BM. This is Bernard McNicholl interviewing Bob Winthrope for the Coal Tyee History Project.

BM. Mr. Winthrope, what year were you born?

BW. 1912.

BM. 1912, and were you born in Nanaimo?

BW. No, I was born in Northern England and came to Canada in 1923.

BM. 22, Uh what part of England were you from?

BW. I was in North of England, (mumbled) (Northern Scotland, and uh, Cumberland ...)

BM. Oh, so you were in the old coal mining area of England.

BW. Oh yes, yes. There was uh, three or four coal mines in that city.

BM. Oh ya, Um why did you come out here? Did you come out with your parents?

BW. Yes I came out with my parents...(mumbled)

BM. Uh, what was the reason they came out for... better living?

BW. My parents just wanted a change I guess. He was a steam engineer at the coal mines, and when he came out here he didn't get the job he wanted so he had to go inside that.

BM. And um, so he just sorta came out for better opportunities, better living conditions, and for a change then.

BW. Thats about all, ya.

BM. And um, how old were you when you came?

BW. I was 15 years old.

BM. And did you land in Nanaimo first or the east coast?

BW. No we landed in Nanaimo, cloudy and 70 in Nanaimo, landed in Quebec, and came over by train to Nanaimo. And from there to Extension, that's a coal mining community(?) village.

BM. So in those days, you had to land in Quebec or Halifax to get across the country.

BW. Of course we were supposed to land in St. John but they uh, were (overcast?) so we had to land in Quebec.
BM. St. John's New Brunswick?

BW. Ya. I was in the 20's there.

BM. And so you landed in Nanaimo, and then you moved to Extension?

BW. Ya.

BM. And was the purpose to work in the Extension mine then?

BW. I... my father came out a year ahead of us.

BM. Oh he did.

BW. To settle you see. ya. And then he sent for (all of those who came out with us)(?) 6 of us.

BM. And you settled in Extension?

BW. In Extension ya.

BM. Um, when you lived in Extension now, did you go to school first?

BW. Were only in school for about 2 years I guess.

BM. And so about 14, 15 years old, did you yourself go to work in mines then?

BW. I started in the Pithead when I was 14, around 14.

BM. In Extension?

BW. In Extension, ya, the (all of this)(#36) was happening in Extension.

BM. So what mine did you, what was the mine number do you remember?

BW. It was just called Extension Mine at that time. I don't remember a number, although a lot of others did have it.

BM. Yes

BW. But this was just Extension.

BM. So you first worked at the Pithead.

BW. On the Pithead ya.

BM. And um, what exactly was your job at the Pithead?

BW. Well, coupling cars and after they dumped the coal out into, and I would line them up in couples because the next trip (into the mine)(#43) you see, and load timber and what not for uh....

BM. So coupling cars is um, just joining empty cars together. And then sending them back into the mine?

BW. You would make a trip out of it ya.

BM. So you would wait until you got maybe about...

BW. About 75.

BM. 75 cars. And then when you had 75 emptys you would send it back to go into the mine again.
BW. Ya.

BM. So uh, take it in the back (?), and this mine was a level, not a shaft, you see so the motor would take it in.

BM. So what they meant by a level is that it went to the side of the tunnel?

BW. Ya.

BM. And it was, uh, just walk straight in?

BW. Straight in, for about a mile and a half. Straight in and then it started gradually up(?)

BM. So um did you unload the coal first before you...

BW. It would come out the mine and it would come to the dump, and it would dump one at a time of course, and then as soon as you got uh, enough cars (mumbled) you'd take them back in.

BM. And was that your only job in the Pithead or did you move up, or change to a different job ...

BW. Well I got transferred inside the mine.

BM. Inside the mine, and what was your job inside the mine?

BW. Well I first went in on the driving an electric motor.

BM. An electric motor uh ha.

BW. Its like a little locomotive.

BM. Yes.

So you were something like a little old (low car) that you sat on?

BW. Well a little more (Locomotive)(#63)

BM. And you sorta, did you sit on it at the front and steer it or something?

BW. Well no, you don't steer it cause its on tracks... You just...

BM. Oh ya.

BW. you kinda control it like a speed car(?)

BM. Speeding, you know for accelerating and slowing down.

BW. No brakes on it though. (You just had a little stop) (#67)

BM. Oh just had a a...

BW. Ya, it did have a brake on it, ya., oh ya

BM. So that basically you could just turn the powere off. Was it electric?

BW. Electric, oh ya. Had wires just like street cars.

BM. Those wires running overhead, um they were bare wires weren't they?
BW. Oh ya, ya.

BM. So they were dangerous, you could get a shock from them couldn't you?
In some cases people got killed if they were standing in water.

BW. Pretty well, I got this touched with my ear once in a while, and you go down,

BM. A little shock And you get a little jolt

BW. Oh ya. Oh if you didn't have one before, it's strong enough to kill you.

BM. Uh ha, I know some people, you know if they were standing in water
sometimes you know....

BW. (mumbled) (J ust swag goin' through.) wasn't too.

BM. You know that was the worst part, people, people could take a good
shock, but once if they're standing in water, they've had it.

BW. (mumbled) (I can't hear you.)

BM. So in this mine did you use any mules or horses for any service?)

BW. Oh ya. You were in steep grades you know. The motors can't take that
the use the you know land horses.

