Jock Gilmour Interviewed by Myrtle Bergren, Feb. 28, 1979

JG: I went to school in Extension. And I didn't go very long. As usual there was a bully at school. And he started to push me around and I wouldn't have it, and him and I were fighting. And I give him a lickin' but he had two brothers. And they only had one big room. And I'd be sittin' doin my studying, and have a ruler stuck in my ribs. Well I reached around, hot tempered, and -- teacher always caught me! So I went home, I told mother I'm not goin' to school any more! Well, she said, you'll got to work. So I went to work. $10 a month. On a farm, right by that first lake, in Extension. And I was there when the riots started.

Now what happened there, the miners got blamed for it. But it wasn't the miners. Years ago, James Dunsmuir, he wanted everything his own way, you see. And he was going to have Ladysmith built at Extension. But, Mr. Bramley wouldn't sell the land. He would lease it to him, but not sell it. Well, that wasn't good enough for him. Mind you, there was a railroad already built down to the E&N from Extension. And he was shipping coal that way. But a couple of trains met head on one time, and not only that, he wanted his own railroad.

Ladysmith got its name from the Boer war. There was a town there, I guess you know that, a town there beseiged, and they lifted the seige, and if you go to Ladysmith you'll see the streets, Baden-Powell Street, and Kitchener Street, all the generals, you see. But he got permission to bring out 2000 Chinese to build that railroad from Ladysmith to Extension. I saw a piece in the paper where he said he didn't want his miners living in the rock, around the dust and that. That wasn't the reason, at all. But that's what he said. At least the paper said. Them's the kind of thing I don't like, you know.

But what started the strike, was an explosion, in 1909. And I always figure it was 22, but I saw 25 and 32, but there was over 20 miners killed anyhow. And of course the mines were dangerous. And the miners they wanted to get -- well they tried to organize, and they did form a gas committee. And this gas committee -- one was Mr. Les Mottishaw. I forget the other one's
name, but after a while -- you see, after the explosion the company (keep down a little bit, and the men got a little rope?) that's when they elected the gas committee. So after a while, they went in and reported gas. So he fired them. And when he fired them, of course, the men that elected these two men, they had to back them up. So they come out on holiday. And the company declared a lock-out. Of course the miners came on strike.

Well, the United Mine Workers came in, they spent over a million dollars at that time. And they gave a man $4.00 a week, a woman $2.00, and $1.00 for each child. Which, don't seem very much, but you could buy a lot. And then there was fish and game, you know, clams, -- we had the best country in the world! You could get everything you wanted. No pollution either. So anyhow the strike went on and they went to Vancouver and got all the scum off the skidroads and brought 'em in. Anything, you know, to try and break the strike. And they didn't make it. But about two years after, they were having a big party. The scabs, they were having a big party. And they decided they were going to clean out the union men.

Now there was a few that lived in Extension permanently. Before the strike. And after that they had what they called the bull pen, you know. Place to keep these scabs so the union men or anybody else can't get at them.

MB: Was there a fence around that bull pen?

JC: Oh well, if they'd come outside -- not at that time, because -- the union men were outnumbered in Extension, because most of them lived in Ladysmith. Some in Nanaimo. Some at Chase River. So they were having a party this night. I guess the booze was talking. And they were going to clean out the union men. (a paper is rattling throughout, as keeps picking up a paper in his fingers) Because they would outnumber the union men in Extension. Not the whole bunch, but just the ones that lived there. So I know the night before my brother and some other/fellows laid out all night with rifles, waiting for them. But they -- I guess they sobered up, they didn't come. In the meantime word come in to Nanaimo, and the miners...
from Nanaimo and Ladysmith, Chase River, they come up. They all got guns then, and they come up. Well, the war started. And I was right there, on this farm. You could see the tipple, for Christ's sake. They chased the tipple. A bunch went in the mine. Some went in the woods. Through the woods. And the ones that went in the mine, went in oh—over two miles. Because then it was air shafts. And they come up the air shafts, and through the woods and got on the train and went to Victoria.

Well, a load of special police come. And the miners met the boat, they went back, wouldn't let 'em land. But next thing come the army. And I guess they could have easily been a lot worse, if the men had wanted to. Start shooting. But they didn't. Of course the army come in, and the rest of the bunch they just rounded them up, you know.

My father had—he owed the CPR tickets, you know, fare for bringing us out from the old country. And we hadn't been there too long, you know. And naturally he hadn't paid it back. And they come to the house and told him he had to go to work. Or they'd put him in jail. Well, he said, you'll have to put me in jail. I'm not going to work! And he didn't go to work. And they didn't put him in jail at that time.

But after these riots, they come to the house and took my father. And my oldest brother, he went out—he would be about 18, I guess. He went out to see what they were doing to my father, and they took him too. And he was in jail for six months. So it went on like this. Quite a few were in a long time in jail, these ones that were supposed to have bombed as I spoke at the last meeting, they were in for a couple of years. But this Mairs died in jail, in 1914. So it must—he must have been a year too, you see.

MB: How long was your father in for? Was he in for six months too?

JG: Yes, he'd be in about that long. Maybe not quite that long, but the younger ones they kept them in. And I remember the judge—when they were up in front of the judge, it wasn't Begbie, by the way, he said, the finest looking body of men I ever had in front of me. But, he said, you know, we
got to uphold the law. But it's my contention anyhow that they didn't start it. The reason that they got into it was because they thought they were going to try and clean out --

MB: I wonder how they got word that the scabs were going to do that?

JG: Oh well, you know drunken men, they'd be howlin' and shouting, and then they lived -- you know the -- Extension's a small place. The mine is right here, and houses all around. You could hear them. And maybe some of them -- the hotel, maybe they were drinking in the hotel too. Anyhow, I don't know, this is what I was told. I was there, but I didn't know anything about it, but I did see the shooting. And there was plenty of shooting.

MB: How old were you then?

JG: About 12. 1912 -- yes, I would be 12 until my birthday.

MB: So this was in the daytime?

JG: Oh it was in the morning that the fellows come up from Nanaimo, you know, when they thought the others was in trouble. And then there's always a bunch follows. And they did a lot of damage. There were houses set on fire, smashed up, and a bunch come in looting too, you see. The miners got blamed for everything. Most of the miners were good honest people. And there was one fellow from Nanaimo come up there, and he walked across in front of the mine. And suddenly a shot come out, and it hit him in the stomach. A fellow, his name was Baxter. He didn't die, but that's the only casualty as far as (managing) was concerned. But I don't think there was anything -- well a lot of them got beat up. But my father and two other fellows were taking a walk round the back road, and after the riots, --Cunningham was the manager there, and he had a lovely dog. A pointer dog, beautiful dog, white with black spots. And he'd come around the house, my mother was always kind, you know, she fed it, so the dog stayed there, you know. Specially, a dog or cat would. So my father and these other two taking a walk, along the road in the bush, and this fellow was hiding, he'd been in the bush hiding in the bush you see, a scab, and
he saw the dog. And he thought it was a bunch of them. And he come out. So they grabbed him. And they brought him up, to our place. And they put him in a room, and my mother fed him. Nobody touched him. Or put a finger on him. But yet he got up in court and said my father threatened to shoot him! My father never fired a gun in his life. He started in the old country, in Scotland, and when he was 9, and he would hardly know which end of the gun to put to his shoulder. And anyhow, they charged him with that. And he was in for -- I couldn't say now, but it was quite a while, he was in jail. And my brother and them was in longer. Because I remember when they come out, we knew they were coming. We went down to Chase River, and I run up all the way, holding his hand, you know -- my brother! (note of emotion). I was so pleased to see him!

MB: How many kids did you have in your family?
JG: Seven. Yes.
MB: How did the strikers drive the first lot of soldiers away? I mean the special police.
JG: Well, the boat come in, and they were all there waiting, and I guess they thought it was better not to come out. They were waiting at the boat here.

MB: What did they have to keep them away? Did they use their picks and shovels?
JH: Oh I guess they'd have clubs anyhow. Maybe not, but they put on a show of force. And the Jerusalem artichokes are the tubers of the Jerusalem artichokes.
special police went away. I guess maybe they thought it was the best thing to do. And I remember, I think Stephenson was the Chief of Police, I remember them saying about the soldiers coming, he said they got ugly looking machine guns, you know. Telling some of the men that. Yes. It was a tough time. But with the help they got from the union, and as I say, you could buy a lot with even them few dollars. And I worked on this farm and I got $10, well, that was the custom then, you turned it into the house.

MB: Yes, I couldn't understand how they could live that long. The strike went on for how long?

JG: Two years. I think a little more than two years. I'm not quite sure. I can't get the date when it started. (paper rattling). I went up to the Museum, and there's two sheets of paper there, and I looked at them, and I got my eyes opened. This trouble, the miners come on strike in Wellington, and the companies would shut the mine down. And they had no backing. The miners had no backing. And you see, couple of months after, miners return to work. You see, they were starved out. And they had several mines. And what happened was two of them, in South Wellington, well, Southfield was at the other end of Chase River. The mines come on strike, they shut it down. It filled up with water. The Alexander mine, they come on strike, that's in South Wellington, they shut it down, it filled up with water. Now that's when I started in the mine. The Pacific Coast Coal Company. They're the ones that build the railroad right down to Boat Harbour. And they're the ones that has Morden. And that's where the railroad goes. They built all that. And they went in between the two mines. I don't think the Western Fuel was on this side, Canadian Collieries on this side, and they wouldn't sell them any land. So I don't know who was at fault, whether the plans for that mine, if they'd gone further than they were supposed to, or whether they went over their boundary, But eventually anyhow, they blew through into the workings and 22 men were drowned.
And I meant to say, after the strike, my father was blacklisted. Not only him, a lot that they him, because they didn't go to work.

