

INTERVIEW WITH STEVE J. SHUSTER
By Mildred Allen Beik

March 4, 1984
Mine 40, Scalp Level, PA

SS = Steve J. Shuster (October 14, 1914-February 10, 1994)

ES = Emma L. Shuster (October 27, 1920-January 18, 2013) a few comments

MB = Millie Beik

Beginning of Tape 1 (March 4, 1984)

MB: Do you mind if I take a couple of notes, so I can ask you a couple of questions.

SS: I may not be able to answer a lot of things right.

MB: Ok, Mr. Shuster what's your full name?

SS: Steve Shuster

MB: OK, how do you spell Shuster?

SS: S-H-U-S-T-E-R

MB: Could you tell me when you were born?

SS: 1914, October 17th.

MB: Can you tell where you were born then, were you born in Windber?

SS: No ma'am, I was born in a little mining town in Clearfield County, Boardman [Knox]

MB: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents, are u the son of Immigrants like some of the people from this time who grew up in mining towns.

SS: Yes, yes, my parents come from Hungary, and first they moved to Clearfield County as far as I can remember, miners they would move from different places. We lived in Geners, we lived in around the Windber area, we lived in Clover, but the biggest working area was around Windber here, cause we never, while we was growing up, my father worked here, my brothers worked here, we got married all around here, I have a son living in central city, I have one living in Windber, and I have one living at home, he was married but not anymore because they broke up, I have a daughter living down there in Pittsburgh.

MB: So you have four children altogether?

SS: and my granddaughter we have down here living with me, her mother had her daughter, she didn't like her daughter, she was raised up here, so you can't blame her, she didn't like to leave us, she was down here for about 5 to 6 years, so, she wanted to come out so I say ok I'll take care of you, so I brought her back and she's going to school here, she's in her third year of High School now, after that I don't know what's she going to do. Coarse we just have to wait and see about that.

MB: Could you tell me where in Hungary your parents are from, do you know of any village names or town names, or provinces?

SS: Yes I could tell ya a name, but now, I don't know if you can say them in English.

MB: Well that's ok say it in Hungarian.

SS: [Ugalane] and of course there's a few other words but I can't exactly think of any.

MB: Is that the village name Ugalane?

SS: Yes I would say so.

MB: Did your parents come from the same village then?

SS: Yes. In fact they even got married in Europe, my oldest brother Andy he was born in Europe, and the rest of the children there was 6 boys and three girls, but one girl died when she was a baby, so there was 6 boys and two girls, and there three of boys living still and one girl.

MB: Do you know very much about the area which your parents came from? Did they farm there?

SS: Yes I would say it was farming more, they would always talk about working out in the fields, it was farming, it wasn't no city they lived in, well just like these towns here, they would have a little market outside the town, but for the most part they did their farming.

MB: Did your father, or your father's family just work the land then?

SS: Well my father's family, that's my grandfather on my father's side, he had a short life, and he died when my father was child, I guess his mother raised him, my grandmother on my father's side was German. So I couldn't tell you anything about my grandfather on my father's side. On my mother's side, I don't even know how many sisters she had, I know she had at least one, and she was red headed, it's wonder none of us had red hair, she had one brother, he was supposed to be out here in America some place, she even tried to find him, but she couldn't

MB: So did you ever hear any stories about how your parents got together?

SS: The only way they looked at it in Europe, they had these, dances,

Friend: Hey tut how do you think they do get together, one parent like the other, I f your mother liked a certain boy and they were friends then you would married them whether you liked them or not.

MB: So parents arranged the marriage?

SS: Oh yea, just like I have a brother, he died, but the sister in law she still living, they lived in Carter, another fella liked my sister in law, and he was going the more European way, you see the European way you didn't bother much with the girl, it was more the parents. And they when they come to marry then they decide. So here while this fella is talking to my sister in law parents, my brother was talking to the girl, and he was the one marrying her

MB: That's the way it worked.

Friend: You'll never see that in this younger generation.

SS: This generation, I don't know.

MB: Did your parents have any stories about living in Europe, do they remember vividly?

SS: They used to have weddings, they had them for a couple of days, and they would celebrate a wedding.

MB: Did they both speak Hungarian as a native language then?

SS: Yes, when I think, see my Grandmother was German and my Father was Hungarian, but I guess a Hungarian can go to Hungarian school, so that's how my Grandmother learned how to talk Hungarian even though she was German.

MB: Did both of your parents go to school in Europe?

SS: Well they had some schooling, but even in Europe they never had too much schooling, I guess 2 or 3 years.

MB: Could they both read and write?

SS: Yes

MB: In Hungarian?

SS: Yes they could both read and write in Hungarian. They had some schooling

MB: Did they got two church there

SS: yes

MB: Were they Roman Catholic?