BM. What was preferred, mules or horses?

BW. Oh, myself I prefera mule, cause I've had experience with them. Mules
uh, horses are dumb compared to mules, in that particular instance.

Pulling car up the hill ( The horse when he wants to rest
he'll stop, and let uh, pack all the way down that slope again, but a
mule he'll dig in and haul it till he wins, so he won't go down twice,
When he wants a breather he'll stop on the slope.
You just hold the car because you've dropped uh, two by four or something.

BM. So a mule would just sorta stop in the middle of a gradient or slope
and just rest and continue on, but a horse would just go back, right back
down again to the level it was, and then go back up again.

BW. And try again, and do it two, three, or four times you know.

BM. So a horse was Minda like you know, try and try, and try again.

BW. Ya but a mule had brains he wasn't gonna try, try again, he was just
gonna pull. He was smart.

BM. Um was this mine did it have a low ceiling or was it fairly high?

BW. Uh, different places there were low ceilings. Depends on the ceiling.

BM. Was it generally over 6 ft.

BW. Oh yes. As far as I remember (it was, as far as I remember) (#97)

BM. So they'd make sure that it....

BW. Well, I'll give you an idea, when I used to work in the timber yard, uh
we had loaded timber up twice a day. This size, and the lengths were, the
posts were 10-12, 10 and 12 ft. long. You know, beams or 
strings?

called it, to hold the roof up, or any tree, mostly 8 ft. wide, and 10 ft.
high. They weren't long.

BM. So um you say you used to load up timbers 2 or 3 times a day.

BW. Well twice a day anyway.

BM. Uh ha. Um so um how often did you have to replace timbers in the mine?

BW. Well I would just load them, till one of them broke.

BM. Well, how long would a timber last?

BW. Oh quite a while.

BM. Quite a while.

BW. I think there's still some standing in Extension Mine yet, and they've
been standing since the 30's. The roof will break them free you see.
And plus your roof will break too, even break posts...

BM. Was there a particular time in the mines when you remember that was
sorta like a dangerous period, where um, the amount of pressure on the timbers
and the mine would have more danger of cave ins?

BW. Well question it all the time. The timbers were cracking all the time.
Now when I first went in my first shift, took me 4 hours to get used to it,
timbers cracking all the time, but after a while you get used to it.

Just uh, it happens.

BM. So you'd be down there and you would hear the wall s creek, and the timbers
crack?

BW. Cracking all the time.

BM. So it would sorta like being in an old ship, where you could hear all
the creaks and...

BW. Well more or less ya. Sometimes you'd hear a big snap.

BM. Yes, and I guess that would be fairly startling.

BW. Well it would, but like anything else you'd get used to it.

BM. Yes. So that first day did you get sorta like the creeps or the willies?

BW. I was nervous. After the first 4 hours you get used to it.
Of course, later on you (your timber was cut (?) )

But they don't break, just the pressure...

After you said you were driving the motors?

Um did you do anything else besides that?

Ya, I went on the hoist.

On the hoist?

And what exactly running the hoist um do?

The hoist drops the empties down the slope.

Drop the empties?

Ya. The empty cars, and down the slope at the bottom of that slope is an apartment.

Did you say apartment?

Apartment like a siding.

Oh yes uhha.

And uh you put the empties in, and uh...

(§142) down below are there, come out the loads from the diggers from the face you see, take the empties into him and then when get a trip on the siding that's what I did, pull them up and let them down.

So you would drop down empties, and bring up full ones.

Ya.

Um what is a mule skinner?

He drives a mule, you know drive a mule.

Why do they call him a mule skinner if he just drives a mule?

Well its just you know, a slang word I guess.

'Cause I thought it made reference that they would skin a mule.

No, just a mule driver that's all.

Did you ever um if a mule I guess died you know I guess sorts like you know got old or what, did they skin them?

No, no I don't know where they get the name mule skinner from. Just an old expression, (§158)

Well how often um you mean alot of mules got injured?

Oh ya.

Well how would they get injured?

Well they would get their foot caught in a track and uh, you know they...

Yes

And he'd pull a hoof off er... pull a tendon of something...

Oh yes.
BM. And would they ever scrap their backs against the ceiling?

BW. Oh ( ) ya, ya.

BM. Was that serious?.

BW. Well I seen a mule up in Douglas Mine, this is another mine, and part of the rump was absolutely, just bare meat. They would kick them all the time, and put in a strainer, boy he was mean, oh yes, there's lots of low places for them, but the mule seems to be able to get down better than a horse. It can crouch more than a horse can, and another ( )

BM. Would you say there was cruelty enacted against the mule?

BW. There was yes, very much.

BM. So sometimes the miner or whoever was in charge of the mules got mad at them for being stubborn he wouldlash (?) ( ) him with a braddish board or a whip?

BW. No never used them, just ( ) or whatever was around. Oh yes they were really mean to them. I felt sorry for them when I saw them. I wish the S.P.E.A. would be around at that time. It was horrible.

BM. So, well from what I hear mules you know if a mine, something like a mine cave-in was coming mules were practically the first ones to get out, because they were more important. So if they were more important why did they allow cruelty towards them?

BW. Darned if I know. Well the boss was never there all the time you see, and way down there where they get the coal out.

