you get that.

......... (Mantle question) There's something in that, because it'll make the light go up, like a blue flame, right into the top there (mantle) but as soon as you bring your lamp back down again, it will go back to its own place. (the flame).
BC: Yes, I didn't think you'd understand about the brattish, you know. For every place -- you 'ad a brattish man. That was 'is job. He 'ad to put that brattish close up to where 'e was workin'. And the air used to go right behind that brattish in into the place, you know, and it would clear everything out. That brattish was away back, then you'd get gas in the place. Not supposed to work. Get that fire boss, you know. Get that brattish man 'ere right away.

MB: Brattish does stop a certain amount of the gas too, does it?

BC: It chasses the gas out. You 'ad to put timber every three feet. What they call stringers. You 'ad to put it on these stringers. If you didn't 'ave the brattish there, there was wood. Six feet wood, you know. You put boards up instead of brattish, if you didn't 'ave it. Stopings was all rock, brick. Solid. It 'ad to be solid. So the air couldn't come back through there, you know. It 'ad to go right round. To the old workin's.

MB: In what case would they use brick and stone, then, because that would be rather permanent, wouldn't it?

BC: Oh yes. That was there to stay. That was so the old air wouldn't leak through there. In the old workings there could be gas. So they 'ad to stop it up solid. So nothing would come through.

MB: And you never saw any disasters, or accidents?

BC: No. I saw two men killed with a blow-out in Reserve. And we couldn't go near them. Because it — filled the place with gas, you know. And they just suffocated, that's all.

MB: Did you ever see any mules in the mines where you worked?

BC: (chuckle) That's all there was. Reserve was all mules. And there was some stubborn ones too, you know. You give them one car to pull, they'd go. Pull that car easy. Next time you got two cars on, they try to pull two cars. They'd kick that chain off the car. They wouldn't pull. They wouldn't try. They knew. They'd just sag, you know. When they couldn't move it so easy, well then they would just kick the chain off. Oh, they knew what they was...
doin', them mules! There was some good, you could talk to 'em, and they understood what you said. And there was some of them that only one man could drive them. Say you 'ad to work two shifts, another driver, he couldn't do nothing with them. Oh no. --And we 'ad to buy all our own tools, you know. Even the machine. And buy all our own powder, and caps.

MB: Did you have to do that in England?

BC: No. No. --Couldn't do nothing about it.

MB: When did they finally get a union?

BC: Oh, in about 25 or 6, something like that. They come from Cumberland. Of a night time. They go round the 'ouses. Get people to sign, you know. And when they got so many men signed, whewell then... But if the company found out you did it, well, then, they be gone before the union started.

MB: Do you remember any of the people who came around from Cumberland? Any of the organizers?

BC: No. They're dead now we anyhow. Yeh, they're dead, they're gone, them that started it.

MB: Did you have a newspaper? Leaflet?

BC: Yes, they used to get leaflets around you know. Oh yes.

MB: The United Mine Workers of America, did they'n help?

BC: Well that was the one we 'ad to join. There was a union tried to come in before that. Before I came. One Big Union. But it didn't work. I dunno what happened. I believe somebody ran away with the money. The Jews, you know. It was American outfit.

MB: That would be the Wobblies?

BC: One Big Union, they called it. They did organize a few. But then 'e beat it with the money, and that fixed it.

No, there was tough times, miners only got two and three days a week, yeh. The City gave us two days a week. Just depends on 'ow many family you 'ad. You worked so many days. For the City. And they give you scrip for food.
MB: This was in the Depression?

BC: In the depression yes. If you didn't work, you got nothing. But then days you was glad to go and get them two or three days work.

MB: You were out of work then?

BC: No, you worked one day a week, sometimes two. You know. But the City would give you -- the bigger the family, the more days you could work.

MB: And at that time, I've heard there were some unemployed demonstrations coming over to Vancouver Island on their way to Victoria. To see the government. Did you ever see any of them? Unemployed people?

BC: No. --There was lots of them, but I was never in with 'em.

MB: Well, getting back to these mules, how did they treat the mules?

BC: Well, the driver that couldn't get it to work, he got a whip, and he used to whip that mule, you know. Cruelty, I called it. If the bosses found out, you know, that they used the whip, they'd tell 'em, anybody usin a whip, they was fired. Aw, they'd whip the mule, you know, cruel.

MB: I guess the cars used to bump into them at the back--

BC: Oh yes! You know, when they was goin up a grade, you know, they 'ad to pull, then they might go on the level, then down and then the cars would bump at a low height, into 'em. And they was runnin too, and no light. Only the driver's light sittin' on the front car. With that little light of 'is. And the mule runnin' and runnin'. You'd wonder they wouldn't knock their heads off sometimes. They knew where they was goin'. See them at quittin' time! The driver, he would unhook the last car, you know. Okay, he'd say, the mule would run away, back to the stables, in the dark.

MB: The stables underground? Is that where you had them in Reserve?

BC: Oh yes, they always had the stables. And then mules knew where the stables was. They'd run there in the dark.
MB: Did you ever go down Number One?

BC: I worked down there.

MB: That was a deep shaft, eh? Yes, there was a -- well, maybe you've heard about this man gettin' killed? Christmas Eve? We 'ad to work Christmas even too. An' 'e'd been workin', in Protection. An' 'e was a young fella too. And 'e was rushin' out, runnin', I think, to go to a dance. That night. And there's a lot of electric from Number One to Protection. Electric wires above your head, you know. And 'e was runnin' out there, it's not very igh. 'E must a got 'ead on this wire. 'E must a lit this wire, 'e run down -- killed right there. One of the best soccer players we 'ad 'ere too. Daisy Waugh. I think there was one used to work for the City for years, a woman. There's a lady used to work for the City with that name. She worked there for years and years. Mrs. Waugh. That was a relation.