SS: Yes both were Roman Catholic all of us, yeah, they went to church, even here we went to church everything. We belonged to the Roman Catholic Church of Windber.

MB: Do you know any stories about how your parents came to the United States, did you hear anything about that?

SS: Well, the only thing I can tell you is, like the saying goes "the grass is also greener on the other side of the fence", so I guess they came and they made a new life on new land and settled in new land and so on.

MB: Did they plan on staying in America, some people came and planed on going back, earning money then eventually going back?

SS: At one time my father wanted my mother to go back to Europe, either way he wanted to go back with the children, he would stay here for a while a year or so, he flowed her then, she said “If you ain’t going with me I not going”. She stayed here,

MB: Did he come and go back more and once? Some people did that and then bought the families over.

Friend: ya and every time they come back their wives were pregnant,

SS: I think my father came first, and then my mother, I don’t remember how long they was apart, maybe in this country, once they came out they never seen Europe again.

MB: When did your mother come out?

SS: I don’t remember

MB: Before you were born

SS; Maybe she been here quite a few years, my brother was just a little boy when my mother came out.

MB: And how old was he?

SS: Well, I’m the forth one in the family. My Oldest brother was, how old was he

Friend: He was 75 back then in November

SS: he was 75 in November, and I’ll be 70 in October so

MB: Ok so if he was born it might have been around 1910, they would have come then. Ok, did they know of any friends of relatives before they came?

SS: I think they had friends I believe, in this country ahead of them, now I wouldn’t know who they are.

MB: Did they go right to Clearfield County then to Boardman?

SS: Now that's another question I don't believe I would be able to answer.

MB: But you were born in Clearfield, so they lived there?

SS: Yeah

MB: And then did they move to Windber at some point after that, or where did you live, maybe you just came to Windber after that.

SS: I Think, from there they moved to [Jenners], and then to Windber, of course we didn't like mine 37, well what actually went place in the mine I actually remember. And then we went for a few years out of coal.

MB: Well of, was your father a miner?

SS: Yes

MB: Do you know how many years he was a miner?

SS: I think from the time he come from Europe to, Do you know what year my father died?

Friend: 1948

MB: Did he work all those years before he died

Friend: I believe he retired three years before he died

SS: He didn't worked for a few years before he died

MB: So he worked 30 years then?

SS: Yes

MB: He hadn't been a miner in Europe had he?

Friend: I'm trying to think of any mines in Europe.

SS: He did some kind of work, but I don't remember what it was at the time, different types of work. In a way over here we understood it as construction work. To me he did so much of that stuff. Different places he would work.

MB: But once he got here he mined most of the time. Do you remember coming to Windber with your parents?

SS: Yea, actually from the time we lived in [Jenners], of course Clearfield, of course we lived in [Jenners] for a while, but I don't know what year it was, but from [Jenners] we moved to Windber.

MB: What year did you come from [Jenners] the first time to 37? Were you just a kid then?

SS: yes I was just a child then, could have been too old then. I wasn't even going to school at the time yet.

MB: Oh so you were pretty young?

SS: Yes

MB: When your parents first come, or when your father first came, did he border with a family, many miners when they first came they bordered with people?

SS: Yes well, when they first came across, I imagine that he would be staying with some friend while he was still here.

MB: When you were little and growing up did your parents keep borders at all?

SS: No, maybe a guy stayed, a couple to get started, but never did anyone stay at our place as a border.

MB: Ok because a lot of families did keep borders, and some didn't keep any. Lots of work those days. So you went to mine 37 and you were pretty young. There was a big strike in 1922 in Somerset County, do you remember that?

SS: A little bit, we lived at 37 at the time, well we lived on the farm up there, and the company was moving people out of houses, down below the bottom of 37 it was a big field and they was setting up tents, and they were living in those tents during the strike, then the company moved the people, and took their furniture.

MB: So you remember those scenes? You said there were tents put up by the Union?

SS: Oh yea, like I said down under the 37 below, there were tents in the field, there was even somebody up in the hotel.

MB: The forty hotel?

SS: Yea, how many different places I don't remember but many different places they had it. Because the people you used to own the 40 hotel the gold blooms, she use to tell us about it, they had tents there.

MB: Do you remember anything else from that, you were about eight I guess when that was going?

SS: Not really?

MB: Did anyone talk about the grievances of the strike?

SS: Well they wanted to bring in the Union, the companies didn't want that. Then regular wages and stuff started increasing, the company and the union signed a contract they both have to live up to it. And I guess the companies didn't want to.

MB: Did your family suffer the 1922 with that?

SS: No, we lived on a farm and it didn't bother us.

MB: It wasn't a company farm then?

SS: Yes it was

MB: The Company owned the farms around the area too?

SS: Yes the company owned all the areas, even till today, own farms around here, there are a few independent farms around here, but the majority of them are owned by the company.