And they thought they had him, you see. I should say that Dunsmuir, when\textit{whether} he knew the trouble was coming, he sent to Scotland and England and I think Italy. But I'm sure Scotland and England, because of an awful lot brought out at that particular time. There was some figured they were up against it and they went to work, you see. But my father was a union man in the old country, and he wouldn't go. And not only him, but several more that I know. And when the strike was over, a lot of them went back to the old country. The ones that were blacklisted. Some went to Australia. I knew several that went to Australia. And my father went to Alberta. And I guess he didn't like the weather out there, forty below, but anyhow he worked there for a while, and then this mine flooded, and he came home. And this Mr. Bonar was the superintendent, and he knew him, in the old country, and he went down and asked him for a job. Because after a flood or explosion, there are some killed, of course, and a lot get scared; And get out of the mines, you know. So he told him right out, he said, Well Jock, he says, I can't give you a job, he says, because you're blacklisted. And I don't know, I'm only surmising my father said well he said when your name goes through the even office you'll be laid off. And my father said \textit{unify}/a few days would help, you see. So he started. And they had a thing down there just what I talked about, a bull pen. He had two rows of company houses. Away down, past the mine. And that would be off limits for strikers, you know. Ther'd be policemen around making sure they didn't get in there. And these houses, every one looked alike. There were numbers, a good job, I guess, or you'd go home and you'd go in the wrong house. But you'd notice if you were up at Union Bay in a mining camp, they do that. They throw up a bunch of shacks, actually, and they all look built exactly the same,

So Mr. Bonar, I'll tell you what to do, he said. Move into one of the company houses. And my father did. We moved from Extension
down. And then when the word come through that they wanted to lay him off, well, he said, he's got so many children, and we can't get him out of the house! And not only that, the main thing, I think, was the war. And they needed miners, they needed coal. So they left him alone. But outside of that, there was a lot of men blacklisted, and went, as I said, to Australia. This Dick Whiskers and I, him and I was cleaning up this grave. His father went to Australia. His wife's father, I should say. And I'd like to have seen him. He'd back up ev'ry word I said about that other affair.

MB: What did you say, you were cleaning up the grave?

JG: Yes, Dick Whiskers and I. Yes. But mind, I sent the bill back to there (rattling of paper). This is it:

Joseph Mairs. Scotland, Born February 2nd, 1892. Died in Jail, January 20th, 1914. Ladysmith graveyard. This monument was erected by his brethren of District 28, United Mine Workers of America. And on it is the sign: Remember me as you pass by. As you are now, so once was I As I am now, soon you will be. Prepare for death, to follow me.

A martyr to a noble cause, the emancipation of his fellow men.

And this official was here, and Dick said somebody down there was talking about moving the grave, or doing something to it. And he said No way! So he said it needed cleaning up. So I said I'd clean it up. So he did most of the work. He lives there. But I went down there and helped. And then I got two sacks of rock, and put it on, cleaned it all up nice. And he's going to take a picture. They want a picture back there, to hang up on the wall in the office. And they didn't know about all the fighting that was going on over here. This is what they wanted to find out about, you know. The struggles that the miners here had. And as I seen it, when I went up there, I really got my eyes opened.

MB: Who wants to know about it?

JG: The United Mine Workers in Calgary. District 18. We belong to them now.
MB: Did you go to the funeral? You'd only be about 14 then, in 1914, when he died.

JG: No, I would be working. You see, we didn't have things then, and it's hard to explain to people in town how conditions were. See, if they didn't like the way you parted your hair, well, out! I think they were really bitter towards the men, because that strike cost them a lot of money, you see. And they tried to put the fear right in 'em. That they figured they would never strike again. And -- well, my father and mother paid for that all their life. They paid every penny back. And I will say that the merchants in Ladysmith, Ryan the butcher, and Johnson, I think it was A.R. Johnson, they packed the men as long as they could. And of course, the people could get by. And they didn't live out of cans, like they do now. They did live out of bottles, they bottled everything. Bottled deer meat, and bottled fish, we never went hungry. Of course, you never had any money. But as I say, we had the best country in the world. Until they got the logging companies coming, and take everything off. And the water run off, and filled the creeks up, now they wonder where the salmon are, because they plugged them all up.

(Rattling of paper between his fingers). This is what I wrote, and I got my daughter-in-law to copy it. I sent it back there. They want a history of it too. Just what I told you, the committee here reported gas. Well, it was like that for quite a while, lots of us got fired, there was nothing (practical) you know. That was all right. But the younger ones still had it in their minds, you see. There was hate, there was hate, in that strike. Friends all their life, some worked, some didn't. I know one family, there was two brothers, one worked, the other didn't. And the one that didn't work never spoke to them for the rest of his life. There was much bitterness, you know. And even to this day, one fellow up there, I used to take milk to them when I was a kid. That's where I was working, taking milk around. And he come down to South Wellington. He wanted to
go hunting with us. Well I'll tell you,
you scabbed! I said, none of these guys want you to go, but -- he was
pretty good. He was a pretty good fellow. I knew what happened, how he
got to work, and he had pressure on him, you know. If a man's wife
isn't with him, it makes it pretty miserable. And my mother there, she
never once said a word about my father going to work. And she had things
tough. But what we did, we just put our shoulder to the wheel and
carried on. We had an old rickety wheel barrow, with one wheel, one of
those big iron wheels. And it was down at the football field. We
-- oh it'd be about 300 yards away. And we hauled hundreds of loads of
that peat out, it was rock where we lived. And we made a wall, and built
it up, and we made a garden. My mother bought a pig. I think you bought
a pig for a dollar, a little pig. And the neighbour -- eggs would be
10 or 15 cents a dozen. So she got a dozen eggs, and a neighbour lent
her a clucking hen. And so we got chickens. That's how you can do when
you have to. Yes, she was a very good manager, and very resourceful.

We didn't suffer, I mean to say. We were never hungry. But
I worked on that farm for/years, and IxxMxx another one, McLean's, for
about three years.

MB: What did the women do? Did you have meetings and socials, and
things, when the strike was on? To keep the morale up?

JG: Oh sure! They did everything. Hard time dances, five cents.
And quite a few of them played instruments, they had good times! In fact
some of the best times you ever had in your life! And you don't realize
it. I know, in hard times, my partner, him and I worked together for a
long, long time, and he had an old Model T Ford. There was about four of
us hunted and fished together, and in the spring, maybe was our last spring,
you know, when the mine shuts down why you'd have an extra bit, and we'd
buy tires. And a licence. For the old Ford. And we fixed it. Anything
went wrong, we fixed it ourselves. And we went up to Sproat Lake there,
even at that time, well to go to Victoria was an all-day job.
And you'd go up the Malahat, it was a dirt road, you know, and steep, and the old Ford would be steaming, and the two guys in the back would have to be out there with a rock to put behind the wheels, and you had to stay there till it cooled down, to give it water. But we could go down to Cowichan River, and we used to go down there, stay two or three weeks. And we'd shoot, the grouse was just about full grown, you know, they weren't supposed to, grouse, and maybe shoot a deer too. And fish. We had the time of our lives. When the mine was working steady, we couldn't afford to take two or three weeks off. That was the difference, you see.

Oh, we had lots of fun. When the kids were small we'd go down there and just camp, and live like Indians.

MB: What ever would you go to Victoria for, if you went to Victoria?

JG: Oh, I forget what we were going for, there was four of us would go down there for something. Probably a football game. Something like that.

And it was an all-day job going to Victoria, them days. You know it wasn't any further than it is now, but you'd think it was!

MB: What period of the strike did all this riot take place?

JG: Right at the end. The 19th of August, 1913. From then on it was kind of chaos, you know. I don't know, the miners didn't get any money after -- I guess the union spent all they could, and some men went away, as I said, all kinds went away, pulled out and got jobs other places.

That was practically the end of the strike -- right after that, and the ones that was in jail, of course, they had to get out of jail. But I'd say within the next few months. Then the government -- they built a road, that road is still there. From Extension it goes right down to the river by the camp. That was built right down to the river. Then. In 1913. Relief work. Course you wouldn't get much for it, but they got a little bit, you see. As I say again, they had to live off the country, actually. And they all had gardens. Potatoes. You can get along if you have to.

If you don't want to be driving a car, --nobody had cars. Them days.
MB: This is one thing I want your opinion on. Do you think it was worth it?
JG: Absolutely.
MB: Why?
JG: Well because the before that you were a slave. You couldn't go anywhere, you couldn't do anything, the boss just run you, ruled the roost, if he didn't like you well, he could fire you. For no cause. So we made it, that strike, I think that strike showed them that they had to treat the men better. And this went on for years. But a bunch of us, as I say, we knew people well. And we knew who to talk to and who not to talk to. Who to trust. So we were more or less started an organization. And in South Wellington, it was a high seam there. Now for some reason we were on contract. And the mine used to shut down, every summer. And I remember on one occasion, the notice up: This Mine will Work Sunday. Well them days, if you took a day off you'd get fired. See. And well, we worked. Thirteen days straight. The following weekend, a notice: The Mine is Closed Down Indefinitely. This is how they acted, you see. No thought about -- they'd just throw you away like a dirty shirt. This is what caused this. When you push a person too hard, they're going to kick back. Even any animal will fight when it has to. The most timid animal, if it's cornered, will try and fight. And this is about what it was, I guess. Life's not worth living if you haven't got a bit of freedom. And this is actually what we fought for, is freedom.

That's the way we looked at it. And we got kind of organized ourselves. And although we had no union, when we went back to work, the company said -- company work, so much a day. Like, $6 a day. That was later on. That was pretty good wages, I mean to say.

