This is Bernard McNicholl interviewing Albert Tickle for the Coal Tyee History Project.

BM. Mr. Tickle what year were you born?
AT. 1903, April 28th.

BM. And were you born in Canada?
AT. No, I was born in Lancaster England.

BM. And what year did you come over?
AT. Well it would be the same year, because I was only 6 months old when I came out.

BM. And when you came to Canada did you settle in Nanaimo first, or the East Coast?
AT. The East Coast, Cape Breton Island.

BM. And how long did you live in Cape Breton Island?
AT. Until May the 2nd, 1918.

BM. And uh, did your father work in the coal mine?
AT. Ya.

BM. Did he work in the coal mines in Lancaster England?
AT. Uh, yes.

BM. And when he came over here was he offered a job to come to Cape Breton to work in the coal mines there?
AT. I couldn't tell you.

BM. Or he just came over and settled.

AT. I imagine that was(-that they)(#15) weren't satisfied with the conditions over there, so I guess he thought he could better himself.

BM. And um, do you, when did you come out to the west coast? 

AT. Well like I said, we left Cape Breton Island on the 7th of May, no uh, no the 9th of no the 2nd of May 1918, at 7pm. and we arrived in Vancouver on the morning of May the 8th. Came over to Nanaimo in the afternoon of May the 8th.

BM. When you first moved to Nanaimo um where about did you settle, which district.
AT. Right in Nanaimo, on Milton Street.

BM. On Milton street.

BM. And your parents came with you then?

AT. Right.

BM. And which mine did your father work in when he came to Nanaimo, his first job in the Mine?

AT. Well three of us worked in No. 1.

BM. So you were all old enough by the time you moved out.

AT. It wasn't a question of being old enough, they just accept you, I was still only 15.

BM. So you were 15 when you started in No. 1.

AT. I just turned 15. On the April 28th just before that.

BM. And um, what was your first job in the mine?

AT. First job in the mine that would be in Cape Breton Island.

BM. So you worked in Cape Breton then?

AT. Oh ya.

BM. OK. And how old were you when you first started working in Cape Breton?

AT. Well I've got to figure it out, we were trying to figure it out at the Rotary Club there just a while ago. Uh, I must have been only 12.

BM. That was usually quite common, you know being that age, and what did you do in Cape Breton on your first job?

AT. Well that would be trapping doors for $0.66 (sixty-six) cents a day.

BM. Could you explain exactly what trapping doors is?

AT. Well they weren't uh, automatic like ours are today, you had to open a door to let a trip of coal go through.

BM. Uh, ha

AT. Then you'd open it again for a trip of empties to go through. Back into the place where they were getting more coal.

BM. What was the purpose of having these doors?

AT. That was so you'd get the proper distribution of air from the fans, up on the surface.

BM. And um, how long did you work at that particular job?

AT. Oh not too long.

BM. And did you do that anything else besides that in Cape Breton?

AT. I uh, went to the next higher paid job, which was distributing Sullivan Machines Picks.
BM. What was that Mules and...

AT. No, no, no thats Sullivan Machine Picks was undermining the coal.

BM. What were you distributing? Sullivan Machine Picks?

AT. Ya.

BM. Oh I thought you said something with and "M"

AT. No, Sullivan Machine Picks. And, they use that for undermining the coal, and uh, that one paid 95c a day.

BM. So the pay was quite low then, for you.

AT. Well I'll give you an illustration as we go along.

And uh, my next job, I missed the job which my brother did, that was Weights Kid, running the weights that hoisted the truck, the coal cars from the face from where the men are working and uh, it (paid a dollar or &dquo; curious &dquo; day)

but I never had that job, I was, I worked on haulage which paid a $1.52 (a dollar fifty-two) which was top, labour wage in Cape Breton Island.

AT. Just to give you another version of it, a dollar fifty-two in Cape Breton, I did the same job in No.#1 Mine for five dollars and a half. ($5.50)

So that's the difference it was,

BM. So the pay was quite considerably lower in Cape Breton.

AT. Oh definitely, yes.

BM. And um, what was your last job in Cape Breton before you came to Nanaimo?

AT. That would be, uh, rope riding.

BM. Rope riding, so.

AT. Or haulage, they called it down there.

BM. So rope riding and haulage are almost the same thing, similar?

AT. Oh, ya definitely similar.

BM. And what was your reason for coming out to Nanaimo? Did you hear rumors that the pay was better out here?

AT. Well, no, I think conditions were pretty hard down Cape Breton Island. I think that between my Dad and my Mother and my Grandmother I think they decided.. Well yes we did, maybe you're right, (to Barry Tipton) took them, he had been out 3 times before that. And actually rode the rods from Cape Breton Island to Nanaimo and back again. And he done that about 3 times, and I guess he painted the picture so well to them that they decided to
save up their money and come out here.

BM. And what was your first job working in the mines in Nanaimo.

AT. We were riding rope.

BM. And was that in No.1?

AT. That was in No.1 mine.

BM. And could you explain um, how you went about doing your job riding the ropes?

AT. Well, like I said before, you have a winch kid with a winch that lowers and brings up these cars of coal, from these miners themselves, and uh, that's what you did, you went down below to load it on the empty, drop the empty in and brought the loaded up, to the place where they accumulated, say, a triple maybe, 14, 16 cars at one time. Then the main haulage would take that up to the cage. Either that or there was another method which they used on No.2 too, the used of horses and mules, instead of a rope and a winch, you'd use these horses to bring it up from the face into the prominent gathering ground, which we called the main haulage, and it would take it up to the slope, up to the cage.

BM. So um, mules was a more primitive method that winches?

AT. Oh definitely, absolutely, it was pitiful when they got down to No.1 because they over worked the horses to such an extent, that uh, some of them poor devils was working 3 shifts a day, 24 hours a day.

BM. So they really abused the mules quite considerably.

AT. Mules and horses. Horses in places where the mules wouldn't didn't do better, because the horses were too big.

