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Amicarella Brothers and the Columbine Mine Incident

Mother Jones, huh? The first time I remember Mother Jones is at Newcastle. This was about 1912. You know, she came into town; she was right out of the prison down in Trinidad where she sold a machine gun, or they claim she did, at least. And she was a pretty good old girl, you know. And, boy, we had that big parade at Newcastle, you know, all the school kids, you know, and about 600 miners marched up the street with rifles on their backs and shotguns. Grandpa had a double barreled shotgun and old Ed Gouples, you know, he had one of these Winchesters and Tony Carlino, he had a single barreled shotgun and all walked up the street in Newcastle, going toward Glenwood, you know. The sheriff was there, but you know they had a Pullman car that belonged to the Colorado Midland.. So him and his deputies stayed in thie Pullman car, you know and they had the damnest spread all day there. And, then that night, there was some scabs come in. They walked that --- do you kids remember that big bridge comin' over the Colorado? Just in town, there, they walked over. Anyhow, there was a bunch of scabs came in, boy, and did they tie into 'em, you know. They thought they'd killed some, but they all survived, Effie. Everyone survived. And at one time, there was about 12 or 15 Dagos besides the Austrians and the Greeks. And the next day, or two days later, they were shippin' more Greeks in and right there where the town used to have a park, the passenger train came in and the union members' bus was about two blocks from the house and a block from where Tony Carlino lived. And, boy; you should have seen them passenger cars was in the dark; they was made out of wood, you know. That train never did stop. And that train, I can remember us kids was goin' to school and that train would come in just about that time and the splinters - they were just as if you took an old axe and went sideways with them. And, you know, them guys all come from Utah.

What happened to Mother Jones? Well, Mother Jones, she was there a week. And John Lawson - Lawson and Doyle. And it wasn't very long after that that they found out that Doyle got away with a bunch of money and bought a big mansion here on Capitol Hill. Up there by the capitol, you know. Something happened to him after that. Somebody then shot the governor, what the hell was his name? Sweet. Didn't they put her in jail in Walsenburg too? In the dungeon, yeah. Well, you know, Costigan, Senator Costigan, he wasn't a senator at that time, he was a young lawyer, got her out. That's why Costigan, when Mrs. Roach got ahold of the Rocky Mountain, was the chief counsel and then she financed him to go to Washington as a senator. And then, when Governor Sweet came in, right after Costigan, he was in one time and then he was defeated because he was for the workin' man. The CF&I, the Rocky Mountain, the National Fuel and the Rio Grande Fuel, they all wanted to send the militia in. He says, "Pay the men and you won't need 'em".

Who gave the orders to shoot the miners? Oh, that was down south? Yeah, at Ludlow. Well, what the devil was his name, I forget. Major-- - he got his orders from Rockefeller. Rockefeller ruled the state. That's right, Rockefeller was the king pin in the state of Colorado and Wyoming. He instigated it all.

What did Mother Jones have to do with the Columbine, anything? Nothing. She had nothing to do with the Columbine.

Well, Effie wanted to know the history, as we know it, of the Columbine Mine. Well, you can give as good a history as I can, go ahead. You worked there. Yeah, I worked there in the mine, but everybody knows what the mine was like.

Mother Jones organized the unions down south and then she came up here north. But that was in 1912 and 13 and 14, but I couldn't tell you nothin' about that.

We moved to the Columbine Mine, as a family, from Glenwood Springs, from Sunlight, realJy, directly. That was in the year of about 1921. '21 or '22; And then, the Columbine was just in its beginning hi. story. Well, it was just a new place; they hadn't even started to pull much coal. The houses wasn't even built. Wasn't even any shaft. Well, no, the shaft was down, John, but they re-timbered the shaft so they could make it so they could hoist the coal, see; so it wouldn't give them no trouble. You know, you always go down the best way you can, cheap methods, and then re-timbered and everything, see. Dad worked at the Columbine before we moved there because we stayed in Lafayette for a few months, until he got a house built up there, the company had a house built for us there at the Columbine. So, we all moved into this four room frame house. The family consisted of then, Dad, Mom, you, Lawrence. Well, I came there in '24. And Tony, Claude, Vera, John, Henry and Virginia. We all moved in one four-room house. And that was just east of the mine, about two blocks. In 1924, Dad and I dug the basement. Yeah, but we all lived in the same house. Then, Lawrence, you worked at the mine at that time. George worked some at the mine. Well, he didn't work there right away. Then Tony worked at the mine. Tony started in later with Dad. And Grandpa (Totto?) moved in with us. He lived in a little cabin. He came from Utah where he was up there with his daughter, Liz. And then, they got tired of him, I guess, and he came home, see. And he stayed home a while and then he went to work outside on a tipple. But, we children then attended a grade school built there by the company at the Columbine. Did you go to school there? Yeah, all of us; Virginia went to school there, I went to school there, John. Who was the principal? The principal was Griffith. He was not only the principal, but he taught school and his wife taught school there. Aed.: probably one of the best grade school teachers we ever had taught there, by the name of Daisy Adair; she was probably one of the most beloved teachers. Well, my kids went to school there, I know, started there. Yeah, but the school then went from the first to the fifth grade, I believe at that time. I think the sixth grade, we went to the Lincoln School in Erie. After I left there. Yeah, after you left there. At the time I was there, you went from the fifth to the sixth. Yeah, then they dropped a grade and we had to go to Erie, to the old Lincoln School to the sixth grade. And then on to the Junior High and High School in Erie. So, then we all graduated from the Erie School. Most of us went to the Erie School then. Claude graduated from the Erie School. I graduated from the Erie School.