BM. Ya, but it seems slightly hypocritical. Management.

BW. Well they couldn't be there all the time anyhow.

BM. Yes, what other jobs did you do down in the mines, I'm still at Extension so I guess we'll stick with that for awhile.

BW. Stick with that. Well uh, like I said I started up the motor, and I got down to the hoist, which is ( ) to pull coal, and that's about all you see. I wasn't driving in Douglas and Extension mine just in Dunsmuir Mine.

BM. Um did you do any digging in Extension?

BW. No I didn't I was just on the haulage, ...

BM. Um what was your pay rate at that time?

BW. Uh, that time, we're going back a long way, two seventy-five a day. ($2.75)
BM. $2.75 a day, so you still hadn't even got to an hourly wage yet.

BW. No, not then no.

BM. So was that much a day, was that enough to live on.

BW. Well in them days it was yes. Stuff was pretty cheap to buy a pair of overalls was 75 cents, or less. Oh ya, stuff was cheap in them days so was our wage.

It's just like today...

BM. Ya I guess it's comparable to a certain extent. Um, what about safety regulations, did they have proper safety regulations or....?

BW. Well they did when I went in, but before I was in, it's just like logging(?) or uh, ya were pretty safe, The union saw to that you see.

BM. So the union was coming in about that time then.

BW. Just about that time, right, wasn't anything when I was in Extension, come in, in the late 30's early 40's.

BM. Um what precautions did they take, um to insure safety?

BW. Uh, the miners themselves used to go around and test for gas themselves. Before there used to be a company man that went around and uh....

BM. So the miners formed a committee?

BW. Safety committee to go around...

BM. What kind of committee?

BW. Safety.

BM. Oh Safety, yes....

BM. Yes a little bit of an accent there. Um, so um the safety commission was formed up by the miners themselves um, so I guess this was sorta like the first signs of union involvement.

BW. Oh, yes, more or less...

BM. So um they would go around and check for gas, and make sure the timbers were safe and things like that.

BM. Um, if an accident did happen at the mine, now I'm not saying major or something like that, because its obvious if a major accident happened you know they would react to it in some way, but just a really minor accident like maybe someone would badly sprain, or break a leg, or badly cut themselves, um what facilities were there um for this person could be tended to before he was shipped in the hospital?
BW. I guess if it was serious then, you would uh, ( )

Well most of the time after a while they had
and then just send for a doctor, and then, I don't think they had any
first aid men in them days.

BM. No they didn't have um any qualified person with some form of a
certificate that could um that was trained enough to give you know general
first aid you know like, simple...

BW. No there was none of them in those days.

BM. So you just sorta have to rely on someone to hold the wound or something
like that, to bring them up on a stretcher and wait for the doctor to come.

BW. On the pithead there was a n ambulance outside the mine on the railroad
there was a railroad car with men in, etc. was the ambulance car.
The steamer was running all the time to keep you warm and hot water and
everything. Anybody that was injured seriously, take him out, and bring him
in the ambulance, and go to Ladysmith....

BM. So where was this ambulance?

BW. Outside the mine on uh....

BM. Oh so there was an ambulance always there.

BW. On the railroad track ya.

BM. Oh it was a railroad car ambulance, so each mine that was near
a railroad had a little car, so all the locomotive, well was, how, was there
a locomotive attached to this car.

BW. No, no, (left)(?)

BM. So otherwise there was facilities in this car, when the doctor came
and if it was that could be tended there, the doctor would have the supplies
and fix him right up there, put a cast on right there, or whatnot.

BW. Oh ya, it was a regular ambulance. Everything was there, hot water and
everything.

BM. So it was just like a little clinic, or something.

BW. Hospital. Ya, ( ) ya.

BM. So in a way, they did have the proper facilities, they just did not
have the proper personell to run it.

BW. Right. You're right there.

BM. And um what about gas explosions, how would they react to that?
BM. Did they have a rescue team, people that were qualified for that?

BW. Oh that's one thing they did have, was a rescue team.

BM. Was these just miners that were just qualified more than others or....

BW. It was once a week, they used to go down there and uh, on Rutherford the Coal Mining Rescue Station. Called them driegermen(sp?)

BM. Drieggermen?

BW. Ya.

BM. Well, so these driegermen were they just miners themselves that just happened to be trained or were they, was that their specific job?

BW. No most of them were always miners, and only for a serious explosions only use them in explosions, otherwise very seldom.

BM. Did this qualification um, give them a little more pay?

BW. Well I don't know, I guess they would. I don't know.

BM. And um what about diseases in the mine, like I'm not thinking of you know like or anything but um was there ailments common to miners?

That you remember like maybe colds or rashes?

BW. No, I know right now that there is uh, well you hear miners, all miners having trouble with their lungs and that.

BM. Coal dust.

BW. Coal dust ya. But it doesn't seem to bother you, at that time, it doesn't seem to bother you.

BM. So it, sorta like something like that happened years later.

BW. Ya. ( ) that these things happen you see.

BM. Yes. And what about um, how was, Ok, after the coal was you know, I guess screamed and washed and everything else at the pithead, it was loaded into cars, um where did the coal from Extension go?

BW. It went from Extension to Ladysmith at (Duncan?) sometimes the scows the boats, Colliery that's the boat, you know Coal Collieries, (go all over the world)(?)