MB: Was this after the strike?
JG: Oh, a long time after. I'd say in the 20's some time. But they had big high places, and I guess they thought they were going to get us to -- you know -- kill ourselves a loading coal. But we had enough amongst our miners that we decided 12 cars was plenty. And it was too.
They were two ton cars. And well you take 12 2-ton cars, the company said they were ton and a half, but we measured them, cubic contents there, they were two ton. But never mind, say they were ton and a half. You load 12 cars. That's 18 ton. And that's nine ton a man. For $6? So we wouldn't load any more. Well, they'd fire some, you know. They'd fire some, and they'd get some other ones that couldn't load. A lot of the Number One men they used to work in the low seams. And -- well--

We would only load 12 cars. Well the boss would be after some. He knew who he could get after, you know. The softer ones, you know. The ones that didn't have any guts, We'll put it that way. So they'd start loading, extra cars. They wanted to get it going, you see. Well, the drivers would tell us. So when they were going to put any timber up, -- you put an 18 foot timber up, it's a hard lift for -- even two good men. And not many two men could do it. And they needed a hand, you see. Well, if they loaded more than 12 cars, when it came to a lift, nobody had time. We wouldn't go and give 'em a hand. Well, the trouble was, they struggled with that timber, and sometimes they couldn't get their 12 cars, and they pretty near got fired! So that's how we did it. We never said anything, we didn't do anything. We just wouldn't give them a hand with their timber. That worked so that they couldn't load extra cars. In fact they got a hard job getting their 12. And if you consider 12 cars, you got to go and drill holes, and blast, and then shovel it in with a shovel. Besides putting these timber up, you have a set -- well in a high place you wouldn't have a set a day, but when your turn, every other day, anyhow. And some of them -- it would take 'em half a shift to put that set of timber up. So you know they couldn't load many extras. And eventually, we started going around from one to the other, What do you think about him? Well, I don't know, leave him for a while. --And we finally got organized.
And we come out in the open. We thought we had 50 percent of the men. And by golly the company gave in. They recognized the union, and signed the check-off, and when we got the lists, you know, in the check-off, we only had about 30 percent.

**MB:** What year was this?

**JG:** 1935 actually. But we were working on it long before that. That book I had was 1935. That was about when we were out in the open, you know. That was the Mine Workers Union of Canada. And we transferred to the United Mine Workers. And I think it was a good deal. Because people say, Oh, union dues going across the line. Into the States. Well, for every dollar in union dues, there's a million goes in profits. They own the country now. So we figured it was fair enough, if you had an international union, you're dealing with international companies. And you have some power. If they have enough scabs to load coal, well, when the coal gets over there, they'll declare it hot, and they won't move it. So I think the companies come to realize it, they recognize the union and try/to work with them, which they should do.

I figure on a fair day's work -- a good day's work. Always did. But I want a good day's pay, too. I don't think a man is put on this earth to be a slave, like a horse. At that time, some of the people, a lot of people they figured, the working man, what does he want? They figured just a barn and a bale of hay, that's the way they had it figured out, you know. And up until the depression, around 1929, I would say there were three classes in Nanaimo. Dirty coal miners, drunken loggers, and the white collared class. Well, they figured themselves a little better. Until 1929, the dirty coal miners wasn't going in and spend their money, and the drunken loggers wasn't spending any money, well they found they had to get down on the bread line too. And they realized how conditions were, that they were just the same -- they had their -- go look for some relief too. I think that changed the thing around a bit, you know.
MB: How did people live during the depression then?

JG: In 1929, this is what I'm talking about, oh it was really bad. Also I think it's almost as bad now, only they won't admit it. There are a lot of places going broke now, you know. They don't write about it, but you go down town and see empty stores, and empty this.

MB: And that's how it was in the depression here at Nanaimo?

JG: Oh, it was pretty bad. Oh yes. You couldn't get a job nowhere. It was so low that some men had to work for their board -- I'm talking about single men. There was no welfare and relief, you had to fight to get just a bare existence. Nothing at all. Around the early thirties, they had us working on the road. And they were. I'll show you how crazy/xxx. They had the miners there drilling holes with hammer and steel. Right by the school in South Wellington. And jack hammers and compressors in the shed, doing nothing. Now, governments are supposed to look ahead. They had 3000 miners, practically, the best of workers. If they'd have given them jack hammers and paid them 50 cents an hour, $4.00 a day, all these roads would have been made. Now it costs them millions of dollars for a little bit of road. And they didn't look ahead at all. If they'd paid the miners -- I've said many a time, and it sounds foolish idea, I said, if the miners would have put tunnels through the Malahat, now, if they had it would have cost quite a bit of money, but not too much. With the wages at that rate. Now, they wouldn't have any snow to shovel, or the money it costs for cleaning highways, and salting them, and sanding them. Look how many years -- if they would have put two big tunnels through there, traffic going one way and one the other. It don't sound so crazy, when you look at it, you know.

But outside of that, you can forget the tunnels, they could have made all these roads. And that road that went from Extension, that still is, in my opinion, the proper place for a road to go. From the Diamond bridge, it wouldn't cost the railroad at all. Go up the same way as the railroad. And cross I'd say close to a mile above the road now, where the other road would have been. That would have been a main road there, it'd come right through here somewhere. (college area)
On Wakesiah Avenue. Extension's not far over here, you know. And they could have made it. But the way now, they've built everything up, and it costs millions of dollars. They got to buy houses, and they've got to have a by-pass here sooner or later.

MB: You hear a lot of people denouncing the union leaders as "agitators" and so on ...

JG: Well here's the way it is. There's two classes. It depends on what side of the fence you're on. If you're working like a slave and barely getting by, like you're going to look at it, you should be improved. Well the other ones are trying to keep their high living standards, and making millions, and they're going to try and keep theirs, so it depends on which way you look at it. But, I think there'll be no peace, automation coming in, and the more automation comes in, the less people they need, the less men they need, and there's going to be more unemployed. What are they going to do with them? And there's only one place you can take the money from. Is from the ones that has it. In other words, you got to take a share of the profits. And the men can work less hours, less years. In all the wall work. Everybody would be able to work. I don't think there would be 3 percent that wouldn't work. There was always a few that wouldn't work. Everybody was honest. Paid their bills. And everything was getting along fine. Of course now, and I don't see why they shouldn't have, radios and TV, cars, a car is a necessity now. They had 'em all the time, but we couldn't afford them.

By the way, we had nothing in these mining camps. Outdoor toilets, no water -- packed the water with buckets. And chopped kindlings, you know, a wood and coal stove. Chopped kindlings and lit the fire in the morning, and cold feet in the morning, and pack the ashes out at night, well now we have electric heat, and I think that this is the way it should be. We have a rich country. And I think we should have a standard of living a lot higher than what we've got. For everybody. And I know that if a person don't work -- I've said it myself, if they don't work, they wouldn't eat.
But it's come to the point now where they're bringing in -- well, the power saw for one thing. One man with a power saw can do as much as I say, 20 men used to do. And that's only small. When you get these 6-inch bulldozers and carry-alls. Well, they don't need very many men. And I say let the machine do the work. It don't get tired. And if a part breaks they can get a new part. But the man he works to death.

MB: Did you have very many papers in those days? In those early days? Did you have the Wee Too?

MR;JG: Oh the Wee Too was in Nanaimo here when they were organizing and underground, more or less. And oh it was funny, I wish we had saved some of them. They must have been pretty good cartoonists, you could tell who it was, you know, and it would really rub it in to 'em, you see! So and so. Well one boss here, he walked I don't know how many blocks, but I say six or seven blocks, he walked down to the -- they used to get on the scow to go over to Protection. And he walked down with this fellow, the fellow's alive yet. And when he -- he waited till they got down there, all the way. Then he turned around and told him, he says, You wasn't at work yesterday, was you? What was the matter? He said I slept in. Well, he says, Take a week off, so you won't sleep in again. --So that's a true story. That can be proved. Yup. Things like that. Oh yes.

MB: What other papers did you used to have, besides the Wee Too?

JG: Oh, the Free Press. The Wee Too was a union paper. And it's the union papers that I wondered about. Oh we got one from the United Mine Workers. An American paper, you know. We get that.

MB: And Jim Galloway told me that the Socialist Party used to have one.

JG: Yes, the Socialist Party, that was Sam Guthrie's bunch down in Ladysmith. Did you see old Jim Galloway? How is he? How is his mind?

MB: Good.

JG: Well you know, he's a fine fellow that. It was a funny thing, in the mine the when a bunch moved they generally kept the same bunch on the same shift. Well him and his partner, Jack Robers, worked beside me and my partner for years.
There was groups like that got to know each other very well. He was a good football player. Soccer, as they call it now. He played for Ladysmith. He was good. And his partner too, Jack Rogers, one of the best.

MB: And what about this Mairs? You said he was good at some sport.

JG: He was a champion cyclist. --I didn't know him. You see, he'd be older than me, and anyhow, I was working on the farm. I never had time to see anybody.

MB: And another thing too. Nanaimo has had socialist representatives right from the start. So that's what I was thinking, it was quite advanced?

JG: Well, they figure, and I do too, as far as the working man is concerned, there's only one party, that's every going to help him. These other parties, and of course the press is controlled. The man that pays the piper calls the tune, and they never give the miner any credit at all. The miners were the hardest working, and most honest men! You'll ever find. You would never have any trouble. You went down, and have somebody a lift, you'd give 'em a lift.

Except when we were on that trial contract, one thing and another. They give us a trial contract, you see. And I was on the grievance committee. So the boss, he come in to our place, a Scotchman too, you know. He says, I think this is going to be a good contract, Jock. I says, Yes, well, we'll see. But I told my partner, in the meantime I'd lost my partner. We were working in Reserve Mine over there, so they made a ruling, that Nanaimo men had to stay at Reserve, and the South Wellington men had to move to Number 10 mine. A new mine opening up. It's the same seam, only further along.

