EM: This is Bernard McNicholl interviewing Clarance Hamilton for the Coal Type History Project.

Mr. Hamilton, what year were you born?

CH: 1908.

And were you born in Nanaimo?

CH: Extension.

EM: Extension. What do you remember about Extension when you were small?

CH: Not really too much. I left there when I was eight years old. I don't remember much about it.

EM: What exactly can you remember that you can think of?

CH: I don't really know. I went to school there for two years. I know so much. As far as the mines go to that time I guess.

EM: Humhum.

CH:

EM: And what year did you move to Nanaimo?

CH: I came here in 1942.

EM: Humhum. You moved to Nanaimo.

CH: Humhum.

EM: Well, you said you were born in 1908.

CH: I went from Extension to Fernie.

EM: Fernie.

CH: Fernie to and back to Nanaimo.

Then to South Wellington, then to Nanaimo. I was in South Wellington 28 years, I guess.

EM: So, you came to Nanaimo once and then you went to South Wellington.
B: Humhum.

BM: Well, when you came to Nanaimo the first time, what did you do when you came?

CH: School.

BM: So, you were still quite young then?

CH: Oh ya, I came back from Fernie when I was 10 years old.

BM: You probably did a lot of jumping around for a while?

CH: For a little while, ya. In Northfield. I went from Nanaimo to Northfield, Northfield to South Wellington. Went to school there too for a couple years.

BM: That is strange. Oh, ya, there is a helicopter going over.

Wife: He followed his parents who followed the mines. Wherever the mines were.

BM: And what was the reason why you moved around a lot?

CH: Well, I don't know, maybe there was no work at the time.

BM: Humhum.

CH: This is why I went to Fernie anyway. I'm sure of that.

BM: What mine was that in Fernie?

CH: Cold Creek.

BM: Was that coal?

CH: Coal, oh, ya.

BM: There got a steel mill there or something.

CH: In a sawmill, I went there and worked in the sawmill but I wasn't old enough to work (?)

BM: O.K, When you came back to Nanaimo when you were 10 years old, did your father go to work in the coal mine then?

CH: Ya. I guess so.

BM: That's fine. What do you remember about your father working in the coal mine? Anything significant?

CH: Nothing.
BM: Do you know what time he went to work or something like that?

CH: Now, when we lived in Northfield, I can't remember when he come back, and then he worked in Granby in South Wellington, worked in Granby for w eile...

BM: Yes, that is Cassidy area.

CH: Yes, and then he come back and then he started work at South Wellington after that.

BM: So, that will be Number 10, then.

CH: No, Number 5, before Number 10.

BM: Oh, yes.

CH: Number 5 shut down in 1935. Number 10 started in 1937, I think.

BM: What do you remember about Number 5? Any stories come out of that your mother would tell you?

CH: I worked there myself for twelve years.

BM: In Number 5?

CH: Ya. On the surface. On the railroad most of the time, well stationary worked on the tipple first, then the boiler room, firing, then on the railroad.

BM: Ya. Could you go through your first job working as a coal miner.

How old were you?

CH: 15.

BM: You were 15 years old.

H: Ya.

BM: So, was that the legal age then or was it 16?

CH: I don't know of any legal age or not, I couldn't tell you.

BM: What job did you start at first?

CH: On the pickin' table.

BM: On the pickin' table, yes. And do you remember what your first wage was?

CH: 2 dollar and 31 cents.

BM: Humhum. So, that was pretty fair,..
CH: That's a day not an hour. (chuckle)
BM: Ya. So, that was pretty fair then, was it?
CH: Oh, ya, I guess so. Ya. I went into the boiler room three years... in 1925, I started in the boiler room firing, that was $3 dollar and 6 cents, fireman's helper.
BM: Could you go through your job on the pickin' table. Explain exactly what you were doing. I knew, it came down on a constantly moving conveyer belt.
CH: Well, it went on to a table, a metal table, it just run along slowly because we called ourself minerologists because we were separatin' rock from coal. (chuckle). Pickin' all the rock out of the coal, you see.
BM: Ya. That was a really good title (chuckle)
CH: Ya. (chuckle) Ya. well, that was all you had to do, standin' there and see all the pieces of rock and threw them of there, of the table, so they can get... That was too much. They would stop it, so you had time to do ...
BM: There is three types of coal, I mean in size.
CH: Oh, all kind, all kinds of sizes, sometimes from nut size right through to big chunks.
BM: Humhum. So, you had kind of chunk-lump coal.
CH: No, we never bothered with the lump, we always throw the rock out, always the bigger ones
BM: So, that this, what did you call the sorting table again?
CH: Well, the pickin' table. You pick the rock out of coal, like.
BM: Ya. Pickin'table. So, there were coal of all sizes.
CH: All sizes, ya.
BM: Anything... Did it come through a screener first?
CH: It went through a screener and got separated and then lump coal got separated. Like the smaller stuff, like egg size and that.
BM: So, they were fairly large screens then?
CH: Ya Good sized screen, ya.
BM: So, they were probably that big?
CH: Different size holes. For the slack smaller holes and then one for stuff a bit bigger and the biggest stuff were nut coal. one, two, two screens, I guess, and then the big stuff came down on the table.
BN: This screens, were they just, did they sort of have a slight movement, shake-movement?
CH: Back and forth. The coal kept slidin'
BN: Ya. Humhum. And that was almost sort of like a conveyer belt too, the screen.
CH: Well, it was on a slant, and it just kept shaking, and then it fell on the table, and then it came along steady, slow on the table, that's when you get the time to throw your rock out of the coal.
BN: Did you find that a hard job or just tideous?
CH: Well, it wasn't hard, it was...
BN: Just tideous, constantly going?
CH: It was not too bad, it was about four or five of us all together, I guess.
BN: Did you get bored or?
CH: No, not really.
BN: Did the worker always have a conversation going on?
CH: Oh, ya, and then sometimes you got a. You just to get every so often, six cars at a time at that time in particular. There wouldn't be another one and you had time to bugger off and do other things.

