

INTERVIEWS WITH JOSEPH JOHN NOVAK AND JUSTINA JULIA BOGDAN NOVAK

Interviewed by Mildred Allen Beik

Windber, Pennsylvania

May 19 and May 21, 1985

Mildred = Mildred Allen Beik

Joseph = Joseph John Novak (1906-1989)

Justina J = Justina Julia Bogdan Novak

Beginning of Interview (May 19, 1985)

Beginning of Tape 1 Side A (May 19, 1985)

Mildred: -- then if it's all right with you, Mr. Novak. Okay, and I'll give you a paper, you know, that then explains what I'm doing so you have something in writing from me and so forth, so you know what this is all about. Okay --

Joseph: You want me to write something for you --

Mildred: -- no, not now, but after we're done then, some other day, because I don't have it with me. Give me your full name first, so we have that.

Joseph: My first name is Joseph. I use the middle initial, John is the middle name, but I use the initial J.

Mildred: Okay. And do you have a middle name.

Joseph: Yeah, my middle name is John.

Mildred: John, you're Joseph John, so Joseph J.

Joseph: Yeah, that's the way I usually have it, Joseph J., see.

Mildred: Okay and Novak.

Joseph: N-O-V-A-K.

Mildred: Okay. Want to tell me what your birth date is?

Joseph: September 4, 1906.

Mildred: Okay, I'll move closer so we pick up your voice real well. 1906. And we you born in here, or were you born in Europe?

Joseph: (laughter) Well, there's a story behind that.

Mildred: Oh, well tell me about it. (laughter)

Joseph: There was a strike in 1906, April, so my mother said to my father: I'm going to the old country for a visit.

Mildred: They were already here in NY?

Joseph: Yeah, they were here, they were married in 1899 in Houtzdale, my parents.

Mildred: Oh, Okay.

Joseph: Yeah, my dad worked for this company.

Mildred: Was he a miner?

Joseph: Yeah, for 50 years, my father was a coal miner for 50 years.

Mildred: Where --

Joseph: With this company only.

Mildred: Oh, with Berwind-White. And he worked for Berwyn-White in Houtzdale --

Joseph: Houtzdale. H-O-U-T-Z-D-A-L-E.

Mildred: Okay. Where did he come from? Maybe tell me a little bit about your dad and your mom --

Joseph: Well, my father came --

Mildred: -- and then maybe you can tell me your story.

Joseph: -- from, what the heck was the name of that town, oh boy, I can't think of it now. I know the name of the town, the name of the town is called Kobyly, K-O-B-Y-L-Y. [Austria-Hungary?]

Mildred: And was that in Austria-Hungary then, I suppose?

Joseph: Yeah, that's what it was at that time. And my mother came from the southern part of Czechoslovakia; from Tanhovisce is the name of the town, Zemplin. She was a Zemplinska, [Stoyitza?], Zemplinska.

Mildred: And can you, what was her maiden name then, do you know?

Joseph: Bak, B-A-K.

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: But when they come to this country, you know, people changed it to Back or Beck.

Justina J: Maria Bak.

Joseph: Maria Bak.

Mildred: And what was your dad's name then?

Joseph: John Adam.

Mildred: Ah, John Adam Novak. Did your parents know each other in Europe then or did they meet each other in the United States?

Joseph: No, well, my father met her in the US. Here's the way it was, see. The Berwinds started this, the mines in 1897.

Mildred: In Windber, yeah.

Joseph: My dad was working down there and they needed a man like him to open up the headings. So they'd asked my dad to come to Windber in 1898. Well, then he

decided he wanted to get married but there were no women here. So he went back, so he got leave and went back to Houtzdale because all the girls from Slovakia were coming to Houtzdale, you know, because that's where the men were. So these men from here would go there, like my dad went there and (laughter) met my wife, my mother rather, and he married her.

Mildred: Did he know her very long before he married her? Because sometimes it's arranged --

Joseph: I never did ask him, not too long. Anyway, he married her, he met her and married her and then they came back here.

Mildred: Had he been in Houtzdale for a long time before he came here, or had he --

Joseph: Well, he wasn't there too --

Mildred: -- you know, when he came to the US.

Joseph: -- he wasn't there too long, you know.

Mildred: Do you know --

Joseph: I don't know how many years.

Mildred: -- do you know how he came, did he hear from relatives or, you know, were there advertisements from the company or, you know --

Joseph: No, my mother didn't want him to go into the service.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: So when he was 17, my mother got a passport for him and she shipped him here.
Yeah.

Mildred: (laughter) Was there some relative here already that he knew where to go?

Joseph: No.

Mildred: I mean, he was just on his own then?

Joseph: He just came here on his own.

Mildred: Not people from the village settling here?

Joseph: No, he came on his own. He came to the Harcourt region first.

Mildred: Oh, he did, okay.

Joseph: Oh yeah, and then he came here.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: Did the [softball?], see that's where all those people from the (inaudible) start coming to the [softball?] region.

Mildred: Do you have any idea about when he came, what year or any of that?

Joseph: Well, let's see, he came to this country about 1895.

Mildred: A couple years before, a few years before he came here then.

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: Oh boy.

Joseph: Something like that, I think it was 1895 or something like that. Anyway, I'm not too sure of the date.

Mildred: He hadn't been in mining at all in Europe had he?

Joseph: No, no.

Mildred: Nothing like that?

Joseph: He only was good, well, see, my grandfather, that's his dad, he was the head guy in that town where they lived.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: See, they owned most of the land there. They owned forests and stuff, and he had the horses and, you know, and they used to haul stuff to Germany.

Mildred: Now, was this city that he was from a place that he's from in Slovakia then?

Joseph: Yeah, it's in Slovakia.

Mildred: It's in Slovakia too, okay.

Joseph: It's still in Slovakia now. So, they used to haul grain and stuff to Germany and he dealt with the Jews there, you know, on the border line and he brought stuff back from there, what they needed here, you know what I mean? And my dad used to do that too, you know, so that's how he learned the German language.

Mildred: Oh, he knew German.

Joseph: He knew German, he knew Polish, he knew Russian, he knew Hungarian, and Slovak. He knew all of those languages.

Mildred: Had he been to school anywhere or did he just learn from --

Joseph: The priest taught him that, the priest wanted him to become a priest, see. So he was teaching him all these languages, see. He learned all these languages from the priest.

Mildred: Was he a Roman Catholic priest or a Greek Catholic--

Joseph: Roman Catholic.

Mildred: Roman Catholic, okay.

Joseph: Roman, yeah. See, in that area they were all Roman Catholic where my dad comes from. But where my mother came from they were mixed. They were Catholics and Greek Catholics and they were Lutheran too down there. See, yeah.

Mildred: So they came to Windber then and --

Joseph: Yeah, well after he married my mother they came to Windber, you know, and they had a boy. And my mother maybe said my mother should go to the old country and show him to the grandparents. While she was there he died.

Mildred: Oh, that's sad.

Joseph: John, his name was John. And so, I wasn't born till 6 years after him, see.

Mildred: You were born in 1906 so he would have been born in 1900.

Joseph: 1900 he was born and my mother said they tried to have children but they couldn't so she made a novena to St. Anthony.

Mildred: Oh, really (laughter)?

Joseph: Well actually (laughter) when I was going to be born, you know, he said to my mother, let's name him John. But we already had a John! And she said: I made a novena to St. Anthony, maybe I'd better name him Anthony. Or Michael or Joseph. So she named me Joseph. (laughter)

Joseph: Every time we had a boy that's what he wanted, he wanted a John. So that --

Mildred: You got the middle name anyway (laughter).

Joseph: When the last boy was born he said: Well, I don't think we're going to have anymore children. What do you say we name this one John? So the doctor was here, Dr. Benchoff, he said: You know what? Let's name him John Francis. So he was John Francis. He was John Francis, see. You know how the Roman Catholics are, you have to, you can't, you have to, when you're confirmed see, you only have one name at baptism. Well then, when you're confirmed, when John was confirmed he took the same name, you know. Some people have three names, because you know, they give them two names at birth and then they get

one at confirmation. Now the Greek Catholics don't do that, see, the Greek Catholics don't have confirmation.

Mildred: I didn't know that.

Joseph: Yeah, that's --

Mildred: I didn't realize that.

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: So you said there was a story connected to your birth.

Joseph: Oh, yeah.

Mildred: Tell me that. (laughter)

Joseph: My mother went to the old country when she was pregnant.

Mildred: During the strike, yeah.

Joseph: Yeah. So then she was going to only stay a month and then come back, see. And the grandparents coaxed her to stay until I was born. So she stayed from April till I was born, because both sides wanted to see me, my father's side and my mother's side. So I came to this country at the age of 11 weeks.

Mildred: You don't remember the trip over then? (laughter)

Joseph: No, I don't remember nothing. But anyway, that's the way it was, see. Then my dad became a citizen of this country, so I never had to take citizen papers out. See, the way it was at that time, the way in was in those years back there, when the man became a citizen his wife became a citizen. And all the children, if they weren't born in this country, see?

Mildred: Oh, I see, I didn't know that.

Joseph: Oh yes, yeah. That's the way it was. So see, everybody's name that was living at that time is on the citizen paper. That's how my mother became a citizen, she never had to go for citizenship like my dad did, see.

