

INTERVIEW OF JOHN HORVATH

By Mildred Allen Beik

March 6, 1984
Windber, PA

JH = John Horvath (1914-1987)

MB = Millie Beik

Beginning of Tape 1 (March 6, 1984)

MB: So you're Mr. John Horvath, would you mind telling me when you were born?

JH: I was born September 26, 1914.

MB: So that makes you 70?

JH: Yes 70

MB: Were you born in Windber? Around this area?

JH: Yes

MB: Are you like some people in Windber the son of immigrants then who came here from other countries?

JH: Yes

MB: Can you tell me anything about your parents and where they came from, like your mother for example, maybe start with her and say something about here?

JH: Well my mother was born in Pocahontas, Virginia. My dad was here, and then they went back and they had a girl then, it was like everybody else's, it was all these foreign peoples, they thought they came to America on a boat. And take all this money back on the ship, you know them coming here they thought this was where the rainbow was. So then my dad decide to come out and my mother and this girl and her mother there all living together, my grandmother told my mother don't take this girl, I'll watch this girl as if see was mine. Because she was alone, so then they finally agreed my dad came out in 37, and after he stayed awhile and he was ready he asked my mother to come.

MB: Did they get married in America?

JH: No, Hungary.

MB: What town where they from, do you remember the town name or the village name.

JH: The town that they are from is called Cinder, so that's how they agreed it they let that girl there. And after the girl was coming about 17 and 18, we wanted to bring her about, and that's about the time the depression was here, and no matter where you had to go it was a couple of bucks, and a couple of bucks was a lot. And one thing lead to another, we was unable to bring her about then, so then she asked her consent for her to get married, so then my mother they knew they boy she would be marrying, so they got married there.

MB: Did they arrange the marriage then?

JH: No

MB: Did your parents have an arranged marriage?

JH: No, only thing they had after their 50th wedding day, they actually had a wedding all over, we had a reception and everything. We had the police the music and everything. So then we couldn't bring the girl out, and mother lost her citizenship due to marrying my Dad.

MB: Was your mother American born then?

JH: Yes

MB: She was American born and he was born in Hungary, and she lost her citizenship? I thought he would gain citizenship, but she lost hers?

JH: He had to go for them, and so did my mother.

MB: Do you know when that was?

JH: In the 40's I think?

MB: For heaven's sake, I didn't realize that someone could lose their citizenship that way.

JH: She had to go to the courts to get her own papers and that's how my dad got his.

MB: Did your dad ever talk about Hungary? Was their agriculture area that he came from?

JH: No, I'm the only one who didn't go over, my sister was over my brother was over, and I imagine where my sister lives, you don't have to live like that. But she must be in an old village somewhere that's way behind the time 40 years, so they were staying in the rotting houses outside, there's no screen doors on the kitchens, chickens would come in you got to chase your chickens out, and you got cement and a round floor. They got their own well.

MB: Is that recently that your speaking of?

JH: Yeah, my brother was there last year, and my Sister was there in 76, and my mother, this sister that were talking about that my mother left there, I hadn't seen her for 48 years, so my mother decided she already went over there in 64, so she thought what she would do is call the three over, the three kids, and three came, so that's the first time I seen her in 48 years, were up at the airport and I call WTAE, you think they would come down for that story?

MB: No

JH: They want us to go the studio, we tell them to go to hell, we wanted to go home, we been away. So they only stayed here for a month, what we did get though is that they wanted to go back home. So my kid brother Earl, I seen last year.

MB: Do you know when your father came to America?

JH: They came here in 1913.

MB: Did he come once and go back or did he just stay?

JH: He stayed, see then you had a lot of them seeking over to Canada, and I think my dad did that, he never talked about it.

MB: How did he meet your mother then, if she was born in Pocahontas, Virginia?

JH: Oh I don't know, maybe over there in Virginia.

MB: So he didn't come to Windber right away?

JH: No Pocahontas.

MB: How did he end up in Windber?

JH: Well they were corresponding to somebody and they said Windber, and he said hey I'll go to Windber. They came over in 13, was the oldest one, and I was born in 14.

MB: Did your parents come from small families or large families?

JH: No we had seven in ours, and the sister I'm talking about had 8, now everything that their talking about I can imagine what it is like, because I went through it, and to go there and see I think it would ignore more than anything else.

MB: Your parents had seven children you mean?

JH: Yes and my sister had 8, their growing and you think you can raise them and get her out of where she's at, but she probably won't bring her out anyhow. A lot of it is unsanitary, they have wells, but there nothing over there.

MB: When your favor came over, what language did he speak? Did he speak English at all?

JH: Not much, no

MB: Did he get to go to school?

JH: No, right to work

MB: How old was he when he came.

JH: I think he was 25 when he got married.

MB: Had he been able to go to school in Hungary?

JH: No

MB: Was he literate, could he read and write in Hungarian?

JH: Yeah, both of them could read and write, matter of fact my mother wrote so closed she be signing all these checks, that's how close writing was.

MB: Was she the daughter of immigrants, if she was born in Pocahontas, Virginia?

JH: Yeah, her parents was over there too. See what happened her father was over in this country too.

MB: I see like so many of them. So do you think your parents planed on going back to Europe after they made some money?

JH: Well that's what they wanted to do but it didn't turn out that way. They wanted to come back, but then you would just have poverty coming over then. Not too many people would go back now.

MB: So did your parents when they got to Windber by 1914 when you were born, in 1913, and then he bought your mother and so then you lived in [Mine] 37?

JH: [Mine] 37 is where I was born.

MB: Did they ever talk about when you were a baby, when they were first here, what any of that was like?

