

Tom Williams -- two tapes, three sides. Interviewed by Effie Amicarella May 1977
 Transcribed by Teri Deane

TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

Well, I was born in 1881, in England. Bloom County, England. That's where my folks come from. My mother and father were just kids. My mother was twenty years old. And they could get passage, before the let ((Rigby??)) across. So, we landed in. . . now, all this mother tells me. . . Pennsylvania. Sometime in the fall. I think dad was four or five years older than my mother. They were just young kids. And that time all their music was singing. Because he was Welsh.

Do you sing Welsh songs?

Oh, no. I don't know nothing about Welsh. I worked with a lot of Welsh people in the mines and they wondered why I didn't learn Welsh. My own father died when I was about four and a half years old. I have one brother that died. He was five years, somewhere around five years younger than I was. And he was born four or five weeks after my own father died. We were in Erie at that time. As I say, we come through Pennsylvania. He was a mining person, been a miner all his life and they had friends in Trinidad. They landed in Trinidad, stayed there three weeks. This is what mother tells me. They were there three weeks and went from there to Erie. Now I suppose you got a lot of history about that time.

Well, quite a little bit. I'd like to hear about your working in the mines and your father, and about your time at the Columbine, I know you spent time there.

That was later, good many years later.

Yes that was later. . .

My parents moved to Erie in eighteen. . . somewhere. . . three or four. Something like that. My father and mother, Isaac ((Wise??)) and his wife. . . a fellow by the name of Dave Pritchard, and Sam ((Bolth??)) all went out to northern Weld County. That was in. . . that would have to be about eighteen eighty three or four. Course, he took sick out there and got some sort of a bug, I don't know what it was, and he came back. Took him to Erie, and then to the hospital in Denver and that's where he died. He was brought back to Erie and buried there in the old cemetery. I've never been able to locate it because after he died, she was just a young person, see, and she had to make her own living. Worked in the school house, had to take care of the school house, made twenty dollars a month, for the old school house in Erie. She married my step-father about. . . well, somewhere in there. I think it was about one, two years. She married Dad Johnson. He was just a young kid.

That's how you're related to Bob Johnson?

He's my half brother.

Your half brother? I knew you were related to him, but I didn't know how.

Bob Johnson and Jim Johnson. Now, I always went by the name Johnson. When I married a girl in Pueblo. . . In the daily paper, the little newspaper there, my mother turned it in as Williams, my name, she said I ought to take my own father's name. Now, I always been ((cannot understand what is said here)). . . all a man ever had.

That's wonderful.

The father was Johnson, then Jim, Earl, Bob. Three boys and there's two of us, that's five. There were five girls in that family. Four of the girls are alive yet. We met not too long ago. All four of the girls has lost their husbands. All three of these boys, except myself, I lost my first wife after 25 years, and their boys all got their first wife.

That's wonderful.

The girls has all lost their husbands, so they're widows. It's been a pretty close knitted family. They've got a lot of love for one another. Now, we meet about every, oh once a year or so. ((His voice fades away. Something is said, but I can't pick it up.))

What were the names of the girls?

Well, one of the girls married a fellow by the name of Ed Weaver.

Which one was that?

That was. . . Sadie. She was the second one. Now the first girl, she married a Joe. . . Eads. He died quite a few years back. And she died. She's the only one of the girls that and this other, the full brother of mine, that's all out of a family of ten. We all get together once and awhile. Jim and Earl live in Fort Collins, and Bob lives here.

I did an interview not very long ago with Bob.

Well, he knows a. . . he's an old timer. One of the oldest around here, I would imagine.

Well pretty much, we have a man who lives next door to the library who's ninety-three.

What's his name?

Ball Moon.

I remember, he run the butcher shop.

That's the one.

In nineteen, nineteen six. . . Now, I don't know if nineteen six, but it went along til after the big strike.

Yes.

Got much information on the big strike?

Not too much. There's more I'd like to have. Tell me about it.

Well, tisn't a very pleasant thing.

Well, it's a part of life.

It was quite a. . . well, what would you say, a development of conditions in this country. I joined the union in 1905. And we worked at the old Haywood. Do you know where it is?

No, I don't know where the Haywood is.

You know where you cross the creek going straight down here on seventh? It was a hundred yards or so right close to the creek bottom right north. Right where that road turns and goes to Erie.

It would have been out near the stagecoach then wouldn't it?

Well, I suppose so, I don't know where. . .where. . .

Do you know where Bill Barrowman's old house is? Well, it's right by there.

On the farm?

Yes, that was the old stagecoach.

Before that road, where the highway is now, before that was developed? Course, when I first knew that road, it was rough like this. You know the first coal; well I guess you got that record, the first coal that went into Denver went off that hill up there, right off the south as you go up past the creek. The coal comes right up to the surface up in there. They went down the slope the first coal was hauled by oxen.

The Simpson?

No, no. . .

The Haywood was the first one?

The Haywood was built after this first one that went down the slope. After this first one. I would say it must have been oh, easy twenty-five years or thirty years before the Haywood was ever put down. You know put down there after they got down into the deeper part of the coal. I moved to Erie back from this Clapville from this homestead country to Erie in 1906, and I worked at this Haywood as a blacksmith. I spent four years learning the trade from the country blacksmith in ~~Foot~~ Lupton, and I come and got a good job in the mine.

How long did you stay at the Haywood then?

Oh, I worked there that summer, winter and the next winter it closed down. And then there was a little mine south of the Haywood south of the highway, right on the creek. It went down and into the creek. We called it the Hole In The Wall. Got anything on it?