Mildred: Yeah, women we treated differently.

Joseph: But today it's different, today it's different.

Mildred: It's individual, isn't it?

Joseph: Yeah, each individual must get their papers today. See, it doesn't go just by the husband. In those years it was by the husband, see. I think he got his papers around 1913, or something like that.

Mildred: Does he have stories about that. What was involved? Did he have to go to Somerset or--

Joseph: Yeah, he had to go and take an examination and all that stuff. You know, like you do now, they ask you questions about citizenship and so on. That's the way it is with me, I'm a greenhorn. (laughter)

Mildred: So did you hear lots of stories about the strike in 1906 then? Did you --

Joseph: No I don't --

Mildred: -- know much about that?

Joseph: -- know too much about that. But they had a strike, you know.

Mildred: Did your dad participate in the strike?

Joseph: Oh yeah. He was on strike too, yeah. My dad was always, you know, a man that wanted to support a union. Yeah, like me. (laughter)

Mildred: Can you tell me then about something about your early life and so forth and then I want to ask you about the union. I want to ask you about your citizenship work, I want to ask you about lots of things, but --

Joseph: Well, okay yeah --

Mildred: -- tell me, just sort of begin with one thing.

Joseph: When we came to this country, you know, and they started opening up more mines. So they opened up the 38 mine and, well, it wasn't too good of a mine, there was too much, you know, [roads?] in it, clay things and stuff, that was expensive to dig out, you know? They didn't have the good machinery in those years. They had what they called this steam hammer, steam machines, you know, to dig the holes. By steam, every mine had a big plant where they made steam, and they pushed it inside the mine through pipes and with that steam, you know, they were able to run these cutting machines and stuff. So 39 Upper Mine is the, the coal is hard. It's a c-prime coal, see. And most of these mines here, they opened up the lower coal, that's a b-coal.

Mildred: B C [Bituminous Coal]

Joseph: That's a steam coal, it's a lot softer coal. So they sent cutters over there from Windber, good cutters, but they couldn't cut that coal. You know, not good enough. So they asked my dad and my Uncle Mike Babyak if they would go there and try cutting.

Mildred: When would that have been about, do you have any idea?

Joseph: Oh, that was --

Mildred: I'm just trying to get some time era or timeframe here.

Joseph: -- well, let's see, that would have been --

Mildred: Let's see, '38?

Joseph: -- I think I have a book on it someplace.

Mildred: Oh, that's okay, I can always find out if I need to.

Joseph: Well I imagine it was about 1908, 1909 or something like that.

Mildred: Oh, it's that early.

Joseph: That early, you know what I mean, see.

Mildred: Oh, I see, well you were little, yeah.

Joseph: So then we moved over there, you know.

Mildred: Oh, is that Seanor, 38?

Joseph: 38, 38 was where the miners lived. Seanor is still the town there

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: The town is still there, the Seanor. And so, my dad went there and he started cutting the coal, you know, with that steam. Him and my Uncle Mike. And then my dad said to the mine (inaudible): Now listen, if you want me to stay here as a cutter I want to load and cut. I want to come here with the men during the day, I want to load coal and cut their places at the same, you know.

Mildred: Oh boy, yeah.

Joseph: So the way the did it was like this, see. They'd take turns usually, so my dad would go and cut his pieces. Let's say one of these places was cleaned up, so they'd come over and say: Hey John, we're cleaned up, would you come and cut us. That way they made a little more money that day, see. See if they, let's say they finished a full cut and they still had a couple of hours to go, instead of

walking out my dad would go and cut the place for them. So they made a little extra money, see. Next day they cut the place a little bit earlier, that's the way they did it, see. And they took turns. While one guy was cutting and doing it all - they could cut by themselves, it takes two men usually, cutter and scraper. But my dad and Mike, my Uncle Mike, they were able to do it by themselves. So the one guy would be loading coal and the other guy would be cutting the plates. So they made money, you know, that way. They were the highest paid in the mine beside the boss.

Mildred: Oh really?

Joseph: Yeah, because they were doing that, see. Now the other guys, they only made on their coal, they made on the coal that they loaded and they got paid so much for each ton that was loaded up.

Mildred: How did the people work in those early days? I understand a lot of fathers and sons went in, but was there like a group, were they separated by nationality, by language or in any way?

Joseph: No, they, I'll tell you how it was up there. The track comes this way across a bridge, there's this shade (inaudible). Now it comes toward the town, as soon as they get off the bridge it makes a turn here, see. It goes like this toward Central City. Now up on this side of the railroad track was all the Hunkies and [Dagles?], there were only two [Dagle?] families. On this side of the track was what they called an English street, and they called this Hunky Street, and this one up here, [Hupper?] street. So that's where all of us Hungarians and Slovak and Polish, Romanian, we all lived here besides those two Italian families. And on this other

side were the Irish, Scotch, English, whatever you know, Swedes, whatever, you know, those people, down on this end here. And we had two schools, one down below by Seanor. These kids all went down there to school. And these kids from here, we had a two-room school here. But it was too small --

Mildred: For the number of people.

Joseph: -- yeah, for the number of kids. So we had to go to [Couster?] School, a farm school. We had to go up a hill two miles.

Mildred: Is that where you went to school yourself?

Joseph: I went there, any boy that became 10 years of age had to go to [Couster?] school.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: See, so I got a little bit smart. I went to the school, Mr. [Holsop?], he was chairman of the school board, he lived in Hillsborough, I said: Hey, why do we have to walk up that dang hill up there? I did go there for a couple years or so. I said: There's a school down there half empty, why can't some of us kids go down there? Why do we have to go up this hill here? Eventually they let me go down there. And I told these other kids: Hey, get after the [Holsop?]. Soon we were all going to school down below.

Mildred: So how long did you go to school Mr. Novak?

Joseph: Me? Well, there's another story behind that one.

Mildred: Okay.

Joseph: See, we lived in 38. And I couldn't get to school, you know, because there's no high school there just, you know, till 8th grade. I couldn't get to school to Windber. So I stayed 8th grade two years. I wasn't old enough to quit. I know

my teacher told me, he said: You know Joe if you were 16 years old I'd send you to normal school, and he said you could get a certificate and you could be a good teacher. Because he said: You know more than I do. A teacher himself told me that, a man teacher. So then my father's first cousin, when he came here with his brother Adam, my dad took him in the mines, you know. But they didn't work here too long, they went to [Monessen?]. Adam became a real estate agent and John [Dichek?], he went into embalming school and became an undertaker. And he owned a furniture store, it was six stories high. And so --

Mildred: So your family helped bring other relatives over and helped them.

Joseph: Yeah, lots of them came to our place. And so, Mr. [Check?] said to my dad, he says: Why don't you send your son down to [Monessen?], to high school down there. So here I was in 8th grade two years, I go to [Monessen?] and I sign up as a freshman in high school. I get my report card, you know, first report card, all As and Bs. Then the superintendent calls me and says: You know, according to the rules in the state of Pennsylvania you can't be a freshman, you have to go back to 8th grade because you transferred from another school. And I said: But gee, I was in 8th grade two years already! I said: I'll learn nothing from one year. I said: What will I learn when I'm going to over the same stuff. I had to go to 8th grade three years!

Mildred: Oh, three years in 8th grade, my heaven.

Joseph: So, then I went to high school. Then I was a freshman, sophomore. I had enough credits to graduate from high school, because I didn't want no study periods. I took classes every time, everything, you know, for the whole thing, whatever it

was, I think 45-minute classes, but I was in class all the time. So I had enough credits to graduate from high school. The only thing I needed, you couldn't do that with English like you did with these other subjects. I had to have two more years of English. So what happened, I came home here to Windber. We were back in Windber then.

Mildred: Your parents had moved to Windber?

Joseph: Yeah, on a --

Mildred: from 38?

Joseph: -- we had the 1922 strike, so we were evicted.

Mildred: From 38?

Joseph: Yeah, my dad wouldn't go to work, we wanted a union. And so, I started in June in the mines with my dad, 1924. And then my dad says: Why don't you transfer and go to school here? Pardon my language, I said: The hell with it. I'm not going to school no more. I said: Do you think I'm going to come back here? I have enough credits to graduate from high school and I'm going to come back to this doggone high school here and they're going to put me back as a sophomore? And I already have enough credits to graduate, and the only thing I need is two years of English? I said: I'm not going to no dang school and that's it. That was it. That's the reason I never graduated from high school.

Mildred: A lot of people didn't get as far in school as you did, in those days especially.

Joseph: Oh no.

Mildred: Was your family, did they have different values or something than a lot of people or --

Joseph: Well see, I don't know, my dad wanted me to go to college. He had enough money to send me to college.

Mildred: Oh he did.

Joseph: Yeah, but like I said, I got all messed up. If we'd have been living in Windber all the time, I'd have been graduated from high school, and I'd have been graduated from college too.

Mildred: He didn't want you to go into the mines?

Joseph: No, I wanted to go.

Mildred: You wanted to go. How come? What was the appeal?

Joseph: Because I was sick and tired of learning nothing in school. I wasn't learning anything. I didn't learn a dang thing! That stuff came easy to me. Especially mathematics, you know, and stuff like that. I was good in that stuff. All As.