JH: She wanted me to stay there, and they just talked the one language. I was 7 years old before I went to school, I could talk American, and they would talk to me in Hungarian. And towards in my mother got into the habit, she would say two words, one in American, you know she wanted to learn American, Even up until the day she died. She couldn't stick to it, you see I could stick to Hungarian strait, until I come to a word I don't know or was taught I would say I don't know. Oh that's what she was having fun with. I have a kid brother down in Washington, Virginia, he's been down there for 37 years. And he was helping so many immigrants out, he had a guy that he said he don't know nothing, nothing and my brother had his garage so he gave him a little job

maybe taking bumpers off, washing cars to keep him off the streets and she said then those guys we go to school they was teaching him how to say words, what happens overtime is that this fella meets another friend of his from a small country and he had a trade. Making good money, so this guy wants to make the money he was making so he left my brother, who was good enough to keep him off the streets. And they did him nicely if you could become a mechanic and make money for me, you're going to make more money too. Well we enjoyed this last year, we had the refuges, and I'm not saying all of them, but right down to Washington, it was a 20th annual thing like that. And you might just figure it be dumb Honkie, but we had professors there, we had people there from South American, from all the areas there. And you can tell that they were talking broken, they were talking slow and you understand them.

MB: These people are from 1956 that's what you're talking about?

JH: Yes, that's where the revolt was. We meet a couple of them, my brother was helping them.

MB: Were there other immigrants from the earlier migrations? The 1820 to 1920 wave was so big, that's when huge numbers came from Austria- Hungary,

JH: '56 is the only one I remember.

MB: Ok did your parents have other relatives in Windber?

JH: No just friends

MB: So what was your childhood like living in those days?

JH: My brother was telling the story to the group that was here last year we had, he always gets us together and shows us a good time, so we decided that we would do it for him. Used to have a party up here, so we finally agreed on family and guess. So when he spoke he was saying that everybody was born in a different town, but he was wrong, he said because that's how much we moved, we were moving all the time. It true like he said, we lived in this one town it's still there

and the home that we was born in it's still there. I took pictures of it and sent it to him, he went over there with his wife and showed her the home where he was born.

MB: Is this Hungary you are talking about or?

JH: Ralston.

MB: Oh in the United States, you moved to all these different mining towns?

JH: Yes, everybody was born different because we moved. I don't we stayed in one town for more than two years.

MB: So you were in and out of Windber?

JH: Yeah, in two years and then we move again. We lived in Ralston four different times. We lived in Windber I think three times, we was on the go all the time.

MB: To find jobs then?

JH: Jobs were easy to find then, you know you go maybe a Sunday you go visiting, I'm talking about oh come here, coal mining, coal miners as godparents, come here good mine, without even trying it they would move over, one time we lived in one town for 8 days.

MB: Do you remember what town that was?

JH: We was moving by horse and buggy then we be moving and the pots would be rattling.

MB: Did you have a favorite town?

JH: Didn't had a chance, so we came here in '34.

MB: To stay?

JH: Now we be here ever since.

MB: So you didn't go to school in Windber?

JH: No I was old enough to go to work then.

MB: So where did you go to school?

JH: All the different towns we moved too. But I finished up towards Hoversvile, that's where I finished up and that's where went to work.

MB: How many grades did you get go through?

JH: Only got to grade 7

MB: So you were 12 by then?

JH: 16, they had a birth somehow if your birthday was before September you didn't have to go; August I didn't have to go to school, boy was I happy even though by birthday was in December. But it did have a clause, if your 16 you didn't have to go.

MB: So you wanted to go work?

JH: Well some days there was just no choice, like whenever there was a birthday and them days your father could go to the office and ask for a job for you. He says to me and I got a present for you and it's in the coverts. It was a slip I recognized it meant a job, and it meant that I had to go the company doctor and get my physical.

MB: Where was this first mine?

JH: Out there in Windber, 1932, that was the first week, I don't know what day it was but that was the first week of October.

MB: I understand that all of Somerset County had a major strike, do you know where you were then?

JH: We was in Ralphton then.

MB: Do you remember anything like that?

JH: They did say how they would chase you out and put you up in tents. You see some kind of farmer would take you his land if I can recall, my Dad would take me up there every now and then. And they had a tree that they cut out and the stump was that high. You would see hundreds

of guys there and someone would be on a stump hollering like hell. I had no idea about what they would be hollering about.

MB: But this was the Union meeting?

JH: Yes, they had to go out in the woods

MB: Yeah, could not do that on company property either?

JH: No it's just like even here, the policemen that they had, it was the company policemen, and they ending up cold line policing, you know they was likely to beat the hell out of you. I never got distorted off the guy, but they said that some of these cops, like in '42 ['22?] they were raping wives and beating the hell out of husbands. That's how we was treated at first and it went on like that almost till '33 when Roosevelt got in there and he said that you could reorganize.

And I have here, how long do you think I belonged to a Union here?

MB: 50 years, goodness, that would be '34, you were probably there when they founded in?

JH: '33, 51 years since I been apart, and I never got out it.

MB: So you worked in Wilbur and then you came to Windber?

JH: When we lived in this railroad, we lived in a few dinky places.

MB: So you remember your father trying to go to this meeting and get organized?

JH: Yeah, he would take me with him, mostly it was on a Sunday, some tents would be set up, and you would see somebody who was a little bit better off and they would bring you some goodies or something to eat. If you didn't move out they throw it out for ya. They didn't want the union in the first place, and after they did get the Union and your company, you know I was interviewed by channel 10, you know so many members today, I don't know whether they forgot about it. Or whether they were bitter from that day up to today 40 years later I doubt it and I told the announcer I couldn't be bitter I worked for the company, you know we was union. Just

merely changing for a living I work for you, you give me a living, that's all I'm asking. I said like over here in Windber they had grocery stores if you need your shoes repaired you took them to the store, your coats cleaned and cloths you take them there and they clean it for you. There was theaters, so what did they have to be bitter about? Sure I admit the price was a little bit higher nationally, as a matter of fact even today, they give you notice from wherever your working they tell ya, you better buy from the store. No it's not fair if you work there.

MB: Oh really today too?

JH: Yeah

MB: So you didn't object to having to shop at the company store?

JH: No, we had some bitter, and what would happen after that, suppose we would be on strike for a month or so, then they kept ya, you see there was no such things as throwing you out of your house, so what happened then you got late on your rent.

MB: This was after the 30's, because it wasn't like that before?

JH: No they let you alone, they give you coal and you charge it, and when you went back to work you probably owned 50 dollars which was a lot of money then. So here's a company which you're striking against keeping you. So how can you be bitter about it? Even though it was a little high, and we never had too many cars to begin with, so how can you go someplace else anyhow?

MB: So do you remember much about what changes came about in the 30's when the Union came in with Roosevelt?

