We are meeting here today at Ruth Tickle's house on Thursday, October 18, 1984, to talk with Bill Cottle, Nels Dean, and Jock Gilmour about various important things to do with coal mines.

LB: First of all, I have a list of things here that have come up in my research that I want to ask you about and then I want to talk about the 1887 explosion. So, first of all, what I would be interested in talking about is, everybody has heard theories about - everybody has heard stories about the 1887 explosion and what caused it. Do you, what have you always thought about that explosion Jock?

JG: Was that in Number one mine?

LB: Yes, in Number one, where 148 people died.

BC: Down the diagonal slope.

LB: Yes.

JG: The white diggers - the white miners blamed the Chinese fellows.

LB: Yes.

JG: They used open lights in those days. You know how risky it is with those.

ND: Well, I'll tell you what I think, one of the rules and regulations is that they are supposed to have sufficient air going in the mine to dilute and render harmless the gases to the extent that there can't be an explosion.

LB: Yes.

ND: So I would say that it was lack of ventilation that, I would blame the company in the first place - what lit it up I don't know, but I think the company didn't have sufficient air in there to dilute and render the gas harmless.

LB: What was the talk around the community about it?

JB: Well, I have heard miners say, the open light, I have heard them say, they figured that was what happened. I have heard miners say they have gone into their place where gas is and they just light it just to get rid of the gas.

LB: Yes.

JG: As far as I am concerned, this was stupid, but they did it.

LB: You never saw that done in later years?

JG: No, my dad told me about this.

BC: It was done before I started. There were actually men that were to do that.

LB: One person in one tape, and it is in the book, said that they would light little pockets of gas,

JG: Yes.

LB: .. and it would go zip, zip, zip.

JG: Yes, that's right.

LB: So that was, they went on doing that, but you are talking about more gas than that?

JG: Well, no. If they lit a pocket and it accumulated over a certain period of time, say overnight, that could cause the explosion.

LB: Yes. But you are saying that people deliberately burned off gas in their stalls.

JG: Yes.

BC: Those were the shotgun, that's where they got their name.

LB: Yes. Didn't they check the shot and then light it?

BC: No, these guys would go around, you see, that was their job, to light gas. Did they have safety lamps then?

JG: No, they had the open light, the only safety lamp was the fire boss.

BC: Yes.

JG: Now, I was in Cassidy when this fellow, Davey Moores, he was the Fire Boss. So, the inspector came around and Davey had fired a shot in this place. The inspector asked him if he had found any gas in there, because he had gone in just ahead of him. "Oh," he said, "just a wee pickle, no muckle." So the inspector said to the boss, "what did he say?" "Oh," he said, "he meant just a little bit, not very much." He said, "you better take him off that job."

LB: What had you heard about it Bill? About the 1887 explosion.
Well, that's with the white men in town. We didn't have a union then. There was a picture of them all in Number one there protesting about the Chinese.

Yes, they really should have got them out.

Oh, was there?

Yes, so they, Dunsmuir and....

Robbins?

.. the other one..

But they didn't own that mine.

No,

Oh, you are talking about the Chinese.

Yes. They came to an agreement to take the Chinese out, but Dunsmuir had started Cumberland, so he sent the chinamen up there. These people they didn't have a commune. That was kind of a thorn in their sides, you know.

Now.

I think Dunsmuir slipped one over on them.

How did Dunsmuir get away with it up in Cumberland?

Well...

Well, there was an explosion up there too, and they tried to blame it on the Chinese.

But they kept the Chinese in there until 1922.

Yes, but finally they had to take them out.

They passed this law, that they had to have a certificate - miners.

Oh.

The miners pressed for it. They thought for sure that the Chinamen wouldn't pass. At the change of shifts, the Fire Boss said that there would be Chinamen reading from the pages - sitting around, and they would have one Chinamen up asking them questions. "What would you do when you first go into your place?"

"Seems there is hardly any coal left, let's go!"

The Chinamen turns around, this Chinamen says, "First I look see, some son-of-a-bitch he stealing my tools, taking my powder." And that was against the law, leaving powder..

"In the mine.

You were supposed to pack it back out again.

The idea of the miner's certificate, you see, is that the Chinamen couldn't talk English, understand English, well they wouldn't pass.

Yes.

You, but John..

Them in there would say, no, no, no, not that John, examine your place. All these other Chinamen would listen and they were getting... when it came to the Chinamen, they nearly all passed.

So they did listen and get the right answers.

Yes, they got the right answers.

So that is what you think happened up in Cumberland?

That is what happened in Cumberland.

There is also a story that, someone told me this very early on, when I was first starting to work on the coal mines, that some man, and they named the name, and I can't remember the name, sat down for his supper cause it happened at five to six in the evening, sat down to have his supper and lit up his pipe, and that what caused the explosion. Did you ever hear that story?

No.

No, I think it was just the company's fault and the naked lights.

Yes.
LB: Well, that is what everybody has said, now when I went down to the Archives last week, I got out the inquest. They call it the inquisition, which is an awful name, and it is amazing how different that is. They have all sorts of coal miner's testifying and what happened on the diagonal slope - first of all the stalls, the roofs of the stalls were higher than the roof of the slope. There had been a couple of stalls where there had been a bit of gas, not much, but a bit. Now, the other thing they did was, this slope, the roof was constant, or the floor was constant but the roof was following the coal and it was uneven.

INTERUPTION
Okay, so the roof varied from eight to thirteen feet but the timbers were seven and one half feet high, so they were timbering seven and one half feet, and where the roof was higher, they were filling it with timbers and with what they called dross, which I assume is coal dust. Did you ever use that term, dross?

BC: Yes.

JG: Yes.

LB: Okay, is dross, coal dust?

BC: Yes, or very small coal.

LB: Okay, at this point, very few people were aware that coal dust was explosive. A few people at the inquest had read about it a bit. A couple of the miners and one of the superintendents had read about it, but most of them weren't aware that coal dust, when it was scared up in the air,...

BC: Probably the worst kind.

LB: Yes. So, you have this incredible thing, of this roof basically loaded with coal dust, but that dust would come down everytime a shot was fired, the impact would shake a bit of the dust down, so not only was there dust in the air and on the sides and the rib, but there were also spaces now up above the timbers for the gas to collect.

ND: Yes.

LB: Okay, down at the face they were, there was one crew that was advancing the face and whenever they needed a cross cut they stopped advancing the face and did a cross cut. They had been working on the cross cut and they were not supposed to work on the face when they were working on the cross cut, because presumably, if it was time for a cross cut, then the ventilation wasn't cleaning up the face very well.

JG: It seems that there would be level here, as soon as you get within one hundred feet they would start the cross cut. Every hundred feet, so in eleven, you would have three places - one going down, one going up and one stayed at the gate. By the time this would be up on the peak, there would be more than one hundred feet there.

Then of course, when they passed one here and this is through, they would block this one off, so the air got to go in. Always like that, you see.

LB: Oh, I see.

BC: For circulation

JG: ... It when they get it past where there is a hole, then they use a head here again, and the air comes in everytime and it goes around the whole mine like that.

LB: Yes. So anyway, they were working on this cross cut. Now, their was one, the day shift had been working on the cross cut and then the night shift, or the afternoon shift came on - they came on at two - and worked from two till ten. There was one younger man on the crew and he, for some reason which no one can explain, drilled a hole in the face while they were still working on the cross cut. This is where I need you to explain some things to me. He fired the hole twice, he put a shot in it and fired it and then he went in and re-tamped it?

BC: Tamped the shot, yes.