Mildred: So were you the last child in the family then, your parents never had any more or did you have other brothers and sisters?

Joseph: Oh, yeah, I was the second one. See, I'm number one, see the first child lives the longest. Since my brother died, I'm number one. And I had a sister Mary. Then we had a boy Tony, and then Andy, and then Betty, and then John again.

Mildred: Oh, wow, so you had a fairly big family.

Joseph: Yeah, well, they had seven children all together, my dad's family. But most of the time they were bigger than that down here.

Mildred: Did your parents have enough money that they didn't bring in boarders or did you have lots of boarders?

Joseph: No, we didn't have too many, if they came from the old country, we'd keep them for awhile, but we'd tell them to leave. My dad said: We don't need boarders. In fact, I told him: Let's get a cow, I want to go watching cows with the rest of the kids, you know how they watch their cows. Eh, we don't need a cow. Let's get a cow! So we got the cow and the cow went back to the farm.

Mildred: Yeah, I guess in town, they had cows. They had cows in town and --

Joseph: Yeah, nearly every house, every other house had a cow. They raised pigs and then they slaughtered them in the autumn, themselves, you know? And they'd have these smokehouses. They'd go in the woods and bring this hickory wood, you know, smoke your bacon and your hams and stuff like that. Everybody had chickens or ducks or geese.

Justina J: They had them in the backyard.

Joseph: Yeah, we had them in the backyard in 38. And my Uncle Mike, he had goats.

Mildred: Oh yeah? Goats?

Joseph: Oh yeah, he had lots of goats. And they were smart! They knew how to play tag with us kids. They did! They come and tag you and they'd run away, you know, and they'd wait a little bit so somebody -- the guy that's it would tag them, you know, they wouldn't run away so fast. They got smart, those ones, they wanted to be it too.

Mildred: Oh boy. Well, it must have been something with all those animals and everything in town.

Joseph: I'll tell you, see, I was a guy that liked the woods. I spent over half of my life in the woods. I knew every tree. I could name every tree. I knew where all the nut

trees were. Now, during WWI, they were looking for a walnut, black walnut, for gunstocks. The big trees. And they'd tell them, see little Joe, he knows where all of them are at. That was me, I was little Joe. (laughter) I'd take these guys out in the woods and show them where all these big trees are, big walnut, you know.

Mildred: All these years you were growing up, were you going to, were you going to a church?

Joseph: Yeah, same church.

Mildred: Same, Cyril and Methodius?

Joseph: All my life.

Mildred: Okay.

Joseph: See, we had a --

Mildred: Even when you were in 38 you went to that?

Joseph: -- in 38 they took all the rooms out of one house, like a double house, see. Six rooms they took out. And that was the church.

Mildred: Oh, I see, okay.

Joseph: So the first Sunday, the priest from St. Cyril came. Then the priest came from St. John's Polish, St. Mary's Hungarian, and St. Mary's Greek Catholic. There were five Sundays our priest came again. For the fifth Sunday we got, most of the people living in 38 were Slovak, see. We were in the majority there, the Slovak people.

Mildred: Well, how did you feel when WWI was going on? Do you remember much of anything about that, was there a lot of antagonism between the Slovaks and the Hungarians?

Joseph: I'll tell you what, I remember a lot about that. I always wanted to be a Boy Scout. So when my birthday came, I knew, you had to be a Tenderfoot. You know, you had to know everything from Tenderfoot. So when September 4 came around, I went to the Scouts and I said: I want to become a Boy Scout. Well he said: You wait till the meeting. No, no, I'm 12 today, I want to be a Boy Scout! I know the Tenderfoot test! And I showed him how to tie these eight ropes and, you know, Old Scout law and what it means and all that stuff, you know what I mean. So I became a Boy Scout, see. So anytime there was anything going on, well us Scouts, boy, we went out and, you know, we did our duty for the government. My mother didn't want me to join the Boy Scouts, she said: Oh, they're going to take you into the service. I said: Get out of here Mom, they don't want babies in the service, they want men. They don't want little kids. And I said: Ones especially like me (laughter). Oh, my father was glad that I joined the Boy Scouts. We did a lot, I'll tell you, you know, we did everything that should be done at that time for Boy Scouts. Boy Scouts helped out, you know.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: We went out and, you know, picked stuff. We were picking scraps and stuff like that, you know, and selling it to the junk dealer. We picked these pods, you know, milkweed and dried them in bags, you know, in perforated --

Mildred: What did they use that for?

Joseph: Lifesavers, you know. Yeah, you know, it killed it (inaudible). I did that for WWII too. Our (inaudible), our lines were loaded with these perforated sacks and all that stuff was in there. Even WWII they used that, to make life jackets.

Mildred: I didn't know that, goodness.

Joseph: Oh, yeah.

Mildred: So you were really active with that sort of thing, even when you were young. Did your family belong to any fraternal societies at all or ethnic clubs?

Joseph: Yeah, [Nota?] Lodge, you know, the first Catholic Slovaks, I belong to that now.

Mildred: Are you an officer of it now?

Joseph: No, no, I was for awhile but I didn't care for that.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: I was more interested in Boy Scouts.

Mildred: I see, that was your thing, huh?

Justina J: How many years did you have Boy Scouts?

Joseph: 58 years --

Mildred: 58 years, wow.

Joseph: with the Boy Scouts, and 57 years with her (laughter)

Mildred: 57, yeah. Well, we'll have to get to that, we'll have to get to -- before we get to your marriage, let me ask you about your work experience, OK? Like, when did you start in the mines and where did you work and what did you do? Maybe, other than being a miner.

Joseph: I started working in the mines in June 1924.

Mildred: Yeah.

Joseph: And I retired, let's see, when was that? That was in, wasn't that when I got that walking pneumonia? Oh, yeah, that's when I had to retire, when I got the walking pneumonia.

Mildred: When would that have been?

Joseph: That was in, let's see, June 1968.

Mildred: Long time.

Joseph: That was four years --

End of Tape 1 Side A

Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (May 19, 1985)

Mildred: -- it starts to record. Now we should be okay.

Joseph: See, I worked in, I started working with my dad, you know. How they did it in those days --

Mildred: Tell me.

Joseph: -- see, I didn't have to do that, because I was old enough to go in a mine.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: Now, here's a boy 13, maybe 14 year old, but he's a good sized boy, you know what I mean? So his dad goes to the squire and he swears that his son is 16 years of age, so he gets working papers for his boy. And he takes his boy inside. Now, the reason they did that, see, because cars were rationed, you know --

Mildred: Oh, yeah, for the companies.

Joseph: -- you know what I mean? So that way they made a little bit more money because the boy got his share of the cars same as any other miner, see. And so, that's the way it worked in those days. But I didn't have to get that. So I started work in --

Mildred: Let me just ask you if that was common, was that very common for young boy to go in the mines?

Joseph: Oh yes, very common, most of the kids started when they were 13, 14, 15 years old.

Mildred: And there wasn't any problem, no one said child labor or anything like that.

Joseph: Nothing. Once they got their working papers that was it, nobody bothered nobody.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: You just worked and that's all. Yeah, I started when I was 17 see.

Mildred: So you didn't have to do anything like that?

Joseph: No, I didn't have to do none of that. None of my brothers started young, they all finished, my other brothers all finished high school before they went in the mines. Yeah.

Mildred: Which mine did you start working in?

Joseph: 36.

Mildred: 36.

Joseph: 36 mine. By then I worked in nearly all of them, you know, I went from one mine to -- see, I started with my dad who was a machine coal bottom cutter. See, they cut the bottom and then you loaded your slack out first and then you had these hand drills and see, up above you had to go through that hard stuff, bony sulfur. So they way we did it, I'd get up against a post see, and my dad would be drilling. And I'd put my feet on his behind, understand? And I'd push, and we got in. See, if it was soft, you could do it easy, see, get into the coal. But when you got in that hard stuff you had to do that. We'd take turns. And I'd get on the auger, you know, and he'd get behind me and push me with his feet up against -- then we

made our cartridges out of black powder, see, with newspaper. We'd roll the newspaper and, you know, turn the end down on one end, pour it in, then we'd push it in with the needle, see. And then we'd push it into the powder. And then you'd get your tamping bar, see, it had a groove on it and it fit right over the top of the needle. So sometimes we'd throw slack in. One guy would throw slack in, the other would go on pushing the hole tight, like this. Or if the lumps were soft, you know, then we'd put the lumps in, if we got nice clean lumps. Because, you know, if you got bad lumps it may be a good breakthrough and then the shot wouldn't go off. So if it wouldn't go off, you'd have to go in with your auger, with your needle again, got to clean it, see. So we always watched what kind of stuff we got, see. Well, once you got it real tight, then you pulled your needle out slowly, you know. See, the needle is thicker on this end and thin on the other end. Pull it out and we'd get a squib. And we all carried these lamps, you know, carbide lamps, see. So we put the squib in there, and one guys would light it and we'd run like heck, you know what I mean? Next thing you know, boom!

Mildred: Oh really, oh boy.

Joseph: Then you'd go back right into the smoke, you'd get the next shot, you know, until you got it all. Well, the air in those days wasn't that good. I know it today, my lungs are bad, I only have a third of a lung on the right side left.

