This is Myrtle Bergren interviewing Mr. Albert Steele and Mr. Bob Winthrop, on May 24, 1979, for the Coal Tyee Project.

Mr. Steele, where were you born?


B: When did you come out here?

A: 1909.

B: What was your father?

A: A miner.

B: Have you been miners for generations back?

A: Oh yes.

B: So did he come out too?

A: Yes. Him and I came out together.

B: And where did you get a job?


B: I know where that is.

A: Yes, well it's the first mine I ever worked in. I started in there in 1909.

B: What was your job?

A: Winch driver.

B: And now I should ask Mr. Winthrop, when were you born, Mr. Winthrop?


B: Was your father a miner too?

A: No, he was a stationary steam engineer. ...... I moved away from Extension when the mines closed down in 1929.

Mr. Winthrop speaks very quietly, and voice is not caught on mike. He is sitting here as a matter of courtesy since Mr. Steele asked him to, so it is not a satisfactory interview of Mr. Winthrop.

Object was to interview Mr. Steele.)

A: When we came out there had just occurred in Extension mine in February 1909 an explosion that killed 23 men.

B: I guess you were used to such things in the old country.

A: Oh yes, especially where he came from.

B: Why was that then? What was the reason?

A: There were a lot of explosions.

B: In England.

A: Just before I came out here there was a mine disaster at 3 Pit? There was 300 men killed in that one. There's really more mines there than what there is here. There were lots of explosions there.
MB: What was the difference in the conditions between England and Canada? In the coal itself, I mean.

AS: They didn't have the large seams in the coal there, I don't think. I never worked in England. I was only 14 when I came here. But from what I can learn from my dad, they were low seams. Anywhere from 2 to 3 to 5 feet. Where right here I've worked places as high as 16 and 18 feet. There's the difference.

MB: Is the coal in England any cleaner than the coal out here?

AS: Oh no, not at all. There was some good coal here. Specially Wellington seam. It was really good steam coal, for making coke.

MB: So this really made no difference as far as accident rates went.

AS: The difference is there is more knowledge now. This generation has more knowledge than when we were working.

AS: It's xirrrrrlyx mix stricter mine rules. The most dangerous mine I worked in was in Cranby. And if it hadn't been for good mining work, and sticking to the mining regulations, I'm sure there would have been more than one explosion there. ...(repetition of what other have told me)...

MB: You have to remember you are working far under the sea.

MB: How do they ventilate a mine like that?

AS: Same as they had in Cranby, a fan shaft. A slope, and they had a g fan shaft, it was a good one.

MB: Well then in that case, the fan shaft is drawing the air out,

AS: No. It's forcing the air in. Say a place is 14 feet wide, take about 5 feet of it and board it up like that, the fresh air comes in here, behind this brattish, circles the place, and goes out this other way. Takes whatever gasses have accumulated there along with it, see. And you get a good fresh supply of air coming to you all the time. And there's no danger.

AS: Number One and Protection each had their own individual air shaft. I'm pretty near positive of that.

MB: How wide across would they be, these fans?

AS: Cranby, the fan would fill this room. It was closed in its own housing.

AS: I was 19 when at the time of the strike. I was working at PSSC.

MB: Did they keep on working?

AS: No.

MB: Did everything close down?

AS: Yes. .... That's what the strike was all about, just the right to organize. Wages was never mentioned.
MB: what can you remember about the strike?
AS: I can remember the hard times. We only had $4 a week strike pay. We had to subsist on that. It came out of the union, the United Mine Workers. That's what the strike was all about, just the right to organize. Wages was never mentioned. But we were really denied that. See, what brought it on was the system of blacklisting and hiring men for sticking up for their own rights and then out you went, you see. If you were blacklisted in Nanaimo, you was also blacklisted in Cumberland, and you might as well get off the Island altogether. No protection at all. And that's all we were fighting for, and although it lasted 18 months we still lost out. It was never organized. The right to organize wasn't until 1937. Conditions was a little better after the strike. But they left a lot to be desired even at that time.