MB: I didn't realize that, I knew the company houses were but I didn't realize the farms were too, Can you think of anything else about that time, I guess it was a bitter strike because they lost pretty badly, many families had to move away.

SS: Well you see I don't even know how long the strike lasted, but the end of the strike I guess people could only take it for so long and then they would start going back to work. And they had their job, it was over

MB: What was mine 37 like when you were living there? Could you describe it to me?

SS: It was a little bit smaller, I would say it was about the same size as it is now, only down below there are some houses are missing. So that made the town at the present time smaller, but then they build a few row houses up above the town like, up where their sitting now. So the one place that's gone, the next place they build it I would say that it is about the same. And mine 37 more or less is situated on the side of a hill, if you look from one direction it's a nice town you think at present time, you think people take care of their properties so they fixed it up and make sure that it's clean and all that stuff. Of course, people years ago, people had different kinds of animals, pigs chickens cows, geese's ducks, you name it they had it.

MB: All intermingled I guess, were there any Businesses?

SS: No, you take these mining towns they had their own company stores, each mining town had a company store, like 30 or 40 had their own store, you think about these company stores they was good to their people because they took care of them, they didn't allow them to buy everything they pleased but they always gave them something, I long as they were approved.

MB: Credit approved?

SS: Yeah credit, I tell ya I don't think I right, but If I had the money that the rican stores never collected, I be sitting pretty high.

MB: But there weren't other stores so you had to shop at the company stores?

SS: They had other stores, but you think whenever a family the amount of children four or five of them, at one time we work one day a week, one or even two days a week, so you didn't have the money to go out and buy they stuff. You just had to buy from the rican store, they only gave you a few dollars a day that you can manage on. So you had no choice, they were complaints about it, if you didn't have any money you couldn't go in that place.

MB: So your father lived on this land, did he farm and mine at the same time?

SS: Yes, whenever they was out on strike, the company was gonna put men on to work the farm for my father so he can go to work, and he says no he says he's not going he sticking on the manor. But of course, there a few coming up to him claiming that my father was a scab. Well we almost got into it, and I said "Listen my father was never a scab he always stuck it out with the miners". But over half the man was working already so what choice did my father have, it was no sense in missing work. He went back to work in June, regardless half or less was working, my father never went back.

MB: Do you remember the Coal and Iron Police at all during those early days?

SS: Not too much about them, well a little fuzzy on that, yeah, they was kind of mean too.

MB: In a time like yours, there were so many different nationalities, could they work together to try to hold a strike for a while? It would seem like they might be pulled apart because polish people couldn't work with Hungarians, or Hungarians couldn't work with Italians, and Italians couldn't work with whoever.

SS: Well, they worked together as far as that goes, you like they say you have some children you don't have nothing to put on table to eat, and the children they don't understand those things, so what choice does a person have.

MB: That's really something

TK: Polish was well to start with, the reason Polish and Hungarian couldn't associate with each was because they didn't speak English, they could only speak the language of their nationality.

Polish was the same, way, now you see my mother see could talk polish and she could talk Hungarian. So she could talk to Polish plenty, but there weren't that many, so how you gonna talk to them?

MB: That must have been hard

SS: They was friendly, but they couldn't communicate to well. I think that was the biggest problem about the different nationalities.

MB: When you think about the 20s when you were a kid all the up through the 30s do you have an impression that certain nationalities wouldn't marry other nationalities.

SS: European people that one thing they was against, they would allow a Hungarian to marry a Polish.

MB: But not an American born or English?

SS: Regardless, see it was, now the children was different, but the parents they didn't want that, my mother she would want us to get married, I would say "Who should I marry mom"? "Oh this is a nice girl, this is a good girl and I say "You like her mom"? Yeah, she's a good girl and then you marry her.

MB: When you were growing up did your parents stress certain things like hard work or religion, or career other than mining?

SS: I started in the mines at 14 in a half, when I quit school, their attitudes was just like this, now whether they actually meant it or whether they were saying it to discourage us or what. But my mom said, either you're going to school or you're going to the mind.

End of Tape 1 Side A

Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (March 4, 1984)

SS: Try to farther their education a bit, but when have to work over education it's a little harder I think. Like say if you get married work, try to farther education it's still harder. They come home one day they start talking about something, and I just start laughing, ya dad we knows your right, I said I didn't even go through grade school but it shows how much smarter I am then they are. Because I know what education means, where yens was just lying down I said my opinion, if a kid went through high school, he had a much education as a boy who goes through college today, he could be the president of a bank. But you high school today isn't more than grade school was when I went to school. I said that's the difference you have to have education today, without education you don't get no place.

MB: You didn't want your sons to go into the minds I guess, or did you?