Mildred: Did you get black lung?

Joseph: I had silicosis too, that's from silica dust. Silica dust and I had black lung, both. So, that's the way we shot our coal, see. Well then after awhile I decided to go pick coal, you know, make a little more money if you dig the coal yourself.

Mildred: I see, okay.

Joseph: Digging and cutting, you know. And then they got these pick hammers, they pushed air into the mine, you know. They're like a jackhammer.

Mildred: Oh okay.

Joseph: But you put your pick in there and it has a turn on it, you know. So you start cutting all the coal like this. Then drill and shoot. So one day there was a real bad place, nobody could make any money in it. So the boss asked me if I would take that place with my buddy. It wasn't my father, another man, you know. And I said: Yeah, we'll take that dang place. I figured we could make money there. So you had about that much coal and about that much -- see the coal wasn't too high there. Anywhere from three feet to four feet is the highest. Some places 28 inches, that's how high it was, you had to sometimes (inaudible) with your cart. Anyway, the boss couldn't figure out why we were making all that money, you know what I mean. So one day he comes in there when we were, I didn't want him to see us do this, see. But anyway, see, what we did, we'd take all the coal out, see, like this. Clean, you know, we're the other guys that undercut the coal. And then they'd drill into that bad stuff too, and then they had to clean that bad stuff and -- God, you wasn't allowed to have that, if they caught you with that bad stuff you got two days off, maybe a week off.

Mildred: Oh really.

Joseph: Well, that's the way it was in those days. So I told my buddy, hey, we're going to change this system. We're going to cut this coal out with this pick hammer, all of

it. So we undercut, we cut it, you know. Zoom, zoom, up to the dirt. Zoom, zoom, down to the bottom.

Mildred: Load and load.

Joseph: When we were done with that, we took out pick hammer and we started bringing that dirt down.

Mildred: Oh all right.

Joseph: And we'd drill holes in the bottom with the auger, same thing, with the same machine, we'd blast it up, load it out. Heck, we got to cut the coal out and then cut a (inaudible) see. Go in both sides. Hey, where'd you get that idea? I said: What do you think, I'm dumb? I said: Because the rest of the guys are dumb you think I'm dumb? I figured this thing out! That's why I took this place, I figured I could make money here. He said: You know what. After we got through with it, it was nice coal, boy, when we got through that, I don't know how long it took us, but anyway. Hey, I want you and your buddy to go around and demonstrate this, cutting the coal under the bone. Okay. So we did, we were showing the other miners how you take the coal out and just leave the [boney?] up, you know what I mean. Then after they get all the coal as far as you could reach, then you bring your [boney?] down and load it up, you know, for dirt. I started that. That's right! They use that system all over their mines now.

Mildred: Wow. (laughter)

Joseph: All on account of that dang bad place that we took. (laughter)

Mildred: Oh, that's funny.

Joseph: That was with the pick hammers. But I did all kinds of work in the mines, you know.

Mildred: Well, tell me what else you did, what other kind of things, and how it changed during the years. It must have changed a lot in all that time.

Joseph: Oh yeah, see, at first they had these steam cutters, you know, to cut by steam. I never worked there, only my dad did, see. But then they got these bottom cutting machines, see, and then they had pick (inaudible) too, you know. Especially in places where the coal was pushing. See, what it means by that is you don't have to cut your coal, you don't have to shoot it, see. Especially in pillar work, coming back, you know what I mean. See, all you had to do was just hit it with a post or something and then you had lots of coal rolling out. It would just roll out, you know, that's when you made money, in those kind of places, see. In heading work, that's different, it's all solid, you know. That's when you're advancing to heading, see. You have to have always air, you know, the intake and going out. So you had at least two entries, see. Like on a main you had three entries, maybe four. One for haulage, two for air, and one for the runway. Okay, so you know, you have to escape on account of fire or something. Yeah.

Mildred: In those early days did you have to buy your own squibs and all that?

Joseph: Listen, in the early days, I'll give you a story. My dad and I come into the mine and we couldn't get our car in, see, the bottom heat. See, when you retreat sometimes the bottom heats, you can't get your car in. So that was the first time it happened, you know, we were taking out pillars. See, you drive the room up first, 300 feet, so then you turn and you take so much coal out, you pull out of there and

you start another link and so on. Until you come way down, you know. But see, every 60 feet you have to drive a cross gut from one room to another. That's for air to go around. So let's see, where were we on that?

Mildred: I was just asking if you had to buy squibs and those things.

Joseph: Oh yeah. The reason I'm saying this is, see, after we got our place fixed up it was quitting time and when I asked my dad: Hey dad, what did we make today? Son, we made nothing today. You didn't load no coal. You only get paid when you load coal. That was before the union.

Mildred: Was that dead work?

Joseph: Dead work. I said: Hey dad, I don't like this. I said to him, I said: From now on, I'm a strong union man. I said: If a guy says we're on strike I'm dumping my water and away I go, I'm on strike Dad. I don't care what you do. I do not intend to work for nothing. I had to buy my miner's clothes, my cap, my lamp, carbide, tools, I had to buy everything. When you move, if the boss got mad at you because he wasn't satisfied with something, he would tell you: Get the heck out of the mine. You had to carry your tools out, they wouldn't even take them out for you, that's how bad it was in those days. I know one time, we had water about that deep. And I told him: Why don't you give us a Hungarian pump? A Hungarian pump --

Mildred: What's a Hungarian pump?

Joseph: It's nothing but a tub, you know, a drum, like a 50-gallon drum or something like that, see. So what you do, you pour your water in there, see, and then you have

the pump running from it. Then water would run away from the drum, see.

That's what we called a Hungarian pump. (laughter)

Joseph: I don't know why but... so...

Mildred: Did you have a lot of names for things like that, like Hungarian something, and Polish something, and Slovak something? (laughter)

Joseph: I don't know, I can't remember, you know what I mean.

Mildred: You forget.

Joseph: See, you know, that system always changed. See, at first they were cutting coal with steam. And then they got the bottom cutting machine, okay, where a big cutter would come in and cut your place at night and then they'd say (inaudible). You drill your holes and shoot the coal down. Well, there was also pick coal. And also in some of these small mines you could blast on solid, if you knew how, which we did. Lots of times, these little mines, you know. I used to work in some of the little mines too.

Mildred: Did you learn how to do all these cuts from your father, or did you --

Joseph: From my father.

Mildred: -- was there any kind of training program involved before you went into the mine?

Joseph: No, no training at all. My dad taught me everything.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: When you're starting a pilgrim, well, my dad would ask the boss: Well, where do you want me to start this next lift? John, you know more about this than I do. You start where you think is the best place. See, sometimes you have these roles, see, and it's rock like this. Sometimes you don't have that much coal on top of it.

So many it runs this way. So some of these guys, you know, well you start your lift here. They'd go in so far then they'd have to go over the top. My dad said: We ain't going to do that. We go along the row, see. And then we'd go along the other side of it and start another lift, see. Take it out that way. That way we didn't have all that doggone dead work for nothing, you know. You load maybe a car or two a day, you make nothing that day.

Mildred: Was it hard to get a union started in the mines around here?

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you how hard it was in this town. The Berwinds said: We'll sign the union contract when grass grows on the railroad tracks. We would have never had the union if it wasn't for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. FDR, when he became president, one thing he suggested that the men had -- he told congress, you make a law that the men have the right to organize. So we started organizing and our first meetings were in the woods. We wouldn't even get a hall to meet in, that's how bad it was, see. So we started a Democratic club. I named the club. The Miners Roosevelt club. I can prove it, I still have --

Mildred: I'd love to see some things like that, if you have some.

Joseph: -- I have one upstairs, I could find it quick. You know, Roosevelt's picture on there and it says Miners Roosevelt club. Just blank paper that we used, you know.

Mildred: Oh, good, I'd like to see that.

Joseph: And I named that club. See, I was secretary of the union. In fact, I wrote up the first resolution on pension. When you retire, you know.

Mildred: When were you secretary of the union?

Joseph: When we first organized, I guess about 1934. That's when we got organized, after Roosevelt was in.

Mildred: And did you have any trouble with the law then, after you got your meetings, somehow, in the woods.

Joseph: At first we couldn't get a meeting place. No club or no hall would give us any place. So, I'm a Slovak, you know. We had a big hall, and I talked --

Mildred: Same one, isn't it?

Joseph: -- yeah, Slovak Education club. But it was, see, the club itself was not the owner of the building. They had a small share. There were six organizations that started that, three Roman Catholic organizations and three Greek Catholic organizations. And later on they split up and the Slovaks bought them out and they built a building on 10th Street, the Greek Catholics, they were always fighting each other for some reason. Anyway, I knew the officers of the hall association and they were good union men, strong. See, they were all afraid of Berwyn, to be honest about it. And I says: Oh, the company ain't going to do nothing no more about this, I says, this is the law. I says: Why don't you let the union meet in your hall here, you'll make a few bucks. Not only that, they'll go down to the club and spend money. So that was the first organization in Windber to give the miners a place to meet.

Mildred: Really, that's fascinating.