MB: And then did they take back the people who had been active?
AS: Not very many of them. I think I was one of the first in South Wellington who did get a job after the strike. I went to the new (?) mine then, that was Horden, and it wasn't very far from the shaft, they just had struck coal when the strike came on. There was only two places in it. That was four men, and me and another fellow on Haulage. We used to supply the cars to them and put them on the cage, and that only made six of us working in the mine. That was 1914. August, 1914. Just when the war broke out.

MB: Well I read somewhere that there wasn't too much sale for coal just at that time, so this was one of the reasons why they were able to keep shut down for so long. And then when the war broke out of course there was more demand for coal.

AS: That's right. That's how I got out of the navy. They needed coal miners, and the government needed fuel. So we got the opportunity from the naval authorities, anyone that wished to go back to the mine, they'd get an honourable discharge. So I think on the ship I was on, HMS Galiano, went down after that. I think there was about 12 on board that ship that was ex-miners, and I think there was about 6 of us left. The other 6 stayed with it and went down with the ship.

MB: And they mainly came from Nanaimo then, those coal miners?
AS: No, some came from Merrit and some came from Michel. One or two of them came from Merritt and one or two of them came from Michel. But the six of us from Nanaimo, we all took the opportunity to get out the navy and come back to the mines again.

MB: How long did you say you'd been in the navy?
AS: Oh, about a year, maybe 14 months.
MB: Did you get anywhere?
AS: Not out of the country, no. Just up the coast here.

(A few words here to Mr. Winthrop re his war activities, words scarcely heard. Of no significance to interview.)

MB: But anyway it is interesting to know what effect the war did have on people. So I guess not too many miners went to the 1st World war, then? Because they were needed at home.

AS: Yes, well, quite a few. Take a look at the cenotaph and you will see there's quite a few miners on there too. That never came back.

W: There was just miners at that time. There was no logging camps.

AS: There was only mines, yes.

W: There was only miners and a few farmers.

AS: And there was two bad disasters too at the time of the 1st World war. In February 1915 -- no, 1914 -- South Wellington had a flood and there was 27 or 28 men was drowned. That was the old PC mine where I first started. Then in May, few months after that, the Reserve had an explosion and there was 25 men killed in that. I don't know whether you've met Nellie Good that's over in Extended Care? Her father was one of them that was killed in that mine.

MB: When you say the old PCC mine that you worked in, what did they break into then?

AS: They broke into the old Southfield mine. Which was flooded. They claimed it was a mistake in the plan, but I dunno, probably there was. (owner's?) But I know it was the my shot that let the water in. He lost his life, and 26 other men.

MB: Funny thing they didn't drill ahead, you know.

AS: That's what should have been done, but ...

W: But something about the flood in 1937...

MB: '37, that was when John Senini, the Shepperd boys were lost --

Both: That's right, that's right.

AS: After that they drilled ahead.

W: They drilled ahead 30 or 40 feet with long drills.

AS: In fact I drilled ten holes 12 feet up in the roof.

MB: So did you have to drill through rock or coal?

W: Rock.

AS: Through the roof, just to see if there was any workings up above.

MB: So you were a rock driller too?

AS: Oh yes, mining, it didn't matter what you were doing. Oh yes, you had to go through the rock to get the coal again. That's what they call
a fault. But I know I was the first driver to go in after that disaster, and -- after the flood -- and for days that place was gone slightly to the left, round, and there was only about 4 feet thickness of coal all the way. If they'd only drilled a 4-foot 'ole on the side, they would have tapped the water.

MB: You wouldn't think, would you, that 4 feet would hold anything.

AS: Well if there's no pressure until there's a release, see. Once it's released, then you get the pressure. But it's stagnant water just there, with no weight. But once it gets an opening, then it's got a force. The floor, what we called the floor, it was solid rock, and it took the rails there was a -- and it just wrapped them round like bed springs, and where it came through this cave in old Southfield, and the water was up above, and you got a downward pour through this hole that the blast had made, and it made a hole in that solid rock/you could bury one of these chairs in, just like you were blasting it out with dynamite.

MB: Did they have Draeger teams in those days? Rescue teams?

MB: Did you say that ever since Number One they've had rescue teams? (Talking now about the Draeger teams exercises at Bowen Park every May or June).

MB: They'll have some records of it then?

AS: In the rescue station on Farquahar Street.

W: What they call Croatian Lodge now.