SS: No, I didn't care coarse, one of them worked out here, and he also worked in Bethlehem mines. He only worked a few years in the mine but they was more, Stevie he was working at sears in Washington, and he was a vision manager at sears, he started taking up this computer thing, so he gives up that job gets another job and he starts taking up this computer thing. After he went through it they turn around and tell him, you got to have a couple years college and a couple of years' experience. I said why didn't you tell them , I just got out of school dad, if no one is going give me a chance how can I get experience? So that's what their up against I have a boy, the youngest, he went to mechanic school down here in Blairsville down in WyoTech, he

went through auto mechanic , he got plane adjustor and his inspection license, and he been out of work for three years. Can't seem to get a job, the places he went to get a job, they told him you ought to have 2 or 4 years' experience. Nobody is going to give him a chance to get the experience, so what can he do.

MB: Well that's a bad situation.

SS: You take the biggest majority of the place your education is involved in it, if you don't have the education it's going to be hard for you.

MB: It must have been hard when you left school for the mines, lets see that must have been around 1928, is that when you went in.

SS: Around 29 or 30

MB: Then how long did you work in the mines Mr. Shuster?

SS: Until I retired?

MB: Which was when?

SS: 76

MB: Oh wow, all those years, when you first started working, did you go in with your father?

SS: Yes

MB: You did, how did that work?

SS: Well, it always was that you take a parent and they take their children through the mind.

There to many worked together, we always worked together, then when another boy grew up, then the other boy went to work with somebody else, than another boy would be brought in.

MB: Was there a reason for this?

SS: You take to a certain extent for a period of time, and the boy goes into the of course like any job, you don't know about it you can't do it right, so they were different things you would have

to learn about. A stranger allot of times would not put up with that unless he's a relation or a real good friend and then they might do it, but no anybody won't do it. So it's up to the parent to take care of that part. Once you work in the mine sometime it takes a while to learn because it also depends of the conditions in the mine too, how to do this how to do that, what to do when to do it and everything. So if you had real good conditions it takes longer, if you had like they say 50 percent bad or 50 percent good, then there's different thing you do or know how to do it, when you do it to protect yourself in the mine, so that what a lot of guys,...they didn't want to do that, so it was the parents job.

MB: Do you think it was safer than for a young person going in to the mine to work with a relative than to work with a stranger?

SS: Of course, it all depends on the attitude of the person who takes this young kids in. Because right now I got this friend or relative he'll take care of them like he was his own child, so they;; watch over him. You take a father who might lose his life in the mine, maybe a relative would take him in. Then hell watch over him, so he don't injure himself, or don't get hurt one way or another like that.

MB: What were the working conditions like when you first started and what was your first job?

SS: Shoveling coal, yeah, I used the shovel and the pick.

ES: Ask him what was his first pay?

MB: Your wife said to ask you what your first pay was?

SS: Well I tell you one thing my pay was when I first started in the mine was a lot more than after I got married. You think my first pay for after I got married two weeks after I got married was 29 dollars.

MB: Oh, mines weren't working that much, was that the difference?

SS: Yeah, that was the difference, I think I worked at Carpenters Park, there we make around 50 dollars in two weeks, and that was considered pretty good already and then we worked it every day. That mine was working good.

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

SS: No Cambria steel is what they called it. It wasn't too bad, it was four of us working, my day and three brothers, and you take 50 dollars that was money coming into the house, but after I got married, then I got a Job at the Burrow, we went to the company store, we started to buy from there it was worth it, then we had to ask a lot of the times what part of the mine worked?

A lot of times it wasn't the whole mine that worked just what part of the mine, so a lot of times we worked one day a week we work two days a week then summer time it started to pick up more for us.

MB: Were talking about the 30s right now, the time of the Depression is that what you are talking about?

SS: Yes, since about around 1931, it was from time on, you see the Union came in then I got a Job Berwind-White, and I been at Berwind-White ever since

MB: Oh you came in after the Union was at Berwind, to the Berwind mines?

SS: Well about the same time

MB: Do you remember much about that when the Union came in?

SS: Well first whenever they tried to organize, see they, Berwind wouldn't give them permission to organize on their own ground, we had to get permission from private properties like on the outskirts of Windber on a farm or something, where they would meet and they would organize, they was loud but the company wouldn't allow them on the property to organize.

MB: So you remember some things about that, tell me about that and how it began?

SS: Well you see The working conditions before the Union came in had one person working on it , but after the Union came in, they required two persons, of course they always tell you in the past one man was not allowed to work by himself.

MB: Whys that?

SS: Well heaven forbid if something were to happen, something, say now a guy was working by himself, unfortunately sometimes it happens he got a broken leg, what can he do by himself, see this way if there's somebody with at least he go he can give him a hand or something. One way or another make him comfortable and go for help and have it taken care of. See when the Union came in that when they had to double up the men. Give them different jobs in there.