So, this fellow was working with me. He was quite a card. Jock Richardson. (?) I told him well Jock, I says, I'm not going to load any more than 12 cars, till we see what goes on. Isaid, now, it's up to you. If you want another partner, you go ahead. Sohe said no, whatever you do is ok with me. So okay. Well I was on the grievance committee, see, I was on the spot. So instead of rushing in like you used to do, and drill several holes, I'd drill one hole maybe, and the boss come down and said I think this will be a good contract. Well, I said, we'll see.
He never got us sitting down once! I'd be up on the planks, you know, but
digging the top, or -- we loaded 212 cars. But he come in our place eleven
times! The first day. And he was getting madder every time, you know. And at
the finish, he got mad and he says to me, (speaking in Scotch burl)
There's no use o' me pushing' me off to gie ye cars if you're no
goin' to load 'em! I said I didn't say I wasn't goin' to load them.
No, he says, but I can see past the bridge of my nose. Yes, I said, so can I!
He figured we didn't intend to load them, but I knew -- I could see past the
bridge of my nose. If we go away and load a whole flock, they'll cut the price,
you see. They'll say the price is too high. But anyhow, we were
cussin' one another there, and I was also captain of my rescue team. I turned
around and I said Listen! I can't tell you the language I used but if so and so's
like you, I says, you got no business pushing cars. Your job is to look after
the safety of the mine. I said if bastards like you would look after the safety
and never minnd -- leave the pushing to the driver boss, there wouldn't be less
men killed. You're job is the safety of the men. But I couldn't say much
because as I say I was the captain of the mine rescue team. And anyhow, next day,
he come in, and he held his safety lamp up, -- by the way, when we started to
mine, that's all we had to work with. You've seen them little safety lamps?
If you was driving a mule, if you hit a bump, you know, a bad joint or something,
you're in the dark. You don't know whether to jump off, or stay with it,
because you might be coming to a hill, you see. I don't know why
there wasn't -- lots of people got hurt, and go under. But anyhow the next
morning he come in and he held his safety lamp up. "Now, I'm not gonna fight
with ye," but he says, As sure as this lamp, he says, the mine'll shut doon.
He says, there's lots of hard coal in Cumberland.

Well, I said, that's too bad, I says, I'll have to go where the
hard coal is, I said, I got nothing to lose. I says, You got a hell of a good
job. (laugh) He told me after, he says, you should have John L. Lewis' job.
And you know, after the mine was finished, I meet him on the street. We were the
best of friends. "Come up to the house, Jock, and see my floors, (flowers)"
You know. He was great with flowers. Well, I wasn't interested in flowers, but the wife was, but I'd go up and see him anyhow, and he gave me enough tomato plants for -- he was good hearted, and I understand his position. He's the boss. He's got to get the coal out. If he doesn't he's not going to be there. You see. There's always a second in command looking for his job. And on the other hand, well, we always put in a real good day, but -- it makes the boss got to be hard. Because if a boss is soft, the men 'll take advantage. **Understand** You know there's certain people will take advantage. So, next thing you know, he'd be out of a job. It's as simple as that.

MB: Well was there this class distinction in Nanaimo between the bosses and the men? Did you visit their homes, or did you --?

JG: No, no.

MB: Did you all go to the same beer parlors?

JG: You'd never see them there. No, no, no. They couldn't go there. If they went there, somebody's probably cleaned 'em up! No, they would never go to the beer parlors, I guess -- you know, if you fire a man, he'd got that in for you, you know. Especially if he shouldn't be fired. And one of the biggest (chance) in the beer parlor, you know what's going to happen. That's what happened after the strike, these guys after the strike would go to the beer parlors, as soon as they went to the beer parlor, there'd be someone pick a fight, you know. Even up to a year or two ago, you still hear it. You hear (that so-and-so) they never forget it. They can't forget it, because they were getting put in jail, and doing all kinds of things like that. They're not going to love anybody if they treat the way that they did. And they treat a man pretty dirty. You know. Lay a man off. Maybe with children. They don't didn't care. They wanted to keep them afraid. And try and stop them from organizing. This was their attitude.

Now as far as unions go now, I think myself there's too many unions. And they come and tell the men, in unity there is strength, which is quite right. Well I figure let's have unity. Why should we have so many unions. One union could cover all the mines. The other union could cover
the woods. And by the way, they should cover the pulp mills too.
Because in the pulp mills they call them wood rooms. But they're sawmills. Absolutely sawmills. You wouldn't know the difference if you go into a sawmill. So they could come under wood. I think plumbers and electricians could go together, you know, skilled labour, if you want to call it. And labourers, that's about all the unions you would need.

MB: Of course in the mines, I guess everybody was in the Miners' Union?
JH: Oh yes, everybody. But the fire bosses. -- There's another idea. You take the telephone workers come on strike. So the supervisors -- they had enough supervisors to carry on, you see. Now in the woods, they have enough pushes, as they call them, almost every three men they have a foreman, well, this is why. A strike come, well, them fellows are not in the union. In fact, in the mines, the fire bosses they were salaried men. You got paid by the month, you see. Not like the miners. They got paid by the month. So when the strike come, it was all right for them to work, they're officials. They're not miners.

MB: Well how many fire bosses would there be to --
JG: It depended on how big the mine was. The fire boss is supposed to come in and examine for gas. He's supposed to do it. And he's supposed to examine your hole. That you drilled. To see if it's safe to shoot. And he is supposed to supervise the tamping of that hole. Well, they couldn't. They didn't have time. They had about three fire bosses on each shift. And they didn't have time. They couldn't. --To do their job safely. And there's one other point. When we used to go to work, the lamp man would say, The inspector's coming today. --Well, you know what that meant. Maybe you heard I said, it was like a young bride having her first visit from her mother-in-law. She'd be cleaning and cleaning and cleaning. Well, everybody knows the inspector's coming. I'm sure every place is going to be timbered up, and the company would speed the fan up a bit, you see, so that any gas -- in the mine laws, they're
supposed to put enough air in that mine to dilute and render harmless noxious gases. Well when the mines get far away, it costs them money, they might have to make another shaft, or something like that, you see. In fact, in Number 10 mine, that's what happened there. The mine got so big, and these fellows were driving a mine shaft up to the surface, and on Saturday, the last shot, see, Saturday -- Saturday afternoon shift, you get off an hour early, and Saturday, maybe go to the pub, and have a beer, and things like that. So they fired the last round of shots, well then everybody would be ready to get out. Well they fired the shots all right, but what happened, they broke through, you see. Well, then that allowed the air to come in. And it short-circuited the air, so on the Sunday morning, they -- nobody worked Saturday night. On the Sunday morning, this Jim Gava, he lived on Nicol Street, and (I see the house, I see that dark green you know, I could almost see him leaning out the window) -- he slept in that morning. And the bus driver tooted the horn, and he stuck his head out the window. Go ahead, he said, I'll bring my own car! And he got there just in time to be killed.

MB: What happened then?

JG: Well, there was an explosion. This heading you see (drawing) there's about 1500 feet down here, then a level, and one diagonal down here 2000 feet, and two diagonals down here, maybe 1800 feet. But in between, you see, as soon as you go down 100 feet they start a place here. Parallel. Well you go another 200 feet and you come up here. Then they go ahead again, you see. That's what you call pillars. And the same down here. And they go in here. And they come up here. And carry on -- that's the way the whole mine would be, like that. Pillars. And there'd be a roadway here, a roadway here, all the way. Well they go right to the end of the mines, and hit the bar, or hit rock, when they hit rock, they they'll start coming back. And they start on the bottom. Well ther'll be two men working here, and two men working here, and they bring everything back. There'll be nothing left, when they're finished. If the roof stays up.
But it starts squeezing and you'll see timbers that big (demonstrates) they'll be down to that big. Bent down and broke in the middle. And sometimes they cave. But the miners get to know just about when they are going to cave. Anyhow, they were 2000 feet down here. There was about 9 men, I think, down here. In these two places. Of course, as I say, there's another level across here, another one across here. And this heading was exactly the same, line, as that slope. Only, this was the main level, the place was a way ahead. When they're going to turn up, you can't go at right angles, they always start back here, you see, and turn like that. But when they get here they get their lines on the timber and they go straight. Exactly the same as that one. But that little piece of coal there is what saved all them mens' lives. I got it in the wrong place. It should be around, like that.

The explosion was up here. They went up here and they hit rock, so they stopped. And they went in along the coal here, then they come in, then they drove a shaft up. Right here. Well, it would be a little higher up, that way. So they come in this level and they come around and they drove a shaft right to the surface. There's a hundred feet, I believe, in rock all the way. And these fellows fired these shots on Saturday afternoon -- well as I say, they broke through, allowing the air to come in, and short circuit the other air. Well that allowed the gas, instead of going up there where it should do, the gas all gathered here, you see. And there's a hoist right here, and what you call have a bull wheel (?) and have a big post like that, up to the roof, and dug into the floor, and a great big wheel. So that they can pull these cars out of there, you see. And what happened there, they didn't ring the bell. There's a bell, a pull bell, -- these two come, the fire boss and the helper, and Jim Gava, you know, he was coming, so there were two loads of rock here, and I guess -- I'm only surmising this, because nobody knows. But I guess the fire men says well I guess we might as well take these two loads of rock down, until Jim comes.
Cause he was the man that did the -- (cough) -- So they pulled em up.

And I guess in the meantime Jim had come up. And he just hung his powder can on the pipe here, and th's hoistman, the rope rider, that's the rope rider, you know, he rides up and down with the cars. It's a steel cable. He got down to the bottom here, and there was another great big hoist up here, pulling out of this one. So that this cable stopped short, here. So (?) the pull bell.

Because there'd be won'e coming here, and they didn't want them getting confused. So he had to fix the points for these two cars to come. And then he had to go back there. To pull that down. As soon as he pulled that down, away it went.

And he was right there. And these two cars of rock were thrown there just like two match boxes. And he was thrown up against the rib, we call the wall. He was thrown up there just like a shirt.

MB: Didn't he test for gas?

JG: The gas up here exploded.

MB: But didn't anybody test for it?

JG: Well, this is the thing. I was the first man in, with my team. I wasn't called to the inquest. If I'd been called to the inquest, I tell you, I know what happened, but how are you going to prove it? The night shift fire boss, you see. As I say, there's nobody working, so they have only one man. Well, he's maybe got to run a pump down here, and something else over here, and it's a big mine. He's got to go into every place, supposed to, according to the law, well, he has to go because he's got to sign his initials here, you see, the date. And his initials. So he'd have to go into every place. But would he stop and look for gas? But this place, it was steep, it was hard to walk up there. And I'll bet you five dollars that he didn't go up there. But each fire boss when they come off shift they sign the book. He examined all places and they're all clear. So I think myself that he'd look at the book, sign all the papers -- he just signed All Clear. He didn't examine the place, you see. -- They all do it. But anyhow, was right there, he never got a chance. So when I come up, to the hoist, I knew there'd have to be a man here. And Jim had just got there, and hung his powder can up, and got
He reads a write-up he has done for the UMWA paper.