Joseph: Then down [Skelt?] Local you had a local, see. That's the one I belong to right now, 5229. This was 6186, in Windber. We had over 2000 miners then, so did

the [Skelt?] Local. But they had a different jurisdiction than we did, you know, the different mines.

Mildred: Was it just as hard for them to get a place to meet and everything too?

Joseph: After we got this place, the VFW, I think that's where they got in.

Mildred: Oh, that's interesting.

Joseph: Yeah, VFW, the [Skelt?] local, that's where they still meet. Yeah, that's there --

Mildred: Did the Berwind company try to have a company union or anything like that? A lot of places tried that.

Joseph: They didn't have no kind of a union, no.

Mildred: Did you have anything --

Joseph: But I'll tell you why the people were satisfied. You know that the Berwinds paid better than any company? Yeah.

Mildred: Miners, yeah.

Joseph: Yeah, but they didn't pay dead work, but they paid better tonnage, see. Our men were pretty well satisfied, you know. Not only that, the rent was cheap, see.

Mildred: Company houses.

Joseph: Company housing, the rent was cheap. But they wanted you to buy from the company stores, you know how it is, and they had them all over the place. I don't know how many they had, but they had a lot of them.

Mildred: What would happen if somebody didn't trade at the company store?

Joseph: Well, they were told that they may lose their job. So, you know, most of them bought from the store. You had a book, yeah, you bought on a book, you know, credit. Now, after things got bad, see --

Mildred: What do you mean?

Joseph: -- if you wasn't paying, you know, good, you're building up a little bit, they put a green slip in back of the book.

Mildred: What did that mean.

Joseph: You know, on the back cover. Here's what that meant. Let's say this woman comes to the store and she wants to buy some stuff, you know, bread, whatever. Milk, though they didn't buy milk then because everybody had cows. But anyway, bread or something else, whatever they wanted to buy, flour, because everybody baked their own in those years, they didn't have to buy bread because everybody baked practically. And so, they go to the store to buy some food, meat or something. They'd look in the back of the book. Well, we have to call up and see if you husband loaded any coal today. You know, they'd call the mine foreman up and say: It's so-and-so, check number so-and-so. Or they'd call up the, usually the place where they, what weighs the coal. They'd ask him, did so-and-so load any coal and how much and so on. And then they'd figure it out by that, whether she'd getting anything or not. Now, let's say he had a bad place and wasn't doing good. Maybe they had a family of eight kids. Maybe they'd give him 50 cents that day or a dollar to buy food. That's how bad it was in those years.

Mildred: And they'd have to do that everyday?

Joseph: Everyday, if you went to the store everyday, they'd call up everyday. My dad was a good worker, he figured things out where he could make money. So we never had that in our book. See, our book was always paid up, on payday my mother

would go to the store and pay the book up. My dad never paid the book. My dad gave her the statement and she went up, cashed it and paid the book off and all.

We were always in good shape.

Mildred: Weren't there a lot of years, even in the '20s before the union, and then in the '30s when mines didn't work everyday though already? Or did they, were they working regularly, how did that work?

Joseph: Well, see, in those days they didn't shut one mine down so one another would work a little bit more days. Everybody got the same amount of work. Now, for instance, we have 35 and 36 mine. Let's say we're going to work three days this week. 35 gets one day, 36 gets the next day, and that's the way it was.

Everybody got the same number of days.

Mildred: Before the union too?

Joseph: Even before the union.

Mildred: Well, what kinds of things happened when you did get the union, what changed?

Joseph: See, we didn't notice it in Windber right away, you know, because they paid good. Even when it came to yardage, see, because after the union came in everybody had to, when they saw the union coming in they started paying a little bit for yardage, you know. See, in the headings you have to pay for yardage, you know, see, because the coal is only say three feet. And you have to have seven feet clearance, see. Six or seven feet clearance. So you have to shoot that bottom up. So they paid yardage, so much a yard, see. And I know when I was the boss I used to step it off. I think maybe you made a mistake! Okay hold the tape. And I said: Okay, I'm just going to walk, now you take the tape down to the base. Okay,

how many yards? Boy, right on the nose Joe. How the heck do you do it? I never had to use a tape, I just walked it. (laughter)

Mildred: You knew it, huh?

Joseph: I knew how to walk the (inaudible). See, in the Boy Scouts you learn.

Mildred: Oh, certain things, yeah.

Joseph: You step, you know, how much, to five feet or whatever. (laughter)

Mildred: You said you were a boss, did you have a title of some sort?

Joseph: Huh?

Mildred: You said you were a boss then, did you have a title? What kind of title? I don't know what all they would be.

Joseph: I was a fire boss, that's a guy that goes and examines the mine before the men come in. I was assistant boss. See, there was a mine foreman and then he has men that's called assistant bosses. They run the sections for him because he wouldn't do it himself. In a small mine you can do it. See, like I was a mine foreman in a mine where there were only 16 men. That's when I lost a, that's after I lost my hand.

Mildred: Oh dear.

Joseph: I took a mine over and I had 16 men. And boy were those men happy that I did that. They said: Gee, Joe, thank you for taking this mine over. He said: Boy oh boy, he says, look my wife was sick, the bill was \$1000 and the union paid everything. I don't know what I'd have done if it wasn't for that. But anyway, I was always a union man, even when I was a boss. Just to show you one thing about this. When I was a boss up here at Number 4 in [Semple?] City, you know.

Two men were running the mine and they couldn't get a mine foreman. So somebody told them about me, that I had mine foreman papers. So he coaxed me into taking the job, you know. So I went up, I said: I'll go up and look at it, see if I can handle it and so on. So I went up and I'm sitting there in a car, it's after 7:00, there's men there sitting there with their dinner buckets. Hey, what the heck are you guys doing sitting here with your dinner buckets? Oh, we're waiting for the mine foreman. I'm the mine foreman! Get the heck in their and get to work!
(laughter)

Joseph: They told me they have to air in it and I said: Oh, that's right. I said: Where's your generator at? They showed me. I said: Does anybody know about this generator, how to start it and so on? Then I started it myself after that. I said: Where's the fan out there? I said: Don't forget, fellas, that's my fan, not yours. I said: I'm in charge of that fan and nobody's allowed to go near that thing. I've got to see that it's running right, that you get the right amount of air in that mine. That's what I told them. So I worked there for awhile and then I did --

Mildred: But you worked mostly in the Berwyn mines, right?

Joseph: Yeah, nearly the whole time. I'd go in here and there now and then, you know, just to get the experience. I went to the local union, see, and I said, most of those guys knew me, you know, because they knew what kind of union man I was. I said: Well, I took [Sotek's?] mine over up here, I said I'm the mine foreman up there. So I want to come down here and join the union. You know, our mine was shut down so I was out of work but --

Mildred: When would this have been, about?

Joseph: -- oh, this was back in, let's see, 1940, no wait, 1963. Isn't that when I lost my hand? Yeah, 1963 when I lost my hand.

Mildred: Did you lost it in an accident?

Joseph: In the mine yeah, a mine accident up here.

Mildred: Oh dear.

Joseph: I was running the motor, it was in the winter time when -- see, in the morning the mine foreman goes around and sees the places, so he asked me to run the motor, you know. See, nobody would haul coal up, there were only us two. See, you'd go up a hill going into the mine like this, then you'd go down a steep hill then it goes up another hill and then you level off. Well anyway, it was a real cold night, 20-something below zero. And then in the morning the sun comes out bright and it hit that hill right away see, so it started to melt. And icicles were forming on the trolley wire. This was my fourth trip out of the mine, I always took six cars out at a trip. Now the mine foreman could take (inaudible), and he didn't want me to take no more than four but I fooled him, I took six. So anyway, I was going in with these six empties, you know, and the coal junked. When it junked, you know, I put my brake on and I stopped the trip. And I got up on the motor, you know, to put the pole down and put it back on the wire so I could keep going. And what happened, this trip started moving down on the ice, see, the tracks were icy. And so the pole base, the pole, you know, where the wheel was, hit a low timber, and the pole base went up like that. And I had my hand, you know, up there on the pole base. So the trolley wire was across here, 280 volts going through my hand.

Mildred: Oh boy.

Joseph: And there was a blue flame up on my hand, I could see it. But I didn't get out of the motor, if I'd have touched the top or the sides or the bottom I'd have been dead.

Mildred: Oh boy.

Joseph: I knew that much. I was dry and, you know, I had boots on. You know, the thrift stayed there, you know, it didn't move. I knew that the guy that's, who will come up there, you know, in about 20 minutes. It takes about 20 minutes to dump the coal. So I was praying to God, I was talking to God, I was crying.

Mildred: I'll bet.

Joseph: The hands burning, inside the glove it's burning. And when I saw him, his feet, Hurry up, turn the power off, turn the power off before I get electrocuted. So he went back in the shop there and turned the power off. I knew he was going to come up there. And come in and he said: What happened Joe? I said: This is what happened, can't you see? I said: I can't get my hand loose. I said, run down the shop and get a saw, maybe you can cut this pole.