MB: So they did work alone before the Union came in?

SS: Well they would work, but they wouldn't be too far away from one another, maybe the boss would send them out, but pretty seldom it happened, I don't think a person would work a full shift without someone checking on him.

MB: Were there any changes to dead work when the Union came in?

SS: Oh yes there were, there was a lot of changes, just like night and day you take any dead work, they would pay, maybe they give you a few cents on it, just that you didn't exactly do it for nothing, but most miners would say it was nothing. But then after the Union came in, they had to pay you a certain amount, you take as time runs out and Union moves in, contract from contract, they even had what you called a makeup shift, see days where you was so much if you couldn't make that if you had bad conditions, they give you so much to make up a shift if the days wages, say it was 15 dollars a day but you only made 10 dollars because the conditions was so bad they give you 5 dollars to make up to 15 dollars.

MB: So it'll be more uniform?

SS: Yes, that way a person could always make a shift

MB: Do you think the UNWA could have come to Windber if it wasn't for the NEW Deal legislation with FDR which sanctioned unions?

SS: I wouldn't know what to say about that, because back in 22 they tried that and they couldn't make no headways with it, see whenever they did start FDR came in and he gave those men permission. And that's see they couldn't stop him, the only way you understand, they wouldn't leave on their own property to organize the Union. But once they got their foothold and organized it wasn't much they could do anymore.

MB: Do you remember any other early instances with the Union came in?

SS: Well there were a lot of changes, you think first when the miners start out of course even before my time they had all different types of machines I never seen them work and they had, first it was one where you pick one where you dumped the coal out then as part of, what I remember was the cutting machine they used to cut a trim the coal down and load it in. They got [joyins], they cut the coal up the men didn't have to shovel it then, maybe just clean up here and there a little but, they had a machine, Duck bile like, and it had two arms one on each side. Arm would just work like this here, as the machine moved in it would rake this coal on to the machine, and the chain would hail out on the what they called a car a shovel card is what we called it in the mines, and then they would haul on they had belts, of course before that they had conveyors.

MB: Tell me about that.

SS: It was the same, the coal, taking care of the coal was the same as hand loading to a certain extent but the only thing was when they cut the coal they had a conveyor and they shoveled this coal into the conveyor, and the chains was going around this balance was taking it out, but in a

car maybe it can burn about 200 feet, then after that they got joys in continuous miners, always improving but always laying off men, because every time they put a machine in men lost jobs.

MB: Was the Union never able to do anything to protect jobs at all?

SS: No, then they got what they called the Lee Norris, they out that in instalment, you take a Lee Norris machine, loaded 309 3 ton cars in a 8 hour shift. Now how long would it men by shoveling coal with a shovel to load that much cars, and that was only about 7 men all total including the boss to load all 309 cars. Worst they were days they delivered less, then when they ran into bad conditions, maybe they only load 100 or less, it's your working conditions in the mine and of course a little bit on the men, what kind of men are they, are they willing to work, will they do what they can do, or if had good conditions in the mine, your machines worked good, you load coal. But if you run into bad conditions if you machinery would break down, you need some time, now I worked on a machine, I think in a about a year or some it produce 1 million tons of coal.

MB: So what were your various jobs?

SS: I loaded and picked coal that's hand loading, then I worked on Conveyors, I've worked on the joy loaders, I've worked on continuous miners, I've worked on Lee Norris of coarse that's a continuous miners too, it's a little different than the machinery always improving it. And then I of and on I worked on a track and ran motor I was a bell operator and practically everything in the mine, sometimes, you got a machine there are times which are going to happen maybe a machine brooked down that maybe you didn't work on all day. They would tell you to do other things. The put you here and put you there maybe re timber places and straighten things out or something like that.

MB: Well can you think of times where working the mines in the sense that mines were essentially working like every day.

SS: Well from about 1940 is when it really picked up that we was doing good.

MB: Because the war effort basically?

SS: Yeah, because of the war, even after the war we were just a last few years that the atom dropped down. I wouldn't be a bit surprise, it's all a, and now they're getting everything overseas. Seem to be shipping everything overseas and natural not producing over here.

MB: Well the Berwind mines, when did they close? They're not running now are they?

SS: No

MB: What year did they close?

SS: Exactly what year, it was in the 60s I think Berwind closed down, and of course there was two other companies they would reopen at different times. Last time it was Jandi Coal Company and they up now for a few years.

MB: Mine 40?

SS: Yeah, it was an old Berwind-White mine and they was working good too, until whatever happened to the coal, it seems that the bottom just dropped out of it then, they just couldn't do anything with it at that. .

MB: Do you remember any other strikes?

