This is Lynne Bowen interviewing Bill Rice-Wyse for the C'Mal Tyee History Project.

LB: Were you born here in Nanaimo?
RW: Ya, I was born in the big house.
RW: The big house, I built one up there up the river there when I was a chief.
LB: Oh ya, you're referring to the big meeting houses.
RW: The big house where they have Indian pow-wows.
LB: And you were born in one of those?
RW: Down on the waterfront.
LB: Did the people live in those?
RW: Ya. When I come to my senses a little bit all this was houses right down to here. All along here, that's where all the Indians were.
LB: And there was a big meeting house here down on the water.
RW: All of them right from No. 1 what you call No. 1 mine, right down to here, all together, close together.
LB: Indian houses.
RW: Uh-huh. That's right.
LB: Was that all the reservation from No. 1 all the way down here?
RW: Yah.
LB: And now they've made it smaller.
RW: It's still reservation but there aren't the houses now.
LB: Does the band lease that land to someone else?
RW: No, no.
LB: But there's some docking facilities along there isn't there? Was No. 1 about where the CPR is?
RW: No, No. 1, the coal mine was right here, right next to the reservation.
LB: And the wharfs were on the other side then of No. 1, were they? The coal wharfs.
RW: All that where the saw mill is, it wasn't there, was all water. That's where the tide come in. Right where CHUB is now, that's where the famous Indian that found the coal, Coal Tyee, that's where he lived. He had a cabin there. Ya, down on the waterfront.
LB: How old a man was he when he discovered coal, was he a young man then?
RW: He must have been.
LB: Did he live a long time after that?
RW: Oh I don't know, I never followed that. He must have been young because he paddled out all the way to Victoria. He went over to show the government. He happened to run into a blacksmith and the blacksmith said, "Ah, he must have picked it out of our coal over here. That's the same thing." So Coal Tyee told him that there was lots of this in Nanaimo.
LB: What does Tyee mean?
RW: Big man. Big shot.
LB: Who called him Coal Tyee?
RW: Oh the white people. After he became known.
LB: So were Indians involved in coal mining from then on?
RW: No, no. Indians never went down in the mines.
LB: Did you?
RW: Ya, ya.
LB: So were you one of a few that went down the mines?
RW: Uh-huh. I spent about 10 years.
LB: When you were a young man?
LB: Ah, were you hired because you were a baseball player?
RW: Ya.
LB: What years did you work for Western Fuel?
RW: I was 18, 19.
LB: Right after the first World War then, was it? For about 10 years.
What were you doing down in the mine?
RW: I was the first chunker that ever worked in the mine.
LB: Could you tell me what a chunker is?
RW: A chunker is. The people that load the coal, they got this machinery
from Scotland or England, I don’t know, but that’s from the Old Country.
The miners all worked... the coal is only about 4 feet thick or...
they wanted coal from Protection because they have hard coal.
LB: Is it different coal at Protection than at No. 1?
RW: No. I had it but there was coal was high like this you know. And
there was more pockets things like, what would you call it, po'kets
that this piece would run so far and would peter out again and then
another one would start.
LB: So you went down in Protection and were working in that area. Now what
would you do as a chunker?
RW: Well I loaded up the cars. They had machinery see going on the face
of the wall of the coal and they had an air pump up there that'd go
dick, chick, chick, chick like that you see then the coal would come
down all these miners were loadin' it on and I was putting their tags
on.
LB: Oh, you put the tallies on did ya?
RW: Ya, I put their tags on because I had to try and keep them even.
LB: So there'd be a number of men working on one area and you would make
sure that they each got an equal amount of credit for the amount of coal.
RW: Ya they got a lot of coal out of there.
LB: Gosh that must have been heavy work, that you were doing. Loading?
RW: No.
LB: No? Would you load with a shovel?
RW: NO! It dropped right into the cars. Ya, and I had to chunk it so, fix
it up so it wouldn't hit the sides of the walls.
LB: Oh I see. So then somebody else hauled it out. Were you a chunker
the whole time you were in the mine?
RW: No I worked along side the machinery and things like that. I never
done very much. I drove mules for a while but I didn't like that.
LB: There's a whole bunch of stories about the mules. Were they awkward
animals to work with? Is that why you didn't like it?