JG: Re-tamped it.
LB: But he hadn't drilled before hand, it said he should have drilled before hand?
ND: No, what he should have done, if the shot didn't properly go off, he should have drilled another hole two feet along side of it, further over.
LB: Okay. When the inspector, when they got down the mine after the explosion, the inspector checked this hole, it was as big as a man's fist.
ND: That's a mis-shot.
LB: That is a mis-shot eh?
ND: Yes.
LB: Okay, so basically what has happened is that the explosion has gone off inside the face instead of pushing the coal out?
ND: Right.
LB: Yes, okay. So, and he said that he could, he found freshly tamped powder down in the hole, which made him believe that the fellow had fired it a second time.
JG: Maybe he was trying to do, what happens -- you drill a hole here like this and it don't go, you are supposed to come over here two feet, but you are supposed to be on the same angle, you see. If it is at the wrong angle, like that, too thick at the back, there is only one place where it can come out the front.
LB: Ah! That's great, because that is what they said, that it was at the wrong angle. Okay, I have to ask you about that too in a minute. They used the same hole and it was at a wrong angle, and when it shot, it sent a feeder, they thought a feeder.
JG: Well, you see, it goes out this way instead of...
LB: Which... because of the angle of the shot, it seems to me they said "bounced off the rib further up and ignited coal dust." Now I should step back, they talk about the ventilation not being good enough. In this case, the ventilation was too good. The ventilation was so strong that it was blowing the men's lights out, and also making the coal dust very, very dry. Someone had just sort of dreamed up the idea, just a few weeks before, that they should start wetting the coal dust, but they had done it once and then they hadn't quite gotten around to doing it again, but I was really interested in them saying that the ventilation was too good, it was creating a wind and was drying out the coal dust and blowing it up in the air..
JG: A dust explosion is worse than the powder.
LB: So, this feeder comes out, ignites the coal dust and for some peculiar reason someone speeded up the fan just at that moment. That was something that they didn't pursue in this. One man in the fan house said, "someone came along and ordered the fan to be speeded up." Just after that the explosion occurred, so that there was even more air, and then here are these stalls all along with bits of gas up in the roof higher than the slope. That is what caused this horrible explosion which traavelled through the whole mine. The thing that, they keep debating about is the difference between a blowout and a feeder.
JG: Well you see, that shot, you have a shot here and a shot, the powder is in here, so you, the law calls for .. two feet away.
LB: Yes.
JG: Well, if you get that on the wrong angle, instead of being straight as that, it would go like that.
LB: At an angle.
JG: Well, it can't come that way, the way it should come, so it blows, and there could be flames come up.
LB: Is that a blowout? Is that what you would call a blowout?
JG: A blown out shot.
LB: A blown out shot. Okay, do you and Nels agree?
BC: Yes.
ND: Yes.

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LB: Okay, what is a feeder then?
JG: I don't understand the feeder.
ND: A feeder?
LB: A feeder. Now, some of the men got up to testify and they said that they had never seen a blowout in North America, you see lots of them in Britain, but I have never seen a blowout in North America. The next guy would get up and say, "No, that was a blowout shot."
JG: The point is this - if you were in there, you wouldn't see anything.
ND: You would know
BC: He's never worked in Granby.
LB: Of course, that was much later though. But you call these blowout shots?
JG: Blown out shot, I would say, yes.
BC: When they were sinking Number one, Robbins was the superintendent and the men complained about gas and Robbins wouldn't believe them, so he went down and stayed there for a period and he got a dose of gas which put him in bed for three days.
LB: This is when they were sinking Number on.
BC: Yes. So, they weren't so very far in then, when they had that explosion. It wrecked the fan shaft, it wrecked the fan, so it must have been pretty well loaded down there.
LB: Okay, he said, "we have lit feeders occasionally in the coal with out lamps. Sometimes they are lit by the flame of the shots. We have then to put them out to prevent them from setting fire to the coal." So I assume feeders, may be these small pockets of gas.
JG: In a gassy place, that explosion up at Greelhorne, the goldmine.
BC: You never hear of explosions in a gold mine.
JG: But what happened there, there were diamond drilling and they drilled down into gas somewhere. When we went in there, after the quarter of the month, there was a machine that was broken down; there was a ninety year old man waiting to see when the machine was going to be ready. Gas had come from that drill hole and I know, when we passed there, I could hear it whistling coming out.
NO: Oh yes.
JG: And what happened, with the electric motor..
ND: Right.
JG: Bingo. There was only three of them, otherwise there was that, if that machine hadn't been broken, there would have been nine more. But that is what caused that explosion. Now I never saw it, but I have heard them talk about it, it was before my time, they were using naked lights as you say in the mine, there was a man called shot lighter and he would go in the mine before the miners and he would light the gas. That was his job.
LB: Well, that is interesting. Now, they didn't have shot lighters until, as a result of this, they started having shot lighters. That is when they started, that was one of the recommendations.
JG: When I started in the mine, I heard them talking about shot lighters.
LB: But you didn't have them when you were working?
JG: No. We had Fire Bosses by that time. The Fire Boss was supposed to go in, the first thing he is supposed to do is examine.
LB: They talk about a fireman in here doing that. - Going in every morning and checking every place.
BC: That would be the shot lighter.
JG: That would be a shot lighter.
LB: Well, they call him the fireman. The fireman, as they call them in here, were not lighting peoples shots, they were only checking for gas, and they had a safety lamp, but they were only checking for gas. Just let me read you.. there is a man in this thing - a Mr. William Griffith - he is getting more and more intriguing because he is on Serial William's tape - do you know Dr. Williams?

ND: Serial Williams, yes.

LB: Well Serial Williams, used to spend his summers on Gabriola Island with a family of farmers over there - the Griffiths. They got to be so he called them Grandma and Grandpa, because they were so close to him. Just recently, Serial went and looked at this inquest and saw William Griffith signature in it - he recognized the writing. It is this William Griffith, he was on the shift before the explosion and he was working down at the face, so they really had a lot of questions to ask him, but he never told Serial that he was a miner, so obviously it was a very traumatic thing for him. He must have left the mines and never wanted to talk about it again. But just this morning I was reading about an accident in the East Wellington mine two years after this, and there is a William Griffith injured in an explosion there, and I wondered if he is working for the East Wellington Coal Company, if maybe the Vancouver Coal Company had fired him or if he had wanted to get out of that mine and left, and gone to East Wellington and then later decided to quit farming anyway. This is what he says: "I have seen the effects of a feeder in the old country and in the Indian Nation in the United States," at this time the Indian Nation was in the Dakotas and Colorado and in there, "what are seen here are feeders and not blowers. A real blower will be felt some distance from the face. Even if the ventilation was good and there was air enough to carry the gas away, a naked light would ignite a blower and cause an explosion."

ND: Now, a feeder .. I don't know exactly what he is talking about, but I worked in a mine where they used a fuse and, fuse and caps, and you tamped up your own holes and lit your own fuse and that was it.

LB: You've have done that.

ND: Yes.

LB: Yes, well they did their own here too, and you know that they tamped their holes with coal dust.

ND: Yes, and you are not supposed to.

LB: Okay, but this was the practice. They would wet it with their tea from their lunch, because the mine was so dry there wasn't enough water.

ND: You are supposed to tamp the holes with clay.

JG: That's right.

LB: Okay, now was that universal practice, they tamped the holes with clay?

ND: That's the law.

LB: Well then that happened after this too, because they all come up and, they don't make any bones about it, they just say ...

ND: If you tamp a hole with coal dust, there is going to be flame when that powder goes off.

LB: Well, yes, you would think so.

ND: That's right.

LB: Why didn't they realize that coal dust could be dangerous.

ND: They should have known.

JG: It doesn't hurt them - it just kills them. I have seen miners that would be off in the summer for a couple of months and would spit all blood.

ND: Yes.

JG: Do you mean to tell me that coal dust doesn't hurt you?

ND: Oh, I would play ball Sunday in the ball field here and you would give a huff and boy there would be black coal dust coming out.

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LB: But look at you all!! You are still here!

JG: We are healthy enough.

ND: Well because the mine finished and we got out before it was too late.

JG: My father died at forty-six, and I know a lot more that died early.

LB: Did he work in rock though, Jock?

JG: No, coal mining.

LB: Coal mining.

JG: Yes.

LB: There was a lot of rock work establishing Number one. Sometimes they went through a long...

ND: I worked in rock for three years, silicosus.

LB: Yes.

ND: It was coal dust that killed...

LB: Gee, I hope you are not going to die young.

ND: Oh, I am sure I am not, not now.

JG: But talking about the shot lighter, you see, now they had these in Nanaimo, here, just in recent years.

LB: Oh really?

JG: But they had a Fire Boss and a shot lighter. The reason for that was, the Fire Boss, he was kind of managing the men, but the shot lighter was paid two bits a day less, but he fired the shots. Now, this was just cheapness on the company's part.

LB: Why?

JG: Because they could have had the Fire Boss doing the job. He could have done the job. They called him the shot lighter, just to get away from paying him the six or seven dollars a day - whatever the wages were.

LB: Well, that is interesting, because right after this explosion, in the Ministry of Mines reports, the very year after, first of all every mine gets water pipes in to lay the dust and every mine gets a, as they call them a staff,

ND: They used rock dust then too.

JG: They used rock dust.

LB: Yes, that comes later I think. And every mine has a staff, as they call them, of shot lighters - makes them sound very important. Every mine has a gas committee paid by the men.

JG: Yes.

LB: Okay, that is 1888. Twenty years later in Extension, in 1909, the men are back to firing their own shots, because they say in the inquest, there should have been a shot lighter. The men are still wearing naked lamps, and the gas committee reports are being torn down. Now what happened in those twenty years?

JG: There were two men, gas committee maybe brought them in and they reported gas and they were fired.