BM. Ya, is you called it Coal Colliers?

BW. Colliers, that's what they called it the boat, Colliers, coal boats in those days were Colliers. We call them freighter or ( ) but we called them Colliers in those days.

BM. Ok. Colliers ya, And um were these vessels steam vessels or were they....

BW. All coal burning steam vessels ya.

BM. And the coal went you know all the places around the world.
BW. I think one real big customer was in San Francisco, and that went down there. And to the other parts of the States.

BM. Ya, So you mainly serviced the west coast alot.

BW. Pardon.

BM. You mainly serviced the west coast...

BW. (mumbled) ( ) Some went into to Europe too I guess.

BM. How much um, I mean how many men would you say worked at this particular mine a 1,000 (thousand) or?... a couple of hundred?

BW. Oh no, I'd say three hundred (300) anyways.

BM. So was that a large operation or uh...

BW. Pretty big for around here ya.

BM. And um, what methods of transportation would y you use, um would you walk to work or take a bicycle or...

BW. Oh in Extension mostly walked, cause there's just around (?) little village, close enough to walk. And another bunch, (half of us?) miners from Ladysmith. (the company?) stealing our train that come up from Ladysmith at every shift.

BM. So they had a train for them.

BM. Um what about private um, um, transportation, what would you use? Did anyone have cars?

BW. Well there wasn’t many cars in them days, we called them jittneys in them days. ( ) somebody in Nanaimo got a bus' pick him up and then uh, in South Wellington and you would ( ) the crew's ( ) And like I say the company train would bring them up from Ladysmith .

BM. So um you would um if you wanted to come up to Nanaimo a bus would make some kind of weekly regular trip.

BW. Most people after lunch (or month)(?) go to town uh, most of them would have their own cars you see. There wouldn’t be nothing left(?) ( ) no bus in them days.

BM. So there was no service either by train, or by car that would take you from Extension to Nanaimo for you know shop or something like that.
BW. Well no, kids mostly had their own car, the old Model T you see.

BM. So you basically didn't go to Nanaimo unless there was an absolute necessity to do so.

BW. (, )(#376)go up there( )(#377)

BM. Wasn't there um, groceries facility like I guess the closest would be a General Store, in Extension, did they sell produce and you know....

BW. Ya we had a General Store they had everything there. Still there in fact.

BM. Oh ya there is one, was there more than one?

BW. There is another little one, but not as big as the big one.

BM. So there was just sorta like two...

BW. There was uh, two stores there.

BM. So that's all there was ot supply the people so um, so the people never used that all the time, just for emergency.

BW. Oh yes they used it all the time, while I was there, used.

BM. So they basically depended on those two stores to meet their needs then,'

BW. Well it's only seven(7) miles from here you see to Extension,

BM. Did the people have the old horse and carriage still running around.

BM. No, not at that time no, they had all gone by that time, 'the odd one thats all.

BM. So they basically sorta um, faded out between the conversion of uh, motor cars from horses.

BW. The car was just getting popular at that time you know.

BM. What about entertainment in Extension?

BW. Oh....There just wasn't any, people had their house parties that time.

BM. Did you ever have a town hall, you know so that activities could take place?

BW. there was nothing going on in them days (or entertainment)(?) there was church to go to that's all.

BM. So was the church, an important community input. I mean not politically, but did they have some kind, some kind of a hold over the community?, Like everybody went to church (the church had an influence)(?)(#422)

BW. No, not at that time.

BM. So it had absolutely no influence, other than the subject religious services.
BW. More of a Sunday School than anything you know.

BM. So they didn't have anything like they didn't want the community doing
a certain thing, they would not have that influence to change...

BW. No, not up there no.

BM. So how many churches were there?

BW. Just that one.

BM. Just one.

BM. What denomination was it?

BW. Uh, I don't think I know.

BM. Was it Catholic?

BW. ( ) there was two. But ( ) in the same church.

BM. Catholic and must be United I guess.

BM. And um, what would you say, in the mines, in what would you say would be
preferred, be the most preferrable job to have? I mean no job would be easy
but what would be easy would be the job that, that would seem to be the
safest or something like that?

BW. Well uh, on the winch I guess, the hoist. Called them winches in them days.

BM. Um, what would you say would be the job that someone would be really
reluctant to take, want would be the most dangerous or most daring job?

BW. Oh... the most ( ) I'd say driving.

Driving the mule,

BM. Driving the mule.

BW. ( ) ya, ( )

(453)

BM. You'd get what?

BW. (Tancancerous) ( ) ya, ( )

(453)

BM. You mean the mule would get cancancerous?(sp?)

BW. Uh, kicking up and ....

BM. No I mean the expression you used.

BW. Cantanquerous.

BM. Cantanquerous?

BW. Ya, knee(?)( )

BM. I've never heard that before.

BW. really? Jes, well that means a (nasty old man) (?)( )

BM. Ya, clustry and things like that.

BM. When the union started to come in, did you have a , were you around when
they started to come in?

BW. Oh ya.

BM. And were you uh....

BW. I was with them uh, I didn't get any (meetings)!

when they was established I went with them to the meetings.

BM. I don't mean you were involved with them, in organizing but I mean

uh (understandable) were you in favour of supporting such a thing?