In 1909 there was an explosion in Extension coal mine, and 32 men killed. After the explosion the miners were afraid of the unsafe conditions of the mine, and started to (adjusts hearing aid) and started talking about forming a gas committee of the union. Mr. Dunsmuir, later Sir James Dunsmuir, heard about this from his (suckers?) and advertised for miners in Scotland and other countries, as well, I guess. My father heard about this and thought it looked good, so he came to make his fortune. He came here late in 1909. My mother and all the rest of us, 8 kids, there was one died, got here late in 1910.

The gas committee reported gas and were fired. The miners declared a holiday, trying to make the company give the gas committee their jobs back. The company declared a lockout. The miners struck, and all the miners on Vanc. Island struck in sympathy. After a short time, the United Mine Workers came in and helped the miners financially. Time went on and the company got all the bums from the skidroads of Vancouver and Seattle to scab. In 1913 things came to a head. The scabs got on a party and said they would clear out the union men. When this word got to Nanaimo, the miners came with guns and the war started.

The scabs ran into the mine and into the woods, and other people came in and looted and smashed houses. The army came in and arrested hundreds of miners. They took my father. My oldest brother went to see what they were doing, (paper rattles as he reads) and they took him too.

When the strike started, my father owed the CPR for our fares from Scotland. The scab herders called and told him he had to go to work, or they would put him in jail. He said, Go ahead! I'm not going to work. They didn't put him in jail, at that time, but when the riots were on, and the army came in, they did send him to jail. My father was blacklisted and could not get a job. He had to go to Alberta. He came home after the South Wellington mine flooded. 22 men drowned. Some left. A lot joined the army, the war was on, they needed coal so he got a job.
He died at the age of 56. No such thing as black-lung in these days, but that's what killed him. working hard, poor air, coal dust, smoke, stand on and gases. My mother backed him up to the limit on his going on strike, although things were tough, we had the best country in the world, good garden, lots of fish, deer called government veal, all kinds of shell fish, and no pollution. (paper rattles)

We are the sons of those men, we are born union men, we knew each other well, and knew who to watch. It took us a while, we worked underground, started a union. When we heard someone crying about conditions, we would get him to sign. The "suckers" were left alone, The joke was, one sucker but here another, talking about unions, report him, and they were getting fired. Hardly any union men got fired. We thought we had 50 percent signed up, and came on strike. The company gave in, and recognized the union. What a surprise we got when the check-off came, and we found out we only had 30 percent!

I might say we organized under the Mine Workers' Union of Canada. We were helped by the United Mine Workers, and later joined them. The workers at this time must stick together, or we will die together. The powers that be know that old saying, Divide and rule. I hope they never do. We went through the mill and know what it's all about.

Mr. Dunsmuir was going to build a town at Extension, but Mr. Bramley owned the land, and wouldn't sell it. He wanted to lease the land, but that wasn't good enough for his nobs. He had a railroad, and shipped coal via South Wellington, but when he couldn't buy the land he built the town of Ladysmith. The Boer war was on and they had lifted the siege of Ladysmith in South Africa. And that is how Ladysmith, B.C., got its name. He also got permission to bring 2000 Chinese into Canada to build the railroad to Ladysmith. This is how the Chinese got their start in B.C. The reason why there were not many union men in Extension was because most of them miners lived in Ladysmith. Some in Chase River, and some in Nanaimo. There were very few scabs in Extension. Mostly imported ones, and they had a bull pe
where they were carried by special police. That was where they got caught when they said they were going to have a drinking party and chase the union men out. At Extension. One of the gas committee was Mr. Mottishaw, I'm sorry I don't know the other man's name. (End of statement).

MB: You said you were on the rescue team. Did you ever have to go down in any disasters? as I was telling you.

JG: I had to go down with that fellow -- I'll tell you what happened.

In 1900 or 1901, the government passed a law that these mines had to have rescue teams, Draeger teams, they called it. Well they didn't get around to it. At Extension. They didn't get around to it until the Extension explosion. And even then they didn't. But in 1913, they built that mine rescue station down on Farquahar Street. It's now the Serbians or something, they've got it. And they didn't get around to our mine until 1934. And they asked myself and my partner to join, so we did. And we took a training course. And I said we 2 hours, every were well paid. We got $2.50 for every two hours we put in. And then on the competition days they gave us a shirt and a pair of overalls. I said at the time they were scared some of us would come with the ass out of our pants!

And when it come time for the competition, we'd go down there two or three times a week. We'd train for hours. And we had a wonderful team. But, the captain, there was always, you missed something. And the last, I think it was 1939, the last thing among (?) I knew we had won the competition. Only when we were coming out, Tony wanted to phone. And what he wanted to phone for, I still don't know. I was so bloomin' mad I quit.

You see, before you go in a mine, that is a mine rescue team, you tell 'em you want doctors there, and all the help necessary, and you're supposed to have six men on your team, and six men at the fresh air base. And you're supposed to work in, like I showed you here (paper rattles). On the pillars, you're supposed to work in, from here (out) fresh air base. Say the air is good here. You work (here) and you get all around to make sure that there's no fires. Well you can put a stopping across here. That brings the air to here. Well then you go ahead again, and the fresh air base
would be here. That team -- or you might rest, and that team would go to the next one. That's how you work in. Of course if you come to a fire beyond your control and things like that, well, I won't mention that, because it gets too technical -- that's when you're in competition. And you're supposed to have two teams, anyhow. So this, I guess everybody knows anyhow, but he had the other team. And two of his boys joined the army, and he come to me and he asked me to -- a friend of mine he was on my team when I quit he quit. To go in on his team, see there was two teams. And I says No, I says, I've had enough. Well he says, I stuck. Well I says, Okay, I says, we'll go in. So we went in the competition without any training, course we already trained plenty before. And we got second prize. So then he said to me, he had his third class ticket and he was studying for his second class ticket, and he was busy, and a real go-ahead guy, you know. Then he said to me, how about you being captain, and I said No, no, I says, I don't want to be captain, I says, I've had enough, I'm going to quit. But all the team said Yes, sure Jock, you be captain! They were all boys from South Wellington, raised there, you know. Younger than me too.

So I says Okay, so I went in as captain. This fellow said to me Something might happen to you, and (you?) would have to take over. And that same year, two days before Christmas, we got a hurry-up call to go to the mine. We didn't have six men, or we didn't have another extra team, there was only four. And we went down the mine, we went down 1500 feet, and the air was good. There was what youz call a split. This split air, you see, the air goes down that way, the other way well, everything was blown out. It was -- we had to be under oxygen. But the phone was ringing, and these fellows wanted to know what was going on. The ones that they'd come through was down this second one, it was closed and when the smoke started to come down there they come through. This is the way it was. And they come through one diagonal, I says Well come right up. And go right outside. I think there were 9 men. Cause when we wwent in we were under oxygen,
and when we got down to this fire heading, and it was here. Steep! Uphill. But right at the bottom was a rope rider. And these two cars were right tossed away like two match boxes. And he was thrown up against the rib just like a shirt. So we knew then, oh we was pretty sure there was no chance, but actually we could have stopped and waited till we got help. But we had plenty of oxygen, and I knew my team were all in good shape, so we went right up. And we got up where this hoist was, and there should be a man here. And I looked all around, and -- the house was upside down, by the way, it wasn’t right where it should be. It was upside down. Then I looked up a little further, and I saw what I thought was a sack of rock dust. Until I saw a belt buckle. And that was Chris. That was the fire boss.

And we did nothing here. We started to go in, and here's a great big rock. The roof had fell right down. And I see Jim Gava there. All dead. All killed, just like that!

I went to a -- when they opened that hall down here we were invited, and we went down and had coffee, and a lady said to me, I saw her name, you know, and I said, I see you’re Jim Gava’s daughter. She said Yes. I said It was my team that went in and got him out. Well you know, she says, we were wondering if he suffered. No, I said, he never suffered. He never knew what hit him, just bang, like that. You know, they're all hair, burnt white, and body black. They don't know when it's an explosion, it's just bang! Unless they're far away, then they might get hurt, then they would know, you see. But them three -- well this one was 600 feet down. He never knew what hit him, either.

But the force of that explosion went straight down. If it hadn’t been for that corner when they made the turn, that would have went straight down this slope, see, --and the whole mine would have went. And all them other nine would have got it too, they'd been away down at the bottom of this (one mine) about 2000 feet down. But that coal was right down there there was stuff -- rubbish, blown from the explosion right down there, that's 600 feet. What we call dummy bags, you use them
when you blast, and things, all blown down there. So then, in 1947, we got called again. Oh, the same four. In the meantime, in competitions, I was -- we won the competition five times, the first five times. And the same four, they called us in Nanaimo, hurry up! And we went in there. And they had an old flying boat there. I think we were more danger than anything on that thing. It was from the first world war. And it -- oh, I don't know how long it was. It looked like it'd take a hundred men on each side. That's all that was there, two big long seats. And there's no belts, no nothin', to hold on to. So away we flew up to Braelorne.

