Their Liberty

- B.C. Federationist, Dec. 17, 1913.

Dedicated to B.C. Miners Liberation League

Tune: "God Save the King".

Oh, who can idly stand,
While human hearts demand
Their Liberty?

Humanity our plea
Justice our only cry
We'll strive with all our might
For their liberty.

Their Liberty to stand
With all men hand to hand
As man to man
'Tis but their right to claim,
Sown with these laws of shame
Let this be our only aim
Their Liberty.

Our brother must be free
From jails and tyranny
Ere peace abound.
Help us their cause defend
On who a hand will lend
And unto these extend
Their Liberty.

— Ethel I. Cuthbertson
This is Myrtle Bergren, interviewing George Edwards, Jan. 30, 1979.

Mrs. Edwards: That's it, make yourself comfortable! (Laughter).

M.B. Well Mr. Edwards, where were you born?

G.E.: I was born in East Wellington.

M.B.: What year?

Mrs. Edwards: 1892.

Mr. Edwards: 1892.

M.B.: And where were you born, Mrs. Edwards?

Mr. Edwards: Rock City.

Mrs. Edwards: At Rock City. At a little place called Rock City.

There was only three or four buildings there.

M.B.: And what did your father do, Mr. Edwards?

Mr. E.: My father was a Welshman, and he was a carpenter, and he worked, you know, carpenter work. And he worked around Wellington when Wellington was in the great coal rush. And they had a strike over there. And my father there was a bunch of scabs come in. And they started to work. And they shipped coal from Departure Bay, down the railroad -- railroad run right through to Departure Bay, by Keeley's there, and they sent -- my father was picked at a meetin' to go down to 'Frisco to boycott the scab coal. And that's what my father done. When the big strike was in Wellington. That's a long time ago. (1900)

Mrs. Edwards: He didn't ever remember -- his mother died when he was only two weeks old. His grandparents raised him.

Mr. E.: Two weeks old, and my father -- I can't remember my father. But he got killed. He got killed in a snowslide.

Their daughter: I brought you up some cake!

Mrs. Edwards: Thank you!

Mr. Edwards: Order, order!

XXX (Turned mike off for a few minutes.)
MB: What year did your father go to 'Frisco, do you remember?
Mr. Edwards: I can't remember when he went to Frisco. In the big strike in Wellington, that's as near as I can give you. And if you find out when the big strike was in Wellington, that's the time he went to Frisco. Yep.

MB: And you were born --

Mr. Edwards: I was born in East Wellington.

MB: And where did you go to school?

Mr. Edwards: I went to school at East Wellington, and I went to school at Northfield. What little school I had.

MB: For how long?

Mr. E: Oh, not too long. Not too long. --I went to work when I was very young. Very young. I never finished school at all. No, no. I never had the chance to finish school. We were a poor family, and everybody had to go to work whenever, you know, whenever you were big enough to go to work, you had to go to work. --I never thought about an education in them days.

MB: And how big a family?

Mr. E: Oh, I was the only one in my family, but the Drew family was a big family. It was quite a big family. They were all coal miners.

MB: They worked in all the mines around here. Number One, Brechin, they all worked in Brechin too. And the Jingle Pot. All around Wellington, some of the old parts in Wellington. Yes.

MB: Can you tell me who owned those mines?

Mr. E: Dunsmuir?

MB: Wellington?

Mr. E: Oh, Dunsmuir. It was under Dunsmuir then.

MB: All of them?

Mr. E: Well, all of them that I know of. But after Dunsmuir left
there was other people -- in small -- you know -- quantities. Yes.
Mrs. Edwards: Wasn't it called Canadian Collieries?
Mr. E: At the finish it was called Canadian Collieries. Yes. The Canadian Collieries went over it and they worked a bit of the top coal out.
The top coal. And they worked some of that out.
MB: Did they own most of the mines at the time?
Mr. E: That's right
MB: And was there one other big mining company too, or was it the only one?
Mr. E: Well, the Canadian Collieries, the same as Nanaimo, there was a different -- what was that? Vancouver Coal Company. Then the Canadian Collieries, you see, took it all over. Extension. The Western Fuel. The Western Fuel in Nanaimo. It was the Western Fuel. And it went from one to the other. And then when Wellington started to see (?) out a little, you see, they found this coal in Extension. And everybody, of course, they moved from there to Extension. And that's how they left Wellington. They went to Extension to work. And then the people lived in Ladysmith. You had to live in Ladysmith, too. But it was quite a few people lived in Extension. And my people worked in Extension too. They worked there when there was explosions there. Yah.
MB: And so you've seen some of these explosions, have you?
Mr. E: I was there when it happened. I seen the smoke comin' out the fan shaft. And I was only a kid, you know. And I ran back in the ca--they used to stay in the cabin, Number Two Extension, that was up on the hill, and this big fan shaft. -- there was a big fan shaft -- so the air come out, and I ran in the house and told my uncle an' them, they were on the afternoon shift, an' I run in there and told my uncle and them, I says, There's a lot of black smoke comin' out of the fan shaft! for an explosion. In the mine.
MB: How many were killed?
Mr. E: I can't tell ye off hand. I can't tell you off hand. I never kep' tab, you know. --Oh there 've been several explosions...
MB: Well, how old would you be at that time?

Mr. E: Well, I was only a school boy. Just a small boy. At that time. And they used to g'wup there and they had a cabin there, see. And they used to batch in the cabin. They still lived here, you see. And they mostly batched in the cabin. And I would go up there/on the weekends and stay there with 'em, you see. And this is what I seen happen. I seen the smoke first.

MB: So it happened on a weekend, eh?

Mr. E: No -- it would be through the week. Sometimes I used to stay there a week, you see, at a time. And I was a small boy at the time. But seein' that dark... I can remember/-- I couldn't understand all that black smoke come out. --Just a cloud of black smoke. Yep.

MB: Well what did they do? What did your uncle and them do?

Mr. E: Well ma'am, them men were supposed to go on shift, on the afternoon shift, and Number 2 Extension and Number 3 Extension, they went and dug ditches. The started to try to flood it out. Try to flood the fires, you see. It was all on fire. And they tried to flood it out. And every now and again you could hear a sort of a Bang! you know, and you thought it was somebody drivin' on the door, to come out. But it was -- explosions. In the mine. Yep. I can remember him tellin' me that too, you know. And he dug the ditches -- there was two doors, you see, one door here to open up to go down the slope, and then down a little farther was another door. Had to make sure -- so the ventilation couldn't pull through from here. And he dug a ditch, down the sides, to run the water down. They were gonna flood it. (nodding) They were gonna flood it.

MB: Where did they get their water from?