AS: Each mine had its own Draeger team.

MB: (speaks of Ike Aitken's father). This is on Ike Aitken tape.)

AS: In a case like that they couldn't do much. They had to wait close to pumping 4 months/ before they could get the bodies of the men and the two or three mules drowned too, you know. I know I had to go and identify my uncle's body when they brought it out. If it hadn't been for my mother -- he stayed with us all the time, he never was married -- if it hadn't been for my mother's patchwork on his overalls and such like, I would never have been able to identify him. The bodies was all swollen up. In the water. No hair on, eyebrows was gone, after being three months submerged in the water. An undertaker called Hubert was in charge of the undertaking parlor. And (Kip?) Brown, he wasn't an undertaker, but he worked for the mines, they had an awful job bringing them out. They had to wear gas masks and everything. And it was summer time, that's what made it worse. And it happened in February and they had to wait three months, so it was midsummer when they were bringing out the bodies.

MB: I did hear that there had been a concert the night before, and a lot of those fellows were good singers, and they were dead the next day.
AS: No, but most of the fellows that were drowned were the fellows that formed the orchestra that we used to use when we were on strike. See, it happened soon after the strike. And I remember quite a few of them. Before the strike was settled, there was a dance every night or something like that, and it didn't cost us anything, because it was a matter of enjoying ourselves. Making the best of it.

MB: And where did you dance?

AS: In South Wellington Hall, it's burned down now.

MB: Is that the one that burned in the big fire, when the fire went up one side of the street and down the other?

AS: Yes.

W: There was a big main tunnel in Extension. There was about two feet of water all the time, in winter time. It was running out like a river, you know.

MB: From gravity?

W: The grade, you know. Dripping off the roof.

AS: It was like a river, just like a river. It wasn't fast. Your feet were never dry, I'll tell you that. In summer time it would be dry. It just started in the fall. Spring, then it would dry up again.

(Conversation unclear, re subjects covered in other interviews.)

W: The Chinese at Extension worked on the picking tables mostly. And the timber yard. They never worked inside.

MB: Didn't the Chinese go on strike at one time? I think I read somewhere that the Chinese ...

AS: I think that was before my time, but I heard the old time miners. You see, a white man would take maybe two or three places, working places, and he was allowed to hire his own Chinamen. If he had three places, he would hire six Chinamen. And all he had to do was tell them where to drill the holes, and all he had to do was blast. He would shoot the loose coal, and then he would say All right Jim, you go ahead and load up. And that's all he had to do. He collected -- in fact it was the white man that was exploiting the Chinese. So that's why I think the government stopped (this racket).

MB: And this would be in the real early days?

AS: Yes. That was in the early days in Cumberland. Oh, they had it soft. And all he had to do was sit back and they were loading the coal! He'd maybe pay them a dollar a day and he was reaping the benefit of what coal was produced.
MB: And this was any miemo at all?

AS: Oh yes! There was quite a lot of them were doing that. Too many of them. I think that was what brought on this law against Chinese working under ground. You know, there's a lot of Chinese bodies still in Number One. From the strike in 1887? That never was recovered, white men too. Miners bodies that was never recovered.

MB: That was that big explosion?

AS: Yes. 1883. then

MB: So that was in Cumberland, mk? They never had Chinese working for the white people here, eh? In Nanaimo?

AS: Not in Nanaimo. I never heard of it if they did. It was in Cumberland where it first originated and I guess it got too much. The government just wouldn't stand for it.

Yes, my father's cousin was in that explosion in 1883, and he was supposed to come out to this country but then he changed his mind.

AS: One time when I was at Granby it got the name of Slaughterhouse, there were so many being killed by blow-outs. It always gave a warning like a tapping up in the roof. My brother and I had blow outs, two or three of them. But we were never caught off guard. We always beat it when we heard this tapping in the roof. And it would blow out maybe 13 or 14 sets of timber. You wouldn't believe it. You would work maybe for two weeks, on that coal. It was a dangerous mine, but it was a good mine, that's the only drawback. Too much gas. That's why it's left today.

They spent a lot of money going through, they struck a fault. Way down. And after they got through the fault they struck the coal, they discovered that the seam they got into possessed more gas than the one they were working. It was really too dangerous. I - I don't know, I have an idea the government encouraged them to put the lid on it.