And (Gunn) Lake, I think we landed on. On the way up, there was a traveler, he'd bummed a ride there somehow. And we were talking, He said, Aw, there's nothing to flying! I said this is the first time I ever flew. Oh, there's nothing to flying, he says. He said he'd flew thousands of miles. Then we must a hit a bad air pocket. Well, I don't know, we all fell, on our knees, in the middle, you know, nothing to hold on to. And I wasn't even afraid, because I didn't know what happened. And all at once the engine took hold again and we went. But I looked at his face, and I tell you, if I ever saw anybody that was scared, that was it. And you know the funny thought went through my mind. We used to build cabins. Them days if we felt like it we'd go and build a cabin. Anywhere. Wherever there was nice timber like that, and a little creek close, if it was good hunting, or good fishing. Well, we'd build a cabin. Now you can't cut a Christmas tree! But, we had this cabin, and nobody would bring their guns in loaded. But one smart young fellow, we used to go out hunting in the afternoon, the evening hunt. And he come and he brought his gun in, it was just them little coal oil lamps in them days. And he hung his gun up on the rafter. And I guess when he put it along like this, he must have pulled his safe off, and the gun went off. And, well it didn't hurt nothing. It went straight along the rafter. But that light went out. And it was a kind of a funny feeling, like a bang like that,
in a little cabin. And someone lit the lamp. And one guy said, he held up his finger. He said What colour's that? He said It's red. I shot myself! So you know, that's the thought went through my mind when I looked at that guy's face, I -- the other guys in my team knew about this, you see. And I pret' near held up my finger and said What colour's that? But I wasn't scared, because I didn't realize what it was. But that guy never said another word, until we landed! I think he got a good scare. We landed on Gunn Lake. Then we run into something altogether different. We had to go into the mountain about 200 feet. Then we come along, there's a shaft, straight down. And a little room for two in the bucket. So I took one of my team, we went down. And we only had the (Camex) machine -- that's only good for half an hour. So we go so far, and come back. Then go up, and I took another machine and took a different man. I took a different man every time. And of course each time, I'd gone through here before, I knew everything was all right. Could go fast. And we went like that until we got right in.

And there was a 40-ton motor, it was thrown up on its side, and all the cars, they'd been diamond drilling, There was a diamond driller, and his helper, and the motorman. And they drove right in there, after shutting the fan down on Saturday night, drove right in with an electric motor. Cause they never have any methane gas in a -- these kind of quartz mines, you know. But I guess it come out of this drill hole. It might have been good gas, I don't know. Anyhow, there were three men killed there. And the same thing as the other, there were nine more men outside. And there was a mucking machine, it was broke down, if that mucking machine hadn't been broke down, they'd a been in there too. But them three, they never knew what hit 'em, just whang! and that motor was thrown over here, as far as it could get up against the side. So that was my team, the same four. Went up there too.
MB: What do you have to do when you come across these men that are killed, or -

JG: Well, what we did -- our job is to explore. And the main thing is to make sure there's no fire. And if there is, to block it off. So that the next 24 hours is very dangerous, if there's a fire. *It might explode again.* So you get to a fire. If you've got cover for all the men that's in the mine, you say there's ten miners there and they're all dead, or you've found them all, when you come to a fire, you put a curtain, a big heavy curtain up, to stop the air from going in there. A fire can't burn if there's no oxygen. You'll put it out. Then if possible, you go round and do the same on the other side. So there's absolutely no -- or we might go that side first, it depends, how the air was circulating. But block the air, block the oxygen off the fire. And then come out. And leave it for 24 hours at least. That's the most dangerous time. Otherwise as I say, it might explode again. But after 24 hours if you've got it blocked off, ten to one the fire 'll go out.

MB: Then you have to get these men out? Get the bodies out?

JG: Yes, well, we come out first, and we restore ventilation. See there was no fire in this case at Braelorne. In either case there was no fire. But we come outside. And we restore ventilation. And we went in at 12 o'clock at night, *we* didn't want anybody around, you see. I guess they didn't want anybody to see anything about it. We went in at 11 at night, without any apparatus, we had restored ventilation, and , and with our apparatus on, and knew that it was safe. I had a canary, and *the* canary died, that meant carbon monoxide. We didn't have carbon monoxide -- we had carbon monoxide detectors, they didn't have them there. A canary, it'll die before a man would die. So, if your canary dies, you back out. The safety lamp, you can test for methane. You can tell by -- you turn it down low, and go up, and if you hit gas here, well, you might go a little further, and then the flame would get bigger. So you get down, and either find some way of moving that gas, or get out.
In other words, if you did find a man blocked in here, you couldn't bring him out, if that canary died, say, or there was sufficient amount of methane in there, not enough oxygen.

MB: Where did they keep canaries?
JG: Oh I don't know, they had one down at the mine-rescue station. We took it with us.

MB: Only one?
JG: Just one there, yes. Oh, they may have had more -- you know, this thing was a hurry up call, fly up to Braelorne, quick and get in there.

MB: Did they use to have a special signal, when there was an accident in the mine?
JG: Oh yes, they blow whistle. The mining whistle around the mine blows at the wrong time, you know. They might blow the whistle for 11 o'clock to start the shift, or 7 o'clock in the morning, something like that. But say in between, if a whistle blows, well you know there's something wrong, in the mine. You know there's been an explosion, or -

MB: And would it blow a lot of times?
JG: Toot, toot toot.
MB: Oh yes! Until it draws attention to me -- most people, they know there's something wrong. And people go there if they need any help. But the safety lamp is for testing oxygen in the air. You must have 16 percent oxygen in there for that safety lamp to burn. If you haven't got 16 percent oxygen in the air, the lamp will go out. That's how you can tell. This is before, now you have it more up to date. We couldn't speak with our machines. You had a mouthpiece and a nose piece. You couldn't speak. Now they can. They've got a face mask. They're much more improved.

MB: And this -- could you take those things out and shake them --
JG: You couldn't touch those things until after -- but you could take them out and blow through them, or wash 'em, you could do anything with them. After you were out. But once you put that on, and got into a dangerous atmosphere, you couldn't --

MB: You had to know each other, to tell them what to do, without speaking?
JG: Well we had HORN, and we had a certain horn to -- one horn to go stop, and one to go ahead, and five to back up, and all different horns. And then we'd motion, if I wanted to put a curtain up; I'd just do like that, you know. Point at the curtain, all done with motions, and that bell. Course we were trained. We trained in that before we went into any explosions. And then when we used to go down to the mine rescue station here, they'd put out a problem. Well we'd go through, with the machines on, under oxygen, we worked lots harder down there than we ever had to do in the competition. Then they had overcast -- say there's a slope going down here, and the return air is here, well just like a road, they'd make an overpass, or an underpass, which they should be doing here (drawing) by the way, which they're not. So we could take this air. The good air's going down here, and the return air would be going over the top. And blocked in so that none could escape. That's what you call an overpass, or underpass.

MB: What about your equipment? Did you have to buy your equipment?

JG: Oh no. We had machines. They brought the machines.

MB: What about your picks and shovels, did you have to buy them?

JG: No, they'd furnish them. But they'd be right on the stretcher. We -- when we were going into a competition, that was the captain's job, to look to see there was everything there. We had a pick and a shovel, and s lints and bandages, and

MB: And you had to know first aid, eh?

JG: Yes, well, it's a big help. We were lucky on our team. One of my team had a -- we were in first aid for a long time. And we had a chance for the (cannon) medal for what they called the Cardero cup. Him and I were on the our South Wellington team, we won the Cardero cup -- I got two medals for that. And that's pretty good to have a good first aid man on your team. Especially in competitions. You know how the -- and I watched the competitions, sometimes it made me laugh, you know. To see these
timber. See, us fellows were all miners. Now these mine-rescue teams
--I saw one there, we put up two posts, and instead of putting in the middle,
you know, of the roof where it would hold something, they put it away over
here, about that far from the rib. 'I talk about the wall, the rib. They
put it away over here. Well the idea for that is so it don't get in their
way, you see.' So they put a post up here, and they put a post up there.
This, if you want a post to hold the roof, you'd have it right in the middle,
and at right angles to the roof. And they had a post here, and they were
going through, One guy hit this post with his rear end and knocked that
post out and the other one knocked the other post out. Well they'd lose a
lot of marks, you see. Well we'd have put the post right in the middle,
and we might have had a little trouble getting around it, but we'd have got
around it. But that post would have been there. In the right place. That
all counts. That's in mine rescue work, and it would count for your own
safety. Your first object in mine rescue work is look after your team.
Your own safety comes first. Then of course we try to save anybody you can.

MB: They had good government regulations here, did they?

 JC: They had good ones, but they never enforced them, until we got a union.
As I say, before we got the union, you'd go on in there, and the max lampman
would say The inspector's coming today. Well, then it didn't matter all the
other 39 days, or however many days there were before he come back. In the
meantime, everything was cleaned up. Everything was ship shape for the
inspector. But one thing I always get mad at, this trip coming down here,
in the mine nothing can stop the coal. The coal has got to go. Well
sometimes this trip, they'd fly down, you know. And sometimes a bit of dirt
got on the track, or anything at all, and knock 'em off the track. Well
they'd knock eight or ten sets of timber out. You see, like this.

Well the boss 'd come -- Throw them on the side! Throw them
on the side! Clear the track! --under that bad roof, and get the cars
going! And it would stay like that, until the week end! & Then on the
Sunday they'd have timbering men come out and fix it.
But then there was men walking through there every shift. And this rope rider is running up and down -- they talk about safety! The regulations were good, but they weren't enforced. But after we got the union, well they were. But I'll tell you why. I guess the poor inspector was up against it. If he started reporting on things, they'd probably move him a way up to Alaska, or get rid of him somehow. But the last inspector that was here, he really, by golly, the boss was scared of him!

And this lamp man he was a friend of mine, you know. And he used to -- when the inspector come, he got on the phone. He'd phone down tell 'em the mine, the inspector's coming. He didn't know he was coming. They didn't know, the mine was working when he come. But I guess somebody have down there, which was quite right, I done it myself, would notify the inspector -- that somebody's phoning down and telling them the inspector's coming. So this guy said Don't you touch that phone. And he didn't. He was scared to touch it. So then that guy, he'd walk down. And he'd be down there, and he'd just see how things were. And not only that. He went out there about 3 o'clock in the morning, one morning. And he didn't go down the main slope. He went down what you call the counter slope. You see, you must have two ways. One for the air to go in, the mine, and one for it to come out. He'd go down that slope. I guess somebody must have reported that it was in poor shape or something. And he had his own lamp. So he could go when he wanted. He went down about 3 o'clock in the morning, went all the way down there. And wherever it was, I guess he got it fixe. Oh he was very (end of Side 1, Tape 2)

(JG: And I had a card from him, he was quitting, you know, retiring, and thanked myself and my partner, who was on the gas committee, for keeping the mine safe. Because I reported everything I found, and .. Our joint efforts, he says, in keeping the mines safe. And he was retiring. And I think he gave me about the highest compliment it's possible to pay a mine rescue man, he said to me I hope if ever I was entombed in a mine,
that you were coming in to get me. I thought that was pretty good.