BM. Could you describe some of the atrocities that they did against Mules?

AT. I wouldn't they done it right off hand but I mean it was there because uh, this one, for instance there was this one great big horse we'd call Big Ben, and uh he was a beautiful big horse, and he was put in a low place and he'd be scraped all the back bone right down until the poor devil was just a one great big scab from the top of his head right down to his tail. And uh, the mules, they were the hardest ones actually. If they didn't like what you were doing they would take a heave at you with their back heels and if you were lucky enough you got out of the way, you know.

BM. How long did you work at ah, what was it a Rope Rider? In No.1?

AT. Well we finished there before the 1st of September 1918. And uh, we
went out to the Powder Works at Departure Bay.

BN. Um, what was your rate of pay at No.1?

AT. Five dollars and a half a day.

BN. Five dollars and a half.

BN. So it was a considerable increase cause compared then...

AT. Oh definitely.

BN. So did your family sorta look at that, as that they sorta um prospered a little more , they had a little more money?

AT. What do you mean, in mining in No.1?

BN. Yes, or did you find that prices were higher here?

AT. Well, unless you went digging hoal done on contract, the more you dug the more money you made out of that. But I uh, only had 3 days of that, but not in No.1 in Grandby.

BN. You mentioned that you went to the what was it, the Departure Bay Powder Works?

AT. Right.

BN. Um why did you go out to out there?

AT. Oh, I guess we figured it was nicer than working down in the coal mine. But uh, then you see the main plant was Departure Bay, at what is called Gilaire now. And the Black Powder Works was at the Northfield, my Dad worked making black powder pins up at the black works there.

BN. You mentioned black powder, and white powder?

AT. No, there's black powder and uh, blasting powder were made down in...

BN. What was the difference between, OK, I can understand what blasting powder was, but what was black powder then?

AT. Well I mean its, black powder was used for numerous, alot of numerous in fact it was used alot in the coal mine too, for if they wanted to take a uh, timber out and uh, plant a black powdered one , in order to break it down they post was always down, and they, but actually to tell you what they actually used for black powder was I never was personally into it to be able to explain it to you.
BM. So you worked at the Departure Bay Powder Works, could you tell me what your job was there exactly.

AT. No not exactly, cause you did everything.

BM. Where did you go about exactly, no not exactly, what did you sorta do all the little jobs you did?

AT. I did so many different jobs in Departure Bay that, and that would be uh, well we did the job of loading the boats, unloading boats, bringing in material for the \( \text{Powder-corrected based} \)\(^{(151)} \) for the manufacturer's \( \text{(Powder-corrected)} \)\(^{(152)} \).

Uh, I worked in the mixing houses, where you mix the ingredients for to make powder. I uh, the scariest job I ever for the Powder Works down there was hauling Nitro Glycerine around in wooden barrels in little wooden wagon, wooden wheels everything, not metal on it. This one particular night, it just started to rain when and wooden walks all around the mixing houses...

BM. Ooooh.

AT. And I started to slip, and it's funny what will go through your mind, at that particular time because you know the results of uh, nitro-glycerine when it blows up.

BM. Ya, quite disasterous.

AT. And it goes up with the least, it doesn't mean you touched it with a piece of cold metal it would blow up.

BM. Ya.

AT. \text{Anyhow, Anyhow, Anyhow} \text{ Anyway we were in the powder works until just before the first of December, 1918. Then we went back down the mines.}

BM. And did you go back down No. #1 again?

AT. No, Morden, down there.

BM. You went to Morden.

BM. And um, could you describe what \( \text{kind of mine Morden Mine was?}

As opposed to No. #1?

AT. Well, I can because it was a terrific gassey mine.

BM. You could smell the gas then.

AT. Oh, for the first couple hours you go down there at night and then you'd just be absolutely sick until you got, until I guess your blood stream got the gas mixed in and you were back on your feet again and then when you went home.....

BM. So you would even pass out sometimes then from the gas.

AT. Well no, not exactly, just enough to make you dizzy and then you feel a little sick but...
BM. So they didn't have anything like a protective guard or a mask, a
gas mask or something to protect you from fumes.

AT. (mumbled: We didn't have anything like that in those days?)

BM. Um if the mine is gassey like that, um did the fire boss have to make
a lot of continuous checks, like every 15 minutes or something?

AT. Well I don't know exactly how long these checks were, oh I imagine
they did because (mumbled by background barking)

AT. In Morden Mine I worked there about, just before Christmas. My Dad
worked an hour and a half, because he had broncial asma, and couldn't
take it. My brother lasted 7 hours, and he not got paid for it yet.

He was a winch kid down there, and he brought this uh of coal up, and run it up on top of the winch, so the guy fired him.

BM. Why?

AT. Because, instead of stopping where he should have, he kept on going
until he come out pretty near on top of him.

BM. So if he pushed it over the top....

AT. He never got paid for that.

AT. But anyway I quit there before, just before Christmas, and the meantime
they had gone out to Branby again(?)

BM. And where did you go?

AT. I went out there too, but I started between Christmas and New Year,
at Granby.

BM. And was Granby a better mine to work at than Morden?

AT. Oh, definitely.

BM. What was the difference, why was it better.

AT. Well the air was better, they had a better system of distributing the air,
which the Morden Mine they used to make the main airway out of uh, old, what
we called battered(?) board just was saw board out of the
saw mill. And more leakage than enough in them. And the reason my Dad quit
down there is because oh, like if he worked up, you see mining is consisting
consisting of a bunch of cross cuts, and that sorta takes care of running the
air around, and they'd have a two way pipe running in and out, well you
can imagine what the air circulating would be. But in Granby well they didn't
have so much to contend with, but I mean the coal itself was wasn't as
gassey as it was down there.
BM. Would you consider that the owner's of Granby were farly more enlightened than other owner's of mines? It seems that you know from stories that I've read that they built a nice accommodation for the workers and things like this.