MB: I understand that there was some court case over Granby, they had to pay a million dollars for going into the--

AS: For going over the boundary? Yes. Yes, they did.

MB: I guess they all did it though in those days.

AS: Yes, well if you happened to be caught --

MB: How do they catch that? How do they know from the top, how do they know where the line is?

AS: All the mines were surveyed you know, just like they survey on the surface. The surveyors can tell them exactly where they're at.

MB: Well I don't really understand that. I can see where they can survey on the top, but how on earth they'd mark the place under the ground, where they're to stop, I don't know.
W: Well that's a good question too. Chick Moores father would know.

AS: Rafter, Bill Rafter, he was a surveyor. Joe Boyce.

MB: These people are still living?

AS: No, no. No, there was a fellow called Ballantyne was the surveyor in Granby. And they had to be accurate. And that's what they claim was the cause of the flood. The Southfield surveying hadn't been accurate. Although they should have known that there was something wrong because my uncle, he had been off sick, for a week, said he couldn't eat his lunch, the odour and stink in the place, and being water, and they thought at this time it was stagnant water that was causing this odour. You'd have thought then that they would have started to drill ahead. In Beban mine they called it swamp water. You could smell it. Well, that's where Southfield, it caved in, an outlet from South Wellington lake, into Chase River creek, and it caved in right at Southfield. Right straight through Southfield brickworks, I think it's standing yet. And it went right down, and it filled from the South Wellington lake. When the mine was full up then the creek started to run again.

W: Orson Wright was the surveyor then.

MB: Well what did a mine smell like ordinarily?

W: You could always smell powder smoke.

MB: About the animals, somebody told me if there was a dead animal in there you'd smell it.

W: If there was any dead animal they'd bring them out.

MB: And put them where?

W: Well at that time there was three or four fox farms around, and they'd come and get them, and they'd be meat for the foxes.

AS: They used to put them on the slag heap, before a fellow called Jim Greenaway and another fellow started a fox farm up the, up around Extension, and they used to take all the dead mules and animals for food for the foxes.

MB: That was a good idea.

W: It was. I was going to school in Extension before I started work, and I've saw as much as 12 horses and mules at the bottom of that rock dump, they call it. It was burning all the time, you see. Horrible smell from those things.

MB: Well now, did you go down the mine when you were a boy, before you started to work?

W: Well no, I worked on the pithead before I worked inside.

MB: What I want to know is, what you feel like when you first come out of the sunshine and you're going down into the mine? How do you feel?
In my case it took me half a day to get used to being in the mine, and after that it's just like being anywhere else. You get used to it. Course it's nice to come out in the sunshine again.

That's quite a change though, you've been up on top of the world in the sun and then all of a sudden you go down into it.

Well it's a slope where you used to walk in, same as the old PCC mine, in South Wellington. The men 'd go so far in, and sit down, because it was safety lamps then, see, no electric light then, and you had to sit down until your eyes become accustomed to the darkness. Just like putting a light out in a bedroom and you know, then you can see a little light coming through the window, or something like that. But you had to do that, especially a sunny day, you go right into the dark, well you had to sit down until what they call till I got my eyesight.

And what kind of a light was it?

A safety lamp. No, no battery, no.

It was what they call a Davis lamp. (Like Johnny Penn's lamp).

And if you was in a gassy mine you had what they call the old kettle lamp. It fitted on to your -- and it was a wick, you made your own wicks. And burned fish oil. You had a good light then, but you couldn't use them if you was in a gassy mine.

How were you going to know whether it was a gassy mine?

That's the fire boss' responsibility.

(Asks q. re sulphur.)

The mine in South Wellington, right in South Wellington, Number Five, that's the worst mine I was ever in for sulphur. Takes you 24 hours to get over it.

I know Harry Mills used to come out with awful sore eyes. With sulphur burn. I think he was in Reserve at that time, Harry.