Mr. E: Now I can't tell you that. I don't know where they got it from. Wherever they got it, Extension. I guess -- they had a dam out by Number One Extension. They had a dam there and I guess that's where they got the water from. Yep.
MB: So then did you stay up there overnight, or for several days?
Mr. E: Oh yes! Oh yes!
MB: Then you must have seen people around the mine.
Mr. E: I could see the people around the mine. Yes.
MB: Do you remember when they brought anybody out?
Mr. E: No, I can't remember. No, I can't remember that. They had several explosions there. Yes. I know quite a few of the fellers was killed there. The Robertson boys used to live right here, they were killed out in Extension. Willie Robison. (?) and the father. Yep.
MB: At the same time?
Mr. E: No, no, different one. That was down in the tunnel. In Extension tunnel. You see. Extension tunnel went in here, and there was Number 3 and Number 2 was up at the back. And that's where they had the fan shafts, you see. And you could go to work down there too. They had slopes there too. But the coal would all come off (?) this way. At the bottom. To Extension. Yep.
MB: Well, why do you think they had so many explosions?
Mr. E: Why?
MB: Why.
Mr. E: Well, I guess it's maybe poor ventilation. Poor ventilation. In them days they didn't know really what gas would do, you know. In a big way.
MB: Well didn't the fire boss have to go in and test?
Mr. E: Yes. Yes.
MB: And he couldn't have been testing then, or what?
Mr. E: Well anything could come. They might have fired a shot. Might have fired a shot in the coal and it come out. See. Same in Granby mine. I worked in Granby mine. And I seen a feller fire a shot in the Granby mine there, and there was eleven sets o' timber pushed out. It was a blow-out, you see, with the gas in behind. -- There was no
you gas there, where we were workin'. The gas was in behind you. Sure.

MB: And did he get killed?

Mr. E: No! No, there was nobody killed that time. Nobody killed, but there was several men killed in there. There was several men killed with blow-outs. In Granby mine. Oh yes. I knew some of them. Oh yes.

MB: And that would be what the blow out would be, in behind, eh?

Mr. E: Yes, the gas, you see. 'Cumulate in behind the coal. Granby was bad! Was very bad. Yep.

MB: When did you start to work in the mine?

Mr. E: When I was able to go to work! And not go to school!

MB: What age?

Mr. E: Oh, maybe 13 or 14.

MB: And what was your first job?

Mr. E: My first job was runnin' a winch. In Brechin mine. And I was goin' down the slope in Brechin mine and I was never so scared in all my life! 'Cause when I went down the slope, it was under the channel -- under the salt water -- the water was comin' in, couldn't come in any quicker. And I thought well, if I go down below that, I'll never come back out! See? And I was scared every day I was goin' down there. And they had a big steam pump in there, they used to call it Big Bertha. And the boys, anybody got through a bit early, and had their work done, they'd come up and sit in the pump room. It was warm. Steam, y' see. The steam was close to the top. And they'd wait till time to go out.

MB: Why, was it cold in the mine?

Mr. E: Mhm... quite chilly, oh yes. Quite cold. Oh yes. On the hottest day in summer, it's chilly in the mine.

MB: I heard that it was about 60 degrees in the mine, all the time. (door bell rings)
Well, it is --

Mr. E: It is around that. I guess it would be around that.

It's quite cool in the summertime. In the mine. You feel the heat when you come out. You'd think you're comin' out to an oven. You think when you're comin' out to the heat you're comin' out to an oven/when you're comin' out in the summer time, out of the mine. See, like you open a fridge, down in the basement. Same thing. Oh yes. --Not as cold! You know. Not as cold as that.

There was an awful heat to come out to. You felt so hot.

MB: That would be nice.

And

Mr. E: We used to use dogfish oil, for our lights. Little pitlamp. With cotton. With cotton. Yep. And we used to pay 35 cents a gallon! For the oil. And we used to have to have about every month. And we used to have a little cadger in our back pocket, to fill the lamp every now and again. Yep, that's the light we had in the mine! Many a times there was little holes in the rib -- of course you don't know what the rib is. Well that's the side of the wall. There'd be a hole in there. And if there was any water in there, and there was any gas, you could hear it fuzzin', fizzin' -- brrrr! brrrr! dzzzz! dzzz! And many a time I used to put my light in there and light it.

MB: Why?

Mr. E: Well, just to see it burn!

MB: And it wouldn't blow?

Mr. E: No! There wasn't enough to blow. The gas got to be mixed up a bit with air before it'll blow. See.

MB: But I would be afraid to do that.

Mr. E: Well I'll tell ye how quick it comes in. Just give ye a little idear how quick it comes in. I was workin' night shift, me an' my partner, in Granby. And we was turning a place off the main road. I was in just behind a bit of curtain, a curtain that guides the air. And we was puttin' a set of timber up, and it was the last thing fer us goin' out in the morning. And the fire boss come in an hour before that
and it was all clear. My partner got up on the scaffold, it was about 12 feet high. My partner got up on the scaffold, and he says to me, he says, I feel kind sick, George. I feel kinda sick. I says What's the matter? --I dunno, he says, I just feel kind of dizzy, funny. And he dropped off the scaffold. And when I looked at the place, looked at it, you know, I could see, it looked like four feet of rock. In the top. That was four feet of gas, in that place. And the fire boss had only gone out an hour before that! And when I went to the top I reported it to him. Now he would have reported that gas Clear. But I went to him soon as I walked out the mine, he has to stand there and let the other fellows know, you see. On top. So I told him, I says, there's like four feet of rock on top o' the coal. So you can take it from there. It was four feet of gas on top o' the coal. That's right. And I told him in time too, y' see. Now they'd have to go down, and run the air in there, and get that out of there. Or take the air hose from the machines, y' see. Take compressed air. And blow it out. Blow it out. And then it would travel out through the fan. Yep. That's how quick it comes in. 

Mr. E: And you had put that brattish ... 

Mr. E: We had the brattish up, you see? We had the brattish up to keep it goin', the same return air comin' in to -- and it hadda come to us, you see? And I guess it wasn't enough. We were in too far, without any brattish. You can only go so far, then you got to have to a split, for the air to go around, come in. That's how mines work. Yep. --One time in Wellington, I remember, they used to have a shaft, and they built it in with brick. And they used to have a 'normous fire there, for air. They had no fans, in them days. They had no fans. Just the air. That flame goin' up would draw the air through the mine. That's how they worked it. Yep. Years ago. In Wellington. Joe Winnen will tell ye about that.
first

MB: What age were you when you went down the mine? You were working up above...

Mr. E: Oh, I would say maybe around 14. That was pretty young. I know I was pretty young. Because I never got through school. I only went to first base. I only got to first base. What little I know now, I've learned it with the wife, and -- you know what I mean. Through me readin' a little bit an' -- goin' along that way. That's the way I -- but I had no education. It's too bad I didn't have an education. I'd a -- I'd a been -- well I wouldn't a been lackin', now. If I'd a had an education.