You see, Henry, they had trouble at that mine ever since it began. In 1924, when I went there that fall - in December, I worked December, January and February. In March, the fella who used to be the general manager for this field, what the devil was his name? General manager of the mine? Of this field, yeah, the Rocky Mountain Fuel. What in the devil was that little fella's name? Oh, I can't think of his name. It doesn't make any difference. But, anyhow, you know, he passed the papers around and he wanted everybody to sign to take a reduction' in pay. They was payin' eight dollars and he wanted to just pay five and a quarter. That wasn't in '24? That was in '25, I'm tellin' you. And nobody, well some of the married people did, I guess, there was a few of us. I left.

The reason I remember '24 real well - first of all, we started the basement and mixed the cement by hand and put those big steps in. And Vera had a guy that tried to court her. His name was Tony; he was a Bulgarian. He was a young fella but he was a Bulgarian. Vera didn't like him, but to impress Vera, he bought a brand new Ford Roadster, remember? A Model T Roadster. Us kids used to go out and sit in that Roadster. That's the reason I remember '24 real, real well. He done everything in the world to attract Vera. But it was no soap. But, I remember that real, real well. Lawrence was workin' at the mine then and Tony was workin' at the mine. George was workin' at the mine. All the older brothers. And I remember we had a pile of work clothes every Saturday like nobody's business.

Well, the things that stand out in my mind about - the Columbine Mine - the thing that stands out vividly in my mind is one, the life-style we lived there. The fact that we had our own groceries - the country store there, I remember walking down to the country store all the time, all of us kids with Morn. And all of us staying in two bedrooms. And we had to buy the groceries with scripts. And, of course, we had outside toilet facilities. We had to all go down to get our coal and wood. And I remember the Christmas parties that the company put on for us. The casino - the casino stands out because there we went to spend some of our time and we used to get kicked out. And the sheriff never did once go down there. And some of us worked down there rackin' balls. And we also showed movies up there for a living. The thing I remember too is sneaking into the picture show. We couldn't even afford a dime admission there. We went to the back where the windows were and got on barrels and looked into the window and then Tony Maurice who used to have the night watchman come around and shag us away from there. And then I remember the company dances they had there and the car racing and the big bands that used to: come to the casino. And the gamblers. And the prize fighters. And the Mexican prostitutes that used to come out there. Well, I don't know. Well, they came, so what the hell. We weren't old enough to remember that. Well, you knew what was gain' on, all right.

Well, then the thing I remember too is the fishing. Oh, yeah. We used to fish the old Coal Creek down there. All of us kids used to go down there with willows and lines and catch fish and fry them and eat them at home. Then we used to go out and trap rabbits with our old homemade snares, wires that we'd hang down from the fence where they'd go through. And then we'd

hunt with shotguns, of course, and 22s and whatnot. And we all lived a pretty close - . We survived, that's all. We survived and we didn't miss too much because we didn't see it advertised. We didn't know what the hell was goin' on. Yeah.

But, of course, the thing that we all remember that was impressive and left a lot to think about was the strike. And, Lawrence, you guys know about that. We were right in the midst of it. Well, you don't remember the '25 strike and then there was the '27 strike. The '27 strike we all remember. And then after Mrs. Rhodes got it, you know, then there was a stri-ke there after that too; I can't remember too much about that on account of some - I can't remember too much about that, you know, that's when I got my back fractured.

The things I remember as a youngster about the developments before the shooting took place were these events: I can remember the militia guarding the roads and the tipple and the facilities of the mines. I can remember as a kid, the lights early in the morning coming down the northeast road coming into camp and also from Lafayette and Frederick and so forth. And I can remember, of course, Dad working in the mines. When everybody was on strike because of the environment and the safety upkeep of the mine and whatnot. And I can remember also taking his post watching the roads too, as far as the security of the camp went.

I can remember us kids bundling up for the winter and using sheepskins and going over and sitting around the fire and talking to the guards.

I can still remember seeing those bullet holes and hearin' them comin' through the window in the house. The morning of the shooting, we were all in the house and some of us were up and some of us were still in bed and some of us were hiding in the basement. Two or three of us were sleeping in the same bed. At that time, all of us were home. You were home, Lawrence. Well, yeah, the bullet went in one window, went over my head and out the other window. George was not home, was he? No. But Claude, Vera and Virginia and I were all home and all of a sudden, this morning when the--. They was all drunk down there. We heard this tremendous burst of shots start out early in the morning. And Dad, he--. It sounded just like popcorn poppin'. To me, it sounded just like a piece of chain you'd grab and took it off the - brrrrrrrrr. You know where them bullets hit? Right at the fence where we lived, right there, with part of the house. They were coming from the tipple. They was coming from the tank. They went into the wall of the house, right under the eaves. Well, you kids don't remember - do you remember the guy they called Porkchops? He pushed Vera and Dad went up there and told him, he says: 'You son-of-a-bitch, I'll kill you right here'. You don't remember that, do you? And you don't remember when Dad took the 30-0-6 and he was gonna get the cowboy up there and I says, 'Put that damned gun down or we'll all get killed'.