AT. Oh ya, (it was beautifully made up) 217 I don't know, I don't think that.

BM. I think that at that particular time, they were making so much money that they had to pay for my taxes and I know this is what I had been told, that in order to get away from those taxes, they just started up on the Townsite, but why they destroyed it long after, that's what gets me. Because it definitely was one of the most beautiful laid out coal mining towns that we've ever actually experienced anywhere.

BM. Uh ha. So when Granby closed down, they tore the town apart, was it because the company went totally bankrupt? There should be a reason for it being sold off like that if something goes.

AT. Well maybe they didn't want to be bothered, I mean it was an American outfit so, they would want to get out with the least trouble as possible, I guess.

BM. So did you ever live in Granby then?

AT. Oh just from... or did you commute?

BM. Or did you commute?

AT. From uh 1920 to uh, well September, (we moved) out, September 22nd or uh, ya September 22nd 1932.

BM. So you were citizens of Granby then?

AT. Oh ya. When we were married in October we had to move and live up there. Did you, did you, did you ever live out in Granby then?

AT. Ya we did.

BM. So when they sold the houses, like I guess they sold them or whatever, to move out property.

AT. They sold them for the price that they paid.

BM. Did you ever take advantage of that offer or...? Or were you not in that economic um state to do that?

AT. No, I didn't have the money in those days.

AT. I know I always said that I would like to preserve that Townsite up there myself...

BM. Ya, it would have been a nice little town for a tourist trap of something.

AT. Because I have a giving me (but uh) 248 with them they're giving me (but uh)
BM. Yes.

AT. You know its surprising throughout the years how uh, like especially when I worked at the (newcastle) (251) (I use to sit on hill) we would sit on the hill, and I'll have to take a picture of this hill because it was something worthwhile, it would have been worthwhile today because, all the pictures that I have seen so far I've never seen one that was complete, and that is to show Granby at the water. But it was just......

AT. I have a few, yes.

BM. Could you describe exactly where Granby is? I know I really don't have a, I sorta know, have an idea where it is, but uh, not exactly perfectly you know personally.

AT. Well I'll going to tell you this. That I think they call it Squawken Road
(Fouston?) (2) road now, Do you know where Haslam Creek is?

BM. Yes.

AT. Do you know where the Haslam Bridge is?

BM. Yes.

AT. Well you turn right and go up the hill there, and as you go underneath the underpath you see where we used to dump use to be. Now where that huge dump used to be originally, when I first started (renting a room) (or Daruma) (road used to go straight) $266 (up along side right where that dump was) and later on as the dump began to fill in, and which was naturally one of the things that had to be (closed) (then closed away) down $269, and a few other things and a place to dump the rock and the (refuse) (2)

BM. So there wasn't enough place to dump it then?

AT. That, and not only that they had to blow outs and everything contributing factor and then the market dropping off, all these activities were factors contributed to the shutting down. It wasn't (without doubt) (275) the loveliest Townsite, in coal mining as far as I'm concerned.

BM. Was it a happy community?, cause they had good living conditions it seemed and....

AT. Oh, I would say on the whole (I would say so) (279)
BM. Since you lived in Granby, could you describe the size of the town?

AT. Well its not that big but... let me show you some pictures.

BM. Um you just showed me some photographs of Granby, and when Granby closed down, what was the different changes in your life style, that you had to face up to because Granby had modern conveniences you know for that particular time. What did you have to put up with, because you know....

AT. The worst thing to put up with was alot of put up, in the building you could pick up a ( job of odd time ) in the hungry thirties it was pretty wicked. And of course we moved when ( says Gramina, but means Granby) Granby we went to Chase River in our Grandmother's place, and we were very fortunate ( respectively ) because we were only getting 17.50 a month.

And which wasn't uh, you didn't buy no fir coats.

BM. And you had to work for the $17.50, in (respectly) would be called welfare but you actually worked for this welfare, ....

AT. You did, you worked 8 days a month.

Actually we weren't being given anything but uh, actually I think it preserved the sanity of alot of people by doing that, just hanging around doesn't help anybody.

BM. I actually think its a little better that you do something for that money, yes.

Doesn't make like you're taking a hand out.'

AT. No.

BM. And when did you finally get another job was it in the mine?

AT. No. No, 1937 I started working on the sawmill. Ya the last week in March 1937,

BM. Uh ha. Um after, after Granby closed down that was the last time you worked in a mine.

AT. That was the last, and as I said I only worked 3 days mining coal that was with my Dad in Granby, that was before I asked for a $ job on the surface of the mine, I don't think I, I went back in the mine after that helping some one, one of the guys, putting in a safe in their, that was before they got, bought pumps to put in. Another time, oh yes I did I worked with a surveyor for about 3 months, and we used to go down and survey ( the slope because ) he had to keep a track on Haslam Mine, he had to keep that down on... That would be a great way to get hold
one of the old surveyors of Cranby, or any mine, they'd have some of the greatest pictures you know, schematic drawings, and mine workings and explanations for it. Just like uh, say Bob Bonner, he lived in Victoria and he ended up as a mine inspector, but he was the last (surveyor) there they had a Cranby, and they must have kept an awful lot of those pictures like, uh, Ray Knight he's always after me to draw him a schematic drawing of the outline of Cranby as it was, you know all the inlets, and outlets, and the way the town was laid out.

BM. Are the roads and streets still there, or are they all over ground by now?

AT. Ah, they'd be chewed up, they been tearing the gravel out of there, you go up there now, its, ... what amuses me is that uh, The boarding house the cook house itself and the dance hall we had combined, they've got that fenced in now, and their making a heritage out of it now, but there's nothing left but the foundation. Why couldn't they have done that earlier? you know, 

BM. Well are they going to reconstruct it?...