JH: Yeah, he's the one who really wanted the union to come in. Well this other town where I lived that was before union of you wanted to go and get some money, why you would have to go to an office, you actually got a check, say you though you spent 10 dollars in two weeks, that's

how much my mother would spend you have I was allowed to go get it, and you actually had to go check. And it depend on what department you went to first, did I do groceries fist or did I do roses and meat market. So where ever I went first they took that check and they we had money out of aluminum, you know its base up like that with all these corners on there, and the 5 dollar bill I think it was brass. And it was aluminum money then and even that every town that you had they made the booze you know on the side. I could buy booze with that money, they take it, so it's less they have pay, and it didn't matter to them at all. Even that town I was in they had a pool room in there.

MB: Is this Windber you're talking about?

JH: No this is Ralphton, this then we went to Windber, a little sharper just a little different. We would always like to have just about what I'm showing you here, we have to have this slip. That was a copy.

MB: That wasn't a Berwind mine was it?

JH: No I don't think it was, should have a little duplicate you know, yes it was, well I was working later on whenever I quit school in Windber there, then I worked in the company store for about three years and then the depression came on and I got laid off.

MB: So you didn't go into the mines immediately you went into the company store first?

JH: Yeah, you had to be 18 to go to work. My dad wouldn't take me in, as bad as he needed my help, he wouldn't take me in until I was 18 years old.

MB: So you got that slip in the cabinet when you were 18?

JH: Yes, I was 18 no time before.

MB: But you worked in the company 2 or 3 years before.

JH: See up around here, my brother of mine he's kind of tall, he was 15 two months later he was working, they asked him where is his birth certificate, he said lost or he destroyed it in fire. And they take ya you know.

MB: How long was your father a miner?

JH: 30-39 years

MB: When exactly?

JH: When? I would say from 1914

MB: 39 years did you say?

JH: He had to of been 57, he went on pension, I had 34, but, I was 54, early, I had a heart attack, and I was advised not to go back. So this coming July it will be 15 years since I worked. And out of my Dad and two more brothers, I figure we gave to the coal company a 140 years between the 4 of us.

MB: Wow, that's a lot of time.

JH: Yeah, we was all coal miners, and you know once you came in, it was just a mine nothing else.

MB: There wasn't much of a choice. So that's what all your brother did then. So why did you come back to Windber in 34 as opposed to other towns?

JH: Oh they was hiring a lot of there.

MB: Were the mines working regularly then?

JH: Yeah, they working pretty stable when they made that drive, they made a big drive they hired a couple of 100 men.

MB: That's when you came back to Windber, did your parents and family come back or was it just you?

JH: It was all of us. The whole family.

MB: Were you living at home then?

JH: Yes

MB: Were you married then?

JH: No

MB: Ok, so how it was like in the 30's during the depression? You worked in area mines, which mines did you work in [Mine] 37? In the 30's?

JH: Oh I wasn't working then, I didn't start work until '32.

MB: Well in the whole 30's during the depression era, which mines were you working in?

JH: The one down in Windber the one down near Hovers vile, it wasn't long just for about 9 months and then we moved.

MB: And then you worked here, what mine did you work in?

JH: Three of them

MB: Which ones?

JH: We had a [Mine] 40 upper, 37 upper, 37 lower, 40 lower that went on top of each other

MB: Could you tell me what the work conditions were like back when you started mining?

JH: Well see I don't even know if you know what a pick is, do you know what a pick is?

MB: Yes

JH: See that's what the first thing the men did, these men they had picks, sometimes one would shovel the overs would pick. Here's what you had to do you had to lay down like this and they could start this low cause if you did you didn't go tin there very far, so if you did you had to start high, it could go down until you couldn't get your hand in there anymore, so right here you have to pick every ounce and then after, let's assume if it was in your three feet, then let's say it's that

high up here you're going to huge and drill as in as many times. In those days you had no dust no water, after you was down you try to do it again. So that's was the very first things guys did carve out lights, and after they got rid out that system, then something else came out of that. Let's say it was a hedge clipper and you could mine down there. If I was a hedge clipper that came down there I got three feet and then take it out, then you lay your track up to it drill and start again. So finally little by little the hand loaders start bringing to go out, and they start bringing, you know when you go to the shopping store, they also had a conveyor. And we just stayed in one place, you didn't have to lay no track on it but every time you did mine in there we had to lay a piece of pan in between and the chain took it out and the chain took it 200 to 300 feet. So each time that would come out, something else would come out, even now the on difference now is why there is so much wrong in the both sides in Unions and the companies.

End of Tape 1

Beginning of Tape 2 (March 6, 1984)

JH: So anyhow, when we were kids and the girls all the homes had were wooden floors, and if we had carpets I was the oldest one at home, I did most of the work, go out and get a bench, put your carpet on the bench. Move it again, we didn't the time to be moussing down the street. You came home from school , you had coffee or whatever, where are the kids at 3:30, 5:30, there down the street, we didn't have that, we had a strict 9 o clock curfew, you didn't have it. So I can recall one time it was me and my brother I think all three brothers, and we were there making noise and one of the cops says you sound like a bunch of cats, get in. So we went in, I told my mother, and she said why you don't go in someone else's yard. That was in the barnyard but we listen and back that day before we had a union, and it was nothing they had, store was up high

and they had a big beckon light, and somebody would man that all night, all other town turning it and turning it every which way he could turn it to.

MB: What was purpose of this?

JH: For cover, when it was 9 o'clock it was 9 o'clock, it's the same thing here that you'll here in Windber, I don't how many thousands were here maybe 15,000, but then they'll say one cop did it, I will never by it. It's true we only had one cop that was walking the street. But let's assume we had 12,000 couples married, so that's 24,000 cops there, plus this cop, you was the cop the mother and father they said don't this. If you did anything you come home, and it's not like today when come home and you come home crying they never ask you what did they do to you, we always accused or own what did you do. That's why the kids today whenever they come home crying maybe the was wronged. The mother will ask what they did to you, if you put word in my head they'll say oh they did this, and that's where they'll be trying to get away with something.