RW: Ya. I had to look after a place where they pulled all the cars of coal you know where they are working. I had to look after that and when we didn't get enough cars something went wrong and we couldn't get no cars up there. The diggers were contract you know and they didn't like that. They used to kind of blame me for not gettin' enough cars.

LB: And you couldn't get them up because of the mules?

RW: No. On account of the motors down below couldn't pull it up but the mules were waitin' there, see.

LB: Did you ever see any mules mistreated?

RW: Oh ya. Because some of the mules wouldn't go for certain people. They'll kick and kick and bite you. And the funny part of it, I'll go up to the mule and pet em' and I'll get him to work but he won't work for certain people. They worked for me. I used to bring them a carrot.

LB: I guess they must have been fairly intelligent animals, they knew who their friends were. So you were with the mules and what else did you do in the mine?

RW: Oh I done mostly chunking and going after the loaders.

LB: Were you paid on a hourly rate?

RW: Sometimes I did, sometimes I got paid by the week.

LB: Oh really. Can you remember how much you were paid?

RW: Oh, about $75.

LB: A week. A lot of work for $75 eh?

RW: Oh that was big money. Oh heck ya. You got $10 you were a rich man.

LB: Well what would your living expenses have cost you then? What would it have cost you to eat?

RW: I don't know. Not very much because we lived on what ya call bannock. Ya because where was the bakeries?

LB: There weren't any?

RW: No, the Scotch bakery was there but it run out of bread all the time.

LB: So your wife would make bannock?

RW: Ya.

LB: Did you have a family?

RW: Yup.

LB: How many children?

RW: About 5 I guess. Let's see I've got one, two, three, four more left. The other passed away.

LB: Did any of your children express an interest in mining?

RW: No, things were changin' when they were growing and I tried to put 'em to high school but they wouldn't have 'em cause they're Indians.

LB: What were they supposed to do?

RW: Well they had a residential school and from Chilliwack all over, Sechelt when you was through there well that was it.

LB: So did your children go to residential school?

RW: Ya. Kuyper Island. Across from Chemainus. They lived there. Well my kids were through. they were real young yet. I don't know my kids were according to the teacher, I went over there. They said they were very bright. We can't teach them any more.
LB: But wouldn't they have been allowed to go to high school here?

RW: Uh, um. Cause they're Indian. Well that's from way back. They couldn't go to the beer parlours.

LB: That's right. Now when did that change?

RW: Not very long ago.

LB: So what would the Indians do for a party? Did you have a party just down here?

RW: Ya. You get a runner and you'd get a whole bunch.

LB: When you say get a runner, what do you mean?

RW: Get a white man to get it for you. But you had to be very careful. It always ended up in a big fight.

LB: Well that happens in beer parlours too doesn't it.

RW: I guess Nanaimo had a lot of beer parlours.

LB: Back to your food now. Did you hunt? For meat? What about fishing?


LB: So would your family basically have provided a lot of their own food?

RW: Ya. Cause I had a wife from the West Coast. She knew how to cook fish.

LB: So would you go out and get it?

RW: Ya.

LB: Were you involved in just the Protection Mine or would you go to any other mines?

RW: No just Protection. I used to go down No. 1 here to get to Protection mine.

LB: Well that wasn't usual. Most people went over on the scow.

RW: Ya. we used to go on the scow but if I missed it I'd go down the No.1.

LB: Now, I understood that there was a heavy cable going through there for the motor. So it was fairly dangerous to go under wasn't it?

RW: Ya, but it just knocks you down. It gives you a jolt and you hit the floor.

LB: And pick yourself up again. How often would that happen?

RW: Oh sometimes 2,3 times.

LB: Could you beat the scow over, if you missed the scow, could you beat the scow over?

RW: No I'd get there just in time.

LB: I guess they were quite strict about being there on time.

RW: Ya.

LB: Now you started work after the Protection Cage fell didn't you? Do you remember anything about that?

RW: I'd be around 15 years old. It was Easter Monday.

LB: Terrible thing. Did you know anyone involved init?

RW: No.

LB: Did you know other Indians working in the mines at the same time you were?
LB: You were the only one? Why was that do you think?

RW: They didn't like to go down below. But I didn't mind cause I wanted the money.

LB: So you're the only one that you know of?