SS: There was a few of them of course, if I'm not mistaken the longest one lasted 3 months or so. I wouldn't exactly 3 months but around that time. A company by the name Balkan coal company took over after Berwind, But the strikes was never too long.

MB: What about the one that John L Lewis took the miners out during WW2?

SS: Well for three months they would have been no strike to it, time went on things was changing, you take when Lewis signed the contract the men didn't have anything to do with that, when he signed that's what you abide by. But later on they had a clause in the contract, the companies and the operators signed the contract then they would go to the men to see if they was satisfied, so in my opinion that when it took longer for a strike to settle cause that's when miners weren't satisfied with it so they rejected it, so and they went back, and that's why strikes took a bit longer.

MB: What did you think of John L Lewis?

SS: Well, he did well, can't say he didn't because miners, I think the companies they sort of thought more of Unions then they did of men as far as that goes. Because they thought mules they had to buy, a lot of mines had mules.

MB: Berwind-White never had mules did they?

SS: Not that I know of, they could get men off the street and get them a job. I know I was a bell topper, I worked for 4 dollars and 76 cents a day

MB: When?

SS: Right before I got married

MB: When did you get married Mr. Shuster?

SS: 1937

MB: So did you marry Hungarian decent then too?

SS: Yes, her parents were same as mine, although her mother was Slovak, we lived in a Hungarian country.

ES: My mother was Slovak

SS: They was talking Hungarian but actual they was Slovak.

MB: What was it like when you got married then?

SS: Wonderful

MB: Were you working very much?

SS: No

MB: Where did you live when you first got married then?

SS: Well her parents were living in Central city on a farm, for a couple of months we stayed up there, it was hard because I didn't have no car and I worked down here. Well my brothers had a car but it was hard getting transportation to work. There was three rooms by the hotel on top of the garage, we moved down to 30 with a couple they had one child but at the period of time my wife wasn't doing everything to lease her way and it wasn't no good there. So we lived down there for not too long, and then moved back to the hometown and lived up top on the garage and then we lived there for about 4 to 5 years. Then we moved down here and we been living here since.

MB: Can you tell me how you meet your wife?

SS: Well I always blamed her brother, he was about the age of my oldest brother they use to associate with each other they would go to the Hungarian dances and they used to come Saturday nights, I know him too but I didn't associate with him as much as my brother did with him. And I talked couple times he tell me "Hey why don't you come up some time"? I said let me think about it, Of course we take a ride up to her place me and a buddy of mine, I didn't see her then, then a couple weeks later we went up again, then from that time on I starting going with her.

MB: So did you get married at St Mary's at the Hungarian Church or somewhere else?

SS: No we got married in Central City.

MB: Was that in a Hungarian Church or a different church?

SS: No it was [inaudible]

ES: It was Slovak, what was that church wasn't it St Johns?

SS: I don't know what church it was. You see we wanted to get married down here, you take it in this Catholic they want you to get married at an early age. So Central city priest objected to us getting married down here, so our priest down here told us we had to go see the central city priest. When we went up to see him he ask us "Why don't you want to get married up there?" I say there's no reason why not, Catholic Religion is Catholic Religion. Whether it's Polish, Scottish, Hungarian, or Italian no matter what it is. We went to go see the priest, and he asked him why we can't get married up here, it makes no difference to me I said were Hungarian, there's no Hungarian Church in Central city, there's one in Windber , our church is Hungarian. That's the only reason why we're getting married, so he says ok.

MB: There were so many ethnic groups in Windber at the time, every ethnic groups had their own churches?

SS: Yes, you take like years ago, like we said before the Hungarians had their own church because they only spoke Hungarian. The Polish had their own church because they only spoke Polish. Italians the same thing, but now it don't make no difference which church it is because they all speak the one language only, and it is very, I don't think its anybody that doesn't understand English already, even the older people, so it makes no difference what church a person goes to already.

MB: In the 1930s weren't their lots of ethic clubs, like a Hungarian club?

SS: Yes, but I never belonged to any clubs or anything like that, I never went with it, but there was nationality clubs, like I would say each nationality had its own club. I don't know how many

different clubs they had up there, even Hungarians had it, now I guess everybody can go to one club because they all talk the same language.

MB: So did you go to a lot of dances?

SS: Yes I went to dances.

MB: What kinds of dances and what were they like?

SS: Well we mostly just like I says each nationality went to their own dances, once in a while we go to like a Polish dance, we go watch you know, but mostly ours was Hungarian. We went different places, I tell you I would just assume that the old time was better than today.

MB: How so Mr. Shuster?

SS: Well you had more fun, you take just like, the music they have today, I would give you two cents for it. Because it's not my kind of music, now some of the music is nice. But a lot of this stuff is blurry.

End of Tape 1 Side B

Beginning of Tape 2 Side A (March 4, 1984)

SS: They like that one, what is it, a Chicken dance!