MB: Yeah, times have changed

JH: Yes they have changed considerably, I go with a lady you know she's got a granddaughter, house thank god, she's got that kid spoiled so badly. I told her you got two kids she did the same thing you know, there such a thing, my mother's theory was love them but show them that you don't. If you keep doing that you be surprised by the price you're going to pay later on. And this girl she has to be with her every minute, if she's got company she's in there. So she comes out here her baby has to come out here, if were out on the porch she goes in for something the baby goes right in there with her, she won't stay there with me. Then I told her leave her in there let her cry I say you wanted in now you're in. And she runs out she run out. Today I'll tell you the way kids are today, boy they are spoiled.

MB: Were your parents strict Mr. Horvath?

JH: Yes, the other thing you had in discipline here is that if you walked the streets they were all nice fence painting fence and if you see somebody working in the yard you say a Mr. cones what are you doing? And you say can I help you, see you were always busy. See when I had already become 15 we had to go in the woods and just drag wood wood wood for the winter just like a scoreal gathers peanuts and it was nothing oh this rock dump is a good example there was always some good coal lumps now you go get that and if your chore was you were supposed to bring in the wood, you bring it in everyday if somebody had another chore then they did that every day to do if you didn't. You knew what the hell you if you didn't you got bopped.

MB: Did your parents keep borders?

JH: Oh yeah, just about every family had borders, my mother was never keen on it, like some had a lot and that turned out to be plentiful for the married couple. And they maybe a few children of their own and they had borders, say that husband died, many times that wife would marry one of borders, not out of love but anything else security.

MB: Did you know cases where a young girl was forced to marry one of the borders?

JH: Well I don't know, well sure even when I was 18 or 19, it seems that my parents because we are Hungarian I had to marry you because you are Hungarian. And they always wanted, it's not like today they wanted somebody Husky, they say boy look at those nice rosey cheeks. They try to arrange a marriage and it was a lot of arranged marriages believe me over the years that was arranged maybe that girl wouldn't had no income at all.

MB: They wouldn't have liked it if you married a Slovak or a Polish person?

JH: That's if , okay your over at [Mine] 40 and the boys want to come all the way from [Mine] 30 to see their girls, they got the hell beat out of them, or vice versa, if [Mine] 37 boys was over

they didn't allow boys in the town. And we didn't have a chance, today look what the kids they don't have, what we played with we had two clothes pins together we made a gun out of it. That was your gun Ok and then I come over with my oatmeal or a round can or a cardboard, then once it was gone, all we did was drill a hole in the top of it and screen you always did have, you come home grocery shopping you always saved it and you run it through there and you made a couple of knots in there so it wouldn't come out you made it so long that you got a cloth pins and you marked it with the clothespin and what and that's your toy make noise like an airplane. And then when you come home from church or something like that of with your shoes.

MB: So did you go to church regularly?

JH: Not too often cause well had travel three miles, I remember going to school, I had one pair of boots and I had to wear dem boots, and later on they start to smell. And my mother not only her you see some in the war pictures, we had no socks, a piece rag put around there, you made a pair of socks out of it. But overthere, we didn't know what potato chip we didn't know what that was. But today here, it's too fast it's not appreciated, what is there when you got everything what is there to look forward too? You know back in those days when I was teen we had no cars we had to walk in rows boys and girls, all walking thorough don't matter what time you went through, and if somebody had a car you stop and you talk to them. Everybody got cars and they ride to school like these farmer boys they still walk to schools two or three miles in the snow, today here now they give you a ride and they drop you off in front of the house, so it was a struggle, this is what I'm getting at, why are the people going in to the mine. I can only talk about the mine, because that's all I been around, I cannot talk about the steel. But the steel had the same problems also, so say it was me already 14, 15, years old. They had taken in boys that was 14 in the mine, so he became 24 years old he's a veteran of 7 years already right? Now you getting

these kids today that's 21 never did a day's work in his life yet, don't know what the hell it's all about, because, I'm sure I appreciate it, I'm sure the women appreciate it. Ok we you had grass cutters; you had no electric grass cutters. Same as the women didn't have all the convenience that you had today. So the kids got it good because there's nothing to do personally, and they'll purposely make a lot of noise just to be chased out. They say get out,

JH: The trouble with mines today is that they hire these guys and there either assistant Foreman's and bosses you there retired their up in age already. Like my group is about gone.

MB: They died?

JH: Yeah, you know I don't think but you'll find some but not too many guys that 55 or 60 years old you know working now. And so when these kids go in there they talk about instructing them, When I went with my father he was the instructor

MB: You went in with your father?

JH: Yeah, you didn't do what you were supposed to does he give you a boot up ass. But today you got to go to school and all this malarkey, the kids today what they will do if they are told to do something. What they will say is that is not their job, they don't want to work, see you got a job one job is yours and there's nothing to do on that job, you're getting 50 dollars a day, and theres 4 more jobs there that pay 50 dollars also there allowed that if you have nothing to do you get 50 dollars a day, there's nothing to do, their allowed to go over here, cause this 50 dollar job and that 50 dollar job, the man say no because that aren't my job, this is wrong, what they will do they will shift you over your wage is the same but if they would shift you to another job that paid 75 dollars a day, you're going to get the 75 dollars, they can go up but they cannot go down, They won't do it. And so today it's all mechanized today I don't have any old books on a shelf like... Oh we was hand loading till about 6 tons no three between about two of us. If you average

in every 20 minutes you know you're doing well. But we had gotten some of these mechanized miners there I was able to give you about 3 ton of coal in about 50 to 55 seconds.

MB: What were the various jobs you held in mines?

JH: Mostly hand loading.

MB: And you worked with these machines as they came along?

JH: I had, my dad hated that when I was shorting it with a pick, so we did the version that didn't need a mount or anything, but then as I say next year their inventing something else to make it easier on us. Now today, Im sure you heard of a jackhammer out on the street. And you can imagine what those men went through, they had to lay down like I showed you instead of getting a pitch, they get this jackhammer and all that noise and all that smell that you breathe in

MB: wow, no wonder so many people got black lung.

JH: And you take those days I at first worked with my Dad and overthere the mine had worked Mon Wed and Fri, we had to work 6 days to put in three days, we had to work an all night shift they said the power was cheaper, now if we went in there Monday and if we had to stay in there until these cars whether they bought them 2 two a couple or three two a couple, but we had to stay in the mine until we got five trips. And that meant you could go home, and if it took you 12 or 15 hours then you was out of luck. And my dad was like that for a while, he says Where you going John, I say it quitting time, my dad was contrary; we should just work a little more.