LB: That's right. I know Jock, but those gas committees were being boasted of by the company in the late 1880's. I would love to know what happened in the interim - did the companies get complacent again and decide that they didn't need to be so fussy, or... 

JG: No, I would say the reason for that would be, if they reported gas in a place similar to what Mottishaw and his partner did, that started the big strike. If they reported gas in the place, the company would have to shut down that part of that section, so they would lose production of coal and the miner, he got paid, well in later years ninety-one cents a ton, and by the time it got the surface, it was $22.50, so the company would lose the money. The miner wasn't making any money. He was making starvation wages.
LB: Is there a chance that the Union, because the Union was getting more militant, the Company decided that this was a way to control the Union?

ND: Well, try to, yes. I agree to that.

JG: Yes, that was what happened you see, after they had two or three explosions, pretty close, the men started to talk about safety and they were going to form a union to try and make them. This is what happened. You have to get this into your mind too, talking about the laws here - there were all kinds of men out of work - your job, they can fire you here and you couldn't get a job anywhere - blacklisted you see.

LB: Yes.

JG: So a lot of the time, men did things that they wouldn't think about doing and the same with shot lighters - they were supposed to say that it was clear of gas and maybe it wasn't clear.

ND: Right.

LB: Now, you are saying that that would happen when there were too many men for the jobs?

JG: At that time, I don't think there were so many, but later on.

LB: At this time in the 1880's, they were just selling coal hand over fist and they could have used a hundred more men in every mine.

ND: That's right.

JG: Right.

LB: So...

JG: I wouldn't say at that time, but later they had the power, you know.

LB: So that was one difference. In 1909 they were still looking for labour weren't they?

ND: I wouldn't say it happened then, but they did have the power to put them out of business.

LB: Yes. I have it written down up here, when you, everybody worked with a partner.

NO: I wouldn't say it happened then, but they did have the power to put them out of business.

LB: Yes. I have it written down up here, when you, everybody worked with a partner.

ND: Right.

LB: Were they assigned or did you chose each other?

NO: No, sometimes they were assigned, but then if you didn't get along with a man you asked for a change of partners. Mostly you got it with no argument. Then, you know if Jock and I thought we could get along better, we would ask if we could go and work together, and usually it helped.

LB: They didn't put an experienced man with an inexperienced man?

ND: Well, that happened later, yes.

JG: That happened, or father and son.

ND: Yes that's right.

LB: Yes.

JG: If the father was a miner, he would take his son as a helper and of course pay him you know, and money was coming into the house.

ND: But then too, Jock, when we were on the relief days, that's, I would say, back around 1926-27 something like that, the Yugoslavs were coming over here. Now these fellows couldn't even talk our language, but they were going to work the next day as miners and we couldn't even get a job. I saw a man, well I asked him, I saw him come off the boat and he lived next door to me and he said that he was going to work the next day down at Number one... and he did! Us English speaking fellows couldn't get a job.

LB: Bill do you have anything to say about the business of partners? Do you have any comment of this business of partners, whether you chose each other or were assigned.

BC: I was working with what they called a company hand, one of the miners partners he was an officer and they sent me in backhanding. You see..

LB: Yes.

JG: A lot of partners worked together for over twenty years. That happened was, Jimmy Galloway and Jack Rogers.
ND: Right.
JG: It was funny when we moved Reserve, they moved...
ND: Over there too.
LB: And the Company had no problem with letting you work with whoever you want.
ND: No.

END OF SIDE ONE

ND: .... you bet.
JG: And as Nels says, if the cars are coming slow and the guy of the low side he has to get his, there is a slope on the floor, most coal is on this side. Well, he would be in there throwing coal out trying to get that post in. Well the side is, you get in here quick you see.... we would get the timber up and not miss a car. You see the driver comes in and he has three places, he goes to that place, and that place, and that place, then he comes to there and you are not loaded, it goes there and there and if you are not loaded again...
LB: So you would miss cars.
JG: Yes.
ND: Yes, you would just get your turn.
JG: You would get your turn. Well, you see this guy would be kicking, he wouldn't do what we were doing.
LB: Yes.
JG: Usually he would be sitting down instead of putting the timber up. If you have the timber up when the cars come.
ND: You are ready to load.
LB: Can I throw some names at you and see if any of you have heard of any of these men?
ND: Go ahead.
LB: Okay. Jules Michael? He lived in South Cedar. Ring any bells?
ND: Michaels, seems to me the name is familiar - Tom Michael.
LB: Okay, what about James Malcolm?
JG: No.

ND: No.
LB: What about James Malpass?
ND: Yes, Malpass had Malpass and Wilson Store.
LB: Well the Malpass', Roda Becks is related to the Malpass', but I just wondered if you knew this particular Malpass, because this is a Princess Royal family.
JG: It would have to be the same Malpass, as Malpass and Wilson Store.
ND: Well James Malpass had the store at the top of Albert Street, the Chinamen have it now. - Albert and Milton.
LB: Oh really.
ND: That was Malpass' store.
LB: Oh neat. Would that have been James Malpass?
ND: Oh it was James, because I dealt there.
LB: So he quit mining and went and became a store owner.
ND: Well I don't know.- I never knew him to be in the mine - all I knew...
LB: It says in 1887 he had mined for twenty-two years, so he was no spring chicken by that time.
ND: Oh no, he had been dead quite a while now.
JG: You know, I find, a lot of times somebody says to me, "do you know so-and-so", and I say, oh yes, but it is his grandfather.
LB: Yes, that's right. What about Joshua Martell? He is also related to Roda Beck. Ring any bells?

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NO: Hmmm, Martell... would that Martell...
JG: Bob Martell.
NO: Yeah, I was wondering that, any relation.
JG: He was an engineer on the... he was related to the Freemans, you know.
NO: Yes.
LB: Oh, that's right, he wasn't related to Rona Beck, he was related to Barbara Stannard. Robert Hindmarsh?
NO: Oh, Bob Hindmarsh, well...
LB: He is twenty-four years old in 1887.
NO: Well, old Bob Hindmarsh, he ran the Herald office, now Gladys of course, this would be probably be an uncle probably to this fellow. Gladys Hindmarsh was a fine looking woman and she married some army man and they went over to the old country to live and she died over there.
LB: Tell me about this Hindmarsh who ran the Herald. When would that have been?
NO: Well, his name was Bob Hindmarsh. That would be...
JG: Oh, yes, I remember him.
NO: Yes, the Herald paper. What year would that be in?
JG: That would be up in the 1920's.
NO: Was it still running in those days?
LB: It started around 1898, sometime in there. He came down from Cumberland.
JG: 'Cause they used to say that Nor~ run the Free Press.
NO: Yes, that's right.
JG: He'd read the Herald and then he would print that thing.
NO: Yes.
LB: Oh, there are some marvelous feuds in the different newspapers. Did you ever hear about the female newspaper editor up in Cumberland?
NO: Yes.
LB: The woman was the editor.
NO: I forget what her name was.
LB: Yes, I have got it in my notes somewhere, but she had a feud going on with that guy in the Herald, with Hindmarsh, but he used to be up in Cumberland and I would love to find out why they hated each other so much. They are always accusing each other of stealing news and stuff.
NO: Did you hear about Ma Mutteridge.
LB: Yes, what about the name Samuel Haig?
NO: Haig? No, don't know anything about it.
LB: And William Griffiths?
RT: I knew him, he was from Gabriola.
LB: Did you.
RT: Well, I didn't know him good, I mean I know who he was.
LB: Did he live to an old age?
RT: You see, I lived over there for eight years.
LB: So when would that have been when you knew him.
RT: When I first got married, I think he was old at that time. I mean he was old, but how old, I wouldn't know.
LB: And when did you first get married?
RT: In 1931.
NO: Well, they called him Bill Griffith - is that the Griffith's that went to work for the power commission?
RT: I don't know.
LB: Here, he has thirty years experience in 1887, but he could have started in the mine when he was ten, so maybe he is forty years old in 1887.
LB: What about the name Richard Bradley?
ND: Bradley... Bradley... oh, there was a Jack Bradley, he was killed in Grandview right in the main road, but I couldn't tell you anything about that fellow.
LB: Okay, Miles Stevenson?
ND: Stevenson's Point? Is that...
LB: I doubt it. No, that was named after the Police Chief. David B. Lewis?
ND: David Lewis... David Lewis.
BC: Hankie Lewis.
LB: What was that name, Hankie?
ND: No, I don't think it would be him, I tell you who the Lewis...
Overlapping conversations...
yes Billy Lewis. I think he would be related to him somewhere.
LB: John Tieg?
ND: No, I have heard of the name, but I don't know him.
JG: I think he lived in South Wellington. Of course, as I see it, maybe the son.
LB: Yes, the son, yes. James Stove?
ND: Oh, Old Stove! In South Wellington, we all knew Stove's.
BC: Yes.
LB: Tell me about the Stove's.
JG: The Stove's, well they were part Indian, you see, and this old sugarbeet, we called him, I don't know where he got that name, but he used to be lying on the road drunk lots of times, but there was a big family and they lived in South Wellington. Bill Stove and there was an older Joe Stove, George Stove...
ND: Yes.
JG: Martha, Kitty,... big family the Stove's.
ND: Yes, there was quite a few.
LB: Alright, Archibald Cowie, I assume is the father of Cowie Machine Shop.
ND: Yes.
JG: He just passed away.
LB: Yes. Did anybody know Archibald Cowie?
ND: Oh yes, yes. Now, that is Cowie's Machine Shop.
LB: I think so.
BC: Yes.
ND: Now, one thing that Kay and I did this year, we went down to Duncan and we took a ride down that little train that runs around and Cowie I think, was it Cowie that was started that thing, I believe it was.
BC: Helmer Bradshaw - he is related to the Cowies.
ND: Yes, well... now, at one time he wanted to put that little train over on Newcastle Island and run around that island and they could have put a ferris wheel and they could have made that thing pay, but the City wasn't interested. Now, they took it down there to Duncan and they are really making it pay - it cost us a dollar apiece to take a ride on that locomotive.
BC: The way I heard it, was that the CPR.
ND: A dollar and a half, was it?
BC: ...were developing Newcastle Island, the CPR were.
INTERRUPTION
LB: ... a standing shot hole.
ND: I don't know.
LB: No? It doesn't ring any bells?
JG: What does it say about it?
LB: It says this man Joseph Randall believes the explosion started from a standing shot hole. The explosion gathered force and then gathered up coal dust as it went along.
The only thing I can figure, is he drilled in to the other shot and set it off.