RW: Oh there was another fellow working out at down the Reserve mine. We called him Hairy Henry.

LB: Why'd they call him that?

RW: That was his name Hairy Henry.

LB: Harry or Hairy.

RW: I guess. I don't know.

LB: So did you know him?

RW: Ya. He used to talk to me, when I was coming home and he was home early. He worked there for a long time. I worked all over Protection. Out under the ocean towards Snake Island. The water got too close to the roof.

LB: How high was the roof. Pretty high wasn't it?

RW: There was places where the water was deep ya know. Well we didn't go for that.

LB: The miners said no.

RW: Oh ya. If that ever breaks it will flood out all the place and we wouldn't have a chance to get out.

LB: How did you know that you were close to the water?

RW: Well they got maps, everything. The men knew, the diggers. Everybody knows what's goin' on.

LB: But was it the men that said we won't go on or was it the bosses that said we'd better not.

RW: Oh the bosses.

LB: Did you see any evidence that the company was concerned for your safety?

RW: Oh ya they took care of that.

LB: At this time were you wearing electric lamps?

RW: Ya. I started with oil and I think it was pretty near the same month that we changed to electric.

LB: You never had the feeling that you were being forced to work in conditions that were dangerous.

RW: No.

LB: Did you ever witness any disasters, any bad accidents.

RW: No.

LB: What made you decide to stop mining?

RW: I went out fishing. A lot better money. Make 2 or 3 thousand dollars in one shot.

LB: Why didn't you go out fishing before that then?

RW: Well I just picked it up when I was working in the mines. I was still growing and I was playing baseball.

LB: Oh, of course. So when you were through playing baseball you quit mining?
RW: Ya. Ya see they had what ya call a semi-pro league goin' on here. Port Angeles, Victoria, Vancouver, Bellingham all those big cities. They had semi-pro. They got big pay those. All that, they stopped that they quit it. I was about 18, 19 when they quit that. Most of the players came out here and got jobs like in logging camps and they moved around the Island. Nanaimo only had about 2 or 3.

LB: How did you get to be such a good ball player?

RW: I picked it up when I was at school and played in Chemainus with the white kids.

LB: Did you go to residential school?

RW: Ya.

LB: So you went into the mins cause you were a ball payer. Did you get special treatment?


LB: That was a good thing?

RW: Oh, ya. If I missed the day I still got paid.

LB: Did you miss a day often because of ball games?

RW: Ya. Two, three days.

LB: Someone told me that the ball payers out at the Granby mine carried their mitts into the mine with then. Did you do that?

RW: No, but I was up at Granby. I was going to try and get a job over there. I was over there when the miners came out, they all started playing baseball. So that's how I found out.

LB: But you couldn't get on there.

RW: No, the wife didn't like the housing.

LB: There were some nice houses out at Granby but I suppose they were all filled.

RW: They were all taken and if I worked up there I had to get one way down by the river. Long walk to get up there.

LB: There was a settlement down there by the river too wasn't there. When the Granby mine closed were those houses all demolished?

RW: No they're still there. They were quite a ways from the mine.

LB: So you went out to look at Granby did you, did each mine have a ball team?

RW: Ladysmith, Granby, Chemainus. That's where I started.

LB: What about the mines like Harewood and Wakesiah and Jinglepot? Did they have teams?

RW: No. Just the coal mine in the city. It was the Nanaimo Ball team.

LB: It didn't have a flashy name like the Nanaimo flames or something?

RW: No. You know I was supposed to go over there and look at some of those pictures. They're down at the Nanaimo fort. The Bastion. It's all in there.

LB: Are you in there?

RW: Ya. Because Mrs. Piper had a whole bunch of them. But I don't know if she's still alive.

LB: Did you know Mrs. Piper?

RW: No very little. But I knew the old man.