JH: Once we got the Union in, people start people bitching about the Union. Ok so the Union come in we had Daylight, we didn't have none here, and we got a little bit of a raise, like up at that mine if you take here if you take coal out and were going this way. Sooner or later your going have to block that off, if you don't the air will build up. The air will come in here instead of going down there or vice versa so this is what you got to have following you. And up there

they had no lasso, so we used like years ago what they called a table cloth. That's what you do block that off so the air forwards ya. And they got jobs, my job was to make it and load it. Then we had two guys in there that had a I call it a truck, and I load him up he gets out of the road and then another one comes up there, you know they take turns a lot . See whenever one had to come down he could come here and let you go and back and forth. It's interesting if you want to work together, we had some crews I think there were seven of us and I always try to stress to the men and we had a boss that would stay with us for about 2 hours. Im doing my thing and you're doing your thing, next thing you know you're coming back.

JH: What the hell is going on here? Somebody else is doing somebody else job. And I urged him to do it, try to teach him to do it and you know why. Im not saying it's going to happen, but let's say someone did get laid off. And you don't have too much seniority I do I can't do that I'll get laid off but you're a seniority capable of doing that job you do that job. So anything that would move overthere I would try to run. That is the trouble today the Union is alright but there comes a time when you're going to have to tell me or Im going to have to tell you that you're wrong.

We have to accept, that there not and no matter how bad the guys are the Union has to go on strike for them. And this is wrong, if you got a bushel of apples or potatoes and if theres one bad one there you got to get rid of that bad apple, if you don't you're going to spoil them all. So here's what they tried to do there was a case one of the bosses was telling me like this place here telling them to put up a curtain, you put that curtain up and he says you come up I have some other work for ya, he waiting Hes waiting, so he decided to come back when he come he did what he was supposed to, but we called that a rigged. So he told him hey there other work to do not just that if you're going to give him 80 dollars for doing that 15 minutes work and he said you know I could fire ya and he went out and told the men and he went out on strike. They had

there hearing, they asked him did this boss fire you. No he said he could, and this is what we got to stop doing, protecting guys, see if you're working everyday you're going work 200 days a little more, probably 210, 220, he said this man worked 88 days. Now that means like whenever were doing the work I showed you hand loading. I could miss, you could miss I could probably work myself, or asked the next guy, he helped me push this up there and we used to help one another, but later on when these machines came in they couldn't do it that way they had to ask one of the men coming out to stay and that meant a double time so we had a couple of guys like that. They would miss and miss and they got warnings and finally the superintendents got distressed and fired both of them. And arguing we didn't lift a dam finger to help them, they warned they were warned. And this is what was going on today, no matter if you're guilty the Union is protecting you. I think the company should have the right to fire a guy like that.

MB: So have you been a Union official for a long time? What has been your Position?

JH: Oh, I'm the financial secretary.

MB: For a lot of years?

JH: Since 1959

MB: This was one of the locals down here?

JH: Yes, that's what I was doing here, I got guys here they hadn't paid me any union dues and I'm calling them up and reminding them. So that's why my table is covered up all the time.

MB: So you must have seen lots of changes and problems in the Unions then, was it hard when there were first Unions to get the nationalities together?

JH: No

MB: No that wasn't a problem? I would think that because they didn't want to marry outside their ethnicity that would cause segregation, it might cause problems at work?

JH: No it was, in the years before there was a union we had things we call day work, if the wages was three dollars you got a dollar, its three dollars every day, and it seemed those types of jobs was work outside.

MB: Oh, I see

JH: So I consider myself a Hunkie [Hungarian] even though I was born here. The Hunkie people could not get those jobs. They gave them to the Americans, so the only thing that we did get that was nice were talking about panel rights ok under that rule they can't do that see you have to take me whether I'm Hungarian or not. And what they would if we didn't have rather panel rights then seniority, if you didn't have that, that foremen could put his friends on the good job that was done long before the Union they get the good jobs and back in them days you had to ill tell you what. You had to, I'm not saying you did but you had to and was told to vote Republican all the time.

MB: Who told you that?

JH: The company; they said you better vote Republican.

MB: Did miners do that then?

JH: Probably some did

MB: Would they lose their jobs if they didn't?

JH: It's the same thing when the Union came out, this little town that I lived at, We done our work on company property but then we had to go here, go there. The places, I remember coming over here, we was on somebody's farm in Valley Dairy up there somewhere. But that's what we have today to much wrong within the union. Though the young groups they know everything you can't tell them nothing, and if you tell them like you seem to know steel cars in 41, many a times two of us loaded one of them, we would be loading and the third guy would be out there, and

then the next day he would come up and I would go down. And the next day two of us loaded the cart. But the third guy had to do the watching see. And to get it ready its nothing like these kids today think I can load that that many times, but get it ready like I showed you. And today I was up there talking at the office, today they should be getting 50 60 ton a man with these machines. And one place up there was making two, now if he made two tons, he didn't make enough money to pay himself, No at what time and I don't know when it was or what the wages was and then they had everything like unemployment compensation, your paid holidays and so forth, but here not too long ago it cost about 140 dollars to have one man working. And if he load two tons, he didn't make enough to pay him. And our group over there and if we would go to work and the afternoon was your daylight, of we would confirm with one another, these kids don't do that today, say how is it, oh this one's bad that one is good. And that's the one you concentrate on, all that is gone. Oh just simply little things.

MB: So do you think there is a real generational problem in the Union

JH: Yes

MB: Are there any other problems? What about with national leadership? Was there much talk about the Lebonski issue in the area?

JH: Yeah, no nobody knows if it's the truth or not, that he was nothing but a gambler and all that. I seen him once, when he was a big wheelie in the office down there, so he's down there I don't know say 5 years and he's sees this hankie pinkie going on for 5 years why do you wait and you're a candidate and you're going to run for this job and now bring this gossip out. So if it was me I would feel if you knew about it than you're in the same click. You should go to jail like the other guys are going to jail. Like one they murdered that Tony Bowl he's must be about 80 years

now, you know still in prison. I think he was framed I don't know. Coarse they tried him twice and he was guilty both times.