MB: Did you used to play soccer?

BC: No, not at all. Only crib. I was in the crib league here.

MB: They had some good soccer teams here, I heard.

BC: They 'ad some of the best. Old country players, you know, they'd come here. To work. They won the Canadian championship you know, a few times. Where the Harboir Park is now, that was the main field, you know. And it was packed. Besides people on the Scotch Bluff. Oh yes, there was some good games with these English teams comin' over.

MB: What other big days did they have in Nanaimo?

BC: There used to be a labor day, you know. They used to 'ave parades 'ere, at one time. No more.

MB: And what about Guy Fawkes' day?

BC: In this park 'ere they used to get all the old railway ties, right in this park 'ere. -- They've got 'em on the beaches now, you know. Different places.
MB: And what about the beer parlors? — They had a lot of hotels in Nanaimo, didn't they?
BC: No! There was more hotels here than anything else! And beer parlors. We used to get our cheques at the mine office down 'ere. That's where they used to pay us, in cash. And there was a Mountie that sit there, all day. Just one Mountie, sit there, never move. And nobody would ever bother. But today, one Mountie wouldn't be any good, would he? — Nobody bothered. All the pay cheques was all paid down there. Then they moved it into the Royal Bank. And we'd go down there to get our pay cheque. Saturday morning. Them people would go out across the street, in the Commercial Hotel. 'Ave a few beers, and go to work in the afternoon! I don't know 'ow they did it, but they did. Maybe 'alf a dozen glasses of beer, then go back to work.
MB: And before the Royal Bank came, where did they cash their cheques?
BC: In the office. Oh, the beer parlour would cash them. But you got paid cash 'ere. And then the Royal Bank paid cash. It was in a little envelope about this big, all cash. Some of them 'd go to the store, they'd pay their grocery bill, they'd get a bag of candy, and then they started fresh again till next pay. Groceries on the ---
MB: Did every miner have a check number?
BC: Yes.
MB: And was it the same number that was on your lamp, and on yer ---
BC: Yes. A little round brass check. And there was a board outside the lamp cabin with your check. When you went to work, you pick your check up, give it to the man in the lamp cabin for your lamp. So 'e kept it. And the same number was on the lamp. Safety lamp, you know. Not 'lectric lights then days. But we got the 'lectric light after that. And if nobody turned up, you know, to -- in the lamp cabin, they knew everybody was out the mine, you know. When you turned your lamp in, you got your ---
MB: I read in one of these little books that when they brought a miner’s body out of the mine after an explosion, ya they put his check number on his boots...

BC: Yes, that’s right.

MB: And when you went to a different mine, you got a different number?

BC: Different altogether. That was checkin’ up, you see. If you went down the mine, if you didn’t come back out, they knew there was somethin’ wrong. They go, searching for you. Because you could get lost in the mine too. In these old workin’s, you know. If a man was gonna get inquisitive, you know, goin’ around where ’es not supposed to go.

MB: When you think back on your life as a miner, would you do it again?

BC: I think I would. *sigh* Sure. See, I left the mines in... I wouldn’t go and look for a job doin anything else, bzzzzzzz I’d go back to the mine again, because I was used to it. And I liked it. Yes, I was a full fledged miner when I come here. I’d had 18 years over there.

MB: But when you started, as a boy, it must have seemed very hard work.

BC: Well, I worked on the pickin table, pickin’ rock, and I went down when I was 14 year old. Just pushin’ cars, in a little place like this, you know. You push the empties. And when the guy took some away, well then you push the other ones, just keep them it clear. That was easy job. And then after that I got workin’ with two miners. Takin’ the load out and bringin’ it back. Pushin’ it. No mules then in the old country. I had to push the cars.

Oh yea. I was 12 when I actually started dzzzzzzzzzzz picking rock.

Then I went workin’ with my father when I was 16. Digging coal. I was a man. ’E took both pays.

And I used to get five chillin’, every pay day. That was big pocket money.

And I didn’t get my own pay cheque until I was gettin married. I stayed home. Company houses.

MB: What was your grandfather a miner too?

BC: He was a miner. My father, and grandfather... all the family, was all coal mines. I had five sisters and four brothers. My mother died in her fifties. I’d been away 50 years before I went back.
I was never homesick.
I couldn't leave this place.

MB: What was it you liked about Nanaimo, so much?
I liked the water! I got a boat, and I went fishing, just sport fishing.
Spare time.

MB: You didn't live near the water in England then?
BC: No. Right in the Midlands, see, there was Manchester, the ship canal there, all the boats used to go into Manchester through this canal. The nearest was Blackpool. Fifty miles away.

MB: What did you think about all the mountains when you came?
BC: Aw, I liked that.

MB: And the bush? --Because the bush would be down quite low ah when you came in 1920.

BC: Five Acres there, was all bush. And down Brechin there, oh boy. That was all bush too.

MB: Did you ever go hunting?

BC: I used to go on Mount Benson. Always got a deer on Mount Benson. We used to leave here 6 o'clock in the morning. Take a lunch with us. Got 'half way up, we'd sit down and eat the lunch. Supposed to last us all day. Then we'd get to the top there. Just sit around till it was gettin' daybreak then, you know. Wait for the deer to come. Sneak up on 'em.

MB: It must have been quite a thrill when you got your first one.
BC: Oh was it! I'll say!

(end of tape)