(talking of Fiddick.) I knew Dick Fiddick's grandmother. She was a good business woman. In the PCC, on one side she held the royalties. It was her property. And on the other side was a family called Richardson. They held the royalties on that side. They sold out for spot cash. The royalties to the Pacific Coast mines. But Mrs. Fiddick, she had her head screwed on right, she said No, I won't sell out. I'll take a cent a ton. For every ton that comes out of that mine I'll take a cent a ton. And anything over two feet of coal must be worked. And she had a man called Boyd that used to come around there every month to see that there was no places left. If it was above two feet of coal and they stopped it, he'd make them go back and work it. And she made a pile of money. And also this Richard's father, Dick, he used to go there and check on the weight (?) pretty near every day. In the weight house on top of the tipple.
W: They had one tipple there for the two mines, didn't they?

AS: Two slopes, there was Number 3 slope and Number 1. (speaking of bus ride to Morden.) --And by the way, Morden was the only mine I ever worked in, or ever saw, that used what they call the flat rope.. It wasn't a round rope at all. It was about 2 1/2 inches wide, and about 2 inches thick. And flat. And the wheel that's up on top, it isn't built for to accept a round rope, it was flat like this. Steel rope, yes. What they call a flat rope. I never saw it before, and I've never seen it since. But they never had any accident with it. In Morden the car never left the cage, you know. You put the car on on the bottom, and when it got to the top, it automatically dumped itself into the -- see the bottom of the cage come up, and automatically dumped itself, and went back again and got the same car back again on the -- but it never left the cage.

MB: Do you mean the same car stayed there all the time? Well how did it get from the miners place to --

AS: Oh the cage left the bottom. They took the car when it came back empty. And put on another load and it just went up, emptied itself and --

MB: How deep was that shaft?

AS: 660 feet.

MB: That was as deep as Number One. Were there any accidents there on the cage?

AS: No.

MB: What did they crib the side with?

AS: I think Morden was cribbed with steel (sheets) I'm not quite sure. I know the slides for the cage were steel. It was a good shaft. And I think that, to my recollection, there was only one man killed. In Forden, as long as it went. I helped to bring the body out. It was an old time family here, Mr Milburn. (Paddy? Milburn -- he was killed. He had fired a round of shot, and then hadn't just quite enough powder in. And (Barry?) he went with a pick, and you know how they used to -- he just touched it like that and the whole thing came over on him and buried him. If he had just stood back a little while it would have come by itself. But he just went to test it and see if it was loose.

W: It was loose all right, wasn't it.

AS: The whole thing come over and buried him. Yes. Well I was rope riding at the time, and I had to take him up on the stretcher. He was dead, of course.
MB: Were you ever on a rescue team?

AS: No.

MB: Do you know what Number One shaft was cribbed with?

AS: No. I think I worked in about 12 or 13 mines, and I never worked in Nanaimo mine. I worked in Lantzville. But I never worked in Number One, or Protection, or Reserve, or any of these. All my mining was done in South Wellington, Morden, Granby, Cumberland, but never a mine in Nanaimo.

MB: What mine in Cumberland?

AS: I worked in Number Five. 1935 to 1937. And I came down here and worked down here at that little mine where Bob was at, what they called Beban mine.

MB: What were the conditions like at Cumberland, when you were there?

AS: It was different kind of mining to what I was used to, it was long wall system. And I had always worked pillar and stall. And it was machine cut. Then they blasted the coal, mostly you was on your knees, you had to wear these knee pads. There was a conveyor belt going down.

MB: Much water?

AS: No water at all. Yes, it was a shaft, but not very deep. I couldn't tell you exactly what it was, but I don't think it was half the depth of Morden.

MB: They had a lot of Chinese up there at the time?

AS: Yes, they had Chinese, Japese, and nigger town. But they were thinning out fast. They tell me at one time the whole three towns used to be big, Chinese town, Japtown, and what they called nigger town.

MB: Did you ever have any trouble with the Chinese, understanding them or talking to them?

AS: Oh no, no, some of them were pretty cute.

W: You'd talk pigeon English to them, more or less.

AS: Yes, you didn't speak like you would ordinarily. You'd try to speak to them as they would understand you. But aw, some of them were pretty cute. They would tell you they didn't savvy, but they savvied all right.

MB: There were no women came out?

W: Very few. There was none in Extension that I knew of. And they had a pretty big Chinatown.