I remember Dad going outside the house and telling us all to stay in because he was going to--. He run all those strikers into the basement. Yeah. Dad opened the door for them strikers to come in and Mom grabbed a bunch of sheets and tore them up for bandages. We opened the doors to the house to the victims of the strike. Some were living and some were dead. Tell me the names of the people that were killed up there. Effie, I don't remember very damn many. Dad told us to get down in the basement. So we kids went down in the basement and he stayed upstairs and I think you might have stayed upstairs. Yeah, because I was there if Dad would have killed that guy they called Porkchop.

Then, of course, we had about two or three extra people at our home, if I remember right. Oh, yeah, there was Rufus, there was Mazzini, I can't remember all their names - Nicholas. Nicha1s or Nicha1as, he was the one. Were they injured? Yeah, they were shot. Young man from camp; he was shot through the groin; oh, I forget his name - he had a little spot in front and a little spot in the back where it came out. And, I remember Mama put a half a sheet around him. That's right. This was all about six o'clock, seven o'clock in the morning. Yeah, I can remember, we were getting up, getting ready to go to school. Did the neighbors come to the house then? Oh, they all came. You know, (Estevas?) got killed. He was the first man that got killed. He lived here in Lafayette. And the next guy that got - oh, I had his name in my mouth, I can't remember. Well, anyway, Lawrence--. Do you remember Adam Bell, he was bleedin' so bad, they thought he died. I don't remember whether he got killed or not, I can't remember.

Well, while you're trying to remember their names - I remember we children were in the cellar, the dirt cellar, looking through a little opening and the things I remember are - the thing I remember vividly is the people laying either dead or injured in front of the house. And hollerin'. And here we were cramped down and looking, of course, we were protected, somewhat by the cement walls. But any one of us could have been shot upstairs. Oh yeah. The bullets did go through the wood and the windows. You see, where I lived, me and Tony was in the same bed - the bullet came in this window and went out this one and I was tying my shoes, if I'd have been up, it would have been payday. I was sleeping in the--. In the bed just east of us. That's right, Virginia and--. They was sleepin' in the front room. Yeah, they was in the front room and Dad, of course, and Mom were in the other one, but Dad was up. He had the gun and was gain' around the house. When Dad was aiming at the cowboy up on the tipple, I says, "Dad, put that damned gun down or we'll all get killed". He had the cowboy pegged, I'll tell you. I don't know. Well, I know. He was trying to protect the family and the victims and the house. I don't think he was aiming at any particular one until they started shooting at the house. See, you kids don't remember. You see, Geneva, Ray and little John came running in the house. At that time that they got there, Dad was shooin' us all down in the basement. Yeah. And we were going down in the basement and the strikers were comin' in right behind us. That's right. We were standing in there in the basement and you couldn't fall down if you wanted. You see, Claude, that's when we, Henry and I and John, crawled up over the embankment in the basement and went to the little window that was about a foot square and it had a screen on it and we saw exactly, just like looking at a movie, exactly what happened, the men that were down, the men

that I, ere trying to help them, the men that were down were crying out loud and all that. At that same time, the strikers that came into the house fell in the kitchen and in the front room, who were shot. And those that were seeking shelter had gone behind the house.

See, I remember (Estevas?), that was his name; he lived here in Lafayette. And Bill, what's his name, got killed - I can't remember his name - Lowell, Lowe or something like that, Low, I think it was, and he was the next one. And then Adam Bell, you know, he was beaten like hell and he was layin' up in the gutter. And Mazzini, he was in the house, in with Rufus and Smith and another one. Jimmy James had been out that evening, he was in Denver. With Herb Ward, and me. What day was it in the week? I can't remember that either. Was it a Saturday morning? Friday morning? I don't remember the day. It must have been during the week day because we were getting ready to go to school. When we got down there to where you hit the road by the tracks, they stopped us. And Jimmy says, "Look at them guys layin' in the ditch, watching us". I says, "Yeah, Jimmy". You know, he was driving his car. And so they stopped us. And wanted to know where we was at. And I said, "Well, I live in camp". And Jimmy said, "I live in Lafayette". And they wanted to know this, that and the other. Well, they escorted me up to the house. And Tony was home because him and I, we would put a string down here at the gate, see. You guys remember, he lived in the next house, next to us. So, they took me home, and it was early, about four o'clock, three-thirty. So, when we come by the office, the whole camp was lit up and we could see a hell of a lot of people there, you know. Maybe 50, 60. And then, you know, I looked and Dad was up. And I went to the door, you know, and he said, "It's about time you get in". So he says, "Do you see all them lights?" And I said, "Yeah, Dad, they're all drunk, a bunch of them, and they're down here under-the tank with a machine gun. He says, "I know something's down there". And all hell broke. And then, I was takin' my shoes off, mind you, after we talked quite a while and Ma was sayin', "Oh go to bed", you know, she didn't feel too good. And I was just gettin' down to tyin' my shoes and boom! Right over my head. Well, we were very lucky that some of us weren't killed.

And then after all that quieted down a little bit, Jack _____, you know he was with a 30-30 rifle down there and Arco - was that his name? and Vic -- ' and old _____ came up and says, "Take him to jail, take him to jail, he's an IWW". And they took us. But that guy stayed and I came back with the deputy sheriff. I remember the deputy sheriff was there, the sheriff was there and then there was a deputy sheriff from Greeley that took me back. Because, I said, "'What the hell do you want with me?'" I was livin' in Loveland.