MB: What was the first job you had in the mine, down below?

Mr. E: Drivin' a winch. Running a winch. In the mine. I was running a winch. In the mine.

MB: Oh, I thought that was up above.

Mr. E: No, no, no no! In the mine! Down in the coal mine. I was running a little winch. And I only had two men to tend to. They were drivin' a little slope ahead of me. And I used to pull the car up, and let the other car down to them, and when they filled it, I'd pull it up. And then the other fellas 'd take it away from me, on a side track, you see. Yep.

MB: And then after that what job did you have?

Mr. E: Well, after I left Brechin, I think it was oh, quite a while after I left Brechin, oh, it was ... I went to the powder works.

MB: How long did you work in Brechin then?

Mr. E: I worked in Brechin quite a few years.

MB: Did you dig coal in Brechin?


MB: Then you went to the--

Mr. E: The powder works. I worked in the powder works for quite a while.

MB: Where was the powder works then?
Mr. E: The powder works then? It was at Departure Bay. Departure Bay and Beban farm. Over here. Yep.

MB: Did you see any explosions there?

Mr. E: There was one!

MB: What happened?

Mr. E: Proof of the puddin' when you eat it! There was ten Chinamen and two white men got blown up there! And the biggest piece we found was one man's arm, cut off there. Biggest piece we found. Everybody went with little sticks around with buckets and pails and sticks, with sticks/on the end to pick up the flesh, and pieces of hair, aw it was .... yep. --An' after they got blew up, they turned around and put girls in there, to roll the gelignite -- this wasn't dynamite. This was gelignite. And they put girls in there to roll the powder up after. You see. In the rolling house. They never had an explosion after that. Not in that building. But in where they mixed the gelignite, it's gone twice. It went off twice. Yep. It killed three men there. I was there when--three more men -- different to this one -- there was three more men killed. And how he got killed, I'll tell ya how he got killed. I was haulin', he was mixin' dynamite. We were workin' in the dynamite. But this is the gelignite. They mix two kinds of powder, you see. Gelignite much powerful than the dynamite. They never used gelignite around -- in the coal mine. They use it in big rock quarries and that you know, it's big powerful stuff. But anyhow, there was three men killed there. Yep. And I was haulin', I was drivin' a horse, with a covered car. On the railroad track. And I'd take all this stuff up from the grist mill up to the mix house. An' I was just goin' away from the mix house, and I was talkin' to the man that was mixin' the powder, you know. And he said It's a bad day today, you know, it was rainin'. And a heavy, bad day. And right at our buildin' we had no flush toilets them days, you know, it was an outside hut. And of course, he said to me, he said, I'll mix this batch, an' I'll run over, he says,
I've got to go to the bathroom, you know. And he went over to the other -- to the gelignite mix house. He never come out. He got killed right in there. But he had one bracer up. (Mr. E. demonstrates a man putting up his braces, over one shoulder).

And there was somethin' hit him there in the throat. And just cut his throat right out. Yep.

Now I got another fella that could give you lots of information on here, was in that. And he was only from here to your car off it. Over an embankment. And he was mixin' the dynamite. He was mixin' the gelignite. An' he's livin' right today. He lives down at the foot of the hill here.

MB: What's his name?

Mr. E: Victor Bolotti. I can give you his number too, right away. He can give you a lot about it. Ethel, he was there when Willie Day an' them got killed.

MB: You were saying this gelignite was used to blow up big rock quarries. Where abouts did they use it around here?

Mr. E: Oh, ship it all over! Ship it by train. Ship it away by boat.

MB: They didn't use it right here then?

Mr. E: No, no! They only used the dynamite here. But when they first started the powder works here, that's years ago, they made the nitro glycerine at Departure Bay, and they made the dynamite in Beban Park. Right here. I'm sayin' Beban Park so you know where I mean. In Beban Park. And they used to haul the nitro (niter) glycerine after they finished it down at Departure Bay, they used to haul it on account of the railroad there, see. They used to haul it up to this Giant powder works here, and they used to make the giant powder here. And this fella that was drivin' the horse, and an express wagon, if you know what an express wagon -- he had a horse and an express wagon, and he was comin' up down
by the mall here, just over the track, and he had this niter-glycerine in big bottles -- oh, maybe ten gallon in a bottle. And the bottle was all done with that Chinee (shiny?) straw. You know? Well, he might have six or eight bottles in there. It blew up. They never found nothin' o' him or the horse or nothin'. Took a hole in the road there, you could sink a house in. --And then they found out that maybe that's what caused them to move the giant powder works down to the bay. I figger it would be. And they only made black powder over here. An' all the time they made black powder over here, I can only give you two people that got killed there. One fella got killed in the wheel house, and -- that was a white man, I know him well, see. And a Chinaman got killed in the coin mill, where they coin the powder. See, when it went through, first, in the black powder, it would just be like black flour. An' nen it would go to another building, and they'd coin it. And then they'd glaze it, make it shiny. It was sut, just like sut (soot). And they'd put it in little coins, like, just as a big as a small pea, that you open a tin a peas? And they'd glaze it. They had the whole thing there, one track run from one house to the other, you know. But there was only two fellas killed, but there was several explosions.

In this here black powder, they had the -- oh, I guess the wheels weighed about sixteen ton. Two big wheels runnin' around in a big pan -- oh, bigger 'n this buildin' here, see. And they used shovels to shovel it in and out, you see. And they'd put the charcoal -- and they made charcoal out of alder wood. They had big burners over here, and made charcoal. And that's where they got the black powder from. From the alder. They'd make it out a soda, and different chemicals. And many a time, the fella had a basement, where to go and throw the switch in. But if it went off it wasn't very high explosive. You see. 'Cause if the wheels 'd slip when you threwed the motor in, you see, it would maybe cause fire, and -- many a time it threw the top of the shed off. Yep.
MB: And taking the shovel -- that didn't make it --

Mr. E: No, no! That was a wooden shovel! Same as the gi'nt powder works. That was all this pressed paper. Years ago you might have had one too, in your home. Wash tub. Pressed paper. That's what they used. Always paper. And you couldn't go into them buildings at Departure Bay in the powder works, with your shoes that you were walkin' around in. They always had big shoes for you to slip in.

MB: Why?

Mr. E: On account of the nails in the bottom.

So MB: Oh, it was metal that would make it go off?