LB: Were they involved with the ball team?
RW: Ya, he was the catcher.
LB: What position did you play?
RW: Shortstop.
LB: Did you ever win the League?
RW: Oh, ya. Lots of times.
LB: How many years did you play ball for them?
RW: Five, six years. Then I had to go fishing.
LB: Not too long after that No. 1 closed down. Did you notice a big change in Nanaimo when that happened.
RW: Because there was a lot of things booming up then see, especially sawmills.
LB: Harmac started I guess after the war. The second World War did it? Do you remember anything about this town during the second World War? What it was like.
RW: So you fished ever since then did you?
LB: I just fished in seasons and then I'd go back to see if there was a chance to go back in the mines and I'd go. Back into No. 1.
LB: Did you have any problems getting taken back?
RW: No the boss was my friend. (Laughter)
LB: Who was that? Hunt?
RW: Courtney. He used to live up here.
LB: He was a ball fan I guess, eh?
RW: Ya. Mr. Hunt was very nice to me too. I used to go see him in the office. He'd call me over there and give me a cheque.
LB: You mean give you your paycheck or give you extra money.
RW: Sometimes extra. They were ball fans. I played ball for the city and for Western Fuel.
LB: Do you remember when Mr. Hunt was here? He was here during the 20's wasn't he?
RW: Ya. He used to live on top of the hill. Way up you know.
LB: There's lots of stories about him. Everybody remembers him. Most people say good things about him. He was your friend, eh?
RW: Oh ya. Very nice guy.
LB: I understand that you were the chief. For how long? Most of your life?
RW: NO. See when I come back here, I was a takin' care of the Indians. I was doin' more than the chief was doin'. I was taking care of the welfare, cleaned up the reserve, got guys to work. So I was busy all the time until I became chief then.
LB: Can you tell me how you become chief. Is it inherited?
RW: Ya. In the right way.
LB: But not necessarily from your father.
RW: No it was from my grandfather. See I'm Bill Rice and when they put me to be the chief I had to use my other grandfather that was here. His name was Joe Wyse. I had to take that name.
LB: And that's all to do with the tradition of the chief, is it?
RW: Ya.
LB: So when you became chief then the work of getting everybody going and everything paused to someone else?

RW: Ya.

LB: What would your duties have been as chief?

RW: Take care of your duties.

LB: You need a strong person as a leader. Does the system make sure that you always have a strong man? As the leader?

RW: It should be that way but it's not workin' out that way. I used to go to Vancouver and see the other guys, the big shots and get what I wanted. They wouldn't give me this road here, paved road, they wouldn't give it. The government.

LB: You have to know who to go to.

RW: Ya. But I got people to back me up. I got the taxis to back me up, I got the stores, grocery stores to back me up.

LB: You really had to fight for it.

RW: They were going to put my name on it just where you come down from the Red and White down there. I wouldn't put it on.

LB: So how did they chose the name Centre Street?

RW: Well that's the name of this street you know like down below here is Totem.

LB: Who chose those names?

RW: Oh, they had totem poles there and I guess uh

LB: Was it the Indian people that chose the names or the government?

RW: The government I think.

LB: Well they're better names than they're putting on some of the streets in the new parts of town I'll tell you. Some of them are pretty awful. It would have been nice to have one names Rice Street or Rice-Wyse street

RW: Laughs. It could have been that.

LB: It sounds pretty classy actually. Was the Protection mine wet?


LB: How wet did it have to be before you got wet pay?

RW: I don't know nothin' about that.

LB: Some of the men got paid so much extra an hour if they worked in a certain amount of water but you didn't. Did a motor pull the cars out that you were chunking?

RW: Ya.

LB: And it took it right under the harbour to No. 1?

RW: It came right about where the post office and Malaspina it got there and then it got across the waterfront.

LB: Oh really. But that wasn't where the shaft was for No. 1 was it?

RW: No it was over here.

LB: But the coal came back up further down. Oh really. And then it travelled on elevated things.

RW: No it travelled ah the motors let's say pretty near to Snake Island. There'd be about 50 to 100 cars at one time and they have phones down there to let you know they're coming through.

LB: So to get out of the way.
RW: To keep clear.

LB: Did you have little indentations in the wall to get out of the way.

RW: Some places. But mostly no.

LB: When you say motor what do you mean? Like a little engine? Like a little locomotive?

RW: Ya. All electric though you know.

LB: How big?

RW: Oh a little longer than that couch there.

LB: About six feet long?

RW: Eight feet. About three feet high.

LB: Did it look like a railroad engine? Like a miniature one?

RW: Ya. It's only a flat thing and it's got lights on it ya know.

LB: And did someone drive it?

RW: Ya.