BW. At that time yes, you had to be, to (get things any better)

BM. Um did you have, was it an absolute necessity as you as a worker

have to support this or was it because you knew the conditions were bad, and

that it, was....

BW. You went in and you joined them, and something had to be done, but uh'
gaining away from you. Its a railroad (bought) mine you see.

BM. And did you ever have a union card?

BW. Oh ya, you had to have a union to work.

BM. So at this particular time, (understandable) even though there was a union starting

up, it was not recognized by management yet was it?

BW. No, it took a long time.

BM. And being not recognized by management, what happened if management found

out that you had a union card, or something like that, would they fire you?

BW. Well they couldn't because if they did, all the workers would go out on

strike .

BM. So they had enough power then that...

BW. (not understandable) 

BM. So they didn't have the authority then, to uh, sit there and say we don't

want you to organize.

BW. (Well they tried not to stop at mine)(?!)
BM. Uh ha.

BW. (I can remember the strike years ago, before I worked there)(?)

(BM) ()

BM. Ok. Um so you wouldn't remember about the strike of um 1912 cause you weren't here?

BW. No.

BM. Um, what about home living conditions, um what kind of conditions did you have to put up with?

BW. Well you had no electricity, is that on?

BM. Yes.

BW. Theres no electricity. Just bare floors, now I'm only talking about my family you know.

BM. Well yes, well that would probably be ( ) (#524)

BW. Just wells for water.

BM. So you had no hot and cold running water and what about toilets, was then in an septic tank or in the old out house?

BW. The old outhouse, is what we had?

BM. So um, you know you had some, you didn't really have that many um you know facilities of that sort.

BW. There was never really any problem(?) we did have in Extension, we did have ( ) we had a washhouse for the miners.

BM. That was uh, that was uh, a good move, they didn't have that in Nanaimo.

BW. No they didn't.

BM. Um, so um, what about other things, like was there, did your Mother ever find that there was uh, shortage of a certain staple?

BW. No, nnnnoo, not in that case no.

BM. You didn't have any shortages of staples, what about luxuries, did luxuries ever find their way to your home?

BW. No.

BM. So um, the wages that they were paid only allowed for um, substitutes of life.

BW. Bare necessities, ya.

BM. So you'd just be able to um you know live comfortably or whatever.

BW. Oh you got along (alright)(?), had to do with what you had you know.

BM. Uh ha.

BW. We didn't have these things that we've got today, and we didn't miss them.
BM. Because you didn't have them.

BM. Well did your um, did you have a garden things like that?

BW. Oh ya everybody had a garden. I used to remember, going to school

I used to go and collect, gathering uh, ( )

horse manure for the garden, in a wheel barrel.

BM. Did people charge you for that or did...

BW. Oh no, it was free, you know (the cow roamed in free land) (?)

BM. So it more that you were doing them a favour getting rid of it for them.

BW. I would always help them (pull their cow manure side of the road, and ( ) them like that.) (#548)

Just keep drinking (you out of mischief ....) (#549)

BM. What about um general diseases like um you know, do remember any epidemics going around at that particular time, that caused hardships. I guess maybe the flu?

BW. No more than there is now, flu or measles. Nothing outstanding in my time.

BM. So you never really had anything. What about um, housing was there good available housing for the, for the miner's family?

BW. Ya there were.

BM. There was Uh ha.

BM. And were families large then?

BW. (not clear, voices overlapping)

BM. So they would be about 5 or more kids?

BW. 5 or 6, 7.

BM. 5 or more, yes.

BM. Wha about education, did the Extension offer a good education, for the children?

BW. Just the ordinary school.

BM. Uh ha, so was there a chance for the student to go on to high school, or was grade 8 and 9 sorta...

BW. Uh they would have to come to Nanaimo High School.

BM. So you'd have to be um make a little more money to enable your children to get a better education.

BW. Oh yes.
BW. I myself, only went to grade six, so, that was it.

BM. Um, did your father ever want you to work in the mines, or did he want you to do something else?

BW. No, just work.

BM. So it didn't really matter as long as you were working.

BM. So mining was the only occupation that would probably be available other than farming.

BW. In them days, there were young fellows like myself, and when you got out to ( ) you go in the coal mines or go in the logging camp. And going in the coal mine in the summer time, uh no winter, they quit uh, and the spring you go in the woods, and summer, switch around.

BM. So you, you were working in both logging and coal...

BW. No, no I stayed in, but that's what they did years ago.

BM. Oh, so, I see, yes, yes.

BM. So I mean in the summer time there's less demand for coal, the miner's would have to find secondary occupations to support themselves.

BM. Well, a lot of them worked in the logging camps. Ya, going in the logging camps. And when winter come they go back in the coal mines again.

There were always jobs in them days for fellows.

BM. What about health facilities for um, for the families, like was there a town doctor?

BW. Well there was a doctor in Extension. ( )

BM. Hmm, so there was a town doctor. Was there only one doctor?

BW. Only one.

BM. Just the one doctor, he looked, he looked after miners' ailments of people and things like that.

BM. He would come down to the ambulance I was telling you about on the railroad tracks.

BM. Oh so that was...

BW. (mumbled)( )

BM. Even the regular clinics like you know for doctors you know, examining sick children and women and things like that.

BW. Well, the miners would pay, that would come off a miner's cheque.