Mr. E: Oh yes! A spark. One time, I used to use a truck. You know these little trucks that they carry feed around in? Two-wheels on? Well I used to use one o' them to unload my buggy there, you know. And the carpenters had been workin' in the mix house, Sunday, on the week end, doin' some work, some repair work. And when I -- I seen this stick on the floor, big parlor matches. They had an awful big head on them. You know that thing was right down, square, when I picked it up, with the weight of that stuff on it! And if it 'd ever a went off if it ------ it was an explosion. So I took it down to the office. Never heard no more about it. Never heard no more about it.

MB: When you say that you used to carry this stuff -- what stuff?

Mr. E: For to mix the dynamite! That was from the grist mill. What they call the grist mill. It was like a flour mill. All chemicals there, you see. And you were like a flour man when you were workin' in there, you were white. And it was just like, just like me haulin' flour. And they used to put so many pound in so -- and the niter-glycerine was up above it. It run into three big lead tanks. Like water. The highest explosion you could ever get. Niter-glycerine. And it run in there like water. All through lead troughs, you know. And it'd drop from that trough down into there, and it'd never explode. You see.

MB: I can't understand that --

Mr. E.: I can't either. I can't, but it never exploded. No.
MB: When this buggy was going along, and it exploded just --

Mr. E: Yep! And then they used to have a scales. And they had a little lead tank on the scales. And for a batch of forty percent, sixty percent, all different percentages, they put so much weight of niter-glycerine, see. And then run it into the tub. And then there was plows. Machines right up and down. Plows 'd keep go round and keep plowin' it and plowin' it. And then you'd shovel that out, and it'd get pret' near like dough, you know. And they'd take it over to the packin' house. And they'd put it in the shells. Put it in the shells. --They had a machine, to put it in shells. Yep.

MB: So the girls, --

Mr. E: The girls rolled the powder, they didn't work in the dynamite. The girls worked in the gelignite. They rolled gelignite down there.

MB: Why do you think that they didn't have so many explosions after that?

Mr. E: Well, that's what I can't understand. They didn't have many explosions after that. They never killed a girl there.

MB: Because their fingers were smaller?

Mr. E: Naw! That wouldn't do it, no. They had a machine there, they had it on a bench like this table here, see. A little machine, they called it the sausage machine. And you could put any size you wanted, to come out there. And they had boards, you see. They used to cut it with a wooden knife. A wooden knife, you see, the length of the sticks. And you could have it five-eighths, half an inch, or an inch, whatever you wanted. See. And it run through. Well the fella that did it out of the tub, it was just like brown dough. And push it down through there like you would push a piece of meat through -- exactly the same as a meat grinder! And it used to go through there on a worm, and come out through there -- you'd be surprised how it used to work.

MB: How long did you work there?

Mr. E: Oh, I worked quite a while at the powder works.
MB: Did you get as good pay as you would if you were --
Mr. E: Hah! The pay -- I forget what we got at the powder works. Not much. Very little. Very little.
MB: You must have been a little afraid though, when you started to take that job.
Mr. E: No. No, the only thing you was afraid of, when you first started there, you would get a terrific headache. It would pret' near drive you crazy. After three days, you started to lose it. And you never had a headache again.
MB: I guess you knew Bill Cottle.
Mr. E: Well! He worked there. What was that fellow worked for -- Nash. What was his name? Used to live just across the track. In that big house. Jack -- he worked there for a long time. Two brothers. --But anyhow there was two brothers. And they worked there in the gelignite mix house. Even after they had explosions there. They never had an explosion. I think Bill Cottle worked in that same place. In there.
MB: Did you ever go back down to the mines after you worked there?
Mr. E: Oh yes, I went back. I went right through till I finished. I went back, I went through Jingle Pot, Old Jingle Pot. The old Jingle Pot. I went through all the mines, Number Eight, White Rapids, I worked a long time down below with Harry Ellis in Old Jingle Pot.

I went and got a ticket, you see. After -- When I was a kid I was always runnin' winches, you know. That's what I started on, that. So I went and got a ticket. I had a hard job gettin' that ticket too, you know. No scho'lin'. But I went through anyhow. But I went through by experience. I worked fireman for a long time. And I looked an' I watched everything that was done. So when I went over to Westminster to get my engineer's ticket, I had quite a -- I'd say there was about fifty there all told. There'd be about, I would say, twenty, goin' for first class ticket. And you know, there was only two of us got it! Only two of us got it. That's right. Yep. And after that, I started hoistin'. I hoisted all through the Northfield Mine.

MB: MB: Well I guess you remember the different disasters that took place around here then?

Mr. E: My parents told me about the disaster in Nanaimo -- I guess I was too young then, there was 150 men killed there in Nanaimo at six o'clock in the evening. That's when it went off. Six o'clock. That was gas. Yep. Dust is as bad as gas, in a mine. Yep. Granby was a bad one for dust. I think that's what made it so bad. In Granby. But Old Jingle Pot Mine, I worked right through in old Jingle Pot Mine. Yep. --When the big strike was here in Nanaimo? --We worked one day over the strike, and I remember that as if it was only yesterday. We worked one day more. And then we was out. When the big strike was called.

MB: That wasn't the one where Alben -- what was his name, Van Alben -- the German, had one of the Jingle Pot mines, and they worked, because they had an agreement with the union.

Mr. E: That's right! That was the time. The only time they had an agreement with the unions, and we were safe on that. Yep. That's how they'd block the unions, I guess. You'd be surprised here when it was -- before the unions came. People'll say The Unions gone too far! Well I don't think they're gone too far at all. You see. When you look at it in the right light, now. When I was in old Jingle Pot mines, you know, it was really a crime. Before the unions come here. It was really a crime, to work, in the mines! Do you know, if you looked cross eyed at a boss, you know what he'd do to you? You'd go in the mornin' -- now he'd never say nothin' to you now -- I'm tellin' you the Gods' truth now. You'd go to work in the mornin' and you couldn't get a lamp. The fella in the lamp cabin 'd say your lamp's stopped, for two weeks, well your off the payroll for two weeks. After two weeks you can go back. A lot of the fellas wouldn't go back. They'd look for a job somewhere else. --They had the horse whip over
you! I know what a union is in Nanaimo, right now. It's a big thing, for the miners! On Vancouver Island. You betcha!

MB: Tell me some more about those conditions that you saw, before the union came in.

Mr. E: Before the union came in? Well I'll tell you what I saw. I saw about fifty men in Nanaimo, come from the Old Country. With big long-peaked caps on. They all got work, and they fired all the other guys. That was the kind of tricks they done in Nanaimo. That's years ago. I don't know if anybody told you that or not. But I know that was a fact.

MB: Where did they come from?

Mr. E: From England. Scotland. That's right. And even when we used to be lookin' fer a job, you know what we used to do? I've seen as high as thirty and forty men sittin' on an old fence out there, out of the office, and the boss 'd look out the winder, you know, and he might call one man in there, for a job. And that was week after week! They done that. In Nanaimo. "Come back Tomorrow!" And that was -- ---(name) -- he was assistant to Jack Hunt. And he really got a nickname on him: "Come Back Tomorrow!"