LB: It ran along a track like with a trolley did it or how did the electricity get to the engine?

RW: By the top.

LB: It had a cable then up to it. It would pull about 50 cars. Gosh it must have been a strong engine.

RW: Ya well it's got to be light down below so the cars can be pushed around.

LB: You would push those cars to get them loaded up would you? Would you ever be pushing them manually? Ya, get a mule down there and it's kind of a slope where they parked our loaded cars the empties on the one side.

LB: So would you ever have to put your shoulder to it and push it?

RW: A little bit, not very much.

LB: Was it really heavy?

RW: Oh ya when it's loaded.

LB: What about when it's empty?

RW: No.

LB: Was it metal rails?

RW: Ya.

LB: And the wheels would they be like train wheels.

RW: Ya.

LB: Those tracks going off on a side shaft, what would they be called? When the mine branches off?

RW: I don't know what they...oh I know. They put names on it that's all.

LB: Would those tracks be pulled up when they were finished mining that area or would they be left behind?

RW: Very seldom. All those sections I knew they were still there when I left.

LB: I think when they closed the mine they ripped them up but I wondered if they resued them; if they went to another part of the mine.
LB: So were there any bad accidents with that electric cable?

RW: No.

LB: When you went into the mine there was the motor there. I guess electricity had been around for quite a while by then. When the coal got to where it came up the shaft, then travelled along over to the tipple?

RW: They had a table there where they'd sort out the rocks.

LB: Who'd be working on the table, mostly young men or...

RW: Oh no. Some of the people were almost retired. I never saw any women working on the sorting table and no Chinese people.

LB: Did you ever have any experience with any Chinese people working at the mine?

RW: No Chinese went down.

LB: They didn't go down. Why was that?

RW: They all worked on top.

LB: Did the miners not want them down the mine?

RW: I don't know. Maybe the people didn't want them down there.

LB: Did you ever see the Chinese workers?


LB: Oh do you.

RW: I don't know if he's my brother or uncle but he used to call me nephew. My father picked him up at No. 1. Oh he was very small just barely walking. They must have discarded him from Chinatown.

LB: You mean he was very old?

RW: NO. A baby like. So my Dad raised him. So when he got married uh he gave the Chinese boy to Billie Sam. Over here. They called him Sam.

LB: Sam Wyse? Sam Rice? He didn't have a last name?

RW: My dad tried to take him up to Chinatown to ask them who owns this. Nobody, no nobody. They didn't want him.

LB: There weren't that many women in Chinatown. You'd think they would have been able to tell who owned him. Had your father been in the mine?

RW: No. Never was. He just happened to be around No. 1 and saw this little guy and picked him up. Raised him until he was about 5 or 6 years old.

LB: Did he spend all his life here?

RW: Most of it. I seen him in Chinatown after I came back from Chemainus. There he was. I was talkin' to him.

LB: So he went back to live in Chinatown?

RW: Ya. He likes their food I guess.

LB: It's funny though he would have been brought up on your food. So he's not alive still. Did he mine?

RW: No.

LB: I always thought that the Chinese people were very caring about their children. It's interesting to hear that there was a foundling. It's like finding a baby in a basket isn't it?

RW: Ya Moses.
LB: Did you ever have any experience with the Italian miners or the Yugoslavian miners?

RW: Oh ya. There was a good friend of mine when I used to drink a lot of beer, Kulai and all those guys.

LB: So there was quite a lot of mixing between the groups. Were they ball players.

RW: No very few.

LB: I guess they don't play ball in Italy do they.

RW: They played soccer though.

LB: Who were the good ball players? Were they Canadians or...

RW: Ya some and some Americans came from uh back east from Montreal some where around there.

LB: So most of them had never mined before. They just played ball. There was a lot of good ball players at Granby. Were they from these former semi-pro teams too?

RW: Ya.

LB: So they obviously learned to mine afterwards.

RW: They gave them a job so they could support themselves. Some of them worked on top.

LB: So you would never have thought of getting your miner's ticket.

RW: No.

LB: In No. 1 did one shift drill the holes and set the powder and them the next shift take the coal out that was loosened up. Is that how if was done or did they have the long wall.

RW: They have that already. The drillers drill holes for the powder and then the guy would come up he'd put the powder in and shoot all the wall down and get it ready for the shift.