Yes, Bill Barrowman told me about the Hole In The Wall. That was right off their place there. They were there on the creek. He told me about it and that was the first time I had heard about that one.

Well, that Hole In The Wall went down in there then up on this grade. You got a picture in your mind about how the coal lays in this country?

Well, I have from my brother-in-law, that's Lawrence Amicarella, and Lawrence, well John did too, you probably know grandpa, John Macarellie. He's been gone a number of years. Well, he timbered a lot of these mines. He timbered at the Columbine. They were both timbermen. And so, I've gotten a lot of description of how the coal lays from them.

Well, we had what you see on the maps too, lots of slicks and faults, things like that. In the mines ((cannot understand what is said here)) the Standard mine was about 300 feet deep, then it layed off level until it got to the place. . .the main place. . . well, it came to a clay wall, disappeared with all this, the coal slipped up like that and we could always tell which way the coal was, wheter it was up or down, by the way this angle was. If the angle was this way, then we then we always knew the coal was down, If it was this way, we always knew it was up here. That's characteristic to those conditions. The coal lays so far and then you'll lose it, and then squeeze down and you'll see a rock coming up between it. And, of course if the coal was large, the larger it was, the cheaper it was to work. Like the Simpson turned out

to be the largest seam of coal we ever found down there.

It was a fifteen foot wall.

Yes, all the way to ten or twelve, fifteen feet thick. You could mine that and mine enough of it to operate very economically. But you lose a lot of withdrawal of the amount you got. You very seldom got over fifty percent of the coal. Keep that in your mind when you see this picture on the back. And it's all been. . . I don't believe that. . . because I seen so much of it. I seen these fellows when they lose a cable out in the mine and it hasn't been all extracted. Which it wasn't.

So, in other words, where it's marked "Cleared Out", that still could have a lot of coal in it?

Yes, I'll say fifty percent, because they never could get it. ((Unintelligible here)) That's one thing that makes this strip mining, this period we're going through now with this coal go so strong, so economical. And being in a higher bracket of value right now, due to several conditions. They can extract that and get a hundred percent. Which means so much. Now take that big seam of coal in Wyoming, out around Hamily. There's two, three feet of coal, there's several hundred feet of coal. Different thing one on top of another. But all around the edges until you get to 150 feet, you can take it all out and get a hundred percent. You can see there's a lot of difference in getting a hundred percent and in getting fifty or seventy-five. Now, when most all of these leases made by the Union Pacific and other land grants, they had a clause in there you were supposed to extract seventy-five percent. That's all they recognized, seventy-five percent. Well, there's a difference in profit. Even in seventy-five percent and a hundred percent when the expenses are practically the same.

That's the first time anyone's ever told me this.

Is that so? You remember or being told about the period when coal miners, except old John Lewis was the one who priced himself out of business, well, I went all through that period and it's very rigid in my mind now. That wasn't the thing that priced him out of the business, that was the period of time when oil was just coming in. Take fifty years ago, you know, and a little before that, maybe sixty. It was just coming into the period when oil was cheap. You could buy gasoline here for maybe five, six cents a gallon. You could buy oil at the pump for crude oil to well for 75¢ a barrel. One time, we used crude oil in the engines we had. But that would have steadily raised you see. But the big thing that developed the coal industry and all this whole thing is when they found a way to burn it. When they found a way to grind this coal into powder and blow it in and burn it in suspension. It's just doing the same thing as they did to the oil. And it made a cheaper way to handle it. It made a way to use the coal we used to call. . . coal that was not usable, not marketable. All this coal went over what we used to call an inch and a half screen and under that was practically giveaway. All the coal they burn now has got to be under that. The very coal they used to throw away and the very coal that used to glut the market is the one that gets the big price now and is the easiest to produce. And that's why the coal ((unintelligible here)). If they had the same conditions in the economy now as they did in 1900, well, the turn of the century, we wouldn't be in the condition we are now. And if they hadn't found this way. You see, they found this way in the locomotive industry more than the stationary. The first stationary plant that burnt coal was out here. Belmont?

Belmont, yes.

They built that and put the boilers in that to handle that kind of a thing. Well, now all our coal is burnt that. . . they take all these trainloads going East. Our coal is throwaway. My brothers and I, we ((opened?)) a mine up in Hanel Wyoming. And we threw coal away, everything that goes through that screen. That's black coal, we threw out on the prairie. Along come that war, you know, and they come pick up

And, of course, closed mines

price of crude oil coal industry

stationary engine

opened mine

Columbine Mine
 that coal, picked up a lot of dirt off, we couldn't sell at all. Down at the Columbine, we had for domestic coal, we use to have what they call a ((Bonie head??)) that was kind of an impurity. Well, the railroad came along and they found out that impurity had more BTU's in it than a lot of the other dump good coal. So they would take that. And we used to throw it away on the ((dirt dump??)). That's what caused a lot of these fires. These old dumps like the one down on the Standard. So that's why we're getting so much of the big stuff. Course, the time will come, won't be too many years, when we'll burn that. And then they'll go underground. They got so much of it to do. But then it'll be a new type of mining. Course, they are into that now. They got that kind of equipment. They can go underground and mine over, but they can never get the 100% extraction.

Coal Seam
Do you think they'll start that around here?

Well, the funny thing about this piece of coal, it comes up here from Eldorado Springs and runs across the country north and east. There's a strip here about two miles wide, more or less. It runs all over to the corner and it runs all over to, well. . . what's that little town. . .