MB: And what was his real name?

Mr. E: Sagey (?)

MB: Was that when Dunsmuir owned the mine?

Mr. E: No no! Jack Hunt was in there then, and it was the Western Fuel.

MB: I have read that Dunsmuir would -- well, he would take a little bit more care of the miners than the Canadian Collieries.

Mr. E: Well I don't know about Dunsmuir, but I'll tell you what happened to me when I was in Brechin. And there's the bone there yet -- right there! (Points out old injury). I got my arm broke. And there was no compensation or nothin'. So some of the boys says to me Well why don't you go and see Mr. Stockand. He was the mine manager. That's before Hunt's time. That's years ago. And they says to me, they says, Why don't you go and see Mr. Stockand? And he might be able to help you out. --So I went to see him, he gave me fifty dollars. I don't know, I forget now how long I was off,
but I had a broken arm, I was off for quite a while. Yes. And I was only helpin' another feller in the mine when I got my broken arm.

Steerin' the cars over the switches. Ridin' in the cars, two or three cars behind him. Slooin' (?) them over the track, over the different switches, you know. And one would hit the rock, ahead, a piece o' rock on the track, you know, and the other cars went click! click!, and my hand was in between there, y' see. And it hit me behind here, and flipped my hand right over.

It fixed me up, you know. He was the manager of the mine, you know.

Bill Roper. Nice feller. And he'd been out huntin' with us. And I'd shot a deer myself, you know. Oh, it run down the mountain. I shot it in the shoulder and broke its leg. He says Now listen, --Here's me in pain no matter what way I could hold my arm, I was in terrific pain. He says You remember that deer you shot yesterday? He says to me. I says I sure I remember the deer, but this is what I'm worrying' now, I'm worryin' about pain in my arm, you know. And I wanted it eased, try to get it eased. And he says Just think how that poor deer was yesterday. --I'll never forget that as if it was just done yesterday. (laugh) --That's a fact! Yep.

MB: Did you work in Protection mine at all?

Mr. E: Never did! Never worked in Protection, never worked in Number One. Never did. I can't tell you the date, but I remember the day the cage went down the mine, with sixteen people on.

MB: What happened?

Mr. E: The rope broke.

MB: Does anybody know what --

Mr. E: Yes. I can tell you. The rope, I guess, it couldn't have been looked after, very good. And the salt water running down the mine, and drippin' on the mine, and runnin' down the rope, salt water -- take a pipe in your house if you live by the salt water, and it's a black pipe. Two years you gotta throw it out. It eats away. And I think that was the
same with the rope. Take it a while \textit{w} to do it, the rope broke. And them men lost their lives.

MB: Did you see -- what did the people feel like when a disaster happened? I've seen pictures of them, you know, waiting to see...

Mr. E: Well, they would do. There be a lot of people waiting to see if they were safe, on the bottom of the mine or not. There was even fellas walked on to that cage, and, I don't know -- they forgot something, you know. And they walked back off, and by Jeez it saved their life. Otherwise they'd a been gone. Every one on that cage was -- I think every one was killed. Why it was just like that!

(hits fist into palm of other hand) when they hit the bottom. They went down I guess five or six hundred feet. That's a long drop, with a big heavy cage. Went down there like a streak a lightnin'! It was an awful disaster, I suppose, on the bottom. But Inever worked in there. But I know what the boys used to tell me. When they worked in under the mine, out in front of the assembly dock, Well the Patricia used to run in Nanaimo. Any time it went out at quarter past two, All right boys! Time to go home now! Put your coat 'n bucket, 'n go out. They could hear it go over. The drum o' the engines. They could hear the engines go over.

MB: And about that whistle on Number One, I heard some stories about it.

Mr. E: Well, the whistle in Number One, they used to blow the whistle if there was work or no work. You could always tell. When you lived out around here there was a lot of the miners -- in fact cleaned this place up around Northfield here. Miners, by hand. After they done their diggin' the coal. There was no bulldozers in them days. But that's how Northfield got cleaned up. Yep. A lot of Welsh people lived here. All coal diggers. All coal diggers. Yep.

MB: How many generations -- I guess they had come from Wales.

Mr. E: Oh yes, they come from Wales. My father really, you know, --from Wales. He was a Welshman.

MB: Was he a good singer too?

Mr. E: Well now, I can't answer that question, because I was too small, y'see.
MB: Glen Lewis told me they had a very good choir here in Nanaimo, Welsh.
Mr. E: Oh yes, yes! They did. Lewis boys used to sing in it, remember?
(to his wife). Two brothers? They did. And it seemed people was great
for choirs. There was some good singers around. I guess if I'd a been in
Wales I'd a been singing. Yep.
MB: And then, like, you only had one day off, Sunday?
Mr. E: Sunday! Six days a week we worked. Saturday afternoon shift, we
used to get out -- they were contract loaders in the mine, specially in
Brechin mine, when we worked in Brechin. There was fellows loadin' by
contract, so much a ton. Well we'd run the cars in to them, and help them
all we could, to get the place cleaned up, and then we could go home early!
--And we used to do a lot of deer hunting. You'd go out hunting, you know,
same as I told you about the manager. And I've seen us here on a Saturday
afternoon, me and my uncle, well they used to call him Nobby Drew. And me
and Nobby Drew would leave that Brechin mine, walk home, we'd get out of the
mine at nine o'clock, in the afternoon, nine p.m., and we'd come here to
Northfield, and we'd walk right out to Blackjack Mountain, hunt all
morning, get a couple a deer, pack them all the way in, right home -- go to
work Monday morning! People wouldn't b'lieve that!
MB: How many miles would it be from Brechin mine?
Mr. E: From Brechin mine? I would say it would be at least, oh a good
twelve mile.
MB: And then out to Blackjack mountain?
Mr. E: Out to Blackjack, well, we went out to the cabin. From here. It
would be, oh I guess from the road over to Pleasant Valley, it was nine mile.
It'd be -- I would say it would be between ten and twelve mile.
MB: That was on your Sunday?
Mr. E: That was Saturday night after we come from the mine!
And then we'd go out there and maybe have a couple hours' sleep. After walkin' that distance. Two or three hours' sleep, get up, and go and pack deer up the mountain, and then come over it -- that's another range behind this one. Where we used to walk. And pack deer in. --There was no transportation. That's right.

MB: Well then, what did you do on Sundays for relaxation?

Mr. E.: Relaxation? (laughter) Well, you'd go huntin'. That's about all you could do.

MB: I mean -- did you go to church, or --.