AT. The only time I went back, it was with (army) #350 and we went down there and had a weekend up there, and the boarding house itself, it was just about, the roof was practically all torn down, slept on that hard floor, all weekend. And uh, the houses were all gone, that would be about 1945. So actually, that was the last time I went back in there. And now, its, their taking all the gravel, their still taking sand and gravel out of there. But people dumping stuff in there I mean it is actually a disgrace you know.

BM. They're dumping garbage?

AT. Its such a lovely Townsite that could develop in, the fellow used to say to me he'd say, oh you gonna have ride to Nanaimo, and ride... well I've seen people for ever in the years, rode from Nanaimo to Chemainus, to go to work in a sawmill. So what difference is where they live?

BM. Well with cars I mean you've been you've ..... 

AT. Absolutely, and the surrounding there is more pleasant I mean sure you had that big rock dump, but that didn't mean anything, that didn't stop you from the like you seen in those pictures, but that was a really beautiful laid out thing, that's what it was as far as I'm concerned. The Cranby Company must have at the early part of the was, they must have made an enormous profit because ... Something that bothered me an awful lot
over the years, the waste of coal. You know the potential that's in a pound of coal, its, its, absolutely tremendous. You take in 1922, 23, that there were getting a 110 different by-products out of coal, and just threw to one side, they didn't even bother. They even made aspirin and everything else from....

BM. They've found more efficient ways of burning coal now, you can burn any kind of coal and they put it in a suspension or something like that and the fire burns hotter and, there is very little residue left....

AT. We're used to digging that and had that in the in the early 20's

You take, we sold low (\( \frac{\text{low}}{\text{p-d}} \)) coal to a sugar refinery (?) pulverized and blowing it (?) and it was almost rock. Because as long as there was enough coal in there and pulverizing and blowing it into the dust, and they were getting sorta ( ) on the rock. I used to go 31, 32 (\( \frac{\text{c}}{\text{c}} \)) $394

AN, as I say when you get not much ash in ( ) well you were getting near as much (?) of as possible, because you see when the Granby Co. took, more or less stole the uh, (Coten-Coal)(?) $400

from No. 1 mine because we had less sulphur in our coal as well, as they had in No. 1, therefore it was easier to wash that sulphur out at Granby, than it was at No. 1.

BM. Oh they get the sulphur out of the coal they washed it then.

AT. Well (?) (Coten-Coal) you have to have a very low sulphur content.

BM. So sulphur was very soluable in water.

AT. It wares off. It depends on just how much was in it. You see there was more sulphur in Nanaimo, than there were in Granby coal. So we were able to wash it out by the method of floatation and they were.... You see we had two different types of a washer. Washer at Granby was the Jig Washer.

BM. Where (what) is a Jig Washer?

AT. Well that's where the water is forced up and down eccentric on the shaft and then it push the water up these screens, with \( \frac{1}{4} \)" (quarter inch) holes in it, and that system of forced to the water through the pumping action on the side keep that in more or less suspension you see, the heaviest went down to the bottom and went through, and went out through a ( ) $423

valve and that procedure.

But in uh, No. 1, was a light headed cone washer.

BM. Cone Washer?

AT. And it was shaped like a cone only inverted, but the process was the same
that the method of suspension was the same, but the action was different. Instead of a plunger(?) you had this thing rotating around. How it actually worked I don't,... I never seen the inside of... I applied for a job down there, but I never got one, because they had too many guys working there.

BM. What would you say about the safety conditions at Granby, were they something to be desired , or were they fair enough?

AT. Well its something and (just shutting) that it was just something that couldn't come back. And that was one, one of the reasons why they had to shut it down too, was you see, they spent 750,000 dollars(seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars) to draw, they hit this faam(?) down there, and it cost them $750,000.00 to make blow, drive a tunnel through to get into the other bed of coal.

BM. There was a fault, as in an earth fault.

AT. Well, whatever caused these faults I don't know.

BM. Well ............ of the earth.

AT. At any rate, It it went down to this fault and going over to there the Cassidy Airport is. And there's suppose to have 640 (six hundred and forty) acres of coal over there. Then There was A mile square of the airport, according to the way I used to hear it. And in order to get it through this to get into this body of coal, they had to drive this tunnel which they kept telling me it cost $750,000.00. Well they get into this stream of coal and they run into these uh, blow outs, and no matter how they

BM. Is a blow out and explosion of gas?

AT. No matter how they used to (bleed)(?) the best thing was every once in a while it would blow out, and the last time I think it took about 2 or 3 men at one time. But it would blow out as far as a 100 ft. back solid, and they'd be loading that for days and days. When I was one of the washers there you'd have to stand there all night pushing this fine stuff down, because it wouldn't go into this uh....

BM. Oh it would sorta float.

AT. It would just float out and you would have to stand there and poke it down.

Try and make get into the washing action and all of a sudden water went right straight through.

BM. Uh ha, and um...

AT. It was so fine it would be blown out by the...
BH. Was there any serious um disasters that resulted from these blow-outs, like were there people injured or killed?

AT. Oh, they lost a lot of lives.

BH. So it was a common occurrence that at least a couple times a year they would lose a couple of men?

AT. I don't know just what their sequence was, but uh, they were beginning to lose them so often that they decided so that what they do they just work the workings (knock) till they worked it out. And then of course they had another little mine over on the other side too, they started up, which helped keep Granby going until 1932. But then they eventually worked it out too.

BH. And you also worked in No.41 um, do you remember any disasters at your time that happened at No.41?

AT. No, never when I worked on it.

BH. So they were able to avoid after that bad one they had in the 1800's.

AT. Ya, well that was, that must have been a very bad one because, later on I working down there, but later on, where the place where the place had been sealed off for years and years and years, that they eventually opened it up again, and uh, the uh, when the air got in there aloft of the ....(end of side one)

SIDE TWO

BH. ... I just know its going to do it, cause I was waiting for it, but sometimes waiting for something to do it, makes you jump twice as high.

BM. Ok. you're talking about No.41 mine in when they repened this old section they found the old bones of...