LB: Yes, I think that is what happened.

BC: Can I put two bits worth in?

LB: Sure.

BC: Years, well after that explosion, my father was working in the big shaft, Number one shaft, and there was an old Frenchman, you have heard of Old Frenchie from Northfield?

ND: Yes.

BC: He was in the next place. Anyways, he was working with the fuse, they had what they called a squid. You know what the squid was?

ND: Yes.

BC: They had a little hole right, and one of the squid, the squid .. the shot it. My father found out that this Frenchman was taking powder, black powder and wrapping it up in straw and tamping the hole with that, so as soon as he lit it...

LB: What happened as soon as he lit it?

BC: It was a danger that the shot might explode right there, you see.

JG: If there would have been gas there, the whole thing might have gone.

BC: So my father told the Fire Boss, there was a shot hazard, and he heard him go in after this Frenchman and say, "I want to see you out here." The Frenchman said, "Oh, we do this in Nova Scotia all the time." The Fire Boss said, "Well, this is not Nova Scotia, and it is against the law." I don't know whether he had him moved out or not.

LB: Were there many Frenchmen in the mines? I never ran across...

ND: No, I wouldn't say that. Mostly, Italians, Germans, every nationality under the sun but when it started out, it was Englishmen and Scotsmen.

LB: Yes, and Italians.

ND: Yes.

RT: ... French Canadians

LB: Oh, I suppose.

BC: That is why they called the house in Wellington Noah's Ark - nationalities from all over the world.

LB: That's right.

BC: So they named it Noah's Ark.

JG: In the South Wellington mine, Number five, this fellow had a hole that didn't blow you see. Well, what they did, and what had been done hundreds of times, instead of drilling his hole two feet away, they put it in the same hole and drill out. You see, they figure they can judge just about where the powder is. Well, he didn't judge and he got his eyes blown out. I have heard another fellow say he drilled a hole that way and he pulled it out and the cap was twisted in the end of the drill. You see, if you have a hole here, just like so, and you go over here two more feet, that is making that twice as strong and it is going to be hard to make it blow this way, and a lot of them are on contract and instead of drilling this extra hole, they drill this hole. You see, it is supposed to be tamped with clay. They have little bags, dummy bags, and you fill them with dirt, you see, and after you ..

LB: Fill them with clay?

ND: Supposed to be filled with clay.

JG: Lots of time it was coal dust, or anything around.

LB: Even when you guys were working?

ND: Oh yes.

.../13
JG: But anyhow, this fellow, he lost his eyes.

ND: I didn't know how he lost them, but I knew he lost them.

LB: Did you guys ever hear of a man named Archibald Dick?

ND: Archie Dick.

LB: He was the mines inspector at the time, and he lost his job not long after this. Did anyone ever hear why?

ND: No, the government didn't want too much exposed, I guess.

LB: Well, his, in this testimony, this inquest, he is talking about what went on and then you read what he wrote in the Ministry of Mines reports and it is completely different. I am trying to figure out... and shortly after that he lost his job, and I am trying to figure out what was going on there. He was one of the first people to become a certificated manager, as they called them in the very early days, and there is lots of Dicks around aren't there? There was a John Dick that discovered the East Wellington.

ND: It was Billy Dick that had a clothing store in Vancouver. I knew a fellow who worked for him, and he got fired. Well I said, "How did you lose your job." Well, he said, "I had become a silent partner and they didn't want me..."

LB: Too silent, or not silent enough.

ND: No, he was taking stuff out of the store and selling it in the beer parlours.

BC: When Sloan was Minister of Mines - in his election campaign - he said, "I'm going to take, make it so that the shot lighters are not coal hustlers, who are more interested in the production of coal than in the safety of the mines."

LB: Well, they wouldn't. Why would they get interested in hustling coal if they were, if the company was encouraging them to - a shot lighter?

BC: The company.

LB: Yes, so.

BC: I guess the miners were complaining about it, you see Sloan is the Minister of Mines.

LB: Who?

BC: Sloan

ND: William Sloan.

LB: William Sloan. When was this?

BC: Oh that would be back in the 1920's.

ND: Yes.

BC: They put on what they called the driver boss, he was the coal hustler.

JG: Well Bill, with the election coming, you know, you heard so many promises all your life, they never do it.

LB: You know it is interesting that you say "coal hustler", because a patient came in to see my husband, John... oh I can't think of his name, he lives up in Northfield and he just had a stroke not too long ago. I'll think of his name in a minute. Anyway, he said that in Northfield, in the first Northfield mine, in the late 1800's there was a man that was hired to be a coal hustler and he went in and worked, he was a miner and he worked harder than anybody else, and he set the example, but he was getting extra goodies from the company. Did you ever hear of that?

ND: Yes, two bits a car more. Going around the mine, and getting the men to load an extra car if they could. Another way they did it - instead of taking one car in your place they would have you take two cars, then you would have to dump one and load one and then you dumped the other one back on the track and load it. This is what you call the coal hustler.