Mr. E.: No, no, no, we didn't go to church. No. We used to wait till the girls come out o' church! (laugh)

MB: You had the odd dance, did you? oh, listen --

Mr. E.: Oh, I was fond o' dancin'. I was fond o' dancin'.

MB: They had good dances --?

Mr. E.: And you know what made me a dancer? I used to work in Brechin mine when I first started to run the winch. And the fella that I had down there workin' with me, he was a dance teacher. Hughie Allen. They called him Hughie Allen. And Jack LaCourt, both of them, you know. And I used to work with them, and that's why I got dancin'. And I went in there and they learned me to dance, and nevdr quit. I just quit now 'cause I'm old, I can't dance.

MB: You went in where and --

Mr. E.: Into Assembly Hall. In Nanaimo. And where the old Assembly Hall was, was up in by --I don't know if you know where it was -- where the Athletic club was. They had a dance hall right in there somewhere. Right there. Yes.

MB: Who played the music?

Mr. E.: Oh well, different fellas, you know. Different fellas. Accordions mostly. Used to go to Nanoose Bay fer a dance, oh yes. Then horse and buggies come out. Oh, we used to go all over, dancin'.
MB: And when you took your girl friend out -- how did you take your
girl friend out?
Mr. E: Ast her! --She was my girl friend!
MB: Horse and buggy, or walk, or --
Mr. E: Oh yes, they had a horse and buggy.
Mrs. E: I used to walk to Sunday school, up at Wellington, and went to
church. I used to go to Sunday school, and church and the English church,
and walk home. That would be about four miles. I sang in the choir in
church too. And I walked to Departure Bay to public school.
Mr. E: Little red school house at Departure Bay, right where the school
house is now? Cross Departure Bay? She went to a little red school house.
Yes. (whispering going on in background, a telephone call).
Mrs. E: Well they never had the means to let you go to high school.
Mrs. E: So I never went any further in school.
MB: How did you feel when your husband went out to work and you knew that
he might not come home -- you know.
Mrs. E: I never thought about it. Anything like that. Never.
Mr. E: No, nobody thought anything like that.
MB: You must have had some kind of a --
Mrs. E: And when he went huntin', I never used to worry. He never had an
accident in his life.
Mr. E: Never had an accident in my life. Never did. And I've killed
more game, I betcha, than anyman on Vancouver Island! I was a great
blue grous hunter. Pheasants and blue grouse, you know. Shoot with a
shot gun. And deer huntin'. I've killed -- you'd be surprised. I used
to kill deer here for all the people -- in the hungry thirties here, I've
seen them send me out to shoot deer for the people right here in this town!
MB: So they ate -- they didn't go hungry?
Mr. E: I had a place here, had a little store here, to try to make things
meet. Couldn't do that. Went broke in that. And here I had the store
there. I used to cut the deer up in the store and I had a committee
workin' on it, they'd cut -- this is fer you, and this is fer you, and this is fer you, all your names on it. And they all got their amount of deer meat. This was after the season went out. We got a permit. From the game warden. To go out and get -- and then there was two other fellas, with a horse and buggy, and they used to go round collecting vegetables off the farmers. In the hungry thirties. Right here. That's how we got by. And then there was five of us went out in the woods there, I where I'm talkin' about Blackjack, and we made five canoes. And we dug them out ourself. We made them ourself. And a fella by the name o' George Ritchie hauled them in fer us. He was in the truckin' business a bit, you know. This was when the trucks come out. He hauled them in, we finished them up, we put them on to the salt water, and I've seen me give her seventy-five dollars in two weeks, when the hungry thirties was on -- and that was big money, in them days. Fishin' salmon fer, you know, to get a loaf o' bread. That's what we hadda do.

Before I finished, I got for the three of us here, I got six days a month, two dollars and 25 cents a day. And if you spent two bits, to go any place, you were short on the table. Two bits, on the table. 25 cents. That's as true as I'm sittin' on this chair. That's the way we were served in the hungry thirties. An' here we are...

MB: And did you have a garden?

Mr. E: I had a garden, grew a garden all my life. I still grow a garden! But this time I think I'll have to go on my hands and knees. I've got arthritis bad in the legs. Yep. But I -- I'll try my best, if I have to go down on my knees. I'll grow a garden.

MB: So how did you manage, Mrs. Edwards, did you can stuff?

Mrs. E: I still do!

Mr. E: Even canned blue grouse! You'd be surprised am the amount of blue grouse that we canned. 'Venison. Done it every way! But now'days they've got a deep freeze. --Well, one day out there -- I could fill the deep freeze! But today, I can't get out to get them. No, that's right. But they're gone
now, to what they were. You know what I mean. Huntin' now is -- it's a hard job fer anybody to hunt now. And the way the government has raised the prices, and everything. You gotta pay, look at the price you pay fer a
li -- we never had a licence here, years ago! You see? And I'll tell you, the deer -- there was that many deer here -- I give deer away to poor people, I know had a family. I'd take a whole deer to them. Not a piece. A whole deer. Go ahead! Help yourselves! Forget about it. Oh yes.

MB: What kind of a house did you have to live in?

Mr. E: Me? A wooden house.

MB: Well, I mean, how was it?

Mr. E: The house next door! Since 1920, till we moved in here. Fifteen, sixteen years ago now. But when we started out in life, I lived in Rosstown in an old shack. A shack! Just a place to put a bed, a little two-room place -- just, you know, built with anything. When we was first married. THAT'S WHERE That's where Ethel was born. That's the daughter. That's where she was born. That's right.

Ethel: They always said I was born in a cow shed. (laugh)

Mr. E: You was, Ethel, that's a fact! That's right! That's where she was born.

MB: You've had a very wonderful life, it seems to me.