*Grant Mine
Chisim Mine*
Frederick?

Oh, Frederick. Now my folks came in 1902 and opened up a mine close to the Grant mine or the ((Chisick??)) mine it was called then, on the same land. It runs all the way and there's places where you find it scattered here and there. There's a big fault, and that's what held this down until whatever the ((Unintelligible)) and heated up and it disintegrated. And this pattern was like a fishbone and that fault comes all the way and goes all the way there for about sixty miles. And then it jumps and we don't see any more of it until we get into Montana. . . drift over the mountain, don't know the course something held that down, and we get it in ((Hanna)) over the other side in ((Haden??)). Lot of coal mining over in that. . . on the Gunnison River. But we don't get much of this all the way, it kind of fades out until it gets into Illinois, Pennsylvania. And then we find a lot of flat places, that's where you find it. But it's funny how it's controlled and held in places. You can follow it up to Seattle, lot of places where it shows up. There's a lot of coal in this country yet. For instance, this coal up around ((Golden or Boulder, can't tell which)) it comes to the surface there. Under the old Tabor Opera House there's eleven hundred feet of that seam of coal. Now, I was down under the old Tabor Opera House, let's see, I was seventeen and. . .

Tabor Opera House
Now, is that the one in Denver?

Yea, the old theater.

Yes, I remember. I used to go to plays there when I was a little girl.

Well, old Tabor. . . I forget who was running it at the time, but ((Frank Kirkendal's??)) half brother was ((Lake fishing??)) there and we went to visit him when I was seventeen years old. It went down, and there was a man taking out rods for the well and he said he had dug that well. He said he drilled and it was eleven hundred feet it totaled to down to the water where they found that seam of coal. It crops out. So, there's lots and lots of coal that's gonna be mined here. It's impossible under the conditions to mine it now, but we don't know what's going to happen in two, three hundred years from now.

When first came to Lafayette
What mines did you work in around here?

Well, as I say, when I came to Lafayette, I was twelve years old. That would be. . . 1893. There was a big Fourth of July celebration. They had a big ball park up here where the school house was. There were no buildings, there was nothing around here, it

was pasture land. And the next time it was 1902. I come to visit and I went down the ((Sixen?? I'm sure this isn't it, but it sounds most like what he says here)) mine, and spent the day with some friends. At that time anybody could go down the shaft, they paid no attention, yea, yea, go down and run around there. Nedley was superintendant, you've heard a lot about him. . .

*Nedley
mine super.*
No.

You haven't heard about Nedley? He was one of the old characters in this town. I thought you'd get him first. Do you know the Swaggarts?

I know Clara, the granddaughter.

Well, they had about four boys. This happened in. . . somewhere around 1910, just before the strike. There were big boys here then that worked in the mine, and those were on machines. And at that time, these two were working on the machines at night, and they went down went way up to where the old Strathmore. . .

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE.

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO:

*Standard
mine*
. . . when I first came to this country, see the picture of that? They're on two wheels. They work on the big board and it's slanting, and it stands on two wheels about that high. They drag that thing about half a mile. ((Unintelligible)) And I heard them two fellas laugh about that.

Well, Nedley, he was the one who was the first superintendant down at the Standard. And he's the first man I worked for at the Standard. That would have been in about 1906 or 1907. I think the Standard was started in 1905.

I don't have much information about the standard. No one seems to remember much about it. Was it a pretty large mine?

*Rankin
mine*
Oh, yea, we had about 600 men working at one time. It was one of the biggest. Wasn't as big as the Simpson, But it was a very prominent place. Did you ever see a string of men walking in the morning? Everyone walked from town. Do you know where the ((Rankin??)) was? Well, that's down that road, just going straight down towards the old Standard ((Unintelligible)) out of town there. And you go down that way and you take a little jog south and then there's the old road that goes down to the Standard. Well, that's the old road. This road here goes past the old Simpson Pond where you dump all the old water out and the old dump there, the old pond by there between the railroad tracks and the old dirt dump, where all them houses was. Well, that old road down by there and the Rankin was just on the hill before you went down to the creek. And old man Rankin. . .

That was a coal mine? That's the first time I heard of the Rankin.

*Jack
Hawthorne*
Really? That's an old, old mine, well as old as the Simpson, or a lot of the other mines, the Haywood, or a lot of mines up here in Louisville, the Rex, one two. Jack Hawthorn, you ever hear of him?

No sir.

Jack Hawthorne was an old electrician here for the Rocky Mountain Fuel for years. Yea, they sent him and I up there, we took the pump out, the day of the first World War. When the war was over. . . it was nineteen. . . oh, what was that, it was in the fall, you remember when. . .

November 11? That was when the armistace was declared.

Well, it started out on the 19th, do you remember that? It had a day or so early or late, a week or so early or late. But the 19th was when they had the first celebration. And of course it was changed. Now the war you're speaking about was, I don't know. . .

That's all right, you're doing beautifully.

I catch myself now, and I can't remember. Names and things don't come very vividly to me. And every once and awhile a whole bunch will come to me. The ((Abinesses??)) was an old family here, an old time family. *Abernathy*

Yes, they were.

I tried for the longest time to see if there were. . .there was Sacks and there was three of them, which were very prominant mule skimmers. In that day the mule skinner was the principle man around, if he wouldn't work, nobody else could work.

MULES

The mules were really cared for.

Well, yes. . .yes and no. They were pretty rough on mules. The mule had to be. . . well, they only lived so long you see. . .

I have the names of some of the mules down at the Columbine and I have the names of all the mules at the Simpson.