Something like to clean up rock and slack, unload timber, sometimes for the mine, no coffee breaks in those days. Eat your lunch on a fly.
BN: So, you had to eat your lunch, so to speak, when you got hungry, sort of..
CH: When you got a chance.
BN:.. you were picking coal, stuffing a sandwich in your mouth, sort of...
CH: No, no, as I say, when you got a break in between, then a few minutes... but there was no particular time to eat lunch. Whenever you felt like it you would eat.
times you had to leave half of your lunch and you had to leave and
at working we had to finish lunch later.

So, you sort of went when you got a break... in the monotony of
work or something like that...

That's right, ya.

You sort of say, I better get the sandwich why I got time.

Ya. Ya. Ya. We started at seven o'clock and eat any time after
seven o'clock or ten o'clock.

So, did you sort of feel being worked like a horse, you know...?

No, not really.

So, you sort of felt comfortable.

Oh, sure, it wasn't hard work anyways.

There was... it wouldn't have been hard, you know. It is just, that
if of like, you know, was on assembly line bit, you know, it always gets
so tiring because you are doing exactly the same thing day in
day out.

Ya, ya, well, sometimes we would go and load timber for the mine.

You know where the timber came from?

Well, it was brought in on flat cars. I just don't know...

Would that have been the S & N railroad or...

E & N, ya. They left them and then we had our own railroad,
they spotted them where we wanted it dumped. Piled up in big
loads.

Humph. So, you piled it outside where some one else could
Down the mine.

How big would

clearly large and

exact height.

They cut the

lengths of timber

size they wanted

and then the

others get because some seams of coal were
small. Did they have to have - the timers -
selves down the mine but there was different
in or sixteen feet. They would tell you what
had a load of twelve foot or fourteens or
different sizes. The big ones
better.
BM: They were round then.
CH: Round, right out the bush.
BM: Oh, yes, they weren't, what I think of, you know, you think of the typical square type.
CH: No, they were round.
BM: So, they were round.
CH: Round timber out of the bush.
BM: So, that is, sort of all showing up, they really didn't have it all tapered...
CH: Oh, no 20 foot slant and just tapered on the top

and then laying over top of that.
BM: Just sort of like a little boards
CH: Ya, about 2 by 4 and 2 by 6 or 3 by 6 or something like that.
BM: And they just to prevent coal to fall down. Once you made ceiling, you didn't bother to pick that up you worked your way up side our did you go straight ahead all the time?
CH: Well, I don't too much about underground because I only worked for about three weeks underground down there.
BM: Humhum.

But I didn't work underground at all, but I did in Number 10.
Every time they ... every three feet they would get timber.
BM: Humhum. So everybody is going in one direction. They didn't try to go unless there was....
CH: No, they kept the same width ...
BM: So, they wouldn't go out unless there was a perfect like, they found another seam going that way.
CH: Well, they start another they make another stroke first

BM: This Number 5 mine, was it a large mine? You know how many levels it had, how far down it was?
BM: Was there a large problem with gas?

CH: No, I don't think so. Not that I know of.

BM: So, they were lucky in that capacity.

BM: Did they ... oh, what else was there....

Wife talking in background.

CH: 

BM: three and a half dollars for a ton of coal?

CH: I just forget exactly how much it was.

BM: Is there still coal out here?

CH: 

M: Ya, I never thought of coal. We still to the Arabs.

CH: Ya. right. We got a coal stove here for a long time.

BM: Ya. I don't think you would throw it away now. (chuckle)

CH: Well, I still got in the basement, I haven't used it.

BM: Well, keep it. You never know.

CH: And we have a cabin in Lakes, we have another one up there.

Wife talking in background.

BM: Ya. It probably would be good to keep them.

I remember our old house, when we lived in Vernon, that was a wood burning one, but my mom didn't like it at all. You also had to put the sawdust in.

CH: Oh, ya.

BM: We had all that sawdust kept, about twelve feet, oh, that's too much, about six feet all year round and we had that big pile of sawdust. But for her it was a constant worry, because one never knew if the house were gonna burn. (laughter). I mean, the house is wood too.

CH: Oh, ya. Every in those days were worth the money.

BM: Number 5 mine, did it have any large problems with water?