LB: So that it the pitboss that would do that. And would that happen in the shift before you came to work?

RW: Ya. After the wall is cleaned out and the drillers right behind drilling it. Then it's ready for the next shift.

LB: So there's someone drilling while you're cleaning out the last lot. How big was that seam? How thick was the coal seam?

RW: About 4 feet. It wasn't very high but they liked that coal because it was hard coal. No. 1 and Reserve mine was soft. They called it steam coal. It was soft.

LB: Was it a poorer grade of coal?

RW: No. It was real coal only softer. It was used for boilers. It's not harder to get out. It comes out in chunks but a lot of dirt in it. Protection was good clean coal though, hard.

LB: These chunks, were they pretty big chunks of coal? Can you show me how big a chunk of coal might be?

RW: They had to break most of it because it's got to be about the size of that T.V. there. That's a big one though that cause you had to break it up to get it in the cars.

LB: Could a man lift a chunk of coal that big?

RW: No not quite. Oh some could but uh all depend where you're lifting it from.

LB: Would the miners have shovels? Would they lift the coal into the car with shovels?
RW: Ya.

LB: Did most of your family live around here?

RW: No they live all over the States.

LB: Do you see them much?

RW: Ya. They come here.

LB: Grandchildren?

RW: Ya.

LB: You've got quite a marvellous array of pictures there. I see a little tiny baby. That's a grandchild eh? How many grandchildren do you have?

RW: A lot.

LB: Is this your wife Mr. Wyse?

RW: Ya. She's all painted up there.

LB: What do you mean?

RW: All painted up in the face with red stuff. She's a half Norweigan.

LB: Gosh that's a beautiful necklace. Is that Tourquoise in it?

RW: I guess so I don't know.

LB: That's a nice picture. Or doesn't that look like her with her paint on?

RW: She looked more like a white woman. She likes to be Indian though.

LB: She looks very authentic in that picture. Is she still alive Mr. Wyse?

RW: No she passed away seven or eight years now.

LB: How did you meet your wife?

RW: Oh I met her in Victoria.

LB: It wasn't something arranged was it?

RW: No, no, but uh to marry her my parents had to go and get her family on the west coast, and mostly in Victoria. Then they got her over and they had to force us to get married.

LB: What do you mean? Are you saying that in a laughing way when you say forced?

RW: Ya, because uh I could have been living with her that's all. Cause I had other girl friends. (Laughter)

LB: You weren't ready to settle down, eh? Were you married in a .. did you have a big ceremony?

RW: No, just mostly my pals.

LB: I heard you mention laughingly on the telephone a potlatch. Do you do that around here now?

RW: No it was just a joke.

LB: Do you see many traditions left?

RW: Still some.

LB: That's good. I hope they grow up again.

RW: I wish they'd start havin' those Indian dances again.

LB: Are there many people around that still know them?
LB: I missed 2 opportunities to see the Tillicum House dancers. Have you ever seen them dance? Ellen White's.

RW: Ya, that's my cousin.

LB: Oh is it? Ya well she's this group of dancers. I guess you've seen them lots eh?

RW: She's from the Rice family.

LB: Oh is she? She's a very amazing woman. She's done a lot of good work.

RW: Isn't that something. We're all, all mixed up with the whites. There's more white people in us than any Indian. And here we all pick up Indian stories. Funny, eh?

LB: Are people clinging to the Indian part of them? That's more important to you than the white part.

RW: Ya. My grandfather that adopted me, he was from Port Townsend. He was only a quarter Indian. He was the one that was a chief.

LB: Did he have to adopt you for you to become chief?

RW: No. That was just in America but here it's different. But today they vote you in, it doesn't matter who you are or anything as long as they get you in there, get the most family and friends like that. They don't even go back and find out what's what.

LB: But now you were saying that your family is mostly American? But you were born here. Why was that? Was your family originally from Nanaimo?

RW: My father was.

LB: And he lived here all his life?

RW: No. He worked all his life. He worked in Chemainus, places like that.

LB: There were many Indian tribes in this area in past history. Has there always been an Indian tribe here on the harbour at Nanaimo?

RW: Well according to some people, my friends. We got slaughtered down at uh what do you call that Bay where we swim?