BM. So they did not have um a medical plan that was paid by the company, so any medical expenses paid by the families themselves.
BM. Oh ya. There was nothing like that then.

BW. And then there would have been no compensation too.

BM. No compensation then, no.

BM. So they knew, the miners lost all the way around then.

BW. I'll tell you we were not sick a day, because you would lose that pay.

BU. No compensation for anything.

BM. Well if they were off sick or, injured themselves, that calls them to be off the job, would they be, would they have that threat of losing their job.

BW. Well not, if you were injured or sick no, no.

BM. So they would just lose the pay, but they would have a guarantee when they came, when they were able enough to come back and get the job done.

BM. Well at least thats not half as bad as it used to be.

BW. Well no, no.

BM. If you were sick you lost...

BM. Uh was there any social divisions in Extension, like was there some people that seemed to be "la de da" and up and down and basically the town snob, or was everyone just working people.

BW. No, no, just the mine boss thats all.

BM. Just working people.

BW. Oh none of us snobbery, thats just uh... there was no snobbery or anything like that.

BM. What about Nanaimo? Did they have any social divisions in Nanaimo that you can think of, or was there a little, little isolated community or um....

BW. Largely like the um oh what the.

BM. But you never really had anything that sorta represented themselves as some kind of aristocracy, it was just some people had a little more money and they just could afford a little more something like that.

BW. Oh no, Oh there was that.

BM. So there was no social divisions?

BW. No.

BM. Uh ha, What about the political aspects, in the community. Was politics politics play an important event? Like when election time came around.

BW. Well not a great amount(?)

No more than now I don't think.
BM. So, so when an election happened, um, didn't the candidate, did the candidate come to the community give his speech to the community, would have a little band around and things like that, and he would talk to people, and they would stand around and listen and the......

BW. Not that I know of.

BM. No, so what about ......

BW. They would rent a hall or something you know, they didn't go in for a (love-a-loops)?( or anything like that.

BM. So, it wasn't really that important then. What about MLA, was he an important figure in your community, or respected or hated?

BW. Well, I don't remember much about that, I didn't bother too much about it.

BM. Uh hmmm.

BW. Oh I have a lot of respect for them and that.

BM. So it didn't really have any impact on the community then.

BW. No, no. Not a great amount.

BM. Um, what about, what do you remember about um, um, the depression.

When it finally hit.

BW. Well, I was out of work for 7 years, I know that. I got the odd job here and there, so, ...

BM. In your mind did it hit this area really bad?

BW. It was the same all over the place. All over the country.

BM. So you stayed in the area even though there was a lack of jobs?

BW. Well, there wasn't any point going anywhere else, cause you couldn't get them.

BM. Um, were there, were there were there, many layoffs were due to this um, you know depression, became a less demand for coal, and, the coal market dropped, so were men just plainly layed off? Or did they organize uh, less hours for the men to stay on?

BW. (in them days) I652 in them days. Just layed them off and that was it.

BM. So um, what about the workers that stayed on, did they take reductions in pay?

BW. I don't think so no.

BM. So they just kept the same.

BW. They just worked less days. They only worked about...
BM. That's what I meant, you know, they would work less hours, ....

BW. Ya, they would have to be because there was no orders coming for coal, you see.

BM. Ya, Uh hum. So how, how did the depression affect the ( home like?). You know how did families make ends meet.

BW. Well it was tough. We went out fishing, and digging clams, and ( ).

BM. Interruptions

BM. Yes we were talking about family making ends meet, so they would dig clams, go fishing, and, so they would, so they would go out and gather their food, almost practically, because they couldn't afford to buy it.

BW. Well, that's about the way it was in those days.

BM. And like I say, everyone had a garden, ( ).

BM. So there was a lot of home canning and things like that.

BW. Canned salmon you know, and everything.

BM. Um, what about the um, do you remember anything about the Chinese Community.

BW. Oh yes, I remember it well.

BM. Did they ever work in the mine?

BW. Not in my time, they worked at the Pithead.

BM. They worked in the Pithead, Uh ha.

BW. On the picking table.

BM. Yes, yes, and stoking the boilers.

BW. Firing the boilers.

BM. You call it firing the boilers.

BW. Well stoking the boilers is the same thing.

BM. Um so, that basically was their job. Was there ever uh, some kind of a Chinatown in Extension or...

BW. Ya, there was ( a big one ) ( ? ), in Extension. And it burnt down just like it did in Nanaimo.

BM. Oh when did it burn down?

BW. Oh...

BM. Would it have been in the 30's or something?

BW. Ya, it would be in the 30's, ya, after I left Nanaimo and left Extension(?)( )
BN. So not too many people know about it, the Chinatown being in Extension.

BW. Well (they probably ( ) there)(?)( )

BN. So, so, so it, had several streets something in Chinatown or...

BW. No, it was just like one street.

BN. One street. But it had maybe about a good row of houses on it I guess.

BW. Ya, it had a row of houses on each side.

BN. Uh hum.

BW. Well yes, it was quite a Chinese Community up there. Also a Japanese community. They worked up there lumber mill.

BN. Oh the Japanese? Oh yes, So they worked with lumber.

BW. Ya, they didn't work around the mine at all, Japanese, not up in this place anyways.

BN. So there was a Japanese Community.

BW. Oh ya.