CH: No.
CH: It was a slope, there wasn't a shaft.
BM: So, it was just a slope. Talking overlapping.
CH: and different slopes went off this one.
BM: humhum. So, you never really had levels, it just sort of sloped down.
CH: Ya.
BM: So, you know, it was just constantly going down.
CH: Well, it leveled off when you get on the bottom, because that's why they have winches to pull

BM: Ya. Going up and downhill.
(laughter)
BM: Do you remember how many employees they had?
CH: No, I wouldn't know, about how many ...... Well, in Number 10, not in Number 5.
BM: Would there be about a thousand?
CH: No, no. Not near that.
BM: So, about a hundred then?
CH: In Number 5 mine? I don't know how many they had.
We were gettin' about a thousand ton of coal there near the end there, but that was none of the other mines (?) had started.
Opened up again. Alexander mine.
BM: Oh, ya.
CH: All the coal from Alexander
and we were getting about a thousand ton of coal between
When I first started, we were getting about four / five-hundred (?)
BM: humhum. Was that a good rate of production , four and five hundred tons coals a day?
CH: It must have been right. It kept it going.
BM: What quality was the coal, Was it good coal?
CH: Good coal, ya.
BM: And there wasn't any sulphur or anything?
CH: Not much, A little bit. But not too much.
BM: What about Alexandria?
CH: Ya. There once was a flood there.

But that was before my time when that happened.

BM: I think, I heard, I can't remember was it was, some else told me about Alexandria mine and then, I think, there was another one.

CH: Yes, there is another one, I can't remember. I know where it is.

BM: Somebody got close to a creek or something.

CH: Ya.

BM: Would that be Chase River.

CH: No, not Chase River.

BM:

CH: No, it's further down. The creek runs out of a salt water lake.

Beck's Lake

BM: Oh, ya.

CH: And the Creek. Well, there is fish in there. Southfield mine, that's what they call it, Southfield.

BM: Yes, I think that is the creek they got too close to.

CH: Ya, that's right. A few guys drowned there, but that was before time.

While talking in background.

BM: Isn't it just around Southern Street?

CH, Ya on

BM: He lives on the Railway. Avenue

CH: Ya.

BM: He is our neighbour.

CH: Is he.

BM: Well, not really, he used to be, but they got a house between us now.

CH: Which side of the house?

BM: Our house faces 7th Street, but it is on Short (Street).

CH: You say the built the house next to George's? You turn off
you go off 7th and turn right and you are on George's Street, don't you?
BM: Well, ya, go over the railroad trucks...
CH: Go over the railroad truck and then right, one house efore you get... or two?
BM: Next one up. It's two houses now. There is the big white house in the corner and now there is another white...
CH: Oh, is it?
BM: Yes. They put it there. It's ugly.
CH: Oh.
BM: And then, our house is the third one down. Like, there never used to be any houses there...
Wife talking in background.
BM: Yes. Two of them. On that triangle...
CH. Oh, ya.
Wife talking in background.
BM: Well, they build smaller.
Wife: Oh, is that right.
BM: Well, it's also rock. They couldn't put foundation in, so they put--they are just like two storey houses. They are above ground basement.
CH. Oh, ya.
BM: it just ruins everything else. The other houses around.... and it just looks like apartments. You know, I don't have anything against the people, I just hate the houses. I wish they burned down or something.
CH:

BM: They have got too many jappy dogs..
CH: They have got two. They only had one before.
BM: I don't know. now Ya. it seems to be quite slow.
CH: Ya. Had his back hurt a long time ago.
BM: Do you remember anything about the workers. Did you remember any labour problems with your . . . a tenseness between management and union.
CH: No. There was no union then.
BM: Ya. But was there any problems or anything like that? A slight tenseness like a wish . . . I would think they would do something about this thing here. You know, like..-
CH: Conditions, right?
BM: Ya.
CH: Oh, that could have happened, I guess. But nothing really serious, as far as I know.
BM: So, the dust from the picking table did not bother you?
CH: No. Mambling.
But nobody worried about dust. Coal dust . . .
not like rock. You know, I worked in the mines for years and years, and it would never bother anybody. Unless you worked in a rock tunnel.
That was different. Rock is a little heavier.
Wife in background.
CH: They had no strikes in Number 5. Not when I was there.
BM: Humhum.
CH: That was twelve years.
BM: Well, you wouldn't have been here in 1912/13?
CH: No, I was in Extension then.
BM: Well, do you remember anything about that.
CH: Very, very little. You see, I was born in 1908, I was only five or six years old or something like that.
BM: Do you remember anything that sort of stuck in your mind?
CH: About the strike?
BM: Ya.
CH: Like I say, I don't know. Very little.
BM: Do you remember, you know, large congl. of people in the streets or something like that?
CH: I heard they had the army out there.
BM: You remember seeing the army?
CM: No, I don't.
Wife: What did they have the army for?
CM: oh, for the strike. The strikers were fightin' and shootin' one another...
BM: At one time they had the army and it is supposed the biggest thing in Canadian history at one time, you know. They brought in; I think, over a thousand...
CM I don't know.
BM: They camped in the streets of Nanaimo, and Ladysmith...
CM: And Cumberland...
BM: Oh, they went all to Cumberland and everything.
CM: Ya.
BM: They got quite a large force out.
CM: The militia.
BM: Right.
CM: Ya.
Wife talking in background.
BM: I don't know, it's just what I read.
Talking overlapping.
CM: They got mad at the bloody strike breakers. Scabs.
BM: They brought strike breakers in?
CM: Ya.
BM: A lot of them didn't know that they were brought in for a strike and they got caught in the middle of it. You know. It's sort of hard to do what they want. There is some people, I guess, didn't believe in the strike. They didn't want the union... around, I think, it was an American union. Some people decided it defy that union. There were people going around peoples houses and stoned windows and things like that.
CM: Ya.
BM: A lot of people threatening peoples lifes. It just got to a point where, you know, a lot of that happening then. But the workers themselves
wanted recognition of a union. They didn't ask for wages, they just wanted recognition.