I couldn't remember the names of all the mules. One time at the Standard, we had nineteen drivers, at one time.

Oh, my.

Yea, I shod them mules. Done everything for years. As far as the names of them. . . ((Unintelligible)) didn't interst me much. I was down at the Columbine when old man ((Pierdon??)) brought all them pretty mules from Missouri. He brought mules that weighed 1800 lbs. And the first thing he wanted done was to have their feet trimmed and shoes put on. And half of them you couldn't do it, you had to hog-tie them. You probably heard about that old mule down at the Haywood mine, he killed two or three drivers and he never would let anyone near him.

*Reardon
Haywood
mine*

Well, no.

You never heard about him? Well, he was a wild one. I started working for them about 1905 or 1906 around in there. The reason I remember so much about that particular time, one of my daughters was born in Erie in 1906. And she was born the same day as one of old Doc Porter's girls. I think the second girl. He was the doc at that time.

*Doc
Porter*

Yes, I knew Doc Porter.

And he was our doctor til. . .til. . .well, he moved away from here. Nice doctor.

Yes, he was. He was quite a man.

Quite a man, quite a man. As I look over it now, he wasn't so richly given with doctor's knowledge as you think of doctors today. But he was. . .a family doctor. And the reason I say that is he was my doctor from that time when my daughter was born until. . .well, all the family.

children
How many children did you have?

I had seven.

And their names?

Children's names, where born, etc.
 Well, there was. . . Berth, she was a clerk at the Columbine for a long, long time, also clerk at the Standard. And she married. She died of an appendix operation when she was twenty years old. She was a wonderful girl. She had three persons working for her when she was at the Columbine. I used to worry. I used to tell old Kurt, he was my boss. . . I used to worry. Well you see, you used to carry this cash. Everybody paid in cash at that time. All your money from the oil company in a little envelope painted gold. He'd give her that money when she was working as clerk there at the Simpson and she'd take it over to the Columbine in a cart to pay it. And I worried. One day, I told the manager about that, I worried about that, and he says, "If you was half as good as she is, there be some use to you." He was one of them characters, you know. And she never had any trouble. She had an appendix operation and died. Of course, Potter was the doctor that sent her to Denver. But they made a mistake and operated when they shouldn't have because she had a cold. When they operated on her it was a Monday morning. I'd been there all night, stayed there. So I come back and I come by the office and I told him. I told him they operated, and he says, "Oh, my god." Just like that, that's the expression. He said he'd sent her there just for observation and she had this attack and they operated on her and she died the next Friday. That's my first daughter. My second daughter, she's buried in California. There was fifteen months difference in their age. And my third daughter, she's the one that was born in 1906. And my fourth daughter was born down by the Haywood in one of them company houses in 1912.

What was her name?

Her name is Helen. She's still alive in California. She's done very well. After her mother died, I sent her to a school in Denver. She took up bookkeeping. . . ((Unintelligible)) secretary work. And her last work was twelve or thirteen years with a sugar company. She was secretary to the president. And then I had these two boys. A boy by the name of Eldon and Carl.

My husband told me you had lost Eldon.

House lived in
 Yea, he's buried here in our lot. He was seventeen years old and he had an ((??)) heart, and they didn't know what to do then. Now, they would have repaired it. Went to school til he was seventeen and he had a hard time. And the principle gave him his diploma. ((Something said here)) and he died here in this little house across from the City Hall. That's where we lived.

On the corner there?

No. . . it's down next to the ((??)) house, the square house there.

Oh, um hum.

I bought that house about 1916 or 1917.

Pat Graves lives there now. (204 E Simpson St)

I bought that house for \$400. Course, it wasn't in the shape it's in now. It had three bedrooms on the one side. They took one bedroom and made a bathroom out of it. But, raised my family now.

Carl and my husband were boyhood friends.

Oh, tell me again.

Well, they lived at the Columbine, and their name was Amicarella or Macarellie.

Macarellie?

And my husband's name is Claude.

Well, he'll remember me then.

Yes, he does.

Did his dad run the ((stable ball??))

No, he was a timberman.

Yea, yea. . .he's dead.

Yes. Do you have a lot of pictures of the old mines?

No. No, I haven't got. I have a picture of the old State mine. I went over to the old State mine as manager, superintendant. . .pit boss. Only stayed there about a year then I went back to the Columbine. I spent about nineteen years with Rocky Mountain Fuel. ((Can't hear what he says.))

Were you there when they had the trouble at the Columbine?

Well, I was. . .((Unintelligible)) J.C. Williams come over to my house, took me out. I was top forman at the time. I done all those things, you know. Jake came just about sun up, he told me he'd be there in the morning. So, just about sun up he come right to the door, says, let's go down and see what's going on. Course, we knew the set up. We knew the intentions, not killing intentions. I heard those guys giving instructions about shooting. And they told him not. . . don't do any shooting until I say so. And he was hole up by the water tank. And was a stake out down by the blacksmith's shop right around the back where people always came in ((Unintelligible)) and they came in, what did they call them, State Police?

Yes, Militia.