MB: You had a union -- did they have a union in the 1912 strike?

JG: Yes. Well, they didn't have a union exactly. The United Mine Workers was going to -- oh they tried a dozen times to -- I haven't got it here, I didn't bring it. (rattle of paper). I got my eyes opened, as I said. Because, I went up to these people back there, they asked me if they were interested, the editor of the journal, wanted to write about how the miners got organized. The United Mine Workers' Journal, Washington, D.C. They are mostly back there now, you see.

And he wanted to know if I was interested in giving him all the information on it. And if I was, to write back, right away. Well I didn't bother, you see, because I was going back. Our daughter, she's a registered nurse. And she was crazy enough -- she trained here. She was born here, and everything else. She trained here, and a girl from back there, in Alberta, trained with her. And she went back there for a visit, and she stayed back there, and got married, and she's still back there. So we go back, pretty near every year. Every year. So I was going to be back there within a week, so I thought well, I won't answer the letter, but I'll call in at Sparwood, the town was Michelle before, you know. But they moved it -- it's a nice little town, Sparwood. So I went into the union office there, and I told the secretary, that's the local secretary, that I'd be going to ----- and I'd be there for a week or so, like if the if the president wanted to see me, he could get in touch with me there. Well he wrote me after, he was sorry, he was away back east, back in Saskatchewan, so we didn't get anywhere. But I got a whole bunch of clippings and I sent them all, I wish I'd kept them, but they were really interesting. Say, my sister-in-law down in Victoria, my daughter, anything about mining, they'd clip it out, and send it to me. And I got a good collection.
MB: When did you send it to him?

JG: Oh, couple of months ago.

MB: Oh yes, what were your wages when you started work? How did a man raise a family? I mean, the cost of living, that's what I'm getting at.

JG: Well it was a continual struggle. (Goes over garden, game, etc.) You could get all the fish you wanted, before the pulp mill came there. And carbs. We didn't do like the people who never saw anything like that. They'd go into the clam bed and dig sacks and sacks and sell 'em. But people here didn't do that. They'd go and get maybe a couple of feeds, or whatever they wanted. They didn't sell any. Just get a feed for themselves, and maybe their friends, and let it go at that.

But the wages were very poor. The wages, when I started in the mine, like a kid starting on a winch, a winch kid, you'd call him. A dollar and a quarter a day. And a driver, the one that drives the mule, $2.86. And the miner's wage, if he wasn't contract, it was $3.30. Course if a miner was contract, he could maybe make some more. But they made sure, you see. They kept the price low, you know. And I was just talking about this the other day. When I started in the mine, in 1915, a contract miner got .91 3/4 cents a ton. Per ton. Now when the mine finished, Number 10 mine finished, we were on contract, we were loading by the car, a ton and a half, a dollar and a half. So, see the difference? A dollar fifty for a ton and a half, that's a dollar a ton, isn't it? .91 3/4 --(writes) -- there's the difference. From the time I started --

JG: For a contract miner, Of course, these drivers that was getting $2.86, I think they were getting $6.00 a day. Later. But that's all. They weren't overpaid. And one more point. There was a fellow here, he was a head surveyor. I forget his name. And they had a commission here looking into the -- how they managed to get by -- just the question you asked me.

And he said, you know these mines here are kind of jumpy. They are not a regular seams like they were in other places. But he said the mines are by nature, very frugal. Well yes, I'd like to have been there. I'd have told him we had to be frugal. That we were frugal because we had to.
I never saw a rich miner yet.

MB: They had small homes those days, didn't they?

JG: Outdoor toilets. Picked their water from the well. Wood stoves, coal stoves.

MB: And houses used to burn down?

JG: Oh yes. Well there was no water, you see. Well if a house caught on fire, ten to one a whole flock would go.

MB: What about the health situation?

JG: Well they seemed to be healthy enough. Of course the miner, as I say, most miners would die between 55 and 65, with this black lung. Of course they called it bronchitis, or -- they called it anything at all but what it was. I don't think they have -- silicosis they have recognized.

That's rock dust. Because it kills them a lot quicker. But they told us Coal dust doesn't hurt you! Coal dust doesn't hurt you! And they didn't recognize it -- I don't think it's recognized yet by the Compensation Board. And even down in the States, they are getting paid --millions of dollars on it. But read in the paper they have an awful struggle to get it. They have to be pretty near dead before they get it.

MB: There must be some doctors left around here that looked after the miners. Er

JG: Dr. Giovando, he came -- he was only a young fellow, his first job was in Granby, for a short time. Granby shut down in 32 so he must have come around 1930 or 31. Well then he moved to South Wellington. And he's been here ever since. And Dr. Hall, I guess, too. And Dr. Brown, he's been here a long time. You know, there's some of the older ones.

MB: Did you know Mrs. Beeson?

JH: Oh yes!

MB: What was she like? I heard about her.

JG: Oh, she was all right! She was a worker, you know. She lived in South Wellington, and well -- talk a lot too, but -- a good person.
MB: I heard she was called Old Mother Beeson?

JG: Yes. Dr. Giovando didn't live far from her. He moved to South Wellington and built a house. At that time, his father, he was in Ladysmith, you know, Giovando. And you know, the miners' doctor was quite a thing. There might be 1200 miners at a dollar a month. It doesn't sound much now, but believe me, in them days, $1200 a month was a lot of money coming in, you see. And old Dominic, he had lots of free beer, you know, when the election come, but it didn't matter, most of us would have voted for the doc anyhow, you know! He's a pretty good fellow! And a pretty good doctor. Although he didn't stay up with the times, you know? But he was a pretty good doctor, and he could pretty well tell you what's wrong with you.

Yes, he's been our doctor every since he's been a doctor. I had Dr. Johnson, now the only reason -- I cut my nose with a power saw, and Dr. Giovando wasn't there, so I got Dr. Johnson. So, naturally I went back to him. And I told him, Dr. Giovando, I know him good, you know! I told him, you're too busy, I says, your just like an assembly line, I says, why don't you get another door, and then people won't know, I says, they're going in and out that door, you know, every couple of minutes. And you should have another door they can go out and they'll think the people are in another room or something. But he only goes down about four hours a day now, or something, times he doesn't go down.

MB: When did you retire?

JG: In '63. I tell you why. I was working up at Kennedy Lake. And I think my wife was sick. Well I know she was, now. But she never told me anything. In fact, I got hurt pretty bad, and went to see the doctor, and he sent me for a cardiograph, in 1952. He said no exertion of any kind. Well, I've been in first aid all my life, you know. So I figured right away that it was heart, you see. And well, I thought to myself, if I can't work, I might as well be dead. And I made my will, and fixed everything up, I didn't tell the wife, I just carried on as if there was nothing wrong. But in 61 or 62, her brother got killed on the highway.
My wife's brother got killed on the highway, and she wanted me to come home. Well I could get into this miners' (special)? it was only $75 then.

MB: Were you working in the woods at the time?

JG: Yes, I was blasting -- at Kennedy Lake. I told the boss I was going to quit. Oh, he says, take 3 months off. Take a leave off, if you want. I said Oh no, I can ask for a job when I come back. You don't need no -- just bring your (clothes) (coat?) back. But when I come down, I wanted to eat up my unemployment insurance, you see. So I come and registered, of course. I registered as a powder man, blaster man, and first aid man. I wasn't home long when they sent me over to the pulp mill. As a first aid man. Boy, that pretty near drove me crazy! I was in a room, bigger than this -- sitting there all day! I cleaned the windows, cleaned everything, read the first aid book, and figure out if anything happens, this -- I should do this and that -- and studied first aid. Pretty near drove me crazy. And here the labour foreman came in and says to me, Do you play crib? I says, Oh yes. Oh good! So he got a crib board, and a deck of cards. And we started playing crib in the afternoons. Well that passed the afternoon pretty good, you see. But one day the superintendent come in, well I know now, I should never have used the language I used to him. He come in -- but the way he did it -- he come in and he said, like Hitler, you know! This card playing's got to stop! --Well he got a mouthful and an ear full, I'll tell you! I'll bet he never heard it before. What he could do with the job, and everything else. And boy, he backed up! --Now I think he should have come in and said to that foreman, Are you hurt? What are you doing here? Well why aren't you looking after the men? As far as I was concerned, my job, everything was shipshape. But the way I didn't want the job, I hated it. And when he come in like that, well, I had a quick temper. I just told him what to do. And I bet he never had anybody talk to him like that before, or use the language I used -- driving mules! And away he went.
And about a week after, the foreman came back, and he said to me, I've got some bad news for you. I said Oh no, you haven't! You got good news, I'm laid off! And he said yes, So I was laid off. And when I went to get my unemployment insurance I signed on, you know. Next thing I got a letter saying I'd been fired. And I'd have to wait so long. Well, I went right back in there, and I saw the fellow, I told him, I told him what happened. I didn't tell him the language I used. I said I was in there and the foreman came in there and (crib --) and then the superintendent came in there and -- This card playing's got to stop. (Explains as above).

Now I said, I was laid off -- and if I don't get paid from the first day, I said, you won't have a first aid man out there tomorrow! I belonged to the Industrial First Aid attendant's Association for oh, about 20 years. That's a higher grade than the St. John's, you know. Oh don't do that, Mr. Gilmour, don't do that! --And the fellow in the back, now I don't know whether he spoke to the superintendent, or whether he spoke to his boss, but he come back and he said, Okay, you get paid from the first day. So fine. That's what I wanted. They never sent for me any more; and I was tickled to death.

MB: And did you say you were a mule driver too?