LB: What would be the advantage of that?
ND: Well, you would get two cars at a time instead of one.
BC: Increase production.
LB: Okay, explain that to me again. How does that increase production?
ND: Well...
LB: You get two cars at a time?
ND: Yes, instead of one. Now the driver would bring, if you only had three places say, the driver he puts one car in each place and gives each of you your turn. Then the coal hustler comes along and you can take two cars in here and we'll dump one up on its side and you can load one and as soon as that is loaded you dump the other one back and put it on the track and load it over again.
LB: Okay I see.. so you dumped it on its side so noone could say, "Hey, you have two cars."
ND: No, no, there is no waiting. You double your turn, that's all.
LB: Why do you dump it on its side though?
ND: Well, so you can get the load out and then push the other one back in... push the empty in.
LB: Seems like more work to me.
ND: Oh no, it wasn't more work - this is the face, so you come in with two cars. Well, while you load that one, you have to get that one out of the way.
LB: Yes.
ND: They dumped it up on its side.
LB: Oh, the empty one gets dumped!
ND: Yes.
LB: Oh gosh!! I thought you were dumping a load of coal out. I couldn't figure out what the heck was going on.
ND: You would dump this car up on its side so they could get this one out. They would just bring it out here a little bit, dump that one back on and load it so you could get two loads instead of one.
LB: Okay, but, there would be room in a stall to dump a car on its side?
ND: Oh yes, you made room.
LB: Okay. I have got some things here that I have to get you to explain to me.
What does it mean when they say that they have taken the workings to the dip of the slope? What is the dip of the slope? In every mine, they say they have now progressed to the dip of the slope. Is that as far down as the coal goes?
ND: Oh no, we didn't know how far the coal went, we just followed the boundary where you were told to go, but the dip is downhill.
JG: And the mine is...
LB: Okay, I think I have figured it out. Then they started to go sideways from as far as the slope's gone.
ND: That's right.
JG: Every hundred feet when there was coal, as I said before, they would turn to the left and a little further on, they would turn to the right. The reason they don't put them both straight across like that - there would be too much roof exposed, so it would be like that, every hundred feet all the way down. When they go in, every time they go in one hundred feet, they go up.
LB: Right.
JG: The next thing you know there are dozens of places in there.
LB: In the Dunsmuir mines, and the Wellington mines, the pillars, when they had gotten to the outer limits and they were about to start pulling pillars, the pillars represented half of the coal or even two-thirds of the coal, so they must have left huge pillars.
ND: Yes.
LB: Is that common practice in the twentieth century?
ND: Yes, that was support your roof.
LB: Yes, but the pillars would have represented half the coal?
ND: Oh yes.
JG: More than that.
LB: More than half?
JG: Well, they were one hundred foot square with a twelve foot roadway going in.
BC: It is like money in the bank, for the company. But some of these energetic superintendents would get the men to rob those pillars.
JG: The next thing you know, they would cave in.
LB: That would seem silly, because they are going to get the coal sooner or later aren't they?
ND: Oh yes.
JG: Well, they were in a rush. That is what they did in Extension at the time of the strike, you see, they didn't have enough miners there. You know how you can get a loose end here, then get two cars at a time, but they were robbing the pillars. They were making the pillars too small, instead of being a hundred feet, they would take about another fifteen or twenty feet off each side... well that is leaving the pillar too small when the roof starts to come down... you lose that roof.
BC: You see, they did that in Number one.
LB: Did they?
BC: Yes....
LB: Oh, later on.
BC: ... the shaft would start to cave in. They had a horse there at the shaft bottom, and the men noticed ... on his ears... but when those rocks started falling down the shaft, old King was in his stall. He sensed there was something wrong.
LB: Okay, what - a number of people are listed in the accident reports as being runners. What would a runner have done?
JG: That is a new one for me.
NO: A runner ...
LB: Nobody mentions roperiders in that early time. They mention mule drivers and runners.
BC: I wonder if it was the pushers.
ND: Maybe it was the roperider at that.
JG: We had the guy who drives the mule and then he sometimes has a helper, and of course the slopes ... a roperider, was a steel cable, you know.
ND: That's right.
RT: Wasn't that what Sid called his job when he was carrying that...
LB: No, he was pick, something pick.carrying... Did he call himself a runner?
I will check his tape, maybe he did.
BC: He was probably taking his turn.
LB: Yes. Sid's first job in Cape Breton was taking picks to the miners, did he sharpen them?
ND: Yes.
BC: Down to Ladysmith that time there, that fellow who was brother to that Union leader. Well if you went to the Mine Boss and asked him for a job and he asked what you did and you said a cable rider, he wouldn't know what that was, but if you said, rope rider he would. It was an English term that came out from..
LB: Oh, it is. Rope rider is an English term?
BC: Yes.
LB: Okay, Bill now is the time to tell your goat story again. The goats from Jessie Island swimming over to Newcastle Island. Where did those goats come from originally?

BC: Departure Bay.

LB: From a farm?

BC: Some people called, I just forget the name now, they worked along the wharves at Departure Bay. When they shut the mines down, they moved down to Ladysmith, they kept on with the same job there. They had this goat, goats... so they took them over to Newcastle, not to Newcastle but to Jessie Island - that little island in the Bay.

LB: Yes.

BC: They left them there. Well in those days there were a lot of people going on picnics on Jessie Island and the kids would tease the goats - they would butt them, you know. So one day, this was when they had the fan going on Newcastle.

LB: Was there a mine working there?

BC: The mine had closed down, there is the mine there.

LB: Yes.

BC: And that is where they had the fan - kept the fan running to ventilate Protection. Well, this goat decided to swim across to Newcastle and he went down to the fan. The fan engineer had to do his own firing, you see, two boilers. He was in the fan room when he saw the goat coming, so he locked the door - but the goat jumped through the window - busted the window, and got in. He got up high where the goat couldn't reach him, and the goat held him there, for quite a while. The steam was going down and the fan was slowing. Finally he maneuvered around to the phone - they had phones in them days - and he phoned Nanaimo and told them of his predicament. He said that the steam was going down and the fan was starting to slow up. Two men had to go over in a boat with a gun and they dispatched the goat.

LB: Now...

ND: .. there is a picture - now that is what you call a rope rider.

LB: Yes, well I know about the rope riders....

ND: He would be sitting on here.

LB: I am trying to find out about the runners!

JG: Runners? Well I don't know.

LB: You guys should read a good book I.. called Boss Whistle, it talks about rope riders in there! Okay, the 1890 strike was for the eight hour day, was it? .. The 1890 Wellington strike?

ND: Yes.

BC: They had several there. 1890, that would be the one for the eight hours.

LB: Okay, now they were already only working eight hours in the Nanaimo mines, so was there any, do you remember anybody saying anything about why Dunsmuir... were they working a nine hour day?

BC: They were working a nine hour day in all the mines.

LB: No.

BC: The miners pressed for eight hour days.

ND: It would be in this, eight hour day from back to back.

BC: Yes.

LB: Oh.

ND: Maybe before when they had to get to the place, by the time they got to the place, eight hours at the place.

LB: It was just the Wellington mines that wanted to strike, not the other ones.

BC: Oh, I think the other ones off and on.

LB: But on this particular occasion.

ND: Yes.

BC: Yes.
LB: Okay, .. the Departure Bay railway, I discovered that in the first few years the Dunsmuirs were mining coal, the railway wasn't built and so they had teams to take the coal down to where the telephone exchange was and then they had an incline down. Now that, I read, had an embaswire rope on it to let the coal down, right down, almost to the Bay. The weight of the loaded cars pulled the empties up.

BC: The empties up.

LB: Okay, now, would that have been just like the hoist that they had in the mine? Something small like that?

BC: Well, there would be a drum.

ND: No, .. I think it would be a bigger hoist than that.

JG: They would have to have, if they just had gravity, they would have to have a brake.

ND: Oh yes.

LB: Yes. It would have to be pretty big because that is quite a section of land that goes down, wouldn't you think? Have you ever heard anything about that? People always used to try to ride it back up and they used to get hurt on it.

ND: I haven't heard anything about it, but I know where it ran. It ran up the back of the Baptist Church.

BC: Cast had a piece in the paper... Wellington mines had issued orders that people were not to ride on it.

LB: Yes.

BC: It was interfering with their work.

LB: Yes. It was also dangerous I think too.

BC: The first coal was hauled right down to the Bay by teams, wagons.

LB: Just with wheels - not on tracks.

BC: No, not on tracks.

LB: Yes.

BC: And the road comes through where that shopping centre is there now...

LB: Where? Country Club?

BC: Yes, where the Country Club is, and over the hill, just before, you know where we turn to go down Departure Bay?..

LB: Yes.

BC: Well, half way between there and the railway tracks.

LB: Yes.

BC: It was there for quite a while... coming down by the old Bay shaft.

LB: You know that Bay shaft is driving me crazy. You know we drove there, Nelson, Bill, and I and Kate, drove there and you showed me where you thought it was.

BC: Yes.

LB: And a man at the talk I gave on Tuesday night said it was right near his house and they used to drop refuge down there when they were getting their garden ready years ago, so he knows it is there.

BC: Yes.

LB: But on the big geological maps of the underground workings that the geologists did a few years ago, it is way over closer to the golf course and it is right where you would have said that the railway turned. You know where you said there was that big turn.

BC: Yes.

LB: But on the big geological maps of the underground workings that the geologists did... against the old Bay shaft.

BC: You know that Bay shaft is driving me crazy. You know we drove there, Nelson, Bill, and I and Kate, drove there and you showed me where you thought it was.

BC: Yes.

LB: And a man at the talk I gave on Tuesday night said it was right near his house and they used to drop refuge down there when they were getting their garden ready years ago, so he knows it is there.

BC: Yes.

LB: But on the big geological maps of the underground workings that the geologists did a few years ago, it is way over closer to the golf course and it is right where you would have said that the railway turned. You know where you said there was that big turn.

BC: Yes.

LB: But on the big geological maps of the underground workings that the geologists did a few years ago, it is way over closer to the golf course and it is right where you would have said that the railway turned. You know where you said there was that big turn.

BC: Yes, that horseshoe bend.

LB: Right, so is it possible that there where two Number one shafts?

BC: No, .. umm... that shaft was sunk by ..

LB: The syndicate.

BC: The syndicate, as soon as they got the coal, Dunsmuir bought them out, and he called it Number one shaft.

LB: So did the syndicate sink it for him - for Dunsmuir?
BC: Well, I don't know exactly - just what I have learnt since.
LB: Yes.
BC: A fellow called...