MB: How does the local work with the national leadership? Are there many ties with national?

JH: Well what you do is there ever 4 years you have a convention, and that's where you bring your problems at.

MB: Do you go to conventions yourself then?

JH: Oh I did towards the end; I could have went to this last one. See I been pretty good to my membership they know that I won any election down there anytime. Just tell me I need to get out, they get mad. Hey you treat your people right. I had a guy we took him up and he was paying me money for union fees at my house, my wife was living with me and she didn't know much about it. I had them all the time stopping over, coming over here, we go to the hall for that. You know, so I got that broke up I said you want to send it to me you send it to me. And I'll send your card back, this is not a private office.

MB: Do you have a judgment of John L Lewis of the time?

JH: Im not saying and I told guys he was supposed to be the greatest union leader. I will go as far I don't say we couldn't have another John L. Lewis, for this reason John L. Lewis we hardly ever had any elections. No elections and if you're on strike you get your pay and go out and act tough and big while I'm doing the suffering and you're doing the suffering.

MB: So now you have the elections?

JH: Now what happened in 1969, the people were to talking about autonomy, you know what autonomy means?

MB: Yeah.

JH: Up in that time nobody voted, no election, if they did it was on a slide he's in there. You gave me a job, he gave me a job this job is yours forever, you going to tell me you're going to pop off, and you pop off to everybody. But today is different it's worse than ever, today you got this autonomy your allowed to vote and it's a popularity contest. I ran here in the '80's, I did, I was running for the secretary of treasury job up there. And my work wouldn't be any more that what I do now, 300 guys and they have 1,500 cause the girls do the work. So you could be running, you are real intelligent and you know your content real good. Im running against you, you and I are going for the same job and I just got this gift to gag and I win. But I don't know nothing about the union. So what's good for the union? See every four years we get new faces. So what happened when you get in there, you're in there for 4 years, you're learning, and by time maybe the third year you know a bit, your done they get another group in there, and this is no good either?

MB: So you don't like the way Lewis ran things?

JH: Well when he said something everybody shook when he said something.

MB: But there are problems with elections?

JH: They say that no one could judge John Lewis, there could have been theres a couple of guys same rights same pay no elections against you.

MB: Are there any other major problems you think with the Union or struggles?

JH: No

MB: What about the problem of unemployment did the union ever resolve that?

JH: You'll hear some lady or some man bitch about the Union ok suppose her husband was in the Union. And while he was getting all the benefits, he wasn't saying g anything. He didn't say

no I don't want that but now that it's gone these women are writing in and complaining that the Union has fallen, but it was the Union that got all these benefits.

JH: Right now though is what I can't understand is your just betraying, or whether their feeling you out all of a sudden everybody is going broke. It's hard, now why did they give them that much money in the first place if they couldn't see it clear. And the same went down in Johnstown for 200 men they said the hell with them, no body work there now. But you can hear the same story some in the mine some in the mill went to work didn't do a day's work slept, now that Union stuff there, somebody goes out and punches his card for them. Now we have the mills down there when they work so long they get a 13 week vacation. Hell I rather not have that I sit and work 4 days a week then and work right through. Then what these people were doing if they had a 13 week vacation coming they would sell it, what I mean by that they get another man in there and do it for less work. He'll go back to the mill and do another job at a lower rate, their selling it.

MB: I guess this area is just besieged with economic problems with the coal industry. Now if you don't mind getting back to more things about Windber. What was Windber like in the 30s when you came back to live in 1934?

JH: Well one thing about else whenever we came here in '34 that was the boom that was the year they hired a lot of men and that's how we got up here. And everybody was working see like you notice this right here in Windber the company has about 5 stores. But one that's sits down by the bank, the big store, the reason they named it the big store, I know you don't know it but the railroad would come up to the store and bring their thing, that was like a depot you know if 7 needed a refrigerator the company would say just go to the big store and get it. And if you bought at one you can buy at the other. And at that time it was pretty good because we were

working, and they talking about this acid rain in [Mine] 37 there. I'll tell you whenever that mine was going you should have seen the dust oh god. Then when they was coming down our way, if you had a table and most of them had a porcelain top, you could of wrote your name on it. And we live by it, I know people that die from it they live from 60 to 78 years old. There all pensioners,

JH: Now I have a lot of pension in there now, while they were working and making dust for 40 that was odd. When they retired you know they wanted to shut the mine down. Then where the hell does your pension come from. From that dust, and in my opinion I don't give a dam where you're going to work if there is work there has to be some dirt or you're not going to be working. See they had up here, and Davisville, they wanted to start a big mine up there. People got together and said they didn't want this and they didn't want that. Maybe some of them people that did live in Davisville were down in Johnstown, or working in the mill making dust for you and that's alright. But you don't want another industry to come up by his house and give him dust. Cause that's how everybody getting there be different. Back way way back people were much more helpful. Back in those days, you had a christening and you had a godmother and a godfather. And everyone else there not godfathers but they must have been proud of the fact, they would call everybody, coal miners come out to it that's means godfathers, and if anybody was having a baby the neighbors would come cook for, wash the cloths for you all that stuff. Today theres no of that you can have a baby and you don't know until you read the paper, were not that close it was nothing, for Sunday my mother would make the bread we would walk a mile out of town, take some bread and some money we roast some bacon. And you cut it down have a stick running all the way through it you have an onion on the end of it a whole one. And when you thought the top was burning you take the knife and cut it off. And every time you got the