End of Tape 1 Side B

Beginning of Tape 2 Side A (May 19, 1985)

Mildred: Yeah, I think by now it should be okay. Yeah, so he got this to try --

Joseph: Well then, I said to him, go down and get a bar. So he took the saw and went down and got the bar. And he's trying to pry it loose and he couldn't no how. He said: I don't know what the heck we're going to do Joe. I can't do nothing. I was thinking with him and I said: Get another bar. Well he got the other bar and I got

the bar from this side like this. See the power was off, I wasn't afraid now. And I was pushing this way on the trolley wire and he was pushing the other way, see. And the next thing you know, the trolley was moving over on top of my hand. And as soon as it got loose the blood went up like this, up towards the roof. And he started running out of the mine to get help. And I says: Wait, wait, wait, I'm bleeding to death, I'm bleeding to death. And he didn't and he kept going and I got myself like this. I squeezed and squeezed until the blood stopped running. Then I got out of the motor, I run out of the mine, and I went down over that (inaudible) there and the owner was coming up with the jeep, you know what I mean. And I got into the jeep and he took me up to the hospital. And as soon as I got out of the jeep I run down to the dispensary, I knew the doctor would be waiting for me. He looked at me, Joe! What the hell is the matter with you? He says we had a litter over there for you. I says: I didn't see nothing, I says, all I wanted to see is you Doctor. Dr. [Orris?]. Doc [Orris?], I knew you was going to be here, I wanted to see you. Oh boy, he looked at it. When he took my glove off, I could see through my hand. But the glove wasn't burned. But my hand was all melted here.

Mildred: Oh, for heaven's sake.

Joseph: Like this. He said, maybe I'll be able to save your thumb and your finger here and part of this. I said: Doctor, I know enough about first aid, I teach first aid and you know it. I know enough about first aid and my hand is completely dead and you know it too. I said: So don't worry about that stuff. Well, I said: Now look, I'm going to tell you something Doctor. I want you to cut my hand off where you

think is the best spot. You want me to do that? Yes, I want you to do that. So he got the papers, he says: Well, we're going to wait for your wife, till she comes and then we'll get her to sign. Because I told them where I thought she'd be and they found her in one of the places I named. She was shopping, you know, at Morris's. I said: What do you want to wait for her for? So she can sign the -- Ah, my wife will never sign these papers! Christ, when she sees what happened to me she's going to be hysterical! I said: She won't be able to sign the papers. I know my wife. I said: Bring the papers here, I'll sign them. Can you still sign those papers after all you went through? I said: Sure. So I signed three papers and that was it. Went to the operating room and he cut my hand off. I'll tell you what kind of a job he did. They told me up at the rehab that maybe I'd have to go through another operation to get this straightened out, you know what I mean. So they shipped me to Pittsburgh and the guy, you know, that makes these prostheses, he said: You know, Mr. Novak, I've been doing this kind of work for 34 years and I never saw a more beautiful job than this. He said: This is the best job I ever saw on a hand. Whoever did it really did a nice job on you. I said: That was Dr. [Orris?] When I got back I told the doctor, he said: Didn't I tell you that I did a good job on you? And he did.

Mildred: Were there lots of accidents in the mines when you were in the mines?

Joseph: Oh, my.

Mildred: Tell me something about those. Did they get better in recent years, toward the present time?

Joseph: Oh yeah, see --

Mildred: Were there a lot more earlier?

Joseph: -- earlier, you know, they weren't as safety-minded, you know. They got more safety-minded. And see, sometimes the men make the mistake. Sometimes the fire boss makes the mistake, see. Just like one time I examined these places and I was thinking about it, it wasn't much, a little piece there was loose, and I says: Eh, they'll be able to see that, they'll pull it down and go to work. And I made a mistake that time. That was the only time I ever made a mistake on, you know, endangering a place. This dang guy, instead of pulling that doggone loose stuff down, he started digging the coal under it and it fell on him and, I don't know, it sort of hurt his leg or something, you know what I mean. It wasn't a bad break or anything, but --

Mildred: Oh, that's good.

Joseph: -- anyway, there it was. That shouldn't have been. It bruised his leg, that's what it did. Because he didn't lose no time, only that one day.

Mildred: In the early days, if somebody died in the mines, did they get any benefits or --

Joseph: At first there were no benefits.

Mildred: -- they didn't get anything at all --

Joseph: Nothing.

Mildred: -- just the fraternal society ones?

Joseph: That's why they had fraternal societies, you know what I mean. They didn't get nothing, nothing at all at first. Then they started the compensation laws, you know what I mean, where you got compensation. Yeah, oh but they wanted to push you into the mines as fast as possible, these compensation people. They'd go

in and watch and everything, you know, take pictures of you if you was doing something around the house or this or that.

Justina J: How much money did they give us when you lost your hand?

Joseph: You know how much I got for my hand? \$12,750. \$47.50 a week for 175 weeks.

Justina J: That's all we got then, \$47.50 a week.

Joseph: That's all, that's all we got then.

Mildred: Oh boy.

Joseph: That's all. That's the way it was.

Justina J: They never gave me a money bond just every week they send you a check.

Joseph: That's all. \$47.50 a week is all I got until I got better.

Justina J: For 168 weeks.

Joseph: I was still getting \$47.50 a week when I went as a mine foreman.

Mildred: Oh, I see. And this was in 1963 already?

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: So people really had nothing at all before and that's hard enough. Yeah, gosh. When did safety programs come in then, was that after the unions or before or both?

Joseph: No, after the union got in.

Mildred: Did they --

Joseph: See --

Mildred: -- participate in that?

Joseph: -- the union is what got after these congressman, see. The union, John L. Lewis. I knew John L., I worked --

Mildred: Did you?

Joseph: -- oh, I was on the picket line with him.

Justina J: We went to see him in Washington. (laughter)

Mildred: Oh yeah, tell me about that, I haven't met anyone who knew him.

Joseph: Oh yeah, I was with him, Tom Kennedy, all those guys. Oh heck, I was on a picket line with him lots of times, yeah. He was a regular guy, that's all he was, a regular man. He was for the working man. Boy he was smart. Boy he was better than any congressman. I'm telling you, boy could he talk. He was good, you know, he always won his way, you know? And he'd listen to reason, if anybody had something good to tell him he'd listen, he'd let you have the floor. Like if you went to a convention and you had something to say, he'd let you have the floor.

Mildred: So did you go to a lot of conventions then?

Joseph: Oh I went to conventions, yeah. The first one I went to was in 1936. That was in Washington, DC.

Mildred: You did, huh.

Joseph: Yeah, that's where they read my resolution on pensions. (laughter)

Mildred: Oh really, 1936.

Joseph: Yeah, 1936, I wrote a resolution see. I wrote all the resolutions for our local union here. See, I was pretty good on that kind of stuff, see. I studied that stuff.

Mildred: You did?

Joseph: Yeah, I took courses.

Mildred: How did you, you would just read?

Joseph: Huh?

Mildred: Where did you take courses or --

Joseph: Home, I got books see, from different schools, you know.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: I'd see an advertisement and say: Hey that sounds good. So I'd go and, you know what I mean, pay for those books and they kept sending them to me, you know. And I'd send my lessons back to them. Hey, I was a well-educated man, I was self-educated, you know what I mean?

Mildred: Right.

Joseph: Yeah, I was.

Mildred: So you kept going to these conventions then and you remember --

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Mildred: -- did you ever go to any CIO conventions, when that got formed?

Joseph: No I didn't.

Mildred: To the UMW ones, huh?

Joseph: Yeah, just United Mine Workers, that's the only ones I went to, yeah. And I'll tell you, you know, after I lost my hand I got this job as a mine foreman, see. And after I worked there about two or three months the men said to me: You know, Joe, we don't understand it. You only have one hand and you do more work than we're able to do with two hands. Yeah.

Mildred: Yeah, that's really something.

Joseph: I taught those guys a lot of things. You know, they didn't know anything about wiring the hoist, you know, and that's simple. Only three wires. So I told them, I went to every pair of men when they worked in these rooms and wherever, I said:

Now look, I might not be around sometime and you might not be able to get me and you need a hoist wire. I said: Now I'm going to mark your lines here. One copper wire, you twist it here, that's the hot line. Two, that's the return. I said: You take that and you put it on your main track, now not on your track, on the main track down there. And this one's the neutral one, three. And I said: Now you got to remember that. So one day a man, it's almost quitting time, I'm out there fixing up my reports and stuff, you know. This man is running down there all out of breath. Joe, Joe! The whole mine is electrocuted! Something's wrong! He said: You can't touch nothing. He said: Fire flying all over the place. I knew right away what happened.

Mildred: Somebody goofed up.

Joseph: These two guys were moving their hoist to a new place because I said: You better get your hoist moved in there. If you can't wire it, I'll come in and wire it after, you know, quitting time. But if you know how to wire it you just go ahead. So I come in there and the first thing I do, I take this hot line off. No more power in those -- (laughter)

Mildred: Oh boy.

Joseph: Those are some of the things you go through, you know.

Mildred: Is there anything else you want to tell me about John L. Lewis or anything about UMW? And then maybe we can, after we finish that we can talk about some other things. If you're not getting too tired. If you're getting too tired we can stop.

Joseph: Oh no, I don't get tired that easy.

Mildred: Okay. (laughter)

Joseph: (laughter) I was real sick here.

Mildred: Oh were you? I'm sorry to hear that.