END OF TAPE ONE
START OF SIDE ONE - TAPE TWO

BC: ... shaft in Wellington - was coming down, you see that is close to the boundary, old Dunsmuir thought that he could get Number one shaft and connect the two, .. so it acted like a water shaft like it did at Northfield, you see, the water would come down, the pump was there.
LB: But that is awfully far from the old slope. It is really a long way away, and that was an air shaft for the old slope.
BC: It couldn't have been, because I think it was connected to Number five.
LB: Yes, it was also connected to Number five, but in the Ministry of Mines reports for 1875, they say, there is a Number one shaft and they say how far it is from the Bay and it is the correct distance and that was given as as air shaft for the old slope which is way up Jinglepot. It just staggers me to think that they had mined that far in four or five years.
ND: Well, you can go a long way in four or five years.
LB: Can you?
ND: Oh yes.
BC: Well, you see, he, so many, Number five, Number four, Number two, . . and Number two ..
LB: This is South Wellington?
BC: This is East Wellington really. You know when we went out, Nels?
ND: Yes.
BC: We went past, over the railway track and there is a straight piece of road there and I said one of the big stores stood there.
LB: Yes.
BC: Well, back of that was the machine shop, and then west of that, closer to Divers Lake, was like a marshalling yard for all the coal miners.
LB: Yes.
BC: Then, as you went along and we made that turn and I said, where Bill Lowden lived.
ND: Yes.
BC: Well, if you went straight west from there, you see that road after we passed, made that turn by Lowden's house, went down the hill and came to where the old slope was. A little further on, there was Number two shaft, down at the bottom there.
LB: Yes, but you know what, it was driving me crazy because they kept talking about a South Wellington mine, and that was started by another company, it was started by Chandler who later owned the East Wellington Coal Company.
BC: East Wellington, yes.
LB: And he started that mine and right away there was a dispute about ownership. The next year it belonged to Dunsmuir, and he made it an air shaft for the old slope. So, I think Chandler was probably snuggling up to Dunsmuir's coal lease and robbing some coal there.
BC: Well, Chandler, they took the coal up around by Lowden's place there, around and then straight down. Dunsmuir I think he wanted part of that road for his railway.
LB: Oh.
BC: It went straight through by the golf course, down what they call Argyle Avenue, now.
LB: Oh, yes.
BC: Straight through there to near Brechin Point. That is where the East Wellington wharves were.
ND: Yes.

.../19
BC: Till Dunsmuir got going and I guess...
LB: That's where it went down! I couldn't figure out how it got down.
BC: Then after, when Dunsmuir got going he put his railway in, that cut them off and they fixed the track around here by Townsite after.
LB: Yes. Oh, very good. Okay, sometimes in this earlier period, they talk about coal cars. Sometimes they talk about wagons with two "G's", and sometimes they talk about boxes.

INTERRUPTION.
LB: This is Tape Number two and Jack ATKINSON has just joined us.... it is okay Jack. Looking suspiciously at me.
JA: At my age, you start to be careful of women.
LB: It's about time!

JA: In the old country, what we call cars they used to call wagons.
LB: Okay. What about boxes.
JA: A what?
LB: A runner.
JA: I will have to think hard on that one.
LB: That stumped everybody.
JA: Particularly on the main slope.
LB: Particularly on the main slope, yes.
JA: On the inside there wasn't a switcher. We used to call them switchers.
JA: Switchers, yes. He would fix the points, this kept going up and down all the, the guy would stay below, this fellow would come down and he would give certain bells and it wouldn't stop, it would go right into this siding, and away he would go. Paul Courtenay and I were on there and we would change, you know, take over, sometimes I would go and sometimes he would go. Old Courtenay, he wanted one of us to work...
JG: with his son, but I would never work with him.

LB: This is going to pick up everybody talking, Bill, if you don't mind. I don't want to miss a single gem.

ND: A switcher is maybe a runner.

JG: It is possible.

LB: Okay, we are back in the era of naked lights, just a few people are using safety lamps just the Fireman, as they called them. But, in the museum there are these sharp pointed candle holders that they say were driven into the timbers, and held candles. This must have been very, very early. Do you have any idea about that? When those would have been used?

ND: That would have been in the early days when they had naked lights.

BC: Yes.

LB: Would they have used those as extra lights.

ND: Yes, I would think so.

BC: I think they used them in England, from what I hear.

JA: Yes.

LB: Yes. Did you ever hear about them being used here?

ND: No, never saw them here in my time.

JA: No.

BC: No.

JG: No.

LB: Didn't hear about them from an earlier.

JA: Oh, I heard about them!

LB: Because I imagine the fish oil lamp goes way back.

ND: Well, I don't know. I saw my dad with a fish oil lamp and that is not too far.

LB: No, but it goes, I imagine they used them for a long time.

ND: Oh yes.

LB: But, I imagine it goes way back before that, that they used them a long time.

ND: Oh, that would be in the old country I imagine.

JA: Yes.

LB: Yes.

JG: Fish oil lamps?

ND: Yes.

LB: Or some kind of oil.

BC: Pit lamps.

JA: Yes, pit lamps.

LB: Yes.

JG: We used them here.

JA: I remember my dad using them.

JG: I remember when rope riding, you see, and when the ship went down, you had to run behind and rope the wheels. With this fish oil, I put a little coal oil in to make it brighter and sometimes that flame would get away, like this and your blooming forehead was burning but you had to keep going to get that car.

JA: My goodness Jock, you should have got a bonnet.

LB: Was that strictly legal?

JG: Oh yes, on the intake, you see, there was fresh air, you can use.

JA: No gas.

LB: Oh really.

JG: That is where the air is going in, where we talked about sufficient air going in to make it clear.
LB: Yes.
JG: Well, where the air comes in you could use the naked light. Us rope riders or whatever you want to call us, we would gallop down you know with the coal there, and I would put a little coal oil in the fish oil and have a bigger flame.
LB: Okay, you were talking about snoos earlier and how you had to take your teeth out.
ND: Yes, and chew snoos too.
LB: Did everybody chew snoos?
ND: Well tobacco or snoos.
LB: What is the difference?
ND: Snoos is ground up.
JG: The Swedes started it.
LB: The Swedes started it?
JG: I think they were those...
JA: Snoos is actually Copenhagen snuff.
ND: That is what it is - snuff.
LB: Okay, what is the difference between snuff and tobacco?
JA: Well, it was made from tobacco and it was in cakes.
ND: Plugs.
JA: Plugs.
LB: The snuff?
JA: No, no.
ND: The tobacco.
LB: Oh, okay.
JA: Snoos was loose - just like small, tiny powder.
LB: Oh I see - and gentlemen sniffed it?
JA: Yes, some did, but the miners put it behind their lip here.
ND: Yes.
BC: Yes.
LB: If it was powder what, did it go into a wad?
JG: They have it here, the lip sticking out like this.
LB: What is the use of it?
JG: Oh, to smoke it is something for you.
LB: So to, it kept your habit going.
ND: It was just something to keep you occupied.
BC: It you want a history of snuff, interview a Swede, Swedes...
LB: They...
JA: Copenhagen, it was made in Denmark in those days and it goes a way back.
LB: So it wasn't - you don't think the English miners.
ND: Oh, the women used to chew it too. Sure.
LB: Where?
ND: Right here... well I never saw it here, I saw it on the T.V., this women driving a horse and she was chewing snoos, she pulled her snoos box..
LB: Well, you don't believe everything you see on T.V. though.
ND: Well, it was true I think.
JG: When you say chews, we used to say chews some snoos too. That was the phrase used, but actually you don't chew it, how could you chew it, it was powder.
LB: You just let it sit there.
JG: You would let it sit there and every now and then some juice would come out of it and you would spit it out.
LB: And you did the same thing with chewing tobacco?
JG: Well, you chewed it.
JA: It was better, you chewed it because it was hard. Have you ever tried chewing tobacco?

LB: No, I never have.

JG: Well they used plug tobacco for smoking pipes too.

LB: Oh, they could eh?

JG: Yes, well chewing tobacco was maybe made a little differently - it was the same thing in flat cakes, like you know, about that long, you used to bite a chunk off, and chew it.

LB: Yes.

BC: Just shut it off for a minute and I'll tell you about snoos.

LB: Oh, can't we leave it on?

BC: No, not for this.

INTERRUPTION

Much laughter.

LB: Jack do you know, what would your version of the term "to the dip of the slope" be?

JA: Well, the slope...

LB: If they extended the workings to the dip of the slope.

ND: So that would be down at the bottom of the slope.

LB: They kept using the expression in the Ministry of Mines reports, "to the dip of the slope", the workings are "to the dip of the slope."