AT. Well they found lots of old bones of animals and probably just been caughts when the gas hit down there or whatever it was.

BM. Yes, they had uh, I think it was 1887 they had that terrible disaster at No.41 where a 150 150 of! It was a bad thing.

AT. Yes, well I, I don't know what year this was, cause I can remember when we used to walking down the place where we worked, show you a place where it was sealed off you know. But they tell me around oh I imagine it was, it must have been in the 30's there sometime where they suppose to reopen that.

You know start mining again once the fire, ya it was a fire wasn't it?!

That section on that coal mine, ya that's right, they sealed it off to break the fire down.
AT. That uh, No I uh, feel sorry for those horses though. They uh, you know there were some that were gentle, and uh they were others of course that would just as soon let you have it with their feet (or hoof )534 And alot of men, a lot of the men down there they ill treated the horses too.

You hear alot of these guys bragging about they would tie a horse up because they done this or done another thing. And what they used to call Braddish Boards(?sp) ( mumble ) and that was used to put over the top of the timber you know to stop the small stuff from falling on top of your head.

BM. Yes.

AT. And they'd take one these things and they just batter(?)( mumble ) the devil out of them you know..

BM. And they, and they felt really proud of doing that.

AT. Oh, I don't know. I know guys...

BM. Slightly sick in the mind.

AT. I know guys that were fired for doing that ( )

BM. I think that's sickening when people do that, there's no purpose for it. There's no gain, or nox benefit for them.

AT. Well actuallyit isn't.

AT. But uh, I still claim that the seam of coal still (time but. )544 they'll never be able to get it now, but uh, you know its all been mined out and flooded in now on the top but there's suppose to be an entire seam of coal under the one they were working, No.91. I can't remember where I heard that but, there's suppose to be on a map somewhere.

BM. Well they're looking into um coal around Nanaimo again cause there's....

AT. Oh there must bea lots of coal around Nanaimo.

BM. There's an operation up in Campbell River opening up now, open mine pit mining, and they're thinking of about doing it that up around base of Mount Benson area.
AT. Well in doing your travels you know you could always look into this and take Granby and the trouble they're having with blow-outs. If you study of the entire surface underground Waterloo itself where all that territory where that airport is..

BM. Yes.

AT. That there's suppose to be an underground river bed, that you can actually hear it in spots. The people that lived in it (I worked in sawmill in Waterloo)(?)\(\text{\textcopyright}556.\) When they, they went down the wells there several times and they and they had engines coming out there(?) where they were cleaning out the well, and a frog would come in, you know, and he was a big frog too. And they go and have their dinner and they go and have a sandwich and a cup of tea or something, and they come back and the frog was gone, but they could actually hear the water running down there, actually Waterloo was suppose to be one bath(?) underground stream of water. So we, my son-in-law and I often wondered if that would probable have any thing to do, or something to do with that part of Granby, because the Granby coal was going out underneath the airport.

BM. Oh ya.

AT. Which use to be Paterson's. Paterson's use to have the farm and then Cassidy's. Cassidy's use to have a farm on this side of it. And the coal that, that all that coal is still under there. Whether they'll ever be able to ever get it, I don't know.

BM. So, sorta Granby was sorta like a sad chapter in coal mining history I guess. You know not in the fact that alot of bad came out of it but because it was such a thing seemed to be a good place.

AT. It was a nice place to work for, I, I didn't mind.

BM. Um.

AT. We had a nice home anyway(or didn't we)(?) And she had a girlfriend and husband live next door to us, childhood girlfriend funny we should live next door to them in Granby.

BM. Uh ha, did you um ever, did you ever think about working about South Wellington, because it was about that time that they opened up #10, about '32 wasn't it?

AT. No.

BM. No?
AT. Well I tried so many places and I, I didn’t want, Well I wouldn’t go back down the mine again, no matter what. While you were working down there as I say we started to work when you were so young, you never noticed it because uh, it just seemed to be a way of life at that time. But then after, after getting out as of the mine at Granby, I never wanted to go back down any more.

BM. Could you um, describe how it was being down in the mine working. You know, you know, I guess there were moments when you paused to work, did you ever think you know what am I doing in this dark hole?

AT. Well actually no. I think, as far as I’m concerned it just took a matter of course. I mean uh, I never, no I can never, but I never uh, I never talked bad about it.

BM. So you never really thought you were just just like you were saying, its just the way of life.

AT. That was the way of life and that was it. And I think you’ll find the general assumption between old miners everywhere that uh, they all ( ) the same thing.

BM. Ya, ya, they never really thought of it.

AT. No, because actually you go back now, we’ve been to England three(3) times and we uh, we talked to alot of the old coal miners there, and their seams of coal are much lower than our. And in alot of cases they uh...

BM. What do you mean?

AT. ... they’ve worked all day long on their knees.

BM. Oh what you mean by low seams that they were very narrow so they had to practically had to work down on their bellies and things.

AT. Narrow seams... made it harder to get the coal, I mean they had the coal there but, the narrow seams and they worked, like you take most of our coal mines here, they uh, they would take alot of they would mine all that say there was uh, uh, what they call, oh I can’t remember the name now, you say you had so much rock, and then someone would say you only had a little bit of coal, and so much mud on the top.

BM. Yes.

AT. Well they would maintain an average height say, uh, anywhere from five and a half(5½) six (6) feet maybe, someplaces would go higher than that just depending on the height of the coal. You would always maintain that same heighth, by taking out that much rock, that amount of rock on the bottom
and that amount of dirt that was on the top. That they maintained that height no matter where they went. But in England, it was a little different, they didn't.

BM. Oh yes, so they, they maintained the height.... (both talking at same time)

AT. ... go down on your knees, and work on your knees.

BM. So in England they tended to follow the coal seam no matter if it went up or down or zigzagged, or what ever.