Joseph: Oh yeah, since -- I got a bad cold in October, 1983, mean '84.

Mildred: And was your lungs the initial problem and then you get something --

Joseph: Yeah, my lungs. And November again. And this one morning I get up, I can't breathe, I can't move, I can't do nothing. I'm just laying there trying to get some breath in some way, gasping. She didn't know it. And then when I did come to, I told her, I'm not going to church today. See, after I retired I went to church every morning.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: I'm that kind of a person.

Mildred: You consider yourself religious?

Joseph: Oh, I am religious.

Mildred: Yeah. You've been active in the church all your life?

Joseph: Oh yeah, all my life I've been active, oh yeah.

Mildred: Well, tell me about when you got married and --

Joseph: (laughter)

Mildred: -- your family, I don't know if you had children or not.

Joseph: We had children.

Mildred: Okay, then when did you meet your wife and where did you meet her?

Joseph: (laughter) I met my wife in Monessen, I'll tell you.

Mildred: Back when you were in 8th grade all those years?

Joseph: No, no.

Justina J: You was working then.

Joseph: She came there to her cousin's place to work --

Justina J: For vacation.

Joseph: -- for vacation, and I was working in the mills, you know, in the steel mills.

Mildred: Oh, you worked in the steel mills too.

Joseph: Yeah, I worked in the steel mills. Yeah, I was working in the nail mill. So this one day, this is Knocks Avenue, 10th Street here, 11th Street here. In between there was a store on this side. Three girls were walking up this way. She was one of them. I knew the other two but I didn't know her. So I said to myself: You know, she looks like a nice girl, I think she's a nice clean-cut girl. I'd like to have her for my steady. So, I said that to myself. So I run across the street and when she saw me running across the street she run up the hill, up the street, you know what I mean. And I hollered: There goes my wife! (laughter)

Mildred: And you didn't know her.

Joseph: I didn't meet her then, you know. But that night, that evening rather, a friend of mine, Johnny [Witzko?], because he knew the other girl, he went out with her, you know. And so we went over to there and we were waiting for them to come out and they wouldn't come out, see. I said: Oh, I'll tell you what we'll do John. Let's make believe we're leaving. So we went up this way, see. We're leaving, we're going away. And we rode back and they come out of the house and went that way. And they were going up that street. I said: Now, we have to hurry because, I said, we have two blocks to go and they only have one. I said: I'm

going to meet her on the next corner. He said: Down this street, to the other one?
As soon as we turned the corner, there they were walking and I run right into her.

Mildred: When would this have been, what year would this have been?

Joseph: (laughter) That was in what?

Justin Joseph: 1927, huh?

Mildred: 1927?

Joseph: No, that was '26.

Justina J: '26? 1926.

Mildred: So when did you get married?

Joseph: '28.

Mildred: '28?

Joseph: January. She was 18 years old on January the 8th. On January 10th we got married. And I was 21.

Mildred: Oh boy. What's your maiden name, Mrs. Novak?

Justina J: Bogdan.

Joseph: B-O-G-D-A-N.

Mildred: B-O-G-D-A-N. And what's your --

Justina J: I never would have got married dear, but my mother died when I was 16, you know, in 1926. And I got tired of working, you know, work, work, work and I didn't get nowhere. (laughter)

Mildred: Oh, where did you work?

Justina J: In a hospital. \$24 a month.

Mildred: What's your first name?

Justina J: Justina.

Joseph: J-U-S-T-I-N-A.

Justina J: Justina J.

Mildred: That's pretty, that's a pretty name.

Justina J: You know how I got my name Justina, Julia?

Joseph: Julia, everybody knows her by Julia.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: That's her middle name.

Justina J: Justina "J" for Julia. We went to Slovak schools all the time, until we made our first Holy Communion, then we had to go to public school and let the other ones go to, you know, our Catholic school. And I said: Gee, how am I going to give my name Justina, because we dropped the Slovak name --

Joseph: See, the J is pronounced like a Y in Slovak.

Justina J: I'm not going to give my name "Yustina" to her, you know. I'm going to name myself Julia.

Mildred: (laughter)

Justina J: So when I was confirmed I said my name was Julia so I didn't get in trouble.

Joseph: You know, there was only one person that I know of that called her Yustina. Her grandmother.

Mildred: Her grandmother.

Justina J: Well, sure, that's all --

Joseph: Oh, her grandmother, after I met her, she always told me, she says: If you marry Yustina, she's going to make you a good wife. You know, she's a hardworking

girl, you know, she knows -- she'll be working good, she'll keep the house clean, she's going to be a good cook someday, and she'll be a good mother to her children. And you know her grandmother was right, on all that.

Mildred: She knew that, huh? (laughter)

Joseph: Well, we're married 57 years.

Mildred: 57 years, that's fantastic.

Justina J: We have four children, two boys and two girls. We have 8 grandchildren and we have 8 great-grandchildren. We have our New York, our Niagara Falls Joe.

Joseph: Joe's in Youngstown, NY, that's 10 miles out of Niagara Falls.

Justina J: We have a son in Texas now, he's a major --

Joseph: In the Air Force.

Justina J: -- Air Force, it'll be 27 years in November, that's he in that.

Joseph: He's a chief biochemist.

Justina J: But his wife died five years ago in December, but he married another girl, and now like they got, he didn't want do it himself so he got married. But he got two kids too, you know, one's married and one's still single.

Mildred: Did any of your boys go in the mines or not?

Joseph: To where?

Mildred: Did any of the boys go in the mines, growing up around here?

Joseph: No, no, no, my sons never went in the mines.

Mildred: Did you want them to go in the mines?

Joseph: No, I didn't. I let them make their own decision.

Justina J: To go in the service?

Joseph: No, Joe went to the Navy.

Justina J: For four years.

Joseph: When four years were done he says he's not going back.

Justina J: He didn't like the Navy.

Joseph: So John, he made a mistake. He had three years of college, see, he went to St. Vincent for three years. We paid this \$50 fee for the last year and my wife said to him one day, she said: John, we're going down to (inaudible). He says: What for? I want to buy you some clothes for school, you know, underclothes and shirts, whatever. And he says: Oh, you won't have to buy my clothes no more, he says, the US government is going to be buying my clothes from now on. See, he joined the Air Force. But he made a mistake, he went in as a private. All right, so while he was a private he graduated, you know. Let's see, organic chemistry in California, Sacramento State. See, he graduated with honors, straight As. And a lot of these teachers were telling me, they said: You know Joe, that's the toughest course in college, he said, he really did good. So then after he had these four years then he was a sergeant. But he was always doing lab work. So he decided he was going to join, you know, he was going to stay in the Air Force. So he asked for Officer's training. And they said: Now John, we want you to go back to school. We have too many people in the chemistry field and we want you in the -

Justina J: Micro.

Joseph: -- what's it --

Justina J: Micro, something like that.

Joseph: -- biology. Anyway, they wanted him to take this other course so they sent him to Arizona University for two years.

Justina J: Boy, he got a lot of schooling.

Joseph: And when he was in Arizona, he was elected into the National Honorary Society of college students while he was there, see. So he's a chief biochemist.

Mildred: Well, that's interesting. When you got married, you were both Slovaks, right?

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: Was that the way most people married, within their nationality?

Joseph: Yeah, at that time, yes.

Justina J: Oh yeah, you wasn't allowed to look at anybody else.

Joseph: Yeah, you seldom married somebody out of, you know --

Mildred: I see, okay.

Joseph: -- in those years, but later on it started.

Mildred: Where did you get married, in Windber?

Joseph: Right here out of this house.

Mildred: Out of this house?

Joseph: Out of this house. The wedding was in this house.

Mildred: Was this your parents' house?

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: Oh, right here.

Joseph: The wedding was in this house.

Mildred: Oh wow. Was it a big wedding?

Joseph: Oh yeah, we had a gypsy band.

Mildred: Did you?

Joseph: Oh yeah, how many days was it?

Justina J: Three days.

Joseph: Three days we had our wedding here.

Justina J: Oh yeah, they used to have them Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. (laughter)

Joseph: Yeah, we had moonshine, home brew, and all that. In those days, prohibition, you know.

Mildred: Yeah, right.

Joseph: Wine that my dad brought here, you know, drinks, everything. They were dancing in that room and this one here, even in the kitchen. We have a big kitchen, 16x16, me and my dad were under there timber, what was it called? (laughter)

Joseph: See, I'm telling you, in those days they didn't have their weddings in halls.

Justina J: In the house.

Joseph: In the house.

Mildred: Oh I see. That sounds like a nice wedding anyway.

Joseph: Oh, you celebrated for a week in those days.

Justina J: And we had cooking, we didn't have to bake, everybody helped --

Mildred: People helped when --

Joseph: Everybody helped to cook.

Justina J: -- bake, everything.

Joseph: Bake, everything, yeah. In those days you didn't, like today, you have to hire everything. You have to buy everything.

Justina J: We had our own chickens and we --

Joseph: Yeah, we had our own stuff.

Justina J: -- we had had our own stuff.

Joseph: Yeah, we raised a pig and we butchered the pig and stuff like that. Yeah.

Justina J: Everybody around here.

Mildred: Some people really helped one another a lot.