JA: Oh, that is meant by the grade of the slope.

LB: Just as far down as it has gone.

JA: Well, no, but the grade, the dip, you see.

LB: So the workings are on the same grade.

JA: It must be. That must be what that meant I would say.

LB: Yes.

BC: Like in Jinglepot, there was a level going around towards Wakesiah Mine, and the coal started to dip towards... so they called that the dip.

LB: I ran across the Oyster Harbour Coal Company. In 1890, there was an Oyster Harbour Coal Company and they drilled down 2220 feet in Oyster Harbour - that is the deepest hole on Vancouver Island at the time. They knew coal was there, but they never got down low enough for it. Did you ever hear of it?

BC: I have heard of it, yes.

LB: Did you ever hear of the Turnbo Island Coal Company?

BC: There is an island there close to Boat Harbour.

LB: No, that is Round Island.

BC: Round Island, yes. There was coal there.

LB: Turnbo Island, they said, was in the south-east entrance of Georgia Strait.

BC: Down near Victoria.

LB: So it must be somewhere down near Victoria.

BC: I have seen it mentioned once a year in the Colonist, you know, the Islander. It mentions something about it.

JA: See that is where you can pick up a lot of history.

LB: I found out that the Alexandria belonged to the E & N, which of course was Dunsmuir as well, but it belonged to the E & N - it was a separate company. I still can't figure out whether it was Alexander or Alexandra or Alexandria, because the Ministry of Mines reports calls it all three things, even sometimes, in one page! I would love to know if it was named after Alexander Dunsmuir, Princess Alexandra and later Queen Alexandra,

BC: I think that would be it, because it happened about that time.

LB: Yes, she was the Princess of Wales then.

JA: I can say this Lynne, that from my being a youngster in South Wellington, it was always known as the Alexandra mine.

LB: Yes.
JA: Do you remember that Jock?
JG: Oh, yes.
JA: I never remember it being called anything else.
LB: When it, it didn't really last very long. It wasn't much of a mine.
JA: It reopened.
LB: It was reopened, yes, or they went into it from Number five.
JA: No, no, it was reopened on their own, because I worked down there.
LB: Did they?
JA: Yes.
JG: At first, though Jack, we tapped the water from Number five.
JA: Yes, that could be.
LB: Yes.
JG: And then went in, but as you say, the slope was opened up. Do you remember, we made a football field there with shovels. We levelled it all and made a football field there.
JA: That was from earlier.
JG: Then they put the railroad tracks from the side of the slope.
JA: Across our football field.
LB: Was there a town at one time, named Alexandra, or was it just the mine? I mean people had to be living down there in Southfield for the Southfield mines.
BC: Yes, some people used to use that too, down to Alexandra's they would say.
JA: I can remember beside the mine there was the Alexander dance hall. It was right at the end of the football field where old, now what was his name, he was the store man there... a relation to .... anyway, it doesn't matter much.
JG: There must have been houses there someplace.
BC: Oh, there were houses there, yes.
JG: South Wellington was close enough for the miners.
LB: Where is ..where does Chase River go through here? The actual river? Is it a little farther up there?
JA: Yes..
BC: Yes.
LB: Yes.
RT: .. the side of the railway overpass.
LB: In the late 1880's and 1890's then, everything from Chase River down is mines. This whole area is mines. The Southfield mine is actually about four or five different mines that end up being connected. There has to have been a place for the people to live, and Chase River, the Finnish people didn't move in here until the 1900's did they?
BC: The Finns?
LB: Yes. I found out just this week that there were Finns in Wellington. I met an old lady whose parents ...
JA: I do know this, that it was there is 1912.
LB: Yes, Chase River settlement. Okay, would that have been close enough for the people to work in the Southfield mine?
JA: Oh yes, you could walk it.
LB: Yes, it is not very far is it.
JG: People walked in those days, you know.
LB: Yes, I know they did, and they walked a long way, but there was no South Wellington town then was there?
ND: Oh, Jock could tell you about that, I don't know, maybe Jack can.
JA: I can't tell you when ....

LB: Then there was a town..

JA: .. in 1911..

LB: Yes, but that could have been because the PCC were there.

JA: No, I know it was before 1900.

LB: It was?

JA: I do know that.

BC: Just about in the 1900's.

JA: Just before, I know that, because I know a person who had pictures of South Wellington as far back as 1898.

BC: Oh yes, South Wellington, yes.

JA: Just cabins and things.

BC: Southfield.

LB: Yes, I am trying to think of where the people lived that worked in Southfield, because it was, for a few years, it was the biggest producing mine for the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company.

BC: I think a lot of them, from what I hear, used to ride the coal train.

LB: Oh, that could be, yes.

BC: From, because the old Reverand Bradshaw - you have heard of him?

JA: Yes.

BC: He was one from over there and he stepped in for the Minister, and he stayed with us in Nanaimo and he used to ride on this coal train.

JA: Well across the road by the pulp mill road in Chase River, do you know that road that I showed you?

LB: Yes. Ruth has been through there, she was taken on a hike through there and you can get through there so she is going to, if she is going to keep in one piece, is going to take me through there. First of all, she went away for two weeks, and then she broke her arm. Well, Sid took me down there, but... no, no, it was you that took me to South Wellington, and we were, there was a big gate and a fence and we didn't know whether we should go through there.

JA: You know, on the road to the old Pacific Mine, the road would go right down, but there are people living there now.

LB: But you got through?

RT: Well we were walking through, it goes down the railroad tracks...

JA: You can go right on the railroad tracks all the way.

RT: ... you go to the railroad track a certain distance to where the fence ends and then you walk down a slope, down the hill, to the old road, I presume, it was just a trail through the bush, and you can see the slag, you can see the remains of the railroad grade, the old grade there.

JA: That goes through to Morden and out to Boat Harbour.

LB: Oh, I really want to see that.

JG: We used to go to dances in Nanaimo and no way home in those days, nobody had a car either, and it used to be great bunches would walk through there..

JA: The Black Road.

LB: The Black Road, yes.

JG: The Black Road, and we would wait right here on the corner for a little while here, in the hopes that a car would come along and give us a ride. When none did, we would give up and walk through the Black Road. It was short over to where I lived.

JA: Oh certainly.

JG: It was a short cut.

overlapping conversation
JG: It was a railway grade and it went along what is now, the, under Nicol Street, ... ummm. Yes, it went around just about where Nicol Street comes out there - this road that goes in over here now, which is the main road, it was along there. You can see slag around there yet.

LB: Yes, you can.

JA: Yes, well, they made the roadbed with slag.

LB: Do any of you remember, was there any remnants of the old Douglas Mine around later on?

JA: That was behind here wasn't it?

LB: Well, the original Douglas Mine was sort of between Nicol and the Highway and then there was a new one carried on around the corner up there by Petroglyph Park, in that area.

JG: I can remember that, yes.

JA: There is one there, this side of Petroglyph Park.

LB: Can you?

JG: It was only a small mine, and very shallow. There was a shaft too.

LB: Well this..

JA: It was like in the bottom, what was the Gordon Street.

LB: Oh, yes, that was one that was started in about 1911, but there was a great big, huge one in about 1870's, called the... New Douglas Mine.

JA: Colin McKenzie owned the property I think.

BC: Yes.

JA: But no, that was way before my time.

BC: The original Douglas shaft was down near where the new union hall is now - right across from there, between Nicol and Albert. Fellows working for the City just recently, well it would be twenty years now, they were going to tear up the sidewalk near where that shopping centre is now, and he layed out the work orders and started in. George Tanner, George said, "Okay, grab your bucket, that is the main thing, bring that bucket along with you." We got working and the boss would come back right away, "Oh, .......

he turned around A and there was a great big hole in the track. The slope went up what is Milton Street now into that lumber yard. Caved in quite a bit. You couldn't see how deep the hole was or anything, so we got the police to watch the traffic and went to get the safety equipment and a ladder; an old ladder he went down. On one side there was the main, the City main, and on the other side there was the sewer. They had about eight trucks or so and they put them all hauling gravel - they worked till nine o'clock at night before we got that hole filled up. They said that there was a bigger hole up under one of the houses up there, but we never went to investigate.

LB: Does anybody ever hear about this Mr. Chandler, that owned the East Wellington Coal Company? Did you ever hear anything about Chandler?

BC: Heard of him but that's about...

JA: I have heard of him but that's about all.

BC: I think after Dunsmuir bought him out, he moved.