Wife talking in background.

BM: It's just unfortunate, what happened. I guess, it just got out of hand. Because of that, I guess, they lost credibility, but because it was happening they lost all... the strike, the whole purpose... it was all lost. Talking overlapping.


Wife talking in background.

CH: Ya.

Wife talking in background.

BM: A lot of the miners got something like a year and a half or something like that... And a lot of trouble getting work after that.

CH. Ya. That's right.

Talking overlapping.

Wife: Just unfair..... I mean, jobs were hard to get and when a mine boss wanted a higher apprentice, he would just higher an apprentice and the other person would be laid off, you know.

BM: Ya.

Wife: A lot of favouratism.

Talking overlapping.

BM: Well, it is sort of similar today. When you know somebody...

CH: A lot of times it's who you know and not what you know to get you a job.

BM: Humhum. It's a lot like that still, because it is the worst economic recession that comes with the depression. I guess, it's not quite like the depression.

CH: No. (chuckle)

Wife in background talking.

BM: No. My mother was a little girl. She was born in '37... So, she was just a little girl. She doesn't remember anything. ... She was born in
Saskatchewan. She remembers when she was small, one time she was outside and it got really quiet. Everybody was getting really panicky and scared or something like that...

Apparently, once the dust came up, you could be lost.

CH: Ya. I heard about that.

BM: Which is worse than a dust storm.

Wife talking in background.

Wife: I worked all the way through the depression, I was never out of work.

CH: Lots of people were out of work.

BM: Well, my grandmother worked all through the depression. She had lost her husband three years prior to the crush and she had got a job, and because she had a job just prior, she had great difficulty getting it, but because she had it, she was able to keep it.

CH: Oh, ya.

BM: At 35, she remarried again.

CH: Humhum.

BM: So, she was fortunate in that.

CH: Ya.

BM: You, she, she was able to make ends meet but she had to send all her children to a orphanage. That was the only way to give them an education and shelter.

CH: Hum.

BM: Actually, you know, it seems unfortunate, it must have been very hard on her, but... I guess, in the long run, my parents got their education.

Wife: Ya.

CH: Ya. I guess, in one way or another.

BM: Times were tough, you know. They never let you forget about it. Ha, ha, ha. (laughter). They always tell me that. "I only had one pair of shoes."

CH: Ya. (laughter).

Wife talking in background.

My father was a reverend, and even if you grew out of your shoes, you still had to cramp your feet in the shoes.

CH: My dad used to say, they used to by them thirteen sizes too big.
They came in size 22 and they lasted throughout his life.

Q1: (laughter). Ya.

BM: And four pair of socks.

Wife talking in background.

BM: Sure, a lot of it is the parent's fault. Lots of parents seem to wait hand and foot on their children. My parents, they never gave us anything more. If we wanted something badly, we could go and make some money and get it. It's sort of sickening something. The kids, they get a car, they get this, they get that and the parents are going into bankruptcy. Trying to give the children exactly what they wanted to when they were a kid. It is ridiculous. They take as much as they can away with.

Q1: Ya.

Wife: What is so bad about it is they get these things and they don't appreciate it. Talking further.

Q1: We never owned a bike.

BM: So, when you worked, what was your method of transportation?

Q1: Shank's (?) pony. We walked. (laughter)

BM: He heard that expression before. That is the second time I heard it.

So, you were in the South Wellington area.


BM: What do you remember about South Wellington and that. Do you remember the Bucket of Blood?

Q1: Ya. I've been there myself later on. (laughter).

BM: Ya. I heard about that. You know from Mark Thomas.

Q1: Ya. we went to school together. We worked together too. Ya, I know him well.

BM: Apparently this rundown old place is still there. It is pretty dilapidated but I heard it was really interesting. How did they get a name like that?

Q1: I don't know, how they got that name.

BM: They didn't really seem at that time .... a very rowdy town.

Talking overlapping
There used to be a hotel there and a boarding house, two shows, bank, barbershop...

Wife talking in background

CH: Shoemaker shop

BM: Postoffice?

CH: Ya. Postoffice was there. That's all they had in a store then.

BM: Ya. I would think they had a small post office somewhere else. I like the idea of a small post office.

CH: Ya. His was... like... in the store. In fact it is still there.

Ya, that's right, Thelma. (Thomas)

BM: Ya. She was there too.

CH: I worked for her old man, he was a chief engineer in the boiler room.

BM: Humhum.

CH: He had worked there before and then he came back.

BM: And what else do you remember about Number 5 mine. Was there any events going on one day that stick in your mind like, you know, maybe a mine boss or something like that?

CH: The mine boss was

BM: Did any inspectors come along or

CH: I don't think so. Nothing I know of. Inspector come around every so often. Maybe not often enough as he should.

BM: Do you remember

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BM: And, we were talking about the coal going from the picking tables into the railroad cars.

CH: And, were talking about the coal going from the picking tables into the railroad cars.

BM: And from the railroad cars, where did they go from there, boat harbour or Nanaimo?