And I remember that very distinct now. He ran to each of these, he had about six or eight ((??)) and he give each of them a hose to wrap around them, a big rubber hose they could strap around them so if anybody took after them they'd have something to protect themselves with. We all have our opinion about what started the shooting. They was told not to do it but they do it anyway, like people do. And then when that was over, it cooled down and the crowd went back after the first blast. As soon as the shooting started the crowd was rushing right in. And then there was some shooting started from the water tank down there. Stopped them. And then they stopped and run back, they was only a bunch of young kids, only a bunch of kids. But then they was kids with a little better advice would have done exactly what they did. They gave us some bad, poor advice at that time. It was kinda sad. So we picked these fellas up and took them down to the doctor's office. We had a office down there for the ((??)). So we grabbed these people and took them there, and I went outside lookin to see if there was any more and I met old Doc Bixler ← ((Picksler??)) you've heard of him, he was the first doctor to come in here. So he was all excited of course, he'd come down there out on the prairie with a suitcase, and he said "What in the hell is goin on here?" And I says, well it's them,

Amicarella

State Mine

Strike

Militia

Bixler ←

it's them people down there. He wanted to know where they was at and I took him down in there. So I do know the situation pretty well.

Do you remember the names of the men who were shot that day?

No, no I don't.

Do you remember the Klu-Klux-Klan when it was in Lafayette?

Klu-Klux-Klan
 Yea, I do pretty well. I don't know anything nasty about them or anything like that cause they weren't too bad as far as I could understand then. I remember the time they went down to the Catholic Church to the old priest, scared him to death. Didn't mean to, I don't think they meant to. And I was in the old Congregational Church there one night when we was having services and here come in a whole bunch of them and marched right in and to the preacher. Me, I just don't know what the theory was then. Had them come over to my house one night and invite me to join the, I forget what you call it, people who were foreign-born. You couldn't belong to the Klan if you were foreign-born you had to be a ((??)). But they had this organization and they dressed in black instead of white. So they come over to my door one night had some friends, called me with an invitation. Which I was. . . didn't have anything against them, thought they had their place in ((??)). But I do know, I worked in 1911 Bob Johnson and I took a trip to Oregon. Went to Portland. And we got a job on the river where they put the ((dals??)) where they put that big dam. Well, we. . . I got a job there as a blacksmith. We got in there one night come up on one of those boats from Portland, got in there in the evening, and I didn't know where it was, but it was a couple of miles. So Bob and I, we walked out and it was just about supertime. I had fifty cents and Bob didn't have anything. So I went to the blacksmith's shop and asked the old blacksmith for a job. Well, he says, "I haven't got a fire for you now, but I can put you on as a helper." Alright. So I took that and he gave me a ticket to the mess house. You got so much a day and \$1.75 a day and your board. I worked quite a little ((??)) there. And these I.W.W. was preaching every night at the bunk house. I didn't pay, I didn't go. . . didn't know much about it. Didn't know what the theory was. But I had read quite a lot about the old Haywood ((Pettypointers??)) you hear anything about them? Them was the people who run this strike in Cripple Creek about. . . oh, it would be somewhere. . . 1890, and 1900, somewhere around in there. And you probably read about that big shooting match they had in there. Well, they were the same guys and I had read about them, didn't like them too much. Their idea was, like some people now, destruction all the time. But what I know about them. We was drilling holes all around there where the building, around by the river there. It had some holes that were thirty-two feet deep. And they run along at night, pulled the plug and filled them with steel. That's about all I know about them.

Big Str. place
You were going to tell me about the big strike.

Here in a. . .

Lafayette.

Lafayette. Well, I was over at the Columbine. I worked at the Columbine there. As I say, I joined the first few years at the Haywood. Had two or three years and went back to the Columbine. And that was about five years time in there. And I'd worked ((Unintelligible)). Finally, I was offered this job down below. Did you ever hear of a man. . . oh, let's see, I forget now. . . McFaddon?

Um hum.

Pat McFaddon. . . When old Nedley left the Columbine and went down in Southern Colorado

Peltien

with old Pete Pelcheteer and opened up a big mine down there, McFaddon was put in as superintendent. Well, he got himself in a mess in this way. He sold his places to these pool hogs, you know, easy mining, easy money. And they just hogged it. And that's why they they left so much of the coal in there. That's why they lost so much. Well, I was working on top, what they call top off at the Columbine. And this time this old man. . . anyway, he had been in this ((Andrews fever???) and he was going to receive it. He didn't know anything about mining. And he had come there and it was a new mine, new things coming up, had to build new things. And I just happened to have a nack, I knew how to make switches, I knew how to make cars, things that were essential, which is things you had to do at that time. And oh, the first thing I built a couple of cages for the Standard. Well, any good man coulda done it, but they done it there on the job, see what they like. I belonged to the unit when this man McFaddon got put in his place. At that time, we had about 400 men working. They had a message boy and they was. . . Did you ever hear of a man by the name of George Swenger?

Swenger?

Yes.

George Swenger
Strike

Well ^{*Swenger*} George Swenger, I took ^{*Swenger*} George Swenger at that particular time to be. . . I picked him out as the best driver because. . . he was, well. . . and he had to take care of all the drivers. As I say, we had nineteen drivers at one time. We had nineteen drivers and about six or eight machine crews, three timber crews ((Unintelligible)) and I guess about eight track leaders. And I belonged to the union when I went in there. I paid my dues. I paid my dues along quite awhile. One night, I come up to have an election like we do and they wouldn't let me in! I think a man by the name of Nelson run the union here in this district at that time. And he says, you know better Tom ((can't get because of background noise)) Then I quit paying my dues. I won't pay my dues if they won't let me run. Along about well, the first of April I think it was the next year, they called a strike. And they called everybody out, pump men, engineers, everybody. There was only two of us left this boss driver and myself. We had pump men, timber men miner ((??)) all the time. And everybody out. Well, a coal mine is something you have to man so as they'll move everything on until the time you're going to stop and when you stop, be at a place you want to stop to control this heavy weight that's up on top, you see. That's something that you have to. . .