BN. Was there ever a black community there?

BW. There was years ago I think, before we came here.

BN. Really?

BW. They worked in the mines.

BN. Oh yes, And um, was there any other ethnic minorities, like Italians, Finns...

BW. Oh yes there was Italians, Yugoslavs, and oh English, Scotch and Irish, Welsh.

BN. Yes. Did they have many bars in Extension?

BW. There was only one. The (Kenmore)(?)( ) Hotel.

BN. Was there (Kenmore?) Hotel. Was that the only Hotel in Extension?

BW. That was the only one yes.

BN. Just one Hotel. Um, did you want uh sorta like um, you know, make some "hoop wow" whatever like that you know, would you go to Nanaimo and do some bar hopping or something like that?

BW. Well, I was too young to do that.

BN. Oh yes, Oh you would have been here when they had prohibition.

BW. It just come in, when we come from country.

BN. So um how did people get around prohibition, do you remember.

BW.
BW. We made home brew (one night) (?)

BM. Uh hmmm.

BW. ( ) when you'd make your own.

BM. So aloot of people would bootleg.

BW. Ya.

BM. Ummm. Em did you ever remember anything about the Red Light District on Fraser St. in Nanaimo?

BW. Well, I of some, I know about it, ya.

BM. What do you remember about the rumours?

BW. Well it's just the big shots, business guys used to go there more than any other people you know.

BM. So it was never really tended by the workers it was always these um, respectable people.

BW. Ya, right, ya.

BM. So what would say um, was the um social attitude towards this section of town? Do you remember was it someone ever trying to close the place down or was it just something just left...

BW. (not understandable) 9721

BW. It was just left, you know ( ) 9724

BM. So that so that,

BW. Well we didn't like it I guess we all ( ) 999

BM. So it just became an aspect of life.

BW. That's the way it was ya.

BM. So um, would you say that there was uh crime rate that was high in Nanaimo or the area or...

BW. I didn't notice that to tell you the truth. Not like it is now.

BM. So um, it wasn't, it wasn't anything other than more your little pranks or something like that.

BW. That's all, there was nothing....( ) 10

BM. No, well that's pretty good, um getting back to mining ( ) 11 was the Extension mine the only mine you worked in or did you go to another mine to work?

BW. No in 1937 I worked in the Douglas mine up on the Nanaimo Lake s Road, there's a ( ) 13 in there. If your counting that, then I went up there, I started there about a month after...
A month after that accident.

Was it....

It went into the old Extension Mine you see up north. (to mumbled to understand)

So uh, you worked in the Beban Mine um, how long did you work there?

Oh, I guess about 5 years I guess.

So this Beban Mine, up around Beban Park?

No.

Oh this is (mumbled) Duben?

Beban ya.

No, is it Beban with a "B" or Duben(?)?

"B, B, N"

Oh so Beban

Same name as Beban Park

Yes, its just that there two families in this area Beban and a Deban(?)

So its Beban.

Beban ya.

So where abouts was this Beban Mine?

Up around old Nanaimo Lakes Road.

Oh yes.

See there, part of the mountain there.

Oh yes.

Its farther back. (mumbled)

So its just in that area, so it was actually in the Extension area.

Just further back.

A little fruther back though.

Run into ( ) mines, so thats the way it goes.

So what was your job in the Beban Mine?

I was rope riding.

Thats where you know, when you let a trip down, you're rope riding, you ride your last car and you, carry a ( ) and two wires going down the slope and when you stop you just get up and do all there is to .......

(rest mumbled)
BM. So you would um give signals and all that, you would hoist the cars up and down and back again.

BW. You had to stop in different places.

BM. Oh cause there were different levels ...

BW. Different Levels? no this was a slope.

BM. So you would start at the bottom or something like that, and if this is the hoist thing you would take a car or whatever, until, you got, by the time you got to the top how many cars would have on?

BW. Uh, rope riding that is on the main rope in bringing the cars out to the surface. Drivers down below collect these cars and put them....

BM. Oh.... so, so the mule drivers the drivers are down and they collect the cars from those levels, and then they come to the main shaft area, where they are collected by the um... what was it again?, the winch person...

BW. Well I'm the rope rider, on the main rope.

BM. So, so the rope (uh, the so the after the cars collected around the shaft, the rope rider-you, would collect these cars in a larger group and take it to the surface.

BW. Ya, take it to the pithead , be dumped , there would always be a track for empties waiting to go down again.

BM. So when you come up, you would bring up what was it, 74 cars?

BW. Oh in this case uh, that was in Extension.

BM. 11 cars in Extension.

BW. No, um, that was a level...

BM. Oh ya.

BW. That was 70 cars you'd bring out.

BM. Oh yes, yes, but this was that you were...

BW. (mumbled) ?

BM. #75, couldn't have any more than 6.

BM. Oh so you would bring up 6 cars, that by the time you got up there you would be able to bring 6 empties down.

BW. Ya, ya.

BM. So you were constantly bringing up full ones and taking empties down.
BW. Oh ya, that was our work just like uh......

BM. That would continue all day long, would that get monotonous?

BW. Well it did, but that was your job.

BW. (mumbled)

BM. I also remember out in Extension once I think that it was about um not 37, maybe 38 or so, maybe even 39 that they had a strike out there, it was called the Bread Strike, now the Boloni Strike, that was it, the Boloni Strike, do you remember that.