CH: I think it went to Ladysmith.

BM: Ladysmith?

CH: I'm not sure, just I was working on the railroad after that and we had to put on CPR siding and they used to take it up the ladder and it went to Nanaimo. I'm pretty sure, my first was Ladysmith.

BM: Humhum. Did you ever go to Ladysmith and see where the coal was loaded, like you know?

CH: No, I never did. Granby coal went there too.

BM: Did you ever go to Granby?

CH: Oh, ya. I was down there often. I didn't work there but I went down there and played soccer and (mumbling)

BM: Do you remember anything about Granby? Was it a large community or?

CH: Well, it wasn't too large. It was a very nice place at that time. All nice houses. It was really nice, Nice houses. Nice big washrooms for men, all cement, real good place.

BM: It is not there anymore.

CH: No, is nothing there now. A couple of chicken farmers. Some houses around, not much.

BM: Was that sort of, like a peaceful town?

CH: As far as I know, Ya.

BM: Did they have dances?

CH: Ya.

BM: So, the whole town, you know, was managing to build a town that was happy for the workers and they would be happy to go to work.

CH: Oh, ya. I thought it was a pretty good place to work. I never worked in it. They used to have explosions down there, Explosions of one kind or another. Not serious ones, but still bumps, they felt and every once something blew around the miners. (mumbling).
BM: Did you ever go to the Nanaimo coal yards where, I guess, they were puttin' the coal on boats to ship out to all points, whatever.
CH: Humhun.
BM: Did you ever see what that looked like.
CH: Well, they had a great big ramp. You rode up and pushed the railroad car right up and dump them into the shute went down the boats. I used to work with George Cobel(?) here, hauling the coal from the, well, from the railroad cars that is, shake it up and push it and push up high to this ramp right on top and then dump it into the shutes right on the boats.
BM: Do you remember where this coal would go to?
CH: It went all over. At least as far as I know.
BM: So, it was a very busy port, Nanaimo.
CH: Ya. It was pretty good, ya. At the time I was there they were loadin' coal for Japan. And the coal was coming ... from Alberta.
BM: Alberta.
CH: That was 19...52.
BM: And they were loading it from Nanaimo?
CH: From Nanaimo. Came across with a scow, and we picked 'em with the scow, picked them up and shoveled it and went to Japan.
BM: That is almost ridiculous, you know, I mean, ship it from Vancouver...
CH: Nanaimo mines self were shut down then. But SouthWellington was still on.
BM: O.K. After Number 5, you worked in Number 10 mine?
CH: Ya. 1942, I started.
BM: Humhun. And what was your job there?
CH: I was down below rope riding for about three weeks and then they got me outsides and I went on the (locomotive?)
BM: Could you explain what rope riding is?
CH: Well, you start from outside, you take so many a big rope and a winch on the rope. You startin' to go the slope
and the hoist man lifts you down as far as you want to go and he knows where to stop at, and you cut them off, the empties off and leave them there, that's where the main slope is, you had twelve cars at one time, Number 10 mine. You leave them there, you cut them off and there is a bunch of loaded cars there, you put them on the rope and start back up... And when you get there you cut the rope off.

BM: What was your opinion of doing this. Were you by yourself all the time?

CH: Ya. On rope ridin' ya. I only worked on the main slope the one time. But... when they were short. But I did the same thing when I was down the mine, but only with two cars at the time. You dropped the cars in down where the guys were working, what they called the face, take a car down, one here and maybe two guys are working here there would be two loaded cars there, you pick them up and take them up to the bottom of the main slope.

BM: Did you take it up with your own power or?

CH: Winch.

BM: Someone way up further...

CH: Ya. They dropped them down, you just rope them down, huck on the loads and the winch man pulls them up to where he want me and cut the winch off. Let them go and them they took two more down to another place.

BM: You were riding to this mine alone. What was your opinion, sort of, you are riding alone in this small long tunnel. What was your opinion. Did you sometimes sort of think what your surroundings were?

CH: Never.

BM: Never entered your mind...


BM: You never thought about the creaking and the cold blowing down.


BM: Huh hum. So, you never really thought about it.