LB: He did, eh? He was from San Francisco, so chances are he didn't live here.
Excerpts from a round-table discussion with Nels Dean, Bill Cottle and Tom Bentley at Nels' home on February 1, 1985.

re definition of a "shank" - according to the dictionary it is a tunnel.
refuse coal is really fine coal.
squared timbers - especially important for entrance and the shaft lining; maintain that a lot of timbers were squared but I think they mean just in the entrances and shaft bottom;
miners carried axes to notch but not to square the whole side of the timber.
timbers - weren't seasoned; used right out of the bush; timbers stored in ocean after being dumped from a timber trip and they would get barnacles on them; "they were hard to handle when they were like that;" tore their hands.
some mines had springs in them which provided beautiful drinking water.
Bill Cottle - Bo Kee did laundry for hotels; he'd go around and collect it with a sheet on his back; he did single men's laundry;
re going down to tracks by mine to pick up coal - "We used to like it; it was a good excuse not to go to school; we took it home in a sack; my Dad was out of work and was way down in Fernie.
Bill Cottle - There was a strike on in Well. and Dunsmuir was bringing in ... they called 'em blacklegs them days from California 'cause that's where the market was for coal; this strike it went on for a few weeks and the strikers would go to
meet the train and they carried a dummy, a curly black leg and one white leg and they said to the miners the ones that was comin' in, "This is what you'll be called if you go to work while we're on strike."

So the company was goin' to put a stop to that. So my father had the ranch at Rock City and he was busy burnin' and clearin'; he was as black as if he'd been down the mine; and my cousins and my Uncle had been turned out of the house in Well. so they come down to Rock City. We had a pretty big house, well it was four rooms not room for them but it was just temporary.

My dad had a good place in Number 6 mine; I never asked him who got that place but when this train come in this time instead of scabs comin' on it there was soldiers, two hundred soldiers come in to Well. They went into 2 lines on each side and in those days Stephenson was Chief of Police and he pointed out the ringleaders; there was about 18 put on the train and taken to Victoria, father in old black overalls and everythin'; they arrested Charlie McGarigle, George Taylor he was one, old Harry Ross from Rosstown, he was one.

So they was thrown into the jail and it was 3 weeks before the trial come up and the judge wanted to know if these men were armed that was doin' the picketin' and the manager of the mine, Andrew Bryden, he got up and he said, "No your honour, they didn't have firearms," he said, "they was armed with sticks and stones."

And my father he couldn't stand any more, he jumped up and he said, "Now you took an oath and you've just told a lie". So the men were sentenced to the 3 weeks that they'd laid waitin' for the trial and there was a black mark against 'em too. And then in 3 days the strike was settled so my father waited a while and then he went up and he was goin' past Number 5 there and one of the bosses had just come up to the surface and he said "John Cottle, where are you goin'?" And Dad said, "I'm goin' up to Number 6 to see about gettin' my place back." He said, "Don't you know you're blacklisted on Vancouver Island." And it wasn't long before the old man found out he was blacklisted.

So my mother and father were like a lot of old country people, they wanted a lot of nice furniture in the house. So my mother belonged to the Good Templar's Lodge and she was tellin' them she had a nice sideboard she wanted to sell. And someone wanted to know why. They were runnin' out of money. And Tom Mills was pit boss in Number One for quite a while. Mrs. Mills was there and she heard this so she went home in the evenin' and she told him that it was a dirty shame about this blacklistin' and one thing and another and he got my father a job in Protection, brushin' night shift; he didn't get a place diggin'; well finally he did get a place diggin' in Number One next to old Jock White and old Jock White was stealin' all the cars off em'; you know they could hear the cars comin' in, the driver bringin' them in; and old Jock would run down and take the car up to his place; and my father went down and he took the car offa Jock; so Sam Cottle he was drivin' down in Number One and he went all over the mine tellin' everyone "Come on" (they called my father the Old Plug) "the Old Plug's takin' Jock White on." They thought there was going to be a fight. And I guess that caused a little disruption so I think my father was relieved of his duties.

Michel mine was just starting up and there was some fellows in Nanaimo that were goin' up and they advised him to go up with them.

By this time my mother and I were livin' in Nanaimo and it wasn't far from where we were livin' down to the shaft and we used to jump on behind the coal wagons and ride down. Mr. Russell didn't object to us taking coal but he was scared
Nels Dean: You see how they do it was they'd put on maybe 3 or 4 cars underneath the chute, and then when they loaded these big cars, they'd let them run down and then when they'd bump together a lot of the coal would come off onto the track. [The cars didn't make any noise like a locomotive would have so the kids couldn't hear them coming.]

Nels Dean: I was pickin' coal out at Reserve off the dump, this is before I went to work there, and there was an old Indian come out and he said, "What you do here?" "I'm pickin' coal." He said, "You know when I was a little boy we lived down Departure Bay." He says, "White man come along and he wanted to build a coal wharf, they give us a kick. And he says, "They put us up by the Post Office. Then they come along and they say, "We want to build a town here. And they give us another kick."

[I asked them if they had any idea how R.D. would have gotten elected in Nanaimo] - Nels Dean: "He'd be a good Liberal or Conservative something like that and he belonged to the Masons or the Knights of Columbus. It wasn't from the miners."

Bill Cottle - He would be considered a very smart man. He had accumulated a fortune. People would think he'd know what to do.

Nels Dean - they say a man can get by without belonging to lodges and so on but that's not so. There's promotions done through the Conservative party, the Liberal party or any of these parties.

Bill Cottle - my father was in Protection when they brought the mining machines in. Course they weren't like they are today but they was workin' longwall. Now what the loaders wanted and what the company was willin' to pay was quite a difference so they got these machines workin' they shot it down, they had all the cars in place and 2 men pretty near killed themselves loadin'.

But normally they wouldn't have that same show, they'd have to wait for cars sometimes.

dead work - "That's rock that you've got to get rid of before you load your car.
road man - driver boss
coal hustlers - fire bosses used to hustle coal; old Sloan when he was Minister of Mines, he took that out, he said, "there'll be no more of that. Firebosses were there to look after firebossin' not coal hustlin'.

They'd hustle coal by seeing that a miner with a good place got all the cars.

Tom Bentley - There was a miner down Number One and he had the record for the highest output and it killed him. He died. Remember that day? He used to pretty near double the ordinary miners...he'd go at it like mad. He'd get more cars and make more money.

Nels Dean: I was workin' in Cassidy. Right beside the office was an arbutus tree. Just reach up and put your hand in the crutch of the tree where the branch took off. So this fella come out from Ladysmith and he went and he put his hand up in the crutch of the tree; this fella and I come out and stand at the door of the wash house. This fella says to me "Nels, I'm going to go and see what's in that tree." So he went over there, after the bus pulls out, he got a ten dollar bill out of it. So he comes back and he says, "Let's watch this". Wasn't long 'til Tuey comes out of the office put his hand up there he got nothing. He was the mine manager and this went on in all the mines.

[He did this to hold his job "with all the Yugoslavs comin' out"]).

I've seen men come out there at Cassidy, they couldn't get a job so they went down to the priest in Ladysmith and he'd send
"The swamp" in No. 6 Well. refers to where the water lay on the road.

Bill Cottle - They tell me that Dunsmuir was always scared of them lakes. He wouldn't venture too close to them. A man said to me the other day at Harbour Park; he said, "Did you ever hear that Diver Lake had no bottom, they couldn't find the bottom?" I didn't think quick enough I said, "No, I never heard that." "Well," he said, "when we worked in Northfield we worked right under it, we never heard about it then. Dunsmuir drained it. What they call the Tunnel Stream. The trout from the Millstream goes up into Diver Lake. I caught one one day that was all bruised up.

drag - Nels Dean - You hook it on behind the trip and if the trip breaks away it'll throw the trip off the track.

Tom Bentley - It was a heavy bar and you put it on the back of the tub.

Nels Dean - It would bend like a "U" and I'm tellin' you those things are heavy.

Bill Cottle - Sometimes miners load them accidentally into the cars and then you can't find them when you need them. They'd be as big around as your arm and like track rail, big heavy steel, with a hook on you can hook it on to the end of the car. They threw the cars off the track and the cars piled.

Bill Cottle - Them days it was mostly sailin' ships comin' in, some on the coal trade to California and they'd get watermelons there you see. And when they came in to D.B. the crew had more than what they could consume so they just threw them overboard. And Extension had lots of Negros up there and you just had to mention watermelon to a negro so there was a fella there thought it would be a good idea he'd get a horse and an express wagon and he'd go down and pick up a load of these watermelons and take 'em. But the negros found out where he was gettin' them from and they chased him out of Extension.

Re Starks - They said that they had a man in Well. that Dunsmuir had hired to push him over and that man got wind and he got out, [quoted a Colonist article] before they could arrest him. They had quite a bit of property there I guess and Dunsmuir thought he was getting too close.