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE (side two empty).

Strike

George, he took care of the pumps. For the first two weeks this went on, he took care of the pumps. I run the engine. The first thing they done, Simpson built this. It was quite a surprise to me that they were a developed, but they decided that something had to be done. So they built the pen and the company I was working for sent a bunch of guards out to watch it. They were worse than, the worst type of people that I had ever. . . cause they would go out and set off a bunch of dynamite at night and claim that the strikers did it. And first thing you know they had newspaper people out here all the time. ((Unintelligible)) So that went on and I only stayed about six months or so and I left. That's when Bob and I went to Oregon. Well, then when I came back we had a big fire down there, burnt the tippie down, and they sent in some people from Denver out of a shop to help repair it. I got pretty well acquainted with a fella out there and he was the superintendent of the shop in town. So he said whenever you're out of a job, come in and I'll fix you up. So, I was out of the fight from after the first six months until it was over.

It lasted five years, though, didn't it?

Yea. Four years. I went down one time to Southern Colorado to go to work for old Jack. . . He was hoist man but he got a job opening a big mine in. . . I went down there. And I had quite an experience. I roomed with this fellow and I heard a noise outside and there was a ((??)) outside and they was gonna tar and feather me. They said I was down there trying to get strike breakers to come up and break the strike. Well, I talked them out of that, but I had to leave. They made me swear that I would do that. So I come back and went to work down here at the Rankin. I worked down there, oh, few months. You see in them days, you only figured on working in the coal mine 150 days a year. Other than that, the mines was idle.

What did the miners do the rest of the time? Whatever they could?

Whatever they could. I expect your husband had to get out and rustle, maybe go into a hayfield. It was pretty hard to take a coal miner and put him in a hayfield. He can't take it. He just can't stand it. That sun just melts him down and he may be your best kind of worker but he can't. . .

Did you know Lillian Stobbs?

Stobbs?

Stobbs, uh huh.

I knew all kinds of Stobbs. Let's see, was there a family of them?

There was a family. She came to visit last year and. . .

Stobbs, yea but I can't figure just where. . .

They lived down across from where there would be the post office. The second door from the post office. Across the street.

Well the post office as I remember it was down where. . .

That was the first one. I'm talking about the second one up here on the highway. She came to inquire about her grandfather, a Mr. Armstrong. John Armstrong. So I got to meet her last year. She was visiting from California.
Where did you go to school?

I went to school in Platville. Went to the fifth grade. My folks took me out and I went into the mine with my dad, the fifth grade. That's all the schooling I got except what I took correspondance. I took a mining course in ICS. And of course, that's what helped me out. My first years I didn't have. This all happened after the big strike. Before the big strike, we didn't know anything about mining. You see, these mining laws never went into effect until 1914.

Did you think John L. Lewis helped the miners?

One of the best men not only for the miners but for the whole country. I think he was the one that developed the miners to have an organization. He made it possible for the operators to organize to combat that, to build something that has been a benefit to men.

What mine
did work in
mines were
chipped like

School
in Platville
Mining course
in ICS

I think John L. Lewis was one of the greatest men we ever had. He had a lot of spunk, he knew how to tell it.

He sure did. They haven't had as good a man since.

No. But I want to tell ya, I don't know whether you'll agree with me, but I think John ((Boyle??)) got the worst deal in this United Mine deal than any person I know of. And that's the reason why he's a sick man, and that's the reason he's not in ^{condition} to take care of himself. Because ah, you know old John Lewis he hated ((??)) he hated them because he. . . I don't know where he got his theory from but ((??????))

Yes, a little.

You know where he developed?

No, I don't.

In Kansas, the coal fields of Kansas. And at that time that man. . . I don't recall his name was president of the local and John took his place. But, he's always been a fighter. And they claim old John, I've heard them try to argue with me, is that he was, ah. . . had his hand under the table all the time. You know old John Lewis when he died his estate was only 50,000 dollars. Some fella was trying to tell me it was millions. That theories get out, them stories get out.

No truth to it.

Do you know what I believe this country ought to have? All reporters put out a story got to prove what they got. And not put out a story and be exempt from prosecution just because they're reporters.

Well, I think we have too many. . . well, they don't report the truth as ~~what~~ it really is, that's the thing.

They report as they see it.

Right, not facts.

Not facts. Don't base it on facts just as I see it or would like to see it. But old John, he fought for his people. I'll never forget when he got this first contract in . . . 1950, 1949 well yea, '49. I was on vacation. I was working in this mining district in Wyoming. And we was laid off on our summer vacation. And the strike was on. And he got his first contract where he got 10¢ a ton ((unintelligible here)) he done it right.

Well, it's provided a pension for many, many miners who wouldn't have had it otherwise.

For myself for instance, I draw ((??)) for about twenty. . . six or seven years.

Did you avoid the black lung?