MB: Well tell me about some of those dances when you and your wife were first married?

SS: Well I tell you dancing and me and my wife was dating, I only married her after 6 weeks of dating her.

MB: Oh what did your families think of that, you robed her from the cradle, how old was she when she got married?

ES: I was 16 going on 17.

MB: And how old were you Mr. Shuster?

SS: I was 23

MB: Did your parents object to her age with her being so young?

SS: Well you would think but a lot of times there's rumors. That ah, they say this they say that, I said hey you're not even giving the girl a chance. Late she told, you know I never thought the way they talked and everything the way she turned out to be the women how she is. So that's the way it goes, you know the whole thing was that European people they had the notion that, they like to pick the boy for their daughter, they like to pick the girl for their sons. Well I mine, when I was growing up, we didn't go for that, we married who we wanted to, well I don't think in this country it never happened that the parents picked the boy or mate, that was more in Europe. But you take a lot of guys well the older fellas who got married over here they was going according to that. Like they would associate more with the parents than the girl until they was ready to get married, then the two parents would get together, if they agreed on it, they would get them together, of course I would say that they would of have to of liked each other if they was going to agree.

MB: So you didn't know each other for very long but did you got to dances when you were first married then?

SS: A few of them.

MB: What else was there to do for fun?

ES: Go to the movies.

SS: Go to the movies, of course it would all depend on what a person was in, you take different things, helping out churches, like banquets and suppers' people would do it, but that even got to

be, a group of women would get in there and they didn't want no outsiders in there because they didn't want no one to see what they was doing. Because it happened up in that dark church they had a supper. You know they didn't have enough food to go around to the people, I had a sister and I had a daughter, they was going to go up there, cause they always asked for help from the in Windber, they go "no we don't need ya" There was only one reason why, A few of them got caught, like they had these coal shooting doors, they was handing food out and somebody outside saw them.

MB: Yeah, I guess there were problems with the churches?

SS: Yes

MB: With conflicts in the churches, with priest sometime?

SS: You take, there's been churches and religions, the way I understand it the Greek Catholic now there splitting up, I heard rather the Roman Catholic Church was the same one. See there's a group of people they want to be boss, then there's another group of people they want to be boss and then they can't agree. So they almost split in two.

MB: So Windber had lots of ethnic churches and lots of clubs?

SS: Yes

ES: We also had a few theaters.

SS: They had the recreational park, different things up there, a person had somewhere to go. Different things, now they don't, there's nothing around anymore

ES: Don't you remember the park how lively it was. We use to love to go up there.

SS: Yeah, we used to go up there all the time. You know it used to be that a lot of people used to go up there.

MB: To the park yeah, do you have any favorite holidays or times you went to the park?

ES: Fourth of July.

SS: Different things up there, it didn't have to be a holiday nut you take now these churches sometimes they have a gathering up there or something like that, well a lot of times well go there.

MB: Do you remember many sports teams playing at the park?

SS: Oh there used to be baseball games, course you take years ago even almost every town, mining town had a baseball team. They used to play one another.

MB: Did you ever play in many of those?

SS: No never played in any, and a lot of times you go up there and you watch them play baseball and different things.

MB: Were they ethnic changers or were they town teams?

SS: Town teams, you take 40 had a team, 70 had a team, and Sculpt had a team. Mine 30 had a team, Windber had a team, all had a team, you think today they had these Santa Clauses, they going through the house.

MB: But these were adult teams right?

SS: Yeah

MB: They weren't High School affiliates they were just towns, were there miners that just played on the team.

SS: Yeah I would say mostly, they had everything, kids all they want when they get 16 years old, they want an automobile running around drinking, drugs that's the biggest thing they do, it's no good.

MB: People used to walk a lot too?

SS: On yeah, you take, like we used to walk around in the woods, there was paths going through the woods where you could walk, today's there nothing, now I will go as far as saying that a lot of them they would walk out to the garden and get the car, and if they had to use the bathroom they would use the garden or the car. They would take two steps.

MB: Did you have lots of picnics, did you go out and pick berries and mushrooms?

SS: Oh yeah, we used to go out and pick berries, and we used to go out, even after we was married we used to go out and pick mushrooms.

MB: How did you spend the Sunday when you weren't working?

SS: We would go out, we would go to her mother's place, or we would go to her friends place. We would take a ride out to the country, we would look at this and that for the entire afternoon. But today you can't even hardly take a ride out into the country, because years ago there was hardly any traffic on the country road. You could enjoy yourself. But today there's so much traffic on the country road it looks like the Arizona Highway. And you think there isn't a lot of things that it used to be, the scenery, there's a lot of scenery still in that stuff. And when the time

would come we go to fairs, when the summer time come we go to picnics every Sunday we go. In the past you go to the picnic some place and we enjoyed ourselves.