CH: No.
BM: Oh, that's fine. You know, a lot of people when they work...
CH: A lot of people couldn't take it.
BM: Just don't even bother looking at their surroundings.
CH: That's right.
BM: They are just taking it for granted. I suppose, if you ever did, you wouldn't have worked there.
CH: Probably. Ya. (laughter) I suppose, they never work down the mines then. Never could.
BM: What was the temperature down the mines. Was it ... when you were down there, did you find it cold or cool?
CH: It wasn't too bad. If you are working, it would if you are sittin' down too long, you get cold. But as far as workin' it wasn't too hot.
BM: So, it was probably ideal for working.
CH: It wasn't that deep. I worked at Britannia mine, that is a copper mine, and the deeper we went down, the hotter you got. That was quite deep. Start on the top and keep gettin' down and down. You could tell the difference in there. But where I worked, on the level where I worked, as long as you were doin' something, it wasn't cold at all. But when you were settin' too long, I don't mean... 10, 15 minutes, half an hour, so were gettin' cooler. But when you were gettin' down lower, where the deeper sections were, where I didn't get very often, I was breaking up electric motor, so I was only up and down in a few different levels. But I did go down the odd time, but when you go deep you can feel the difference in the temperature.
BM: It was a little warmer deeper down then.
CH: Humhum. The one thing about the mine, summer or winter never change.
E: Yes. I have been aware of this. It is pretty well the same. Which is fortunate, you know.
CH: Oh, sure.
BM: You don't have to worry about the temperature being different.
CH: No.
BM: We are thinking of uniform in schools now, It is
too hot or too cold.
CH: Ya, that's right too.
CH: When I went to school... (talking overlapping)
they had a big wood burnin' stove when I went to school. One in the middle
of the room for the whole school.
BM: So, did you go to South Wellington school?
CH: Oh, ya. See. I went in 19... I started to work in 1923, I quit school
in 1921, 22, I guess.
BM: So, which grade did you go up to?
CH: Eight.
BM: Eight.
CH: Ya.
BM: You are the same age as Mark Thomas.
CH. Ya. It's the same age as me. Ya, that's right.
BM: So, did you use to chum around with Mark Thomas.
CH: Oh, sure.. For years and years and years.
BM: So, what kind of did you use to get into?
CH: Oh, nothing serious. They got the kids playing around, fooling around.
BM: You ever call any on your teacher. You know, like
putting a frog in the desk or...
CH: Ya. Not so much Mark and I but another friend of mine, he and I
went to school together for years and years, we still go together
huntin' and fishin', but he put on the teacher's chair once
in a while (laughter). We got this
doing something we shouldn't be doing.
Talking overlapping.
BM: What kind of lessons do you remember? Was the class room strict?
Like my mother, she sits there and says the first few years of school
they had that one teacher that was very, very old and when you turned
around, dropped your eraser, pencil, were not doing anything, you got
the strap.
CH: No, no. Nothing like that.
BM: It wasn't like that?
Cl: If you did something, you maybe got the strap.
EM: But there wasn't anything (talking overlapping)
ridiculous... discipline thing.
Cl: Oh, no.
EM: A good school to go to.
Cl: Oh, ya.
EM: Humhum.
Wife talking in background. (What was your teacher?)
Cl: Mrs. Wall, when I first went there, and then...
was the last one, and another one before him.
EM: Was there a big turnover of teachers?
Cl: Not really. Like I said, I only went there to school about three
years. No. Ya. I moved from South Wellington. It was a changeover with
me. I went from one school to another. And then one teacher did quit, that
was Arthur L. (?) We used to call him Lane all the time.
He was the last one. And this other fellow, I can't remember.

So, I only had three teacher. But they had four rooms.
EM: When you were still young, did you ever go down to the areas where...
to the mine pit heads, when you are young... you know... just
to hang around? Your viewpoint would have been different because you
would have been viewing, you didn't have to participate. What was
your excitement or whatever about going down to the mines, you know?
Cl: It was a real thing. All kids would go down because you had to
go down and look for a job. You would go down every day and knew
the kids who worked there. So you
on the tipple, bullshitting
together ...
EM: it was sort of like... the thing just to go down the mine and talk
to the miners. Did you ever use to sit there and ask the miners that have
anything left over from their lunches.
Cl: No. No.
BM: Nothing like that?
CM: No. The young kids...
BM: So, you, did you used to claim up and down the slide piles for fun and all that?
CM: Ya. I guess, a little bit. You slide down and slide down on a shovel or something or a piece of tin...
BM: What about your mother? Was she very enthusiastic about you doing that?
CM: I got my clothes all dirty.
BM: I guess, she got pretty mad.
CM: summertime,
no shoes, no socks.
This friend of mine told me, he never wore shoes all summer.
BM: So, what do you remember about the weather? Was it similar to today, or was it colder winters and warmer summers?
CM: I think, it was. I don't know, but maybe I did. But the summers seemed to be always long summers Really hot, sometimes.
BM: And the winters...
CM: I'm shure, we got more snow. You know, last year we had some, about this much, and this year, about this much. But I have seen up to this much snow here. There there used to be lots of snow all the time. Because I remember sleight ridign as a kid, there was always lots of snow.
BM: I was asking that question because Mark said the same thing.
CM: Ya?
BM: Even Henry Gueulette said so.
CM: Ya. I remember Henry. (laughter) Very careful. Were you down to him?
BM: You know, I was just wondering about the weather and a lot of them said there was a lot of snow then. I was surprised.
CM: When I was in Extension, I remember at one time, the school caved in from the weight of snow. Around 1916, I guess.
Wife: Did Rayvens work in the mines too?
CM: Ya. No. Ya. He was
Him and I started school at the same time in Extension.

If you keep going straight up there is just one house left and keep going past and go straight ahead.

BM: Did you ever, I guess, sometime you moved back to Nanaimo.

CM: I got married.

BM: So, where did you meet your wife?

CM: I was living in Nanaimo. (?)

BM: What do you remember about Nanaimo then? What was your opinion. Like you coming here from South Wellington up, sort of, like, small town. Was Nanaimo a large city in comparison?

CM: Well, it was a lot larger, more traffic, more more of a, you know.

BM: Was there still the horse and car, you know, on the streets?

CM: There wasn't much. You mean in 1942?

There wasn't many cars
But still one side of the street.

BM: Would you say that there was a crime in this area?

CM: Nothing serious.

BM: Nothing serious. Just mostly, you know,

CM: Petty crime. We had one bank robbery.