BW. No, never had a strike while I was there.

BM. I think it was about 39.

BW. I was before that. There was no mining strike.

BM. Cause I was talking to a miner who lives out in Extension, and he said about just after the second World War started, that they had a Boloni Strike to ask for more um, Boloni, you know, something more to eat.

BW. No, no.

BM. You don't remember that.

BW. Well you say about 39 you say?

BM. About that.

BW. The mine wasn't running then.

BM. It wasn't?

BW. No it was closed down.

BM. Well would that be out in South Wellington maybe? maybe?

BW. There was no strikes out there during that time. Not that I remember.

BM. So when did you finally....

BW. That might have been South Wellington.

BM. Uh mm, I think if it was close to Extension, then alot of people went to South Wellington and worked in the No.90,

Um how, when did you finish working in the mines?

BW. In 1929, they closed it down.

BM. Well you said you went to Beban in 37.

BW. Well when it closed down we moved to Nanaimo.

BM. Oh ya.
BW. Mumbles, talks 'bout closing the mines(?)

BW. And in the mean times I been working in the logging camps.

EM. So, so when was the, what year did you finally finish working in the mines period.

BW. Had to be during the War, the second war.

EM. Oh did you go into the War yourself...

BW. No.

EM. They didn't let miners go in.

BW. No we were frozen(?)

EM. Yes.

BW. I would have liked to go in, but they wouldn't let me go you see, ( )

EM. Yes, you know, men supplying fuel, need it.

BW. Ya right. 1944 was the last time I was in a coal mine. In fact thats when the mine closed, and then I worked for a logging( camp in 1945. That's when I started work in the logging camp.

EM. Uh ha, so then after that you worked in the logging camps after that.

BW. Ya.

EM. Would you remember any particular incidents, stories, conjecture, or whatever that sticks in your mind. You know some funny tale, or long tall story?

BW. Not really.

EM. Uh ha.

BW. Not really if you're sitting around...(?) ( ) would have been the best bet...

EM. Well don't remember any sorta like rumours that some, was there some kind of superstition about down in the mine, like um, was it superstitious that women were not allowed to go down in the mine.

BW. Not that I know. You never saw them in anyway.

Any women that went down the mine, was just uh visiting, you know ....

EM. Um do they have any superstitions like you weren't suppose to do something a certain way, in the mine, like you know like you know you would have something like if you spill the salt you would throw the salt over your shoulder.

BW. No, not like that, but you weren't allowed to smoke in the mine. Because of the gas of course.
BM. Yes.

BM. But there wasn't any particular superstitious acts that you did or something like that.

BW. There might have been before my time, but uh....

BM. Some old thing you know that kind of thing that dissappears.

BW. Ya, .......

BM. So um, you can't really think of anything else then.

BW. Well I ( ) in Extension when I was young when I just started work, I would be sitting at the winch, I was running winch at this time, and everything was quite, you know, I only see my rope rider for an hour or so, I would be sitting (at the switch)(?)( ) all by myself. And the timber cracking, and cracking all the time you know, I'd sit back with my feet up on the winch, and just sit there( and close my eyes for awhile), and the rats would start crawling on my feet.

BM. So....

BW. I liked that because it was company. Oh that another thing talking about superstitions , always say, if you see rats run out the mine there's going to be an accident or an flood, carrying(?)( ) or a flood. But never happend to me.

BM. So, so there was a superstition that if a rat ...

BW. Lotsa rats.

BM. .......were leaving the mine that something was going to happen.

BW. That's just an old superstition.

BM. Uh huh.

BW. How true it was I don't know.

BM. I think its pretty reasonable, like,....

BW. They might have known something else that we didn't know.

BM. Uh ha, and sometimes you would just be quite and just lye there and then the rats would crawling around your feet, So was there alot of rats in the mines?

BW. Oh there was ya, ya.

They would go down on the (mules) 9#194, with the hay and the wheat or whatever on the mules and horses down the mine would be in the day(?)

and thats how they got down there.

BM. Was it, so you kept the mules in little stables in the mines then?
BW. Well in uh, NO.1 you had shafts, it was a big mine it went under the
water, they kept them down there all the time.
But in Extension they come out everyday.

BM. Ya. Um, what about washroom facilities in the mine if a miner um I mean
its obvious that sometime during the day, one has to go, um what facilities
did you have down the mine.

BW. Um you don't have any, they don't have anything like that. Not

BM. So um, so the miners just had to find someplace else.

BW. Mumbled( )

BM. Go into an old workroom or something.

BW. Ya, ( ) of the gas if you went to far in.

What you call Black Damp, and there was no air you see.

BM. Oh, so a Black Damp, is when there's no air, but just all pure gas.

BW. Well, dead air in other words.

BM. And that's what a black damp is.

BM. Well were almost out of tape and is there anything else you would like to
say before we finish off.

BW. Well not worth typing.

BM. Well I thankyou for this interview, and I guess we'll sign off now.

BW. Albert Steel could tell you more than I did, it was, he started earlier
than I did, he was in during the strike when the strike was started.

BM. It seems to me Albert Steel is dead.

BW. Mumbles( )

BM. O.K. thankyou very much.

BW. Your welcome, I'll see you again eh.

END

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