MB: Did your parents Mr. Shuster belong to a fraternal society then? I know a lot of immigrant families joined those insurance societies.

SS: We belonged to insurance, loges.

MB: Yes can you tell me about them, I don't know a lot about them.

SS: Well there isn't too much, it's just like a regular insurance to a certain extent. Like we have, there was different names, but it's all combined now and it's called insurances. William Penn insurance

MB: And they paid dead benefits and sick benefits at one time?

SS: Yeah, I still being to it, but I only pay a \$1.87 a month, for \$1,000. I work in the mine, so you take those days which were a whole lot cheaper, and it's still the same price, they had sick benefits, but sick benefits never amounted to much. The only amount I gained was 6 dollars a week.

MB: From the lodge?

SS: Yea

MB: There wasn't any other benefit, when you started in the mines in 1928 was there benefits if you got sick.

SS: Well that was that sick benefit, more so something like compensation, if you got sick or if you got hurt or anything like that then you got the def, the thousand dollar def.

MB: Then when the Union came in I guess you got more benefits, when the legislation changed then if somebody died?

SS: At the lodge it never changes, it's the same, but you take when the union came in there benefits from the union. There's no sick ones or anything like that, there just benefits,

MB: What about when the old miners, when you were young they got black lung or silicosis, how was that dealt with.

SS: I don't think they could deal with it in those days, because well you take from the time the Union came, who you was gonna fight, who had the money to fight that. So I don't think anyone could get anything before the union came in, just after the union the union helped you out furnished lawyers, stuff like that, it was a lot easier on the men. And then you take your doctors, you had the Windber hospital, they had the company doctors they was no good to a person

MB: They wouldn't diagnose the diseases?

SS: Well they don't tell you exactly but if they don't tell you and if they don't stick with you what are you going to do?

MB: So is it different now, you have black lung now don't you?

SS: I have black lung and silicosis, I have the black lung but you can't draw both of them, I have black lung I have to do is notify them and she would get after me money from the black lung.

MB: Do you remember when the Union was fight for black lung benefits?

SS: Well, it's been going on since the early Union days, I think it was in the contract, in the contract they had it in the contract that if you apply for black lung, and I guess the government I

guess had to say, Imagine so, it's a lot more easier than it is today. Harder to get it, cause you have to go through too much riff raf. You take a lot of these doctors today, I don't know thee just don't want to stick with a person, especially the way I heard a lot of guys talking if you had different alignments it was harder to get the black lung. But now me and the sense of it, I wasn't doctored to anything. The only doctor often was Dr Canter, once a year to check up on my lung. As time goes by a guy gets deeper.

MB: Mr. Shuster when you were married in the 30s do you think when living in Windber mine 37 mine 40 whatever, can you think of some people that are more powerful than others. Were there names associated with power and wealth?

SS: I don't know about that, just by looking at him you can hardly tell they were millionaires,

ES: Are you pertaining to doctors too?

MB: Yes

SS: Well, what your referring to in other words being the boss, I would say the only ones are like the men on councils, on ours we had, they would do everything, I wouldn't say their wealthy people, but their sort of ahead of the group because their head of the borough and they take care of things, I wouldn't say that there are any big shots, you do this you can't do that, I don't think there's anyone like that.

MB: In the old days, in the 20s or 30s could a Slovak, Hungarian, or Pole get elected to the council.

SS: Oh yeah, you take the whole as long as I can remember there's been Hungarians and Polish on the council, Americans, I don't think it made any difference.

MB: Do you remember any important elections in town?

SS: No I wouldn't say, to me they all seemed to be equal. We would elect councilmen all the time

MB: What about elections for presidents, is this a Democratic area of a Republican area?

SS: I don't know what to say about that?

ES: I would say more democrat!

MB: Did miners feel more together?

SS: Yes, I would say, I think miners are more than less democratic there are some that are republican. But for president they might vote democratic, because it democratic gets in he does good it could benefit him.

MB: So most miners followed democratic, did other people in the town who weren't miners Democratic too, do you know?

SS: Well, you take me would say a lot of people, there isn't too much division, they had us rely on the people for them living there, cause if they got someone in there that no one liked and if the work slacked up, then the business went down, so I would say that they would be democrats.

MB: Do you think like in working for Berwind-White, did they favor any nationalities? Did they bring in people from other places?

SS: No I don't think so, there were lots of nationalities in the mine, I would go and say that one was as good as the other.

MB: Did you ever know any of the Berwind family?

SS: No

MB: Ever see them?

SS: Not that I remember? I saw them from a distance but I can't remember.

MB: So who were the big people who ran the company that you worked for all those years, were there certain names, like big boss

End of Tape 2 Side A (March 4, 1984)

End of the Interview with Steve Shuster