I remember that.

BM: What do you remember about that?

CM: Nothing. I heard from readin' about it. Later, Not at the time, because it didn't interest me too much.

BM: It just sort of happened.

CM: It just happened.
BM: That is life.

CH: Ya. (chuckle)

BM: What do you remember about the Red Light District in Nanaimo? Fraser Street.

CH: Oh, ya. That was down there. About five houses down.

BM: Do you remember what the public opinion of that area was? What, you know, they didn't like it there or...

CH: They, frankly, most of the people could have done without it, I guess, didn't want it there.

BM: You know, a lot of people said, it didn't really bother anyone. It reduced certain types of crime.

CH: It could be, Ya.

BM: There was no rape, you know.

CH: That's right.

BM: A lot of people said as long as they stayed there, it's fine.

CH: Oh, they did. They stayed there. They came up town, all dressed up, up town.

Wife: Very respectable one around town. Very neat to deal with. You know, working in stores (undistinct)

CH:

BM: You probably had few of them because it was legal. Fewer people being less exploited, I suppose.

CH: Ya. Four or Five.

BM: What about... I guess... What did you do in your spare time? You know, did you play soccer?

CH: Soccer, softball...

BM: Did you ever belong to a soccer team or?

CH: The Salt (South) Mountain Soccer Team. Junior.

BM: Did you ever meet with other teams?

CH: Yes. In Nanaimo.

BM: Did you ever get to the point that you won anything?

CH: I don't think we won anything we probably got close to it a few times, but I don't remember... (mumbling)

BM: Small team.

CH: Ya. The same as halfways to the top.
Wife in background:

Pool

hangout.

CH: Pool there.

BM: Pool room, ah?

CH: We spend every night but Saturday nights.

BM: You used to spend, ah....

CH: Playin' pool, plain' tennis.

BM: That was before you were married?

CH: Oh, ya.

BM: Did you plau pool after you were married.

CH: Not much.

BM: Did she have something to do with it? (chuckle)

CH: No, I still went back playin' cards, on weekends or Sunday mornin'

Wife in background: When we got married, we moved to Nanaimo, right to this corner here, right this house. How many years ago is that now?

CH: thirty-seven years ago.

Wife: We dont' move. (chuckle) This is the place where we came to after we got married.

CH:Like this time of the year I used to play soccer or softball in on the school grounds there.

Then you would go to pool. Play pool, play cards in there,

BM: Humhum. Would you say that this area was... a lot of heavy drinkers or just....

CH: I don't think so. You mean right in Nanaimo here?

BM: Yes.

CH: Oh, there is a few alright, no doubt about it. I wouldn't say (mumbling)

Wife in background: You mean now or then?

BM: Then. They used to have fourteen

CH: ut I don't see .... A few of them were heavy drinkers, but not too many.

But probably I don't know.
Wife in background: The miners usually enjoined their pint of work when they came home from work, you know.

BM: Yes. They used to say it was good to wash the dust down.

Wife: Ya.

CH: Well, ya, but that is not a heavy drinker.

BM: No.

Wife in background: That's alcohol. (No alcohol(?) undistinct

CH: See, we used to work six days a week then. You only got one day off, Sunday. You couldn't drink all day and all night and go to work the next day.

BM: What would you say the community spirit was like? Like, was it strong, a strong community?

CH: I think so. At least as far as I know.

BM: What do you remember of the Chinese, the Chinese ethnic community? Do you remember anything about them?


We went to town about twice a year.

But as far as Chinatown goes, I never...

Wife in background: I remember Chinatown.

Talking overlapping.

BM: You lived in Southend then?

CH: She lived south of Chinatown, Milton Street.

BM: Oh, yes.

CH: She lived only two blocks from Chinatown.

Wife talking in background: ... not too far from Chinatown.

BM: Yes, that's true

Wife talking in background: ... undistinct... go around in Chinatown and look around. And I remember hearing this game they were playing...

klick, klick, klick...

BM: Oh, Ma Jong.

Talking overlapping.
BM: I know what you mean, ya.

Wife in background: I bet you know the age of this thing.

Talking overlapping.

Wife in background: Years and years old.

BM: You could probably take it to the museum. Say could tell you the approximate age.

CH: Maybe.

BM: You can go to the museum, like you don't have to give it to them or anything. I would say, you just got that from Chinatown.

Wife: My brother got it, an old Chinaman gave it to my brother. And do you know, they must have played, played with these things cards and added. That must have been the initial.... But anyway, when my brother brought it to me, they must have kept it on their table all the time and grease and that ... it was absolutely black with grease.

BM: Ya.

Wife: Uh, this grease and dust and dirt and that.

CH: it didn't bother the Chinamen.

Wife: No. They just played with it. It didn't matter to them.

CH:

Wife: You can see here parts where I didn't get part of it off. But it was just absolutely coded with grease. I scrubbed it with Spic and Span and Scrubbing brushes.

BM: You even got two

Wife: Yes. I don't know. They must mean something.

CH: Maybe. Ya, they hold together. (looking at object)

BM: I don't know...

Wife: And that is what we used to hear (klicking). This here and then the things that they played with as well, you know. We would be so fascinated. And then on Chinese New Year, we thought they are getting nuts.

MB: Ya.