No, I got that. I. . . ((??)) But anyway, I got it right at the start. But, it's funny, I am glad for it ((can't hear because of loud airplane in background)) procedure and I didn't hear anything about it, so all at once I had retired by this time and I had my papers that qualified me for that thing that showed I worked in the coal mines showed where I'd worked all the years from the time I

John Lewis

Miners Pension

Black lung

was seventeen years and worked with my dad up until that time, '65. So I had ((unintelligible)). So, I got notice from the black lung man, he was from social security, he wanted to come down and talk to me. So I went down, ^{I got these papers with me.} sit down and got to talking about it, he says, "Mr. Williams, you can't get no black lung." I didn't expect it. He says, "You're drawing too much money now". I was getting a pension of about ah. . . maybe about 65\$ a month. And he says where was the proof that I'd been a miner. So I handed him these papers, he looked at them, I had a record there from the time I was seventeen years old, every place I worked, where I worked at the Haywood, when I joined the union at the Haywood, where I went to the Standard, worked the Standard, the Standard company, the strike all those times, I had names. He looked at that and says, "Boy, that's some report." Course that's what the union required to get a pension. You had to have your ((music??)) He said, "Let me take a photograph copy of this and put it in the file here, maybe they'll change the law." You know it wasn't sixty days when I got a check for. . .all the way back.

Good.

But in this same letter, we had this thing that says we can't. . .we can't. . . well I don't know the word they used, qualify your dependants. We didn't have enough proof of that in it. And it wasn't a month before ((Some name. Maybe his wifes??)) got her check with all the back payments in it. They went with the miner's reports what I'd had from the United Mine Workers, the companies I had worked for and that. And I had it ((??)) and you had to have that signed by people three people who knew you all your life, and I had that. So I didn't have no problem.

My husband, they say he has it, but they haven't given him a pension yet.

How is his medical. . .does it qualify him for a. . .

He's totally disabled.

Totally disabled. Well, tell him to keep on fighting for it, he'll get it all back.

Well, we're doing it, but it takes a long time.

Takes a long time. But I'll tell ya there was so much dishonesty in the beginning you had to do that in order so they wouldn't steal the whole package. So, if you didn't have the whole thing so there was no question about it.

What were the wages you got at the time you started working in the mines?

My wages was a dollar and fifty two cents a day. Miners was working ten hours a day at 1.52. I'd come to, one time I come to visit my folks in Erie went up to the old Garfield. Got anything on that?

No.

That's a mine south of Erie. Where Jack Gordon's father was engineer there for years. The old man. And , ah, we went down there with my dad was just a little kid. Everybody went, down in the hole and everything. . .my dad. . .mining and they'd mine all day long laying down for \$1.52. I hear lots of fellas saying things were better off then then they are now. In my book they aren't. (laughter). No, I think they were pretty rough days. We're in the golden days right now. I think if we could come back in history, be in four or five hundred years and we did a history of things, wish we'd get back to it.

TAPE STOPS AND RESTARTS

Was 60

These Working conditions

Denver

I went to Denver in 1911, and I went as a mechanic then to work in this big shop, and I realized how little I knew. I went into the superintendent, I went in and ((unintelligible)) yea, go work right now, go work the afternoon. He called the forman over and says, "You help Tom get something ^{drawings} over there," he says, "I'll be right back". So, I shook hands with the forman, nice ((bloke)) a scotsman. We talked for a bit and he took me over to the table where the drawings was. He says, "I want you to start on this one, there's the table to cut out. Have these pieces cut out." Well, I looked at that and it looked like that floor to me then. All those lines and that didn't mean as much as ~~as~~ ^{as} them bricks. I know they were to walk on. So I knew how little I knew, but as I got it, I was a fairly good mechanic. I could do a thing after I got it understood, see. So I decided the only thing I could do was to go to night school. I went to night school for four years. And I took the ((ICS??)) course. I made a set of ((dyes, dies??)) at that very time in night school and I think they are hid under this house over here, I made a nice box. Carl's gonna take us over there and talk to that woman and see if they are down under. . . And there was on. . . these was in the Post display window for three weeks to tell what the night school was doin' for showing what the night school was doin' ((unintelligible)) there was an old lady 65 years old was taking typing in the same class as mine in night school. Now, this was in nineteen. . . eleven.

You furthered your education so you went really more than. . .

Well, I done pretty good. I ah, I took a mining course which I found out at that time that they were taking. And that was something I didn't know anything about and the only thing they could really give you a picture. . .

With your background in blacksmithing and all you really. . . It all helped, didn't it?

Oh, yea, when I. . . as I say I was in that big shop there and this big strike went on. Now, this was in fourteen. So it went all along these years, you know. And you got to remember the strike was over at that time. Was you born in?

I was born in fifteen.

After strike

Fifteen. Well, the strike was over and a lot of the people who had fought the strike had moved out, moved away, lot of them moved back, and a lot of hatred, it was tough goin. But I found out that what I learned. . . well, it's been, . . . I wish I'd had a chance like Carl and gone to college.

Well, you were able to put your son in college. That's wonderful.

Son Carl

Well, I don't know whether I did. . . I started him in college. But you know, he had quite a time. I don't know just what happened there but he quit and went in the Navy. That's when he went in the Navy. And that. . . course he. . . he was just a big kid at that time, and went in the Navy and went through all that experience and he came out. I just can't help but be amazed at his personality now and really what he went through in his younger. . . you know, he was an alcoholic.

No, I didn't.

I don't know if he'd appreciate me telling that or not. But anyway, I talked to Florence. And I said, Florence, how do you stand it. How do you do it? And this is the words she said to me, she says, "Dad, he's the finest man in the world when he's sober." And she stuck through thick and thin. And there's a girl who's responsible. Course, she's had him backed up against the wall once or twice. This is it. ((can't hear this)) course, that's what life's all about isn't it?

That's right.

To be able to handle a situation. . .

When it's there.

I'm amazed at him now, though. He never had no ((Unintelligible)) to speak of. He had a grandfather who was one of the most wonderful christians I know of, that had an influence on all of our standards, that was a Johnson. But he had influence over all his family, which is the grandchildren and their children which is all christian people. And grandpa Johnson. . .