Mr. E: Well, I tell you what I done, Missis. I figured this way, see. I wasn't a fella to run around a beer parlor, and drink, and drink a lot of whiskey. I'm not against anybody drinkin', don't ever forget that -- I take a drink of anything at all, you understand? But I wasn't any person to run around there. I put my money into guns, and shells, and ammunition, and I was out in the bush. Now if anybody come here and offered me $200, to go over to Vancouver to spend, and stay over there for a week, or a $500 bill, I wouldn't take it. I'd go out there for a week. All my life. I been once(t) down in Frisco. I been once(t) down in Frisco. That's the way that I live my life. I lived my life in the bush.
MB: And when did you go down there?
Mr. E: How long ago is it?
Mrs. E: It's about 15 years ago.
Mr. E: Twelve years ago anyway. It must be. It's about twelve years ago. That's right. --She's -- the wife's been down more than me. But that's my sport, and that's why I tell you I've hunted all my life, so I know. The last year, I been off now, what, about three years, three or four years -- I lost my dog. My dog died. I've always had good bird dogs. Wonderful bird dogs. And the last year that I hunted here, just around here, Beban Park, and around, close around, the last year that I hunted, I killed thirty cock pheasants, I'm pret'near ashamed to tell you. Thirty cock pheasants. So I've killed more game, I figure, than any man on Vancouver Island. That's right. That's right. --But I've had a good life. I enjoyed it, everything. I've done, I've enjoyed it. That's right. I'm not sorry -- there's only one thing that I'm sorry for. --I never had the education. Or I'd a went places.
Mrs. E: Well, that's your story! Gosh, I didn't think you were ever going to quit! I've been timing you. (laughter)
MB: But you've seen some marvelous changes in your time.
Mr. E: I've seen some marvelous changes. Even in the building, and everything. Marvelous changes. That's right.
MB: And in people's standard of living today?
Mr. E: Different standard of living. That's right.
MB: Do you think people are any happier today than what they were?
Mrs. E: Not as happy, I don't think.
Mr. E: You could get board in these here -- people used to run boarding houses, like, in these coal town places. They used to run boarding houses. Cumberland, all boarding houses. And you used to get the best of board for $18 a month. $18 a month! That's right. What you got for board. So I don't know if you're any better off. I'll tell you, the fellas
nowadays, they can go and spend a lot of money, where you can't go in to spend near the money they spend, because they get what, 40, 50, 60, 70, 90 dollars a day! D'ye see what I mean? Well, how are you gonna do it? Now they holler about the unions. This is the only one thing. That I've got against the unions. And I'm gettin' right now $220 from the union. Because I was a good union man. That's what they can pay us fellas, on the royalty of the coal. --Why can't they do it to the other people? Why can't they do it to the loggers? That's my meaning. --They can do it for every -- Who's gettin' it? The $220 that I'm gettin' from the union --who, who would've got that? The owners, would have got that. That's right.

MB: Do you remember how it was during that big strike they had here?
In 1912. How old would you be then?
Mrs. E: We were married that year.
Mr. E: I remember the strike. Oh sure! You know what I done in the strike? I'll tell you how I remember the strike. I remember the strike, I was in Nanaimo one time, we had a meetin'. And we had a meetin' in the Athletic Club. Where it the Athletic Club was? --It was packed! With the miners. And finally, the militia come in from Vancouver. Bowser's Seventy-twa.
Now the old fellas 'd know that. Bowser, never forget the day, when they stormed Departure Bay, did Bowser with his rotten seventy-twa!
Mrs. E: I thought they said the gallant --!
Mr. E: Well I'll tell you what they done with us out at the Athletic Club. I'll tell you what they done with us. When we went out, you understand, to go out? There was bayonets, all soldiers, right from the Athletic club, and all through the court house, and they searched every dam one of us. And when we were goin' out of the court house down on to Front Street, had to go through a bunch o' bayonets. And the last words they kep' tellin' us -- Get home! Get home as fast as you can. --And then we all had to get out of there. That's right. That was in the strike.
That's a fact. Yep.

MB: Do you remember what went on at Extension? When they burnt --

Mr. E: Yes. There was a bunch of scabs come in Extension, and oh! it was somethin' awful up there. It was war. In fact, a fella by name of Alec Baxter, he was a contractor, and he wasn't a miner. He was a contractor. And the scabs was in the tunnel -- out of the way, you know. And they shot Alec Baxter, through -- lookin' out, y' see. You couldn't see them, in there -- they shot Baxter in Extension. I think he was the only man got killed though. They shot him. -- He got killed, yep. Alec Baxter.

MB: And who had the guns?

Mr. E: Some of the scabs had the guns, in there. Must've. He's the man that got killed. -- But it was an awful mix-up. I lived here, see. I didn't live in Extension. They had quite a go there. That was in the strike. In the strike time. Yep. And you know what they used to call the scabs, after it was over? Anybody workin' in the mines -- how many cars you give that fella? Don't you know he was a Black Monocker (?) They called him a Black Monocker, 'cause he was a scab before, see, and they'd cut him down as much as they could cut him down. That's right. Yep. Oh, it was great! (--Pause) back

But I'll tell you, after you look/through life like that, you know, how many fellows today would go out there, and fall that timber, big -- cedars this (demonstrates) big through, just imagine, a big tree like that, and then go to work and -- the length of your canoe and work around it, and make canoes and get out on the water out here, where it gets pretty rough sometimes. And there was five of us done that. Yep.

MB: Who were they?

Mr. E: There was meself, there was Johnnie Loudon, there was Jake Rennerd, Johnnie Rennard, and Nobby Drew. And Johnnie Jones. And Tom Drew. There was about seven of us. Altogether.

MB: There was good fishing out there those days.

Mr. E: It was good fishin' in them days, yes.
I've seen me sketch fixx high as fifty coho salmon in that canoe in one day. Fifty. Yep. --We were lucky, we were gettin' ten and 15 cents apiece for them. That's right. 

MB: Did you ever see any sailing ships in your time, out here?

Mr. E. Sailing ships?

MB: Yes. I guess they had gone before your time?

Mr. E: That's right.

MB: But they had coaling ships out here,

Mr. E: Oh yes! The Thaw used to take everything from Brechin -- a big ship they used to call The Thaw. The boat would come in at the wharf, the coal would come out of the mine, dumped into the tipple, and run right into the boat. That's how close it was. See, the mine was right on the point. And the mine itself, the shaft, was only about 60 feet deep. But then it went down like that, see, from there. Yep. And then, at Wellington, all the coal went from Departure Bay, to Prisco. From Wellington. And the two boats that used to handle it, was -- they called it the Two Brother One boat, and the other one was the Wellington. The Wellington hauled tons and tons and fixx hundreds of tons of coal.

MB: Do you remember any union paper they used to have? The Wee Too?

Mr. E: The Wee Too! That's right! Yeh, there was a lot in there about a feller was driver boss, you know. Aw! It was true!

MB: Then there was the United Mine Workers of America -- they had a paper too, I guess,

Mrs. E: He gets that.

Mr. E: Oh yes -- I get that paper!

MB: I'll have to get some of the old copies --

Mr. E: I used to pass mine on to someone who never got it, you know.

MB: Is there anything else that you can remember?

Mr. E: Well not very much, you know, except at Extension. For months and months they killed a man am month. Every month, they killed a man. In Extension. They killed a lot of men. Diggin' coal, you know.
And a lot of fellows there got their back broke. It was a bad roof in the mine, and quite a few of them got their backs broke. Yep. Cave-ins. Yep. I used to know an old fellow here, after they get their back broke, they used to be here in Northfield, I used to go and see two of them. One fella with a back broke was a fella by name of Mike McFarlan. And another fella was Mr. Morgan. And they were in bed. And this Mr. Morgan, you know, it was comical, when I was a kid, you know, I used to go and see him -- he used to have a rabbit! Used to have a rabbit, used to jump in bed with him! A - a rabbit! Yeh! Old Mr. Morgan -- used to live down the road here. Yep. That's a long time ago.