Wife: Fire crackers.
BM: That is, because, you know, you are surprised that some people don't pay money for any stupid little ...
OH: Oh, ya.
BM: I don't know why.
Wife: Ya.
BM: I never tell my mom that her only thing out (?)
Wife: No. But this is a (playing with object) Well, I remember when my brother brought it over to me, I said, I wouldn't want a thing like that for anything in the world (laughter). Well, some day, he said, it will be an antic. And I (laughter)
OH: Antic all right.
Wife: Well, I kept it and...
BM: Oh, something like that... They are gettin' very rare.
Wife: I'd like to know how old it is, really I would like to know, I would like to know what that meant.
BM: It looks like it is... I thought it was that'hi (?) (Laughter)
Wife: No. I don't know what it is..
BM: Indistinct.
OH: Well, that looks some Chinese writing, you might call it that.
Wife: Ever dirty... (chuckle,) Anyhow...
BM: What do you remember about any other ethnic community in this town?
OH: Not really very much.
Wife: Japanese.
BM: There were Japanese around here then?
C: Fisher men down here.
BM: Oh, on top oh, ya. That was only a few. They were fishermen, they didn't get involved with coal mining.
OH: No. They were all fishermen, as far as I know.
Wife: The Japs lived all down here where the Grotto (?) is now.
BM: Ya.
Wife: indistinct
BM: Ya. Well, they were mostly fishing community, weren't they?
BM: They had all those fishing shacks out Piper's Lagoune.
OH: Ya. and dow around here, all (old) fishin' boats.
indistinct.

BM: Kelowna, I think.

Wife and CH: Greenwood. They shipped 'em all to Greenwood.

BM: Do you remember any disasters that you can think of that may have occurred before or during your time that you may not remember yourself experiencing, but remember, through, you know...

CH: In the mine?

BM: Yes.

CH: There was an explosion in Number 1 mine, at one time. But I don't know when and how many men ... that's quite a long time ago.

BM: Were you alive then or was that before you time?

CH: No, I think, I maybe was alive, but I was too young to realize what was going on. I can't remember what year. I couldn't tell you for sure.

Wife in background.

CH: I may not have lived, but I don't know.

Wife: And a cage falling.

CH: And a cage...

BM: At Protection?

CH: No, Number 1 mine.

BM: They had a cage fall at that?

CH: I think, it was Number 1.

Wife in background (indistinct)

BM: sixteen men? or something?

CH: Quite a few. I don't know how many.

BM: There was one, actually, Protection mine, and Number 1, I think were exactly the same.

CH: You go down one and come up another.

BM: Ya. At one point, there was one at Protection, where the cage broke and sixteen men died. And the company refused to change the rope even though they were told to do so..

CH. Ya. That could have been I don't know much about that.

BM: So, were safety conditions in your mine really bad or just...

CH: I think they were really good, as far as I'm concerned.
Nobody seemed to complain about it much. The inspector would come down every so often and...

Wife talking in background (indistinct)

CH: Ya, that was bad, That was the inspector's fault to, I guess. We didn't have no cages out there. But those cables, even the rope, at Number 10 mine, they walked down and ride up. You would give 'em a ride up, the slope (indistinct)

But you had to walk down. And every six months you had to change that... every six months you buy a new one and then change it end for end (?) (indistinct)

BM: You mean they had it for six months and turn it around?

CH: It was only worn on one end but once you turned it around you got a pile of new rope there. The rope was still around the drum and hadn't been used.

BM: Oh, I see.

CH: So, that's end for end. (indistinct)

About of coal, between the car and the coal that gives you about two tons each one so that is 24 tons (indistinct)

Wife: After the union came in (indistinct) did that include conditions?

CH: Well, conditions. The unions were in Number 10 mine. (?)

Wife: Oh.

CH: In 1937, you had the union come in there..

BM: So, the union had already been established when you got to work for Number 10?

CH: Ya.

BM: Humhum.

CH: Four years later.

BM: Did you ever have any brothers and sisters?

CH: In the mine?

BM: No, I mean, you?

CH: Ya. Two. A brother and sister. Actually two brothers and a sister. (?)

BM: Did they ever work...

CH: He worked down the mine (?)

BM: Do you remember anything about your parents. Did they have any aspirations for you to do something to further your education or something like that?
CH: Ya. I guess, they did, I don't know. There was no
when I was going to school.

BM: Grade 8 or something?

CH: 1914. No. That's when I was born. 1916, I was born.... I was sixteen
ya. I started school, I would say, 1914, eh. That's around there.
And eight years later I quit school.

BM: Humhum.

CH: I quit school in 1932, I guess.

BM: But Grade 8 was a good equivalent.

CH: That's entrance level.. (indistinct)
We were called seniors third and junior fourth reader. But fourth reader
was like entrance. But... the next thing is high school. But to get
to highschool, you had to come to Nanaimo. There was no buses, no...
at all.

CH: So, it was just a matter of lack of facilities...
if highschool had been available for you, would you have gone to it?

CH: I don't know. I wasn't too fussy about school. I don't know why,
because I did all right in school. I had no problems in school.
So I don't know if I worked because the other kids did. The other kids
were always workin' you know.

BM: So, you don't really remember any, sort of, you know, action or anything?

CH: Mine works?

BM: Ya.

CH: Oh, nothing, Nothing serious.

BM: Were you working in Number 10 or something when an explosion occured?

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 11