Joseph: Oh yeah, in those days --

Justina J: Now --

Mildred: That's changed so much, huh?

Joseph: What a difference.

Mildred: And people marry outside of their groups a little more than they did then, huh?
Even if they stay in religion?

Joseph: Well, see, I was the type of a guy that I was always helpful to somebody. I
always liked to help. All my life that's all I did, help another, that's all I ever did.

Justina J: You still do. (laughter)

Joseph: I worked with the Red Cross for 52 years.

Mildred: Wow, you must have worked almost the entire time it existed in Windber then.

Joseph: We had our own chapter --

Mildred: Tell me about that.

Joseph: -- we had our own chapter in Windber. The Windber chapter of the Red Cross. I
was on the board of directors, and I was also secretary of the board. I was
secretary of the board when we joined in with Johnstown, see. See, what they
did, you know, we had a chapter here, there was one in Somerset, and there were

two in Cambria County and so on, you know what I mean. And then all these chapters were going in with Johnstown, you know, they were going to make one big one, and we were the last ones to go. We liked our chapter, we were doing a lot of good to our people and everybody else, you know what I mean. And we were getting the money in. Ooh, when it comes to raising money --

Mildred: You did a lot of that?

Joseph: -- number one, chairman of drives.

Mildred: Like what kind of drives?

Joseph: Well, chair for the Heart Association. For the Boy Scouts, for the Girl Scouts, Cancer Society, Heart Association, March of Dimes. I worked for anything, chairman, I organized these drives. I raised more money in one year that was never equaled before or after that.

Mildred: I see, oh wow.

Joseph: As much money as we have today, and there was not that much in those years when I made, you know, a record.

Mildred: And you were acting with the Eagles too, right?

Joseph: No, not the Eagles.

Mildred: What was it?

Joseph: The Boy Scouts.

Mildred: Boy Scouts. Oh, I guess it's --

Justina J: Eagle Scouts.

Mildred: Eagle Scouts, that's why I was confused. I was confused by that, with the names.

Joseph: You know, every troop can make Eagles, they have regular Boy Scouts. You know how many boys become Eagles from the beginning? One and a half percent become Eagles. It's an honor to be an Eagle. One and a half percent. I'm an Eagle, my two boys are Eagles, both of them.

Justina J: They had an honor, Eagles they can get it easier than what they had when --

Joseph: See, a lot of the boys didn't become Eagles because they couldn't get anybody to give them lifesaving and swimming (inaudible) badge. So I took the test from the American Red Cross, and I became a Red Cross Instructor. Then I started training these guys on swimming, lifesaving, waterfront safety.

Mildred: Wow.

Joseph: That's right. See, that's when I became more active with the boys, you know, after I did that. Because when I quit doing work with the union so much, you know, and politics, I quit that altogether.

Mildred: Tell me about politics, what did you do? How were you involved with politics?

Justina J: You've got to be a crook to get along. (laughter)

Joseph: See, I was in politics when I was in the union. Now, one big Berwind official approached me one day: Joe, you're nothing but a little fool. He was a good friend of mine, his boys were in my scout troop. He said: You know, Joe, if you do only third for Berwinds what you're doing for the union or what you're doing for politics, you'd become the superintendent of the mines. My dad told me the same thing. I wouldn't listen to him. Joe, one day you're going to wake up, you're going to find out.

Mildred: What did you do in politics, what kinds of things? You were with this Democratic thing when Roosevelt came --

Joseph: Yeah, see, I helped to organize the Democratic Party.

Mildred: Oh, I see. That must have been hard. Because it was a Republican town, wasn't it?

Joseph: Yeah, I know it was a Republican town, but we got it going. You see, I started a citizenship school.

Mildred: Okay, yeah, I want you tell me about that. If you're not tired, if you're too tired we can stop, but I'd love to hear this.

Joseph: Oh, I'm not going no place.

Mildred: Okay, now it'll be on again.

Joseph: It's on now? Okay. See, before FDR got elected President, the only people that were bosses were English, Scotch, Irish, French, maybe German, and those kind of people, see. But us, the middle Europeans and Italians, nobody was a boss. Well, then the Berwinds started a school, a night school.

Mildred: Oh I see, okay.

Joseph: And we went to this night school, us guys. And we went and we passed the examination. And they needed us real bad, you know what I mean. And we all became good bosses, too. We produced and all that stuff.

Mildred: That would have been in the '30s, then.

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: After Roosevelt.

Joseph: I'd say maybe it didn't start till close to the World War, close to the '40s. That's when these other people had a chance to get in as bosses. That's around here, I know that's the truth. Then after that most of the people that were bosses were either Slovak or Polish or Italian or Hungarian, something like that.

Justina J: It's just like when the properties come here for collection and I said: Yeah, (inaudible), but dammit when they wanted to join the firefighters nobody was allowed to join it because they had the whole --

Mildred: Right, they wouldn't let the Slovaks --

Justina J: -- they come for collection --

Mildred: Is that still true?

Joseph: No, no. Anybody now, it doesn't matter.

Justina J: Now, they're okay now, there wouldn't be a farm if they couldn't get in.

Joseph: Back in the 30s --

Mildred: Back in the 30s --

Joseph: -- I wanted to join the fire company --

Mildred: Was that true of other things besides the fire company too? I guess wasn't politics a lot like that too?

Joseph: See, you had to watch, you know. You wanted to get along, you had to be a Republican, if you wanted to get ahead in anything, you know.

Justina J: But you've got to be a crook. All these rich people they're damn crooks and nothing else. (laughter)

Justina J: They just ignore the poor people. Riches don't give a damn, as long as they have it good. But you know, it's not right. When they go up there they're going to be pushed down. (laughter)

Justina J: They don't want no rich people up there.

Joseph: Oh you're mean. (laughter)

Mildred: Well, tell me how, then, it was to get Democratic candidates at all from a Republican town, how did that all work?

Joseph: Well, see, at first they were in the majority and a Democrat couldn't get in no how. But then later on we got two guys in and it's all --

Mildred: In a service?

Joseph: -- right now all council is Democrat.

Mildred: Really, huh?

Joseph: And the mayor is a Democrat.

End of Tape 2 Side A

Beginning of Tape 2 Side B (May 19, 1985)

Justina J: -- it's already been --

Mildred: They've been in for a long time now, huh?

Joseph: Well, there's a lot of Democrats, guys running for Democrat. There were, men and women are running now.

Mildred: Yeah.

Justina J: And women, I don't like no woman running for anything. They need to stay home and wash dishes and bathrooms --

Joseph: Get out of here woman! They're allowed.

Justina J: -- and not run for office.

Joseph: Ah, let them run if they want to! I voted for a woman.

Justina J: Let them work at home, a woman's work is never done.

Joseph: I know, they don't have the -- hey, they don't have big families today. One or two kids, that's all.

Justina J: That's right, that's why our schools are all closing, have no kids no more.

Mildred: Well, before FDR came in, if somebody wanted to vote Democratic, would they be in danger of losing their jobs or anything?

Joseph: No.

Mildred: No, you don't think so?

Joseph: Not here. See, there weren't that many, you know. Like I said, if you wanted to get ahead with the company, you had to be a Republican, that's all. That's the only difference there was.

Justina J: But he had a lot of good friends who were Republican.

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Justina J: And they're good to him.

Joseph: And I'll tell you something, you know, after I make all of these people citizens, hundreds and hundreds of them --

Mildred: Yeah, I want to ask you about that because you haven't told me about that yet.

(laughter)

Joseph: Well anyway, you know, we're talking politics, that's why I was saying -- anyway, they coaxed me to run for council.

Mildred: Oh, when would this have been?

Joseph: About 1936 or '37. '37 I'd say. Yeah, '37. I said: I don't want it. Oh, we want you to run, we want you to run. Okay, because I was pretty dang active, you know

Mildred: Yeah, it sounds like it.

Joseph: -- and look, you couldn't get a place to meet. So, after the guys voted, all they had to bring is their corner that they rip off, with the number on it.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Justina J: From the voting block.

Joseph: From voting. You came to this house here, from all over Windber, to get a drink. Joe [Jazway?] was president, I was secretary. We handled the money. I was secretary of the Democratic party. I would say that secretarial labor is non-partisan work, see. But we weren't afraid, my dad and I. Oh, bring the guys here. They came here and drank here and everything, because I liked --

Mildred: Now did you run for council?

Joseph: I ran for council, now I want to tell you something about that, how people are. We had four precincts, one at 17th Street and it goes up to --

Justina J: 35, 36.

Joseph: 35 and 36, that's through there, and it goes up to the high school. That side of Graham Avenue. This side of Graham Avenue, from 12th Street out, is number two, mostly Italian people. This part here, from Graham Avenue from 12th Street out this way to the [burr?] line, that's number four. Now, these two precincts, two and four were strong Democrat. Number one was about 50/50, just about, at that

time. See, a part of the hill was number one. And some of the bosses lived up that way. And number three was probably 80 or 90 percent Republican.

Mildred: Who lived in three?

Joseph: People that were Republicans, that's where the hospital is, you know, from 12th Street up.

Mildred: Oh, yeah, okay.

Joseph: From 12th Street up, that would be over there. So there was only one person that was honest. Steve [Papinchek?]. He came to