AS: I don't think there was any in Cumberland either. There might have been one or two. There were a lot of Italians in Cumberland. Yugoslavs and Italians. Most of the Yugoslavs came out in the 30's, I think.
In the depression anyhow. They were bringing them to work in the mines and we were working on relief! That's a fact.

W: Yes a lot of them came out here at that time. Pretty near all of them went to the south end of Haliburton street. Fellow there had the Balmoral he was one of them, he came here and worked in the mines and bought that Balmoral for a song.

They were working in the mines, and we were on relief! It caused a lot of ill feelings, you know. We couldn't get a job, we were natives here, we couldn't get a job, and they were bringing them from Yugoslavia, and giving them a job, and at reduced wages.

MB: I guess the company's policy was Divide and rule.

AS: Oh yes.

W: (speaking of older timers) The cemetery at the corner of Wallace and Comox, headstones are imbedded in the wall, there are a lot of people buried in there.

AS: Across from Haslam House. They dug the graves up and I don't know what they done with the skeletons, but they built a wall and they put plaques in there. But most of them are young women, I notice many times. 23 year old, and --

MB: What would they be dying of, the young women?

AS: Child birth, and there was only one doctor in here then, called Dr. Grant. He was buried there too. So I guess a lot of the women died in confinement.

MB: Was there much drinking going on amongst the miners?

AS: Oh, in the early days, yes. Lots of pubs.

MB: They made their own beer in Nanaimo, didn't they?

AS: There were breweries in Nanaimo, yes. Where the city hall is was one. You go in there, there was a lunch counter too, and you helped yourself to a sandwich, and your beer, for a nickel. They were pretty near all alike. There was a big sign for years at the Crescent Hotel, five cent beer, a big five. And a free lunch counter.

Saturday night was the big night.

I remember Glyn Lewis' father. He was killed. The mine was the tail end of the Harewood mine anyhow. Glen went out with a loaded car to dump it, and his father was still working in the place, went he went back, his father was almost buried. Place had caved when he went out. His father dead. (They were working the mine, just the two of them.)

MB: Did the miners go to the Wheatsheaf very much? (This q. after some discussion covered in other tapes.)
AS: Oh yes.
MB: Wasn't that a long way out?
AS: Not for South Wellington.
MB: There was a pub in South Wellington, wasn't there?
AS: Oh yes.
MB: Was that before the fire too?
AS: Yes. Yes, there was always a pub in South Wellington. It survived the fire in '13. I don't know how, because everything around it burned. (chuckle). But a few years after that, (end of Tape 1) (Start of Tape 2)
Well I lived there at the time, and I don't know how it escaped, but it still stood. --It was always suspected that some of the strikers started that fire. And the wind was blowing to the north, and after the fire started, all of a sudden the wind changed and it was blowing south. (laugh) And instead of burning the scabs out it burned the union men out. (hearty laughter). Whether that was somebody's guess or not I don't know. I know I had nothing to do with it!
MB: (Story about burning shakes). which is on other tape transcription.)
AS: They went down as far as Thatcher's. You know, there's a well there that supplied the hotel, and that well, I forget the depth of it, a little over 20 feet, and it's all in coal. It was good water, yes. Where is coal right on the surface in South Wellington yet. And that is a 12 feet seam too. I know for a fact that that well was in coal.
AS: You've been to Jock's, have you? (Jock Craig). (Tells how he could have bought that house for $100. Man who built it was named Taylor, couldn't get a job after the strike,).
I lived there for a good many years.
MB: Why would you want your boys not to go into mining?
AS: I'd had enough of mining myself. I didn't want to seem them go through what I went through.
MB: What hopes did you have for them at that time?
AS: Well they'd have a better chance for an education, highschool and such like, which they did do, and they all made out all right. One became a plumber, and he's been at Harmac for 28 years. One is 64 next month. At that time about the only chance they had was work in a mill (Extension) or work in the mines. But in Nanaimo it was different. They could go -- W: In Extension, winter time they'd work in the mines and summer time they'd go and work in the woods.
AS: The only thing that faced them in South Wellington was go to the mines. Just that.
MB: (asks about whether they have had any trips back to the old country.)
And what do you think about it now, would you ever go back there to live?
AS: Oh no, no.
MB: How did you feel when you first came out?
W: It was the end of the world to me. Oh when you come from a city where
do you go? /All you see around you is a bunch of stumps. Rocks.
Oh, I liked it all right, but my mother was the worst time, she couldn't
get over it. She just didn't like it. We had to use well water, and
outdoor toilets and things like that. Well, it was just different. No
on nothing. It was like the end of the world.
electric lights/xxxxxxx
MB: No picture shows?
AS: Oh, in Nanaimo.
MB: You had to walk though, didn't you.
W: We had a car, or my brother did (?). Kids used to walk in on a
Saturday afternoon. Fish and chips, and a movie. The Limited Express
That was a big one - old train bobbing picture, you know.
was one of them/ Old Tom Mix movies too. Train robbing, you know.
Tom Mix and all them guys.
AS: Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. All these ...
W: They had three shows a day. Matinee and night time.
When you first went in all you saw was advertising on the stage. Every
business in town. On the screen. That was just the curtain. The movie
was going to start in -- like any other theatre, you know.
MB: Was there any music playing while you waited?
W: Piano player. A real man, not a record.
AS: When I first came the Columbia theatre was straight across from
where the Hall building is now. Dr. Hall's office was in the Hall building
on Commercial street.
AS: Dances, New Year's even, New Years night.
MB: Did you go to where the doctors and so on went?
AS: No, we never saw them. They had their own. They never mixed with the
--
MB: So there was a class distinction.
AS: Yes, absolutely. Course in my day the doctors would make house calls.
W: A doctor in a beer parlor, never.
MB: Who were the mine bosses - were they all educated men?
AS: No, they had to pass an examination, of course, even for a fire boss.
When it come to the big bosses, the superintendents, the only time
you saw them was at the mine.
AS: My father's cousin was married to the first pit boss I ever worked for.
(gives name). Harry Devlin.
I have noticed in this history project how many of the old timers are related to one another.