AT. And if they, if they can make it ( 615, even though you had to work on your knees, you worked on your knees, although they had those special knee pads to do it. But I have uh, I have a book in here too don't I, with uh, I'd like to show it to you.

BM. You just showed me a book about um, the difference the way they mine coal in England and here, and here in general they usually cut the uniform height of about five to six feet, you know if the seam was narrow they just cut the uniform height anyhow. But what was the reason for that, was something the miners demanded so they didn't have to spend all their time crawling around?

Or was it just the way things were?

AT. No, I, I, couldn't tell you. I would just be guessing what it would be. But general that's usually what they did here because....

BM. Uh ha, And um, what, did you ever travel to Nanaimo, and sorts like what methods of transportation did you use to travel to Nanaimo?

AT. Oh we use to uh, we first stayed, stayed in the bunkhouse, and we used to go home on the weekend. And uh, we'd go by train, mostly. Because they never had no jittneys in those days. You know, I mean you didn't have a bus service like that, like you have today, so we had to rely on the train. And to come back to Granby, well we'd come back on the Sunday afternoon train. We had more trains running then of course. And uh, we'd leave Granby on uh, Saturday nite or whatever, depending what shift you were on. And uh, then go back on the Sunday afternoon.

BM. Uh ha.

AT. So you had like uh, Saturday nite, and Sunday morning at home.

BM. So jittneys and uh, trains, were basically your main motor transportation.
AT. Well, when we first started at Granby there wasn't any jittneys.
BM. Oh, did you walk?
AT. Later on this began, to develop, you see. And then before we moved there
my Dad and my Mother they bought a 490 Chev, that was a 1919 model. Cost,
I remember that because it cost twelve hundred and fifty dollars ($1250.00)
at that time.
BM. Twelve Hundred that's a considerable amount.
AT. That was a lot of money in those days.
BM. That's like today's prices.
AT. But they just had the canvas sides on it, you know, the plexy glass windows
you know.
BM. Oh ya.
AT. And my Dad got hurt at that time, and I had only had one lesson.
We were on the left hand side of the road then too...
BM. Really here, we were on the left hand side of the road?
AT. Oh ya, yes, ya. It uh, I think they changed that in 1923.
BM. So in 1923 we changed to the left hand side, to the right hand side of
the road.
AT. Ya, that's right. I had one lesson in the driving of the 490 Chev my
Dad got hurt, and then I had to take it over.
BM. So you've been driving for a long time then?
AT. Right.
BM. Uh, ha, um like could I ask you again like Ok. I'm going back to Granby
again, if a worker had an accident, like you know any kind of any injury
from cutting his finger to breaking his leg. What kind of emergency medical
facilities for that particular injured man?
AT. Oh we had a doctor right on, right in Granby.
BM. Uh ha, was this a common practice to have a doctor on hand?
AT. Oh he, he, was, we paid so much a month for a doctor.
BM. But I mean just not for Granby, was that a common practice for all mines
in Nanaimo area, to have a doctor?
AT. No, not naturally, I mean, ....
BM. It was just Granby then, basically.
AT. You see, its just the same as, as you for instance, you have so many people around there that you have trained for Industrial First Aid.
BM. So you did have people that were, took something like St. John's Ambulance, or something like that.
AT. ..Basically you would head down the mine, just the same as they have in the sawmill today you have your industrial first aid men. Or in those days they used to call it ST. John's Ambulance.
BM. So they did make allowances to have someone that was on hand that could, if someone was injured.
AT. Oh yes, right. But they never got paid like they do in today. They more or less did it on their own.
BM. But I was just establishing the fact that they did have someone there.
AT. Oh yes, definitely.
BM. Um, this is sorta getting into, something I don't know if you would know but, um, diseases common to miners like um, would you, was there some kinda um some particular thing, did miners always have colds or sniffles or something like that, due to working in the coal mines, was there something that you remember, a sickness that seemed to be common or something like that?
You see I don't really know exactly what I'm talking about....
AT. I know what you mean BM, Well I can't, I can't say that I've....
BM. Did you, did you think that a lot of the people miners seemed to have a cold or were constantly sniffling all the time?
AT. No, I can't say so( ok. ) (a bit mumbled)
BM. Um was the flu a common thing for any miners to catch constantly all the time from the damp mine.
AT. Well you can go back to uh, September 1918, when we had that big flu epidemic here. Uh, 90% of the people I guess then were all coal miners. That, that wasn't developed just actually through coal miners, but ....
BM. So you can't think of any, you can't think of any hygienic problems that were common to the coal miners.
AT. Well not exactly..
BM. So there wasn't any problems more than there is today.
BN. Ok. Were you around when they started talking about unions?

AT. When I started, well I would like to go back this far, that the second mine I worked in, in Cape Breton Island, my brother and I (Sid) ...-.

BN. Yes.

AT. ... It was uh, a (meaner?) because (EVER. )702 that's what makes it rather uh, much of a joke, because I mean that, the age that we were, when we started the No.3 mine on Cape Breton Island and it, we were told by the mine manager now you know the rules of ( )702 mine, you have to join the union. And we said yes we do. And it was the United Mine Workers of America. And now what year it was, well, I imagine I must have been about 13 and a half when I started....

BN. So when you were 13 years old, you had, you were in a way, you got that job you had to join the union also.

AT. We had, that was in No. 3 mine, in No.4 mine they didn't have a union.

BN. And that's what you saying, was saying that was sorta strange 13 years old and usually it was union policy to uh, protect from child labour.

AT. That's right, and uh, my brother who was 2 years younger than me, so if you figure well if I was 13½, ( THAT TIME )719 now I'm just guessing now, or even if I was 14....

BN. He would have been 11 or 12.

AT. Ya absolutely, that's the thing. (YOU HAVE TO )719. And he worked a short time on No.4, now how much I can't remember, but I know...

BN. No.4 Cape Breton, though right?

AT. Ya. And uh, but as I say they use to ask about me, so there it was, the United Mine Workers Of America was in Cape Breton then already, I don't know when they started.