MB: That was his pet?

Mr. E: That's his pet, yep. --But there was a lot of accidents in Extension mines. Single accidents. Yep. Granby mine, they had quite a few accidents. Oh yes.

MB: Would it be something to do with the formation of the rock up above, or something? Or the ground up above?

Mr. E: The formation is, Missis, I'll tell you what the formation is that got most of -- broke most of their backs. What they call hogbacks. See, a little dip in -- shaped that way. They come up, the same as a whale, a whale back, see? And there'd be a little bit o' water in there, a little bit o' water, you know, and it'd loosen up, and you'd pound it with your pick, and it'd sound solid. That's what killed most of them.

MB: It would cave?

Mr. E: It would drop in. --Didn't timber. 'Nuff timber. See. --They'd go in a little too far, maybe, and down it would come. You see. But a lot of those peo le, a lot of those fellas, got killed with the coal car. Full o' coal, too, you know. Specially workin' in a high place. I worked in Granby where I was puttin' a 24 ft. leg up -- a leg -- you know what a leg is? Under the timber. See, and the timber goes across, and two legs down? And still on coal. I dunno how far down.

MB: And this was at Granby?
Mr. E: That was at Granby.
MB: That was deep.

Mr. E: That was deep. Yep. We don't know how much coal was below that. That coal's all there yet. That's right.
MB: That's what I've heard, there's a lot of coal out at -- under the air port.

Mr. E: That's right. That's a field of coal out there. Oh, no doubt. Down at Cedar district, there's lots o' coal in Cedar district. Oh yes.
MB: Can you tell me how much rock they would allow in your car of coal, was it each miner had a car to fill up?
Mr. E: Yes.
MB: And if there was ten pounds of rock in it?
Mr. E: They'd dock you. That's right. They'd dump the car out. They'd dump mine numbers. See, the check number's in 'em. The check number -- they put a check on the car. That's how they know your cars. So when the check comes on the cars, they dump one car, and they pick rock out. They have a boy there, pickin' rock out. So many pounds o' rock. I can't tell you exactly the pounds, but if you had too much rock in that car, they'd dock you. They'd dock you. And they found -- they used to have contract loaders one time. And I remember one -- I knew the fella that got caught. And they was wonderin', you know, they was wonderin' who was stealin' these cars. Of coal. And so only way they'd do, you see, they told the fellas to put two checks on the cars. One in each corner -- you get me? That's how they caught him. He'd put his check on the car. But that was robbin' you. Out of a car of coal. He got caught, in Nanaimo. He got caught. They caught him. Yep. And his name was Evans. I don't know his first name. But he got caught. And that's how they caught him. They put one check -- you only put one check on a car. Well, they have little staples, you know, in the corner of the car. And, they just put a nail on the inside of the car, and the coal was up above it. And that's how they caught him. Yes. It was simple to catch him. Sure.
MB: Well, all the work in the mine was hard work.

Mr. E: What! -- Bull work! When you went down the mine, my dear woman, in when you went down the mine, you just peeled right off. Right to your undershirt! And the steam was off the coal diggers -- you'd see the steam off some of them fellers' backs! All day long. That's right. And when they're workin' on the walls, it was funny too, sometimes, you know, you could smell the garlic, with some of the Italian fellas, you know. The garlic comin' out. But they worked! They earned every nickel they got, Missis. They can't pay a coal miner too much, you know. One time we had a strike -- oh, it's -- not too long ago. In Nanaimo. They had a bit of a strike. It didn't last long. And they wanted a dollar, a dollar a day. Well, our union man, the head man, John Stockalock, says You can't get the cent on the dollar. We're beat! -- We were gonna defeat 'em. We're gonna stick it out! We'll stick it out! -- We got the dollar a day, but the company kep' us out of work for three weeks, before they give us the dollar a day. But you know what the company was benefittin' on it? The company was benefittin' on it, if two men loaded sixteen ton a day, you understand, two coal diggers? They only got a dollar, and you got a dollar -- what did the company get? The company got fourteen extra dollars on them two men! They just tryin' to blindfold the people, but they couldn't blindfold me! That's a fact! And all these diggers, some of them 'd load twenty ton o' coal. That's eighteen clear dollars for the company. -- See how they work? That's a fact! That's right. Yep.

MB: Well, you are the first one that's told me how really hard it is, what hard work --

Mr. E: Missis -- anybody worked in the coal mines, he's earned every nickel. He's earned the hard way. The hard way. Go an' look at his hands, you'll see callouses on his hands off the shovel. That's right. They kill theirself! They killed theirself workin' . Most of the coal diggers.

MB: What is this little thing?
Mr. E: That little thing is 50-year membership. For coal mines. I just got it. George Bryce -- you know George Bryce? George Bryce just brought it to me? Fifty years!

MB: Fifty years in what? Who put this out?

Mr. E: The unions. District 18, Calgary. --That's where I get my $220 dollars, see what I mean? I didn't know a thing about it. Do you know what we got for back pay? On that 220 dollars? We got 1600 dollar cheque. And when I got the cheque -- I was the first one got it, and here I phoned up the other boys, and they said You're crazy! And I says I'm crazy then. And by George, next day or two, they got their letters. They got their 1600 dollars, and from there on, --we was only gettin' 100 dollars, and they raised it to 220. --And give us all that back pay. --So there's what a union 'll do for you. That's what a union 'll do for you. And that's -- I'll tell you. I've been a union man all my life. I guess I -- bred from my father. You see. He was sent to Frisco. So I'm the same as him. Yep. Been -- all my life -- been a union man!

MB: Do you know anything more about that time when your dad went to Frisco?

Mr. E: No. I don't. I was too young. I was too young. My mother died when I was 2 weeks old. And I was raised by my grandparents. See.

Drews. Their name was Drew. And they raised me, and that's why I ain't got an education today -- there was nothin' too good in this world for me. They put a silver spoon in my mouth, and they were too late takin' it out. (laughter from all sides) -- If I had a headache, I didn't have to go to school. Every other day, you know, I'd have a tooth ache. See?

Now that's a fact. I'm tellin' you the facts.

(End of interview).
Phone call to George Edwards after transcription.

Q: Where was it that you saw the pieces of flesh etc. being picked up with sticks, after an explosion?

That was at the Powder Works at Departure Bay. There was 10 Chinamen and two white men killed. They were pickin' up the flesh and putting it on a piece of canvas. That was where the rail was wrapped around a tree.