LB: Hammond Bay? or Departure Bay.

RW: Departure Bay. That's all reservation there. Should be. They never fought for that.

LB: So when did the slaughter occur?

RW: Well the northern Indians came down and slaughtered most of our Indians there and they had to run away and went up the hills all over. They came down here.

LB: So when coal was discovered here were there Indians living here?

RW: Oh ya.

LB: And there's been Indians ever since, living on the harbour. Is it one tribe? Or is it all mixed up? Or one band?

RW: There must have been three tribes all in Nanaimo. One of them moved down by the brickyard on Gabriola and one tribe was up right on the Dodds narrows on top of the hill there near Harmac and one family they moved I don't know where they moved then. Maybe it was Shell-beach, somewhere.

LB: You mean on Kuyper Island?

RW: No they didn't go that far. Just around here. I think myself that's where they left. But our bunch here still want to stay here.

LB: And what band or tribe is their name?
RW: Just Nanaimo.

LB: And the group that went to Gabriola. Did they have a different name?

RW: No that's another family.

LB: Oh I see. So it's like a clan.

RW: Ya.

LB: And as far as you know just you and Harry Henry were miners?

RW: Ya. That's all. I worked down there and I come home with my lunch bucket and he'd be standing out there too.

LB: I can certainly understand why it would be that people wouldn't want to go down in a mine. And I can certainly understand why Indian people wouldn't want to go down in a mine when you're used to fishing and that sort of thing. Last thing you want to do is go underground. But that didn't bother you at all.

RW: uh,uh.

LB: Do you remember your first time down in the mine what it was like?

RW: No, I was amongst the mules, I know that. The big stable.

LB: It didn't bother you being underground? Or being dark?

RW: I was asked to go on a swing shift. That's the only time I didn't like it. It was so quiet down belwo and the roof was cracking and things like that, which you don't hear during the main shift, because of the noise goin' on.

LB: So the swing shift is at night.

RW: Ya but I didn't like it myself. It's kind of quiet at quittin' time when the night shift's coming on.

LB: And there's no machinery on. Why would there be people down there then?

RW: Well they want to fix the place to keep up to the coal.

LB: Was that maybe when the timbers would go up and so on?

RW: Well the roof would be settling, it would be cracking. Timbering and working up to where the face of the coal.

LB: That's like a hospital at night you know, very quiet. You can hear sounds you don't hear during the day. So what other sounds are in a mine besides the roof settling?

RW: I don't know.

LB: Did you ever see rats?

RW: Oh ya, lots of them.

LB: Did they not run away from the men?

RW: Ya they do. But they go so far and they get underneath something a rock or ...You generally leave your lunch there for them. You know if you've got anything left.

LB: So the miners were sort of encouraging the rats in a way. Did they like to have them down there?

RW: No they didn't care much for them but they never bother us.

LB: Someone said to me that when the rats left, when there were no rats around, you knew there might be a problem.

RW: Somebody said that ya. I don't believe that. The gas uh, there was so much air down there, they kept fans goin' that if there was gas it was taken out all the time.

LB: But, down in Protection and NO.1 there were pretty long long slopes
aren't there. Now there must have been huge fans to keep the air circulating. Were they actually big fans?

RW: Ya. Big fans and the trouble is ah it's got to have a get away before there's a draft.

LB: It's got to circulate. So there'd have to be another air shaft. So would the fans suck fresh air down the main shaft and then out an air shaft?

RW: Ya.

LB: Do you happen to know where the air shafts were for NO. 1 and Protection?

RW: No.

LB: There's an old mine map that has a marking sort of behind the Civic Arena, you know where the canoe is up on Front Street and then there's the arena and in this hill here there's a they call it an adit. Did you ever hear that term "adit"? Nobody seems to know what it was and I assumed it might have been an airshaft.

RW: Maybe it was.

LB: Did any of the shafts on Protection go towards Newcastle?

RW: Ya.

LB: But most of the mining on Newcastle was from Brechin wasn't it?

RW: Ya.

LB: Can you think of anything else that might be interesting about coal mining? You've told me some really interesting stuff already.

After the tape was shut off Mr. Rice-Wyse told me about the miners running down the road to catch the scow in the early morning when it was still dark. Their hobnailed boots made sparks on the road surface as they ran.