AS: You never know who you're talking to. Be careful, that's my cousin!

-- (after some irrelevant remarks) -- The two men I first worked for was general superintendent George Wilkinson, he became the Chief Inspector of Mines, after that. And the pit boss was Harry Devlin, who was married to my father's cousin. He also became the inspector of mines. Then he had a son Harry, he became the superintendent I think of Jingle Pot, I'm not quite sure.

MB: And when you say he studied mining, where did he study it? Like now they go to university.

AS: Yes, well they didn't then. I guess most of them studied at home. By books and correspondence. I know some of them did a lot of this Scranton stuff. The Scranton school of correspondence school. I know a lot of them got their first start in that.

MB: There are a lot of these big books down at the museum, and oh, what a lot you have to know about mining.

AS: Oh yes, about mining, and gases, and such like. There's an awful lot to know even to get their third class papers. 🇺🇸

(rek the picture in museum of furnace, instead of using a fan.)

AS: You build a fire close to the entrance, and a fire will draw. And that was before the day of the fan.

W: That was real ancient, wasn't it.

(MB tells about John Pecnik's description.)

AS: Yes, I guess that was the old PC mine. That was a good old mine. They had an old mine at you might not believe it, but they put what they call stoppings in a crosscut. You see. So that the fresh air would go through and come down the other way. Instead of cutting through this crosscut. It was fitted with boards, with chicken wire on it, and cemented. You know. A thin coat of cement, just to make it airproof. And he said one time, I think it was in Number One, he noticed a big bulge in the ✭✭✭✭✭✭✭ cement. And he happened to be with the fire boss. And he said I wonder what's causing that bulge in that cement? And the fire boss said I'm sure I can't tell you, he says, there must be a leak there somewhere. You know, air coming through. And they couldn't find where there are any ventilation coming through there at all, because the netting and cement, you see. So he finally says, let's bust it. So they took a piece of lagging and they hit it, you know. And you know that thing was full of maggots.
MB: Whatever would have caused that?

AS: Well I asked him that and he said the only explanation was life had come through by the gases. Whether it could materialize that way or not I don't know, but he swore that was the truth. How could they live, you know, --

MB: You'd live your life all over again in the same way if you had the chance?

AS: I think so. If the conditions was just the same. I was only 14 but I passed myself off as 16. There was nothing else.