He went to the Congregational church, didn't he? Mr. Johnson.

He never lived here.

No, he never was in Erie. Never was in Lafayette. He came to visit Bob once, a few times. But our family life was when we were kids ((??)) he was a great worker there. But I worked with him in the mines digging coal and pushing cars day in and day out. From the time I was a kid until I was married when I was twenty one years old. I never knew him to do anything but what was right up to the standard mark.

That's wonderful.

He never crossed it. Never knew him to do anything. . .

You were lucky to have such a nice stepfather.

Yea, oh, I know that. Mother was a good woman. But, she was more on a high-tempered side. Dad didn't have much of a temper. He could control his own. But mother, she had a high temper and she'd wail us kids when we needed it. And she'd be sure that you had it more than you did, as I see the picture now. I done so many things. I remember one time, I heard her talking to someone, she says, "I know that Tom don't drink at all." At this time I was seventeen, sixteen years old. And dad had given me a fine pony. That was like a cadillac now. I used to go out on Saturday nights rough kids like there was. She didn't know I was carrying a pocketful of cents((unintelligible)) She never did know. (laughter.) Raised her kids pretty good. They all turned out good.

That's wonderful.

She's got seven boys ((??)) now that boy in Fort Collins, that Jim, he's really top-notch too. He's raised a good family. Besides that, made a little money. Yea. And his family's all made money. ((unintelligible)) Funny how some of them things come out of people who have the best opportunity in the world.

Well, Mr. Williams, I think I'd better get back to the library. This has been so nice.

You think so?

Oh, I do. I've really enjoyed it.

How do you get any good out of that?

You get a good many things out of things like this.

TAPE STOPS AND RESTARTS

Grandfather
(Johnson)

Stepfather

Mother

That's right.

To be able to handle a situation. . .

When it's there.

I'm amazed at him now, though. He never had no ((Unintelligible)) to speak of. He had a grandfather who was one of the most wonderful christians I know of, that had an influence on all of our standards, that was a Johnson. But he had influence over all his family, which is the grandchildren and their children which is all christian people. And grandpa Johnson. . .

He went to the Congregational church, didn't he? Mr. Johnson.

He never lived here.

No, he never was in Erie. Never was in Lafayette. He came to visit Bob once, a few times. But our family life was when we were kids ((??)) he was a great worker there. But I worked with him in the mines digging coal and pushing cars day in and day out. From the time I was a kid until I was married when I was twenty one years old. I never knew him to do anything but what was right up to the standard mark.

That's wonderful.

He never crossed it. Never knew him to do anything. . .

You were lucky to have such a nice stepfather.

Yea, oh, I know that. Mother was a good woman. But, she was more on a high-tempered side. Dad didn't have much of a temper. He could control his own. But mother, she had a high temper and she'd wail us kids when we needed it. And she'd be sure that you had it more than you did, as I see the picture now. I done so many things. I remember one time, I heard her talking to someone, she says, "I know that Tom don't drink at all." At this time I was seventeen, sixteen years old. And dad had given me a fine pony. That was like a cadillac now. I used to go out on Saturday nights rough kids like there was. She didn't know I was carrying a pocketful of cents((unintelligible)) She never did know. (laughter.) Raised her kids pretty good. They all turned out good.

That's wonderful.

She's got seven boys ((??)) now that boy in Fort Collins, that Jim, he's really top-notch too. He's raised a good family. Besides that, made a little money. Yea. And his family's all made money. ((unintelligible)) Funny how some of them things come out of people who have the best opportunity in the world.

Well, Mr. Williams, I think I'd better get back to the library. This has been so nice.

You think so?

Oh, I do. I've really enjoyed it.

How do you get any good out of that?

You get a good many things out of things like this.

TAPE STOPS AND RESTARTS

Grandpa Johnson
(Salmon)

Stepfather

Mother

Miller. Miller was a man who run a bake shop here in town. And his wife was Emma Miller. ((Can't hear because of noisy birds in the background)) moved to Fort Collins, Fort Lupton. And he run a bake shop there. But in 1902, as I say, I come up there and he can't make me believe that. Cause, I seen too much of it happen at the time. Course, this ((Seely upper??)) had 300 feet of dirt on top of it. So way in down it don't. . . you've got to work at the ((unintelligible)) Course that's what old miners. . . they'll explain that. He don't wait for no one. But they've got that now full, they can do more. They run it like everything else they run a system. Which the time will come. . . I think they'll be mining coal in this country 500 years from now. But it'll be different than today. Our energy situation is quite a problem and will need a lot of thought.

How do you feel about Carter's solution for the problem?

I don't think he knows anything better than anybody else. He don't know no solution. He's just listening to somebody. Like he did about the tax. He's gonna make a big tax deal. He found out that the people advising him knew more about it than he did. Now one thing, I'm a Republican. I've been voting the Republican ticket for a long time. But, he's one of these kind of fellas, it seems to me, he's gonna back out of it when he finds out that this won't work just like that. He's not one of these bull-headed like some of them. Now I don't think Ford would. . . I think he'd. . . One thing I'd like to see. I'd like to see a Democrat president than a Democrat senator than a Democrat ((unintelligible)) And see what they can do with it. It's been a long time since we've had a clean slate.

That's right.

A long time. Republicans are just as nasty as the Democrats. . .

END OF TAPE

Miller's
& Bakery

Mining

Carter's
solution is
enough
people