Well, I can remember the militia then, coming around and securing the whole camp. But there was people laying in the gutter from the state police from the time you left Highway 7 all the way to Columbine, laying in the ditch. They were preparing for the strike. Oh, yeah, they knew it all the time.

Well, the Rocky Mountain Fuel, you know, they still got paid for that strike by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation. Do you believe it? It come out later that that Porkchop was one of them that was the instigator. He worked

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for the CF&I, see? After it was all over, I went down to the bartender's and believe it or not, and J, am, more of an authority than anyone, I never saw a 30-30 or a 30-0-6 cartridge. They were all revolver? Well, I don't know, but they did have a machine gun. They had a machine gun there. Well, that must have been on the tippie, the machine gun, Lawrence, because the shooting sounded like it was coming from a machine gun - brrrrrrrrrrr. The machine guns in them days, they was in a belt. Well, that's what I thought. And the casings never left that belt. That's why they didn't find them. You see what I mean? They had long belts and the casings stayed within that belt. And another thing, you know all the cartridges that we picked up - you could hold them all in both hands. There wasn't too many shots. They were all 45s you saw? 45s and 38 both. Well, some of these people must have been hit by 30-30 machine guns or something. They was 30-30s because the cowboy upstairs had a 30-30. Yeah, because some of the holes went right through, Lawrence. Oh, yeah, because the holes you could see where they plowed the ground up were like a fence. Yeah, Nichols is the one that got the worst of the bunch, the guy that was in the hospital in Longmont, because when he turned around, they unloaded on his legs. The hole that went through the house must have been a rifle shot. A 45 wouldn't have gone through the house, I don't think. The one that went through the window, I don't aknow what the hell it was. I think a rifle shot. Yeah, but we were kids and distance was far then. And if you went and paced it now, it wasn't over 25 foot, 50 foot. What's that? The tank, water tank from the house. Oh, it was about 150 feet. Well, anyway, it's an event we probably will never forget, Lawrence. But, you know, it was just the next day when Mrs. Rhodes. said that they all got to leave, and took the mines over. And she made the remark right there to the Denver Post and Rocky Mountain News that she will sign with any organization that has anything to do with the AF of L. That's when Dad got us all together and he took us down to the house in Denver. After the strike. Did he have the house then? Yeah, after the strike, Dad thought we'd be better off moving to Denver. (We were in the back seat and we took the dog with us.) To get out of that kind of a situation but then we lived in Denver, what two years, and came back to the Columbine. I don't know if it was two years because I was married then. Well, it wasn't very long that we stayed there because I remember we didn't have enough beds there or anything and Tony slept on the floor.

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After we moved to Denver - Dad moved us to Denver on Navajo, 4538 Navajo. Someplace down there. You know, of all that confusion, I don't remember where Tat0 was. I don't know where in the hell he was at. No, Grandpa lived up there at that--, didn't he? Tato was in the tent. I don't remember him out in the yard, I don't remember him in the basement. I don't remember him no place. In the tent, behind the house. Behind the house, right next to the chicken coop. Remember we had a bunch of chickens. But when we went to Denver, Tata was with us. Yeah, because he came from Utah to us, you know. Well, Dad worked in the mines while we lived in Denver too, didn't he? Yeah, sure he did. He batched at the mine and then we had an acreage there of asparagus and rhubarb and strawberries. I think Dad stayed with some people in Lafayette for a while. That's right. Jack Ridge. And then, you know, he got a two story house that belonged to Big Jim and he stayed there for a while. That was way before all this. Oh yeah.

Yeah, but then in Denver, though, we enrolled in the school. Vera enrolled in Skinner Junior High and Claude, Johnny and I went to Smedley School which was about six blocks. And, thank God, we weren't there very long. We stayed one full term. Yeah, we stayed a year or two, I forgot. Yeah, one year. In fact, when we started to school, school was already in progress. And when we came back to the Columbine - well, we went to grade school about a year, year and a half and we returned to the Columbine. Dad sold the house, remember? And we came back to the Columbine and we enrolled in the Columbine Grade School again; Then, you went to Erie, Claude. John Jencall lived in that house after; I can remember when John lived there. Which house? In Denver. Oh, yeah, that's right. And Grandpa stayed with them, see? You remember? You're all wet. No, we're not all wet, because Grandpa stayed with John Jencall down there. When we went to school in Denver, it was way before the strike. Way before the strike. Oh, yeah, hell, it was about 1925, 26. During the strike, we did not go to school. 'Cause Mama was sick if you remember. Because school was just about ready to be over, it was April - April or May. The strike was called in November. In 1925, the strike was called April 1. The first one, 1925. In 1922, there was a strike. The shooting was in when? 1927. What month? November. That's when the shooting occurred. When the incident happened, Dad took us to Denver. We stayed in Denver for the biggest part of the summer and then came back and went to school all over again. I believe you're right, Claude. Because I was in the sixth grade. 'Cause you guys were in Denver, I remember, and Dad bought that house. Right after the strike, you know, it wasn't too long after that, I got married.

Well, while at Columbine, well you attended the sixth grade, Claude. Then we attended to the fifth grade. The thing I remember about the Columbine, LawPence, of course, you didn't go to school there, but this is where we really learned how to play baseball, where we played on the cap team, too, didn't we later on? Oh, it all comes now, the Borsnicks - (lived next door) - now wait a minute, I went to the Columbine in the sixth grade; they had just started the sixth grade. And Jee Borsnick was supposed to go to school at Erie for the first time but he didn't because they moved from the Columbine to Lafayette at that time. And that is when they cut the sixth grade from the Columbine and brought it to Erie. That's right. Yeah. Because we had a bigger enrollment, or whatever it was, I don't know. But I remember that part now. So, I started the sixth grade at the Columbine, but I finished the sixth grade at Erie. Well, we used to ride the yellow bus every day to Erie, didn't we? You know, Henry- (we walked quite a few times) - you know, Henry, the Columbine Mine, when it opened up, was the most modern mine west of the Mississippi River. It employed a greatest, : number of men there in the Rocky Mountain. About 900 men. At the same time, Carl Williams moved to Lafayette, because he never did take the bus with us to Erie. But Robert Hide, remember Robert Hide? Yeah. He took the bus with us. There was there was the (Panick?) boys, they took the bus with us. But I remember Joe Borsnick and Carl Williams - both families moved to Lafayette.

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Now, how many men worked at the Columbine? Oh, about between six and seven hundred. The two shifts? Yeah, they never had a compliment of 300 men at one time in the mine at no time. Oh, when that mine first opened up, they had three shifts. And a lot of them lived outside the mine. The mine probably had, what, 300 people living in there? I figured in school at any one time, there must have been, what, 30-40 kids, Claude? 30? You mean at the bus? There was just one bus. Yeah, just one bus. Well, the Columbine was still building houses long after it started. Between the two mines, there wasn't more than a bus load, between the State Mine and the Columbine. Yeah, but of course, the State Mine had nobody hardly in town. So, all the kids from seventh to twelfth grade took the bus. And one bus was adequate. But, of course, a lot of times we walked from school. When we played basketball. And we walked over the prairie. Five nights a week; remember John? Snow, rain. Vera used to be froze. Remember? Out of a hot shower, can you imagine? Out of a hot shower and no hats; our hair would be just full of ice by the time we got back to the creek. No colds. That's the way it goes, Claude.

All right, now when did we move from the Columbine, as a family, to Lafayette? What year, 1942? 40 or 41. Now, your house was moved from the Columbine to Lafayette, right? The house you lived in at the Columbine? I didn't live there, but that's the house. Then after I graduated from high school, I think that's, when did we leave, 1941, cause I was attending college while we lived in Columbine, right, Claude? And you were working at the mine, weren't you Claude? You started working at the mine right after high school? I was working at the Eagle Mine. Well, I was even working at the Eagle Mine the year I was in Denver. When did you work at the Columbine? Uptill '39. When did you start working there? In '30, '29. Right after high school, huh? Yeah, '29. Johnny never worked at the mine. Cause we moved right to Lafayette. Then, Dad and Mom moved to Lafayette. John had a shoe shop here. And also in Denver. Well, now Vera married (Dominick?) while at the Columbine, right? They lived at the Columbine. That was in '32. And Lawrence and Thelma lived at the Columbine. When did you move from the Columbine, Lawrence, you and Thelma and the kids? Oh, let's see - '42 or '43. About the same time as Dad. Oh, about a year or two after. Yeah.

When did the Columbine Mine actually close? About 1947. Did you work until they closed? No, no, I left there in '42. Did Dad work until they closed? No, no. Dad got hurt in 1939 and he never worked no more. I went in '42 to the Service. Yeah, we moved out of the Columbine then. I was living in Greeley then, going to college.

I remember Dad working in the mines then he got hurt then he kinda phased out, didn't he? He couldn't work no more; he couldn't use his right arm.

But the mines, you say, closed about 1947. When did they start moving the houses out? Oh, about '42. I've still got the bill-of-sale of the house when I moved it out. What did they charge you for one of those houses? Oh, either \$100. or \$200. They charged us rent while we lived there. Dad used to pay how much for rent? \$16. a month. Then, we had to buy coal for about \$2.00 a ton, was it then? Well, we bought our coal, well, at first, it was \$1.00 a month then they started charging by the ton, as the cap got bigger.

How about your lights? Lights were 50¢ a drop. Otherwise, you had a drop, you could put all the lights you wanted on it and it was still 50¢. Well, we never had lights to begin with. Oh, for a long time. We used those, you know, mantles. Gas lights. Coleman gas lights. And we had to go outside for the water. And half the time, it was froze in the wintertime. I don't know when you put the lights in your place, but I put the lights in my place. It was in 1939. I believe you're right, or '38. We used a coal oil lamp. Let's see, who was the super at that time; a little fella from Lafayette, remember, a little mustache? Oh, old man Kerr. No, this little fella, it wasn't Kerr at the mine when I got lights. I can't remember his name, but he says, "If you'll put the lights in, we'll pay you for material".

I remember this vividly, when we used to take turns-washing clothes, all the boys and the girls would take turns ironing. Before we went to school, Mom used to have us takin' turns bakin' bread in the big tubs. And also, washing the floors with those mops; those wooden floors - we'd get splinters in all the mops. With lye. And I can remember Dad taking a bath - he'd never take a bath in the bathhouse, but he'd use this tub and sponge his upper half and I can remember we'd take turns going to the mines getting coal, remember, Claude? And remember the chickens we used to have around there? Mom used to tell us to go out and we'd rake in a chicken with one of those wire catchers and go and get an axe and put the head on the block and then we'd put three or four chickens in hot water. Those are the things I remember.

Do you remember when we had the rats and I used to go outside with a gun and shoot these damn rats, me and Poochie and Dick. I'd raise these boards up and these rats would go.

I remember we used to go get the coal. We'd haul a sack at a time on our shoulders, remember? And, then I don't know where I got them four wheels. Remember those four steel wheels I got? On the wagon. And I went down and I had Old Man cut me a and I cut these ten-penny nails and made bearings and put them all around---rii"e axle and I made the in the back and I made the guide for the front, . put the supports in, made the box and we used to put as high as eight sacks of coal on the damn wagon.

Well, it's amazing how we all survived. And got rheumatism out of the deal'. Well, we never had any modern conveniences inside the house. We shaved in one - Dad would shave first with a straight razor then Claude and you would use your old Gillettes. I can't get over it - we always used a tan, wobbly box for a basin. Nobody ever thought of making a decent basin for Mama. I know. The same thing with the walk, from the back porch to the outhouse; nobody made that poor woman a walk. Well, we used to put boards down. We'd forget to buy razor blades. We'd all use the same safety razor blade and we'd put it on a glass to sharpen it. And we all used to use the same dipper. viedrank out of the same dipper. We used to eat out of the same bowls, if I remember right. I remember all the fun we had helping Mom make the sausages, remember John? And pickling the fish we used to catch down at the creek. And remember the codfish Mom used to soak over night.

We'd have spaghetti invariably every other day with sausage. We had a big pig that Dad used to butcher. And make sausage and lard. Every night, Dad used to have food on the table - grapes, oranges or something. We didn't go without eating, that's for sure. We ate pure jelly in those days. Big buckets of it. Not this artificial stuff you get today.. Then we had these bins you pulled out, remember, full of flour. Uh-huh, on a swivel. And those long French breads, remember? And the basement was always full of sacks of potatoes and flour and canned fruit. And I remember too, in the fall, I can remember coming from school and I could smell that tomato paste that Mom used to have on the board and the bread she used to bake. And she used to make that tomato sauce and preserve it to make spaghetti sauce with tomatoes and peppers and garlic.

And we had more time then than we've got now. Because life was on a different scale; if you prepared for it, you lived it.. If you didn't prepare it, you were just SOL. Everything we did, we participated together at the house, whether it be ironing, washing. And of course, that's the way we survived, by sharing. Time was measured; just like on a Saturday, I used 'to hate to see Saturday come because of all them damn work clothes. And we were lucky too, because that water up there helped us 100%. It was soft water and you could take a bar of soap in there and those work clothes would just saturate that bar of soap right up. If it wasn't for that soft water, we could have never done it otherwise.

It was amazing how Dad could get a garden going in that clay. But we fertilized and fertilized it. And we used that old alkali water to irrigate it. But we had some good vegetables, didn't we? Yeah, we had some good peppers there for a couple of years. And do you know what was precious? There were no trees on the prairies in those days; but we grew one big cottonwood there. And we had wild roses growing there. To have a flower or flowers around the house on prairie, clay ground was something to be amazed at.

Do you guys remember the first day that we left Lafayette here and went to the Columbine? Well, I remember a little bit about it, yeah. Do you remember all the cactus in the backyard right up to the back door? And I mean cactus'. They had spine on them and inch to three inches long. We had to clear all of that cactus. And rattlesnakes. Yeah, right up to the back door. If the cactus didn't get you, a rattlesnake would. But then they come and they plowed that all up, remember, after a year we was there? It's amazing, though, that in spite of all these exposures and ha-zards, we're still alive without too many ill effects. For example, look at the diseases that we could have had and we didn't have available, the medical facilities and the medical attention. Just think, we went hunting where we were in the midst of many rattlesnakes, Claude, and none of us were ever bit by a rattlesnake. We could see them and hear them. We would put our hands in those holes when we went for rabbits. And I suppose there were water mocassins in the creek and we would swim and drink that dirty water coming through the various fields - sewer water. God'. But we survived, right? In fact, we learned to swim in that old Coal Creek. Maybe if we have any strength today, we probably learned from that survival.

You know, I'm not, well, I'm just not a religious person because I have never participated formally. First of all, I never had the opportunity. There were no facilities or encouragement to be religious in those days, Claude. But, I remember that particular day when we were hunting, it was right after a little rain, remember? At the dump there? And I had that wire and I was wirin' that one hole. You were wirin' for a rabbit in a hole, right. And I got a little fuzz on it and I tried it again and I could feel this thumpin' around down in there, and right by my hand, not over two inches, three inches from my hand was this rattlesnake, right by my hand. You left the wire and all! Well, as I jumped back, there was these other two snakes and whatever made me go straight up in the air and straight out, I don't know, but I went straight up and straight out. You missed a good bite.

And we didn't have this education of no kind; we learned by experience. We learned the hard way. But they should have had somebody in the camp; our folks was ignorant of it; but someone in the company should have said to Dad: "John, this is a rattlesnake infested area and we want the children to come down here and we want to teach them something about it". They weren't interested - they were interested in digging that coal out and seeing how much money they could make. But you know, the fact that we worked in that kind of environment wasn't all bad. It made us stronger, in some ways. You learned to appreciate better things. If we were given everything, we probably wouldn't have had some of the strengths we have today. And then, too, I don't know who you could blame, but that's one reason we really didn't know when we were successful. We didn't know it; we didn't recognize it. Well, I guess we can look at it this way - we could have had it worse. Just think back at some of the experiences we had. Just think of some of the environments we were in. Just try to remember some of the tight situations we were in, like in Denver, we were in a bad neighborhood there where some of them are still in jail, some of them have been killed amongst their own kind. So, maybe we're pretty lucky. At least, none of us probably are not starving today. But with the company we were in and the environment, we could have been in some bad company today. So, you can look at it both ways. Maybe in spite of all these things, we came out pretty good. We never had everythi-ng but we made the most of what we had. Mom and Dad didn't have the opportunities either. They came from the country; they had less. And they wanted to have something better. But they sacrificed and had a lot of hard, hard work.

Like when I went to work for the battery company in Denver. I can't blame Mom; I can't blame Dad. I can't even blame myself because I didn't know what that stuff would do to you. I worked in the most hazardous place that they had there because it paid the most money. You had to make a livin' too. Well, we needed money and consequently, what little I contributed, it cost Dad that and more. And it almost cost your life.

Well, the thing I think we've got to remember too and I think we all share this, we certainly have to give Dad and Mom just a heck of a lot of credit. Just remember, their philosophy of education was different than the philosophy here. If we could have understood Mom and Dad and their philosophy, their Italian philosophy a little closer - cause we were divided between two philosophies - the American side and the Italians. And we were criticized because we were Italians. Right. So, we left the Italian side, for

actually the bastard side of the philosophy. If we had accepted the Italian side of their philosophy, I krrnw damn well we'd have been twice as successful as we are. Well, in those days, as John says, we were criticized just cause we couldn't talk American. See, we all talked Italian in the family. Mom and Dad used to talk Italian a lot, yeah. But outside the home, we were criticized because we were Italian. We were a minority group in those days. Just like they criticize the Mexicans today. Yeah, but you see how things have changed. Today, everybody would give a great deal to be able to talk Italian, or Spanish. But, to come back to Dad and Mom, though, how many parents could survive with 12, 13 kids and all the problems we've had. You know, Dad was pretty capable. He came all the way from Italy with this great burden of family responsibility and he wasn't even able to speak one word of English so he couldn't communicate. So, we survived because of the Italian philosophy. We could never have survived under the American philosophy. We would have probably shocked Mom and Dad with the American philosophy they've got today. Well, here's a plus - it's what kept us together. Dad survived then because they were looking for people that could work in those days. Cheap labor, that's what it was all about. Well, you could almost compare it to the Mexican labor that is brought into the United States today.

Transcribed by Laura Simermeyer

Lawrence: These are chain fillers and barrier cables. Now these colors are on both sides of the motor ways and air intakes. (E.A.: And when they start a line, how do they go into those?) Lawrence: Well, they start like at the very bottom, the bottom of the shaft. They go through the bottom of the shaft and they see which way the coal dips, towards the shaft, because the shaft has got to be at the lower level. So the water drains. Then they start to what we call...getting out to the extended water, coal mine. A mile could be several thousand feet. And he showed me, see he's a...and when we get to these cross-cuts here, they have to put ... these barriers in here...they'll stop in there, to recollect the air coming up one way and down the other. (E.A.: And they coal out in between these...) Lawrence: Later, yeah where the motor road is or where the air ways go they take the coal out...that's what these little small lines are, see?...This other line here to here, you could tell the air went up this way and come back this way along the luber rule or went up this way and come back. (B.M.: May I ask how you tell which way the coal dips when you put the shelf down?) Lawrence: You drive probably north, south, east or west two, three hundred feet, take an elevation. If they don't do that, then they drill a hole through the surface, down before they start the line. : And they go down 260 feet for this) Lawrence: Ok, and then you see a hole rolls to the northwest, that where the fault is. And it dips the southeast. Now you ask what a fault is. Fault is where there is a want. A want is where there is no coal. Either the coal has dipped down, or the coal has went up almost to the surface and then there's a want between the two, and the

coal over here either dipped down or went up, see? (B.M.: That was like an, . . . earthquake) Lawrence: Well, that's what caused it, I was coming to that, that caused it, . . . is a soft spot in the earth. Soft spot in the earth, so what happened upheaval, what time, I forgot that time I think, and so they call that a want. But it's a fault and a fault is a rooting. And on either side of that fault is usually a . . . throw me that piece of paper . . . on either side of that fault, now here's where the mine is, say this, and I want to drive up here you can, this is coal right here and this is coal over here. And on one side or the other of this block, like this way and this, either there's a . . . a . . . little screen right in here where the coal dips down, see, that's the weak pull, where the coal goes in, now the coal goes back the other way the little stream or the soft circle it was in. The fraction, . . . you know where . . . (B.M.: In the back, in other words the stream is on the lower part of the yard) Lawrence: The lower part of the yard. Could be on either side. Like now, here it goes up and the inside goes down and the other side comes in up here. And if you know where it's gonna go in, a low spot. Or it goes in the cat tails in, wherever the cat tails go in. You don't know where the where the . . . spot is. It's in the south. Did you get that? (B.M.: Um. Hm.) And that's where they find out where these faults are. Now, we don't know how far that is, So what you do, you drill a hole. You run out of that, so you might have to go under. This side to this side you . . . (B.M.: And the material is in between that from one to the other, is that like rock, or is that more soft . . .) Well, it could be sandstone or it could be limestone or it could be just any kind of a stone, you know. Usually it's a . . . oh, what we call here, a . . . bottom wood stone that's soft. It's clay like. Till it get's down so far. Then when you get down to the bottom, you find sandstone,

then you find gravel, then you find water, then you find mold. (E.A.: Where is your layer of ironstone?) The ironstone we don't have. It's the pieces blown down, straight...straight down...look over here, here's where you're gonna start. Now, usually in this field, thirty feet down, find water.....Plus another 20...thirty, forty feet, you'll find a streak of sandstone.. Now between here it's clay, clay like rocks. We call it coal dust. Then you go down a little farther, and it's clay again. Then you go down here and you find.....ironstone. Down here. That's hard. Very few drills can go down and come out again. Lot of them. And this could be any where from ,_two to four feet. And that does not break easy. It'll bend. Almost that hard, it'll bend when you get enough surface up there. Then it'll break. When that breaks, then it's more likely to break and go to the surface. All these mine hazzards. Now, from here down you have just ordinary soapstone. Around Louisville they have some sandstone right around over the coal. And usually soft rock maybe 6, 7 inches. Then you hit clay again, So you go farther in. (B.M.: And then is there coal under the soapstone again?) No, if you go down under. Now they got here in Broomfield, now that goes down some hundred feet. There's layers of coal between here anywhere from 3 up to 10 feet. Some places more. Like now down here south of town, there.'s only 25 feet up to the top of the coal, that's what they call the surface break. In the open day that's what they cut first. And there's about 6 men working. (B.M.: The vains wasn't too deep then?) No, some of them wasn'.t. But, underneath this one vain, you go down and come up, the original vain here is 300 some feet. Some like that is 360 feet. But they hit more than one vain coming down.And them vains are very warm;- some carry gas. (E.A.: So then you work those vains going down?) No. NO. They go down to the original. Because probably these vains is where they got the originals vains. It's not very safe. It's not possible.

(B.M.: Is that why they do a lot of strip mining anymore?) Yeah.
ON these top layers they do. They can strip a hundred feet of earth
to one foot of coal. The same way here. They strip here, here, here,
(t::S.: But here, there's coal.) Here this is coal. Yeah. (Well, I don't
know what you're warring about, looks like there is more coal than the
places that are worked.) (E.A. But you have to realize this is a progress
map. And this progress map is also made what back what year?) (L.S. 1918)
(E.A. 1918, but they wind up to 26.) You see. (E.A. So, you see there's
8 more years of coal they could have put up.) You see, it happened here
long time ago. I can remember. Where the Rocky Mountain and what you
call it? They robbed coal and didn't put it down. You see? Everybody
was thieves. We got em today, but they was just as bad, so. (L.S.: So
some of this is marked.) It could be, it could be, because the state
didn't forcer.them to do it, they took everybody's word. You know when
I worked with an engineer by the name of Canis when they had all the
mines. I worked with him 22 years. And you better believe, I went into
all the mines, Like the Born, the Boulder Vally Born. And there was coal
taken out that didn't show on the map. And this was in the 50's!
But they been taking out since 1920, Probably, 1918, you know. You see
they robbed it. Robbed Peter but paid nobody but Paul. And there was
Paul. Now this map could be true, whoever made it. I don't know, but
I imagine a fellow by the name of.... (E.A.: It's right there Lawrence,
Under your hand I think. Right under the scale map, isn't it there?)
(B.M.: Look over there in the corner.) Oh, I remember the fellow's name.
He was...Albey! Albey was the chief engineer them days, see. And above
him was...the chief engineer, was the vice president of the company was
Harry Jones. You've heard about him haven't you? I knew the man well.
You see....all these maps up here, now I don't know if this is part of
the Simpson mine, I believe it is. And this here, they drove off to the

left. The reason why, I don't know, it doesn't show you. Same here now. This is an old, old, map. Where they did extract some coal here, very lightly, see, it run em out. What is this right here? There out in the middle of nowhere.) Well, these here is coal left in here. They probably drove up in here, you see, they didn't hook this up here, see? They didn't hook this up. Then they went in here and they probably had a cross-cut here, they come over here and here and they took little coal here and here and here. See, the rest of this is all solid coal. (So this comes from the surface and goes down.) No, these come from the inside too, sweetheart, cause they got to go up here, see? (E.A.: Now Lawrence, here's an early map...all areas coded in yellow coal to be left to prevent tearing of buildings on the surface.) Right. (B.M.: This is that map that that guy left, isn't it?) (E.A.: NO.) (E.A.: This is one of our originals) (B.M. I don't think it's marked.) (E.A.: Well it's been rolled up with this all the time.) (B.M. I bet. you they left it in there, or something....cause I don't remember cataloging this map.) (L.S.: Here's where it tells you about your stopping wood. When I opened this all up for him, this was all in it.) Yeah, you see the yellow here is where they left. The yellow is the coal that they left in, see? (L.S.: They left in?) Isn't that what it says there Effie? (E.A.: Yeah.) (B.M. It's under your hand there.) All north, all areas colored rnyellow-coal left to protect the caving of the building so far. This is right under the town here, see. Now this yellow, they drove in here they took a little coal here, and left it, see? Cause they figured it was gonna cave through the surface. Here, they left the coal here, see, they went in here from this side, see here? This coal here isn't out, they just left this. See, because there was a building on top, see? In the white, see? Here they extracted the coal, here they didn't do a ery good job, see cause it's light colored, right? In the