JG: Oh well, you start on a winch, you see. Then you're pusher, and then you want to drive mule, and later on as you get a little older, you'll be digging, a little more money. You're always after more money.

--Oh the mules, them bloomin things! It was a horse, I think, I had the worst time with. There was a little dip down, and that horse would have run up the other side. But no, no, he'd put his rear end to that car, you know, and let it go down slow, and stopping it in the bottom. Cause he wouldn't go up. Well, you're behind the car, and he's trying to shake hands with you every time you go to get past. He's kickin', and he'd try to bite. So I got -- I'll
fix you! So, we got to go down. I was up alongside of him. I was up right by his neck, you see. And I give him a few taps on the backbone with this sprag. Well then he'd lean on me. Try to imprison me up against the rib. Well he did that -- well I was pretty strong anyhow. So (chuckle) I give him a few kicks. Then he's there holding me there. So I made the sprag, a long one. A sprag is what you put in a wheel so that the wheels don't go. I made a long one and I sharpened one point. So when he started to lean on me, I just put it up against his ribs and let him lean. Well that battle went on, you know, between him and me. One day I was so bloomin' mad, there was a brashagger the miners use. They drill a hole in the coal, and they drive in a rib bar (?) when the coal is real hard, and then have a thread bar and a spindle, and you turn it, kind of this way, you see. Well I got that, I put it up against his belly, I'd a drilled it right through, well, I gave it a couple of turns and he got up poop-poop, and away he went! After that, every time he stopped, Ihaclae the tool (shaking sound) and away he'd go. (laugh). And I saw one fellow, get down on his knees, and pray the Lord to strike him dead, you know. It's hard to explain the exasperation. See, the boss is after you. If you don't get the coal out. And everything is against you. You're going along good, and a car goes off the track. Well there's nobody near, nobody near! I've off broke lots of lagging trying to get cars on the track. And you'll get the cars just about there's a flange, you know, justixxixxx that stays inside the rail. You get it so you're just about there! And you need a little more sloo. Then it would fall back down! And I've broke lots of laggings lifting. We used to aim say God on God, if you be true, lift this car and I'll sloo! (?) Boy then mules would drive you nuts, and believe you me, they're always ready to. But, they're a smarter animal than a horse. In a narrow place, or a low place, a horse will go crazy. You go over there -- that's the first time I got hurt (showing scar), you see -- I was putting this horse, come on, boy, come on, boy, come on, boy.
Trying to calm him down, you know. Som he come. He come -- whom! And the names caught me up against the post there. But oh yes, they'll drive you crazy. No wonder a guy can swear, you talk to them mules. (chuckle) One thing I used to wonder, how a man wasl swear so much.

Every word was swearing in the mine, you know. Everything was -- well, they talk about hell, that's just about what it was. There's a lady down in the States, in Alabama, she made a poem to her father and to all the coal miners. And she named it the Miners Prayer, which it actually IS!

Look at those hands, Lord.
They're worn and rough
My face is scarred with coal marks
But language is tough
For you know in this heart lies the soul of a man
Who (boils) out a living
That few man can stand.
There's sulphur and coal dust and sweat on my brow,
To live like a rich man I'd never know how
But in your corner when my work is through
I'd be mighty proud to live neighbors with you
Each dawn as I rise Lord
I know all too well
I face only one thing
A pit filled with hell
As I scratch out a living the best way I can
But deep in this heart
Lies the soul of a man
With dark colored faces and hard calloused hands
We (arrive?) in our tunnels,
Our work to begin
To labour and toil, to harvest the coal
We silently pray, Lord, please harvest our soul
But I wouldn't exchange, Lord
Though no riches I show

When I grow too old Lord and my back it won't bend
To shovel the coal
Lift me out of the pit where the sun never shines
Cause it gets mighty weary down here in the mine
If you have a corner in heaven
When my work is through
I'd be glad to be there with you.
But I wouldn't exchange Lord
Though no riches I show
So tired and weary, I'm just glad to know
When the great seal is broken, the pages will tell
I've already spent my time
Living in hell.

And that was a poem, I thought it was good.

MB: Did you ever hear that song about Joe Hill?
Yes, I've heard it, though I don't know it, but -- We used to, when we were kids up in Extension when the strike was on, The Nanaimo river's flowing and the scabs will soon be going, and, and all these kind of things, you know. Maxx Maxx Maxx, sing the Red Flag. One night when my grandmax daughter was playing the piano I said Play Oh Christmas Tree. It was up in Qualicum. She played Oh Christmas Tree, and I sang the red flag, I said, the Cop come along he'll put us in jail! (laugh) ME: Yes, I heard on the radio the other night, there was a program about the depression, and it said they used to open meetings with one song, I forget what it was, and end it with the Internationale. JG: Well this is the thing. People Maxx Maxx that haven't been through the mill don't know what it's all about. No work -- or when you're working you know, the boss is like a slave driver, he can fire you for anything or nothing. That's why we had unions. And we had a good union. The reason we had a good union because we attended the meetings, and that secretary, if there was a couple a dollars more in expenses this week, what was the matter? Why was that for? Maxx Maxx But nowadays these guys they come and sign their name and they're a union man, they get gaz big wages, they don't go to meetings. 

ME: One more question, and that's about this fellow who shot, that man who came back from the war, and who was shell shocked. Yes. JG: Yes, well this fellow was working out of Ladysmith. Camp Nine. And he come back after the war, and these 3 fellows, started to -- well they did all kinds of filthy tricks. And at the finish he couldn't stand it any longer. He said I'm going away, but I'll be back. So one morning the engineer. They had to fire them donkey punchers with wood. And this fellow he had to be there early in the morning. To get steam up, you see. And this fellow knew it. So I guess he went to Vancouver, and I don't know what he did, but he got a gun, anyhow. Then he come back, so the engineer was going up there and he met this fellow on the trail with a gun. You know, not far from the donkey. But he said to
Hunting? Yes, he said, I got one, I got two more to get. When the engineer went to the donkey here's this fellow dead. And then he made a mistake. This flatcar was coming up with all the men on the flatcar. So he stood out in the open with a gun. These other two fellows they jumped off the other side, and they run into the bush. And he went after them. And there was quite a hubbub everywhere here for a while, oh -- about a dozen police up there lookin', you know. Finally they found the poor guy, he sat under a tree and blew his own brains out. But he intended to kill them first. Yes. Well, as I said before about unions, you can only push a man so far. And then he's going to fight. And he don't care if you kill him or not. That's why that gets them, you see. The same way with a miner, when his kids are hungry, he couldn't buy shoes, and things like that. That's why we had unions. And they were good unions! The miners union was a good union! And they were good unions! The miners union was a good union!

MB: So you've had a good life.

JG: Oh yes! I worked hard all my life. Yes.

MB: Would you do it over again?

JG: Yes! Yes, I sure would, as far as the union part is concerned. I could have been president if I wanted to, I guess. Because I was well known and well liked, and I was always on gas committees and grievance committees, which were very important. You've got to be good and honest, and not be afraid to...

MB: What was your union card number? You were one of the earliest union members, eh.

JG: Well I couldn't say. There wasn't many. There was just a few of us that knew each other well, and they just decided, and there might have been a bunch there -- they were just taking the names, and maybe the way we were sitting there, that ...

MB: Is there anything else you want to say? Did the people all go to town on a Saturday night?
JG: Yes, pretty well. In them days, in South Wellington, a train used to come, down to the station. And when that train come, pretty near all the people walked down to watch the train, you know. And they used to go over to town on the train. And they didn't have cars, them days, you couldn't -- we thought nothing of walking 1 from Extension to Nanaimo.

MB: What was town for you?

JG: Nanaimo was town. But of course when we were young fellows, we had cars. a few Fords around then, well we used to chase around the go to dances and everything. But before that, there wasn't much. In South Wellington now, when we were there, there was a hotel, a boarding house, one, two, three, four grocery stores. Two pool rooms, two moving picture shows. And what else? Oh, there was another pool room further up. And a dance hall. You know, this dance hall to dance was upstairs. We used to dance all the dances, the bloomin' thing would go like this! (demonstrates sway -- laughs).

MB: Were the sidewalks in Nanaimo made of wood or cement?

JG: I think they were wood at first. If Chinamen walked on the sidewalk, they'd push 'em off. Now they Chinamen own the sidewalk! (laugh)

MB: Yes, you said they were walking like ducks.

JG: Yes, coming from Extension, they'd come down here -- I felt sorry for them people, you know, they'd be there all their lives, sitting in this little cubby hole, they'd make their shacks, and they'd get old. tin, anything at all, you know. To make it. And then they'd have the stove in the middle. And each one would have his bunk. But they'd all coop there. And they'd sit there with their chopsticks and eat their rice. And as I say, they had that pipe. I guess it was opium, but a water pipe, it's oh, about two feet high, it bubbles, you know. Dream about China. But they sent all their money back, you see. What a life they had. Maybe have one trip back. And come back again.

MB: Did they work in the mine, or on top?

JG: They worked on top. A while ago the miners come on strike at South
Wellington, they didn't want Chinamen in the mine. They come on strike, and got them out. But there were over 50 killed in that big explosion. But I worked in Cumberland, in No. 4 mine, and there were Chinese diggers there. All Chinamen on the long wall. And they were good diggers too. And I was on contract. So much a car. Take a car and get an empty, take a car and get an empty. So one morning I went there and they were loaded. And you know there's one bossy man. A gang would have one bossy man, maybe one that could talk a little better English than the others, or something. We called him the bossy man anyhow. I don't know how they come to it. Whose the boss.

What's a malla, Jimmie, (we called 'em Jimmie) -- What's a malla, you no load-em car? Oh he said, You sabbee before him dollar up? No for dollar quarter. --They cut two bits off the (wages) and they cut two bits off the shovel. They were good union men. But I think at Extension -- they come on strike, as I said, I think -- I don't know this mind, I know they stopped the men from gettin the union from gettin/Them to talk to them.

Note: Someone Syd? has told me about the Chinese, getting a new hat every so often, they would pile one on top of the other. Some had many hats. on top of their heads.