dripping, you put the dripping of your lard on your bread. And whenever you thought it was done you cut that top of and you got a sandwich. They take moonshine down there, see theres no get together now as you well know. I don't care where you go, if you go there watching TV, what do you do, sitting there watching TV, back in those days you didn't have that, you went to visit and you went to talk. Now there's none of that, there was a lot of things that we did that didn't cost any money now it's gone, even now their fighting about these prayers in church and so forth I said I went a few times if somebody had a wedding. And I was with a guy that was actually born in Hungary and he was sharp, he was the best man for more people you can shake a stick at, because he was real good at that, so we had these cans that you could win at the carnival. And our colors are red white and green. We come to your house and give you a personal invitation to the wedding. Everybody was invited; unless they were in the city it was different. Now all that's gone, it can be brought back but someone has to bring it back. Like here their talking about at the church again, the Supreme Court like how many of them, their laws now they got the manger and everything, what the hell is wrong with that. Think about that, now it's at Christmas Eve and this little town I lived in, they had this little Hungarian orchestra in town they had this guy would come and get on your porch, he would play Christmas music for you. Every house, and naturally everybody had something then. Because it was Christmas, you had the cake you had the moonshine and had fun and got drunk. All the nice things are gone, another nice thing that, and I still go dancing I'm 70 years old and I'm a dancer for 50 something years. And all this noise that these kids do on TV in don't send me at all. And you can't tell them, but once in a while you will run into some teenagers will listen. I'm talking 1940's now, ok you have 5 or 6 in a bunch, you would say to John, your dad says number 2 they would walk up that part and they would say its 50 cent or whatever the admission was and they gave the girls a little

tablet that was marked on the 13th, now the reason they gave you a tablet was, suppose I come up and ask you if you want to dance, and you look at this list and I could be number 7 and you put my name there, if you was the type to remember all of them that's fine, you didn't have to do that. So when the orchestra would play their first song, first set I mean, and you take that number one away and you put that number two there, see if you got confused on your slip all you had to do was look up on there, and then if you sat on the outer side of the part there, and if you went up to a girl you asked her for dance, If had my hat on, would you dance with me?

MB: I think you would remove your hat.

JH: If they had to tell you, the girls told you to take your hat off, or if you came over there with a cigarette in your hand and if you didn't have sense to take it out, they told you, today what do you see hats on cigarettes, beer bellies, they grab one another like this and they don't look for anybody else, whose in the way or any dam thing, and this is what they call dancing.

MB: So there were a lot of Hungarian dances and so on?

JH: Yeah, there were dances, but not that many, but back and year ago, they would have ore Union picnics or a Slovak day, we would have it so often, we didn't have that many, and the park had much more up there then now, the problem is the teenagers got in it and they blew everything all to hell. And the Slovak day, one year like my local would hold a picnic, next year the Windber local would have a picnic or they have a Slavish day or a Hungarian Day and we had quite a few dances down in Scalp mine. And yet just start telling them you know they realize, but the only thing they did with this little town in Windber, they didn't even have a cop there, church there would start at mass at 6, 7 o clock their still over there. And now the only thing that has difference is you try to get a group of up here we try to get teenagers dressed in Hungarian costume they would do a folk dance and after that was over the judge would make

announcement that grape stealing was open. The only is in them days get a bunch of grapes always one or two fell and you walk over it and you was making wine see. So these teenagers that dance each other they were the cops they would be allowed to dance and if you and I were dancing we try to get away with it they come up and tap you on the shoulder and they say ah I caught you, so it was their duty to take you up to the judge.

MB: Oh, I see.

JH: And the judge would say “Well this is your first offense.” Get the gavel maybe 50 cent and a quarter and the more ya stole the cheaper he made it u know. Now the only thing they would do now is they put them in these little baggies so don’t get this waste in them. But you’re getting a young group in participating. And in another town if you get caught you go to jail. Somebody’s got to bail you out; if they don’t bail you out you sit there. We’ll have like, well Kansas City had it well there out of season about now. We had about 3 or 4 of them now well do it just a little bit different.

MB: Did you marry a Hungarian women or Slovak?

JH: No, I married a Pollack.

MB: Was that a problem did your parents object to this marriage?

JH: The only thing I had when we were getting married, my mother was pretty sly, and I would talk to my neighbor more than my mother about my problem, and she would tell her. But when we were going together I was missing a lot work. She got number one what the hell she don’t care. Then I can recall going down to De Roy’s, I wanted to get engaged and I asked the man what’s the average , ah what the hell it’s close to about 40 dollars for a ring that’s how cheap it was. But I got that and I gave it to her she wasn’t too keen about it. Her first words were always “How much did you pay for it?” She didn’t like them, and I took her and her sister-in-law back

to De Roy's and she picked her own out and so that one ring it wasn't a hell of a lot but then it was. It was '57, 87 dollars, and no matter what you bought, prices was everything to her. No matter what you bought prices was everything to her. You bought something there for 50 cent you would her it was 2 dollars. So I lived with her for 16 years and I left her.

MB: Do you have some children?

JH: Yes we had 4 girls together. I lived there for a while, we fought from the very beginning and this is so while I just told you I told the neighbor. The neighbor told my mother, and she would got rooting dammit, I used to see her root to much through my clothing see the rings there, one day the ring would be there the next day she wouldn't be there. And she's such a miser like that now what the hell is she going to do and be like when she got married.

MB: It must have been hard to get divorces in those days, to leave because of ethnic and religious sanctions of that were hard, and I imagine that would be difficult.

JH: Yeah, so I had about 16 years with her and I took off, I know I could of went back home anytime I wanted to. She is just so stubborn she wouldn't call me, but if I went back and if I jumped when I was living with her boy would I be jumping now, she said oh I wouldn't call you.

MB: You never had any boys?

JH: No all-girls, so after I left her, it seems that I was always lucky when I ran into companionship, a girl that was single. I lived with her for about 16 ½ years we got along with the kids. Well sleep at the homes and so forth that's up to her. And I think 16 ½ years on the 7th month she died. And here now, this lady I go with, she's so strict on divorces. And I told her five years ago, let's try to get annulled, you know, the more figure now, hey I'm 70 now what the hell can I give you 5 years 10 years what? And she's sacred she says she had two of them her husband had a tumor and he died, the second one that she married she didn't know at the time

but what did he have? He had cancer when he married her, so she lived through hell 3 or 4 years till he dead, she had to take care of him, and this is what she's sacred of. So I can see her point.

MB: If you had a son Mr. Horvath, would you have wanted him to go in the mines?