BN. So the unions themselves started in pretty primitive methods themselves, I guess.

AT. Oh ya.

BN. And what, out in Nanaimo area, when did they first um, start gaining I guess strength or um, popularity amongst the workers?
AT. Well we had to go way back to the...  
BM. You wouldn't have been here during the 1912's though would you?  
AT. No, I wasn't here then.  
BM. No.  
AT. Well that would, I would, what the devil did they call that union?  
One big union.  
BM. They had one I think United Mine Worker's Of America, but before that it was United Mine Workers of Canada. I think it was the American affiliation that got a strong hold here.  
AT. Ya, but that wasn't started until into the 30's.  
Because I can remember my brother-in-law's brother was one of the first to organize that, but I can't remember what year that was. But it was in the 30's I know.  
BM. Ya. It took that long after the 1912 strike for them to, they had to, they had to actually start right from the beginning again.  
It wasn't until about the 1930's I guess they um, got the I guess um, support or recognition, I guess, that was the most important thing was it recognition?  
AT. (mumbles during first part of BM. speech)  
AT. Oh ya, well you had to have the strength in the first place, you had to have over 50% like you have even today, you have to before you can apply for certain (vacation)? ( ) or anything union at any place you have to have over 50% to before you can put your application in for a union.  
BM. Mmm,  
AT. So uh,  
BM. So uh, was the idea of a union in this area, was it a popular thing, a wanted thing, or much disputed thing?  
AT. Oh I would say a wanted thing. Because we used to first organize the uh, United... uh IWA, um in uh (sawmills)? I first time I came out was in 1938.  
BM. I think that was about the same time for the coal mines also.  
AT. No, no, they were before that.  
BM. Earlier?  
AT. Oh ya.  
BM. Oh I see.  
AT. They were before I started to work in a sawmill.  
BM. Uh ha, Um...  
AT. I suppose I got pictures...
BN. Um, oh what was I going to ask now?
AT. We never had any at Granby. What they had at Granby, was a Gentlemens Agreement between the coal miners and the company.
BN. Well was this ....
AT. Well it didn't work very well either.
BN. What had at Granby was the gentlemen's agreement. This agreement did not work then?
BN. No.
BN. So the company really didn't actually keep its word then. Or did the miners, did the both parties try to keep their word, or was it management that opted out?
AT. Well, that would be a matter of opinion because I don't know, you see we never had anything to do with any Gentleman Agreement, we were just uh, company men, we weren't on contract.
BN. Uh ha, well what would have happened if uh, ok, I'm going back to say before unions were recognized to the extent where the unions workers were represented. Um, what would happen if the company found out that you were a union member? And you were working in their mine, and they did not recognize the union, what would happen to you, would they fire you?
AT. Well it depends. Most of the time they wouldn't, but sometimes they would.
BN. So sometimes they would and sometimes they wouldn't, um, Ok, if they were really out to get you and they wanted you, would they blacklist you from the other mines if they really thought you were a radical?
AT. Well, I seen it done.
BN. Uh ha, so blacklisting was common in certain cases where...
AT. Oh I would say lotsa cases.
BN. Uh ha. And when they black listed, that meant that they were barred from all mines in this area as far as Cumberland?,
AT. I've uh I've seen, I'm now now I'm just going by what the old people tell me(?) from the 1912 strike, that uh, a lot of people had to leave and go work some place else, and when they came back it took them along while before they ever got back into the swim again.
BN. Uh ha. So blacklisting was an occurrence.
AT. Oh ya, (mumbled)
BN. Um, talking about, I guess Ok, Granby ti would be almost an enlightened example. For most of the living conditions, could you go through basically Ok,
living conditions before Granby, this is like things you would have in your home like little luxuries, and then to Granby, could you give a complete stark difference. Ok, you're in Nanaimo working in No.1 and Ok, could you describe what you would have at home like did you have hot and cold running water...

AT. Oh ya.

BM. In Nanaimo then, yes? And did you have electricity?

AT. Right.

BM. And would you have things like a couch, a sofa, and lots of chairs?

AT. Oh I (don't) think so. We had sofas and they were quite common.

BM. And what kind of stove, I guess you would have a coal and wood stove.

AT. Ya, coal and wood stove, ya. Usually around that time.....

BM. And um did you have a sewer system, like a toilet that was hooked up to a sewer or did it go into a septic tank?

AT. Oh, I'm not too quite sure, but I think they had the same system at Nanaimo in 1918.

BM. It was the old wooden coil kind I suppose yes. And um, so they did have electricity you pretty well....

AT. The power plant was down by the millstream.

BM. And you used, you didn't have refrigeration quite that early but you would have had like the ice box.

AT. Ice Box.

BM. Uh hmm., and I guess you would have, you would have I guess normal things I guess you would have food and things like that. Was the cost of food considerable, like um, did the mine company's themselves have some kind of control, over the cost of food of the town, or was fairly, very free of trade going on here?

AT. No, no it would be free trade, especially in Nanaimo. Because although I tell you that one thing in Nova Scotai, that uh, one time they use to have the company's uh, this No.3 mine I was talking about, and Ha, the tremendous amount of money that some people owed those.....

BM. Yes, they just kept people so much in debt that they could not leave that town.
BM. So Nanaimo was fortunate that they had free enterprise.

AT. Oh yes, definitely. I would say that ya.

BM. And um would you remember about the Chinese community here? Um the Chinese often associated with the mines, as they one time worked in it. Did they work in the mines while you were there?

AT. No, not when I was there.

BM. They were limited to um what you call, stoking up the boilers or whatever.

AT. At the time I was I would be here, they were working in Cumberland.

BM. They did work in Cumberland.

AT. Ya, We, it was quite hard trying to get up to Cumberland in that time, so we never even tried to get up there. I believe that they worked in the coal mines in Cumberland.

BM. And here in Nanaimo like they were working with the coal miners, but they would have been up top, do you remember seeing them around and what they were doing?

AT. No, no, actually I didn't, I never seen them on the top or at No. 91.

BM. Um did they have Chinese out at Granby?

AT. No, the only Chinese we had out at Granby, was uh, laundry...

BM. Chinese Laundry.

AT. and that and uh maybe a few working around the boarding house.

BM. Oh yes, so they were sorta working as house boys I suppose.

AT. I can't remember anyone working around the surfaces or down the mine in Granby.

BM. Did you ever um go to Chinatown?

AT. Oh yes, quite often.

BM. What was your reason for going to Chinatown, was it sorta like...

AT. Chinese Food.

BM. Just Chinese Food.

BM. Do you remember the name of that Chinese um House was called, the Chop Suey House, or did it have a particular name like...

AT. Well the one we used to go to, because I worked with him in the sawmill, was the Yen House. Then later on we used to go to, you know the people that own the Rendezvous now, and they were on this end of Chinatown, was uh, I forget what they used to call it now.

BM. Wong...

AT. No but they use to have a name...
Oh I see, Was it Chop Suey House or was it?

No, and then of course there was Willie Chang, who use to Pass'n Boots ...

Oh ya, I've heard that name before.

And then there was a No. 7 (Number Seven House) it was on the middle of that side. As these went on, it was pretty well. He employed an awful lot of Chinamen. You see what happened when I first started in the sawmill was that uh, even when Pettulla(?) brought us out working wages which was 40 cents and hour, these company's were allowed to hire a Chinamen for as low as 15, 16, 17 cents an hour.

So a lot of people saw them as trying to take their living away.

I know, because (Andy.....) showed me at one time, he showed me these sheets that the government issued statements, they could employ so many people at this rate of pay, Even though Pettulla working wages was 40 cents an hour or $3.20 a day.

Uh, Um did you have a church in Granby?

He had a we just used the hall, but the Catholics built one, and I think that as far as I can understand they still own that piece of property that. They must have torn the church down after, then they hadn't even finished it.

There is a Catholic Church as you go out in Cassidy, somewhere in that area, between there and Ladysmith, that is suppose to be disobeying the Vatican and continuing Latin Services.

Waterloo. That could be Waterloo.

Uh ha. So would know what kind of influence the church would have upon the community, would there be sorta like a social influence, that the church would hold?

Well at one time, one of the managers that was there one time that would be when Jim Tolley(sp?) (Too - ie ) was the manager.....

Jim Tolley?

Ya, he was the manager and his brother was his boss, that was when this Catholic Church came up.

Yes.

And he uh, he didn't actually force it on. But the people at Cassidy at that time built that church.
BM. Yes.

AT. And it probably went on with his influence. You know I've seen the same thing in Cape Breton Island. In No. 2 mine, he was a Catholic, and the other one at No. 4 was Protestant, and they were brothers...

BM. And so....

AT. .... the Catholic influence then was very very strong.

BM. So this mine manager to a certain extent would um, sorta influence you to go to church, and he would, not exactly say it in more words than one, but he would, it would help you a lot better if you did go would it?

AT. No, I can't hardly say that he did it. He did do people of the Catholic faith.

BM. Oh sorta, did he do a little bit of intimidation?

AT. (mumbled)

AT. Oh, I think so, in a little way. Uh he was that type of a person.

BM. Uh ha, so that isn't something, that, that can be just that man, isn't wasn't something, ya.

AT. But that was a long....Ya, just that faith, but we belonged to, we were Protestant, but he never bothered with. Not to my knowledge, I never I know I would never bother about, I could belong to the Catholic church, or any other church.

BM. Yes. It usually is most common in most miners most of them were you know Christian believers, but they weren't religious what you would call someone that would have to go to church every Sunday, I mean they believed and that was good enough for them. Was that common?

AT. I'd never seen any like that. Except as I said, in Cape Breton Island.

BM. No, but what I was saying that most miners were Christian but I mean they felt that as long as they were Christians that was good enough they did not have to go to church every Sunday.

AT. (THAT'S exh-- )967, I still feel the same today, I don't have to go to church to be a Christian.
BM. No. Um, did you use to go to things like the beer parlour, or the pub?

AT. Right(?)

BM. Was that a frequent thing to do, a past time, or something you did once in a while.

AT. Oh I would say a very pleasant pastime because we had the people who ran it, I don't know, the people were more social in those days even though they had a pint or two. Well today, I don't know if they're just so long I've been in a beer parlour that I forget what they look like.

BM. Uh uhh, well they're starting different kinds of things, as opposed to the bars, they're starting community beer parlours again, sorta like old English pubs sorta things. And they seem to be coming popular because they're becoming sorta things that part of that a little area, and not something that people from far away go to, usually the people respect it.

BM. Um, what do you um, did you ever take your wife to the beer parlour?

AT. Sure.

BM. Uh ha, ...

AT. (mumbled)

BM. It wasn't something, something you had to leave the wife at home then.

AT. Oh no, Oh ya, earlier days yes.

BM. Uh ha, but you took your wife with you I mean there was nothing thought of.

AT. When, when they opened it up, you could go and have a couple of beers of so, social evening out. I don't think we ever went to excess.

BM. Uh ha. What kind of entertainment did you have, baseball, soccer, rugby or uh shows, did you have any set things like that?

AT. Granby? Yeah, (possibly?)

AT. All coal mines were sponsored especially football.

BM. Did you ever play on some spott team?

AT. Uh, I played softball, little baseball.

BM. Uh ha, did they have any I guess doctors am in MD's there in Granby?

Not the mine doctor, but a doctor that would treat the local people.

AT. Well he was right there ( ) #24 he was brought in by the company, but then we had to pay uh, so much a month.

What we pay? 75 cents wasn't it.

Wife: I can't remember.
BM. So you're, so the company .......Tape ends.

END

Interviewed by Bernard McNicholl
Transcribed by Heidi Schmitt