JH: Well we had nothing but that, that's all you did, what kind of choice would I make, I hated school, and college didn't interest me, I know like we had to do, the company store there if somebody wanted the kerosene there was a lot of kerosene I'd take so the man that was waiting on you wouldn't get his hands dirty, somebody wanted to pick up potatoes, it's not like today, I would get the potatoes and I would deliver with him and we stop the truck here, I take something to this house while he take something to this house. But at the end of the day you didn't have all those registers like you have today with the tape, you just push the button down for sales, and he gave me 50 cent for the whole day. I loved store work, when we moved up to Windber I was getting 8 dollars a day a month, and I like it so much I would have to work all Saturday, I was going to school. I would have to go past the store and in the mornings give them about a half hour, then go to school, coming home I would stop by there again. When it all added up it came to about 25 dollars a month. And how I used to run and just give it my mother. But you try today my mother did all the cashing and if I wanted anything yeah. They had the cinnamon rolls, you know what these big 20 pound grocery bags is so I had the money, and instead of coming straight home, my house was first I had to go to the store, they had a pan of cinnamon rolls I would buy a dozen and he would flip it over in sixes I could barely hold the top that's how big it was. A lot of bread a lot of potatoes, a lot of beef.

MB: Did you worry a lot about layoffs and things like that?

JH: No as far as layoffs no, I got hurt though, I was working pretty steady till one year there after 28 years I got laid off. Well laid off for a couple months and then went back and they shut it

down. This other company came, so I was probably out for a year and a half, but I was 54 ½ when I got laid off. Boy If had stuck it out I would off left at 45. Some of us had as much as 448 years in the mine, I got one friend who lives on this street, was you at Shuster's?

MB: Yes

JH: What would be the last row houses towards the rug dump? Now he worked for 48 years, and his social security amounts to 750 dollars, the thing is he worked beyond 65, which helps you more. He lost his wife in '72.

MB: Did you worry about accidents while working the mine?

JH: No, there were times, out of all the years I put which were 35 I seen one of my buddy's get killed, now he was closer to me than you are. See after that if you get, like this talk here this is going to sound loose. What your supposed to do, now we actual had a imp sector and this guy had gloves on the man that worked there, and he went like this, and the man said to the inspector do you feel your wife with your gloves on, you suppose to take it off. It's not active. Then you hold your fingers here up against the top then you would grab a pole about that long and you would hit it.

MB: You would do this to see if it was safe?

JH: Yes to see if it was solid. And if something like that was bad, then we have to take something and we called it a cross bar we had to go up this way and over that corner and then down, and we called that cross bars and that's what we was doing, and he was I was about that far, I run the machine so he was in the front there maneuvering around getting into position to press to raise it up, the rock came down, his head hit right on the machine like this, killed immediately. In 34 years that's the only accident I seen. And that's 1959, I had some scary moments, you get scared and then you have some of your buddies that are not with you. Their

back maybe 50 feet, you think if anything happens in 50 feet, you think if anything happens in 50 feet he's got a hell of a start on you. And you know

MB: Do you know of miners having any superstition about when they wouldn't work, I've heard stories, more of in the old days before you were working, and sometimes miners would refuse to go into mines because they had some superstition? I heard a story that miners didn't want to run into a women before they entered the mine.

JH: No, but one mine where I was working, I remember one time they had a women there I say and even in this area. If I were to pick out some coal miners I picked out a mother and a daughter, they paint the houses. And one time I would pick out a crew, but that's no place for somebody weighing 90 pounds. And I recall somebody telling me that when we say its caving, after that it would get so weak that it has to come down. And they were telling her come let's get out. And she said "No" according to the book it's not supposed to cave in. Every place is different, every place has different condition. Some places your there, every time you take out so much coal you put a prop up. But soon as they start to crack that means get the hell out. It falls quick, if it goes to another place it could crack for a week and nothing happens and that's what you do every time you got a different Section you get to know it. But the safe fest way at working was hand loading, you know now you take that there monster that I was running later called the caterpillar. It was 28 feet long, 8 feet wide, see I couldn't put it in this room, and you didn't need much room for that. Hand loader all you could work to the teeth there. So I started off that way and then this conveyor work, so I had about 17, you know 17 loading and like that, what we're talking about trying to tell these young guys, we used to have whenever this place was dried up they had 10 men two other here, two other there, then this guy a locomotive, he come and put two cars in between, another three for him and another three for him. So let's say

that I'm the first one and I got a car off the tracks, you have to help me or you're not going nowhere, so we trying to reach out to these young kids and they don't want to believe it.

Everybody come help, help, soon as you get it go on, well I'm going to work and everybody else going to work but now they say "What kind of Job?" Oh the wages are good, were just slopping around.

MB: Are you saying that younger miners don't understand the struggle older miners went through to get the union? And they take for granted all the benedicts they were getting and not appreciating any of the struggles, or any of the work you had to do?

JH: My Nephew would work there, at first he was a little noisily but when he settled down they said that he was pretty good and these other men aren't doing so well, and they'll say "Oh you're crazy for doing that". And that's the purpose of a mine if your place is doing real good, it's taking off the slack of you because you're not doing so well. But hand loading was the best though and we had a rule that if you made 10 dollars you got three dollars, now you get in there if their wages are 80 dollars you got 80 dollars one day for whatever you do. And we lost it like whenever I came out and you was following you was doing the same work that I was doing. I had a piece of paper, and I would have on that paper, this is it, this is it, and started running around looking for that piece of machinery you had I'll tell you it's over there in number 4, these guys don't do things like that, and you take like when they come out of the drift I think it was 4 tracks at least at a timple and the good timers whenever they would come out and the guy on the end he would throw that switch forget the men that was coming out so they don't have to stop stalling. These guys don't do that, all these little simple things. And they won't give or take.

MB: So you think there are going to be real problems in the future then if they don't resolve it?

JH: Maybe these men here is laid off now you know it's quiet now, but they go out and strike for everything. Around the mine if you have a problem what you're supposed to do at the end of the day is go see management. And tell them what your problems are and he'll say to you, "Will you come in tomorrow?" I'll have it checked out, so you go in the next day, maybe they checked it out, and maybe you were right or wrong, that's it, but let's take it the other way around you're not satisfied, all you have to do like a lot of guys say I'm going to the union, and you say I'm filing a complaint. This when you get other people involved in it, and sometimes, if it's already quitting time. And the boss wants you to come up because they want to pay for it, 5 mines extra, and how many times you come out early and how many times you come out late it takes care of itself.

End of Tape 2

End of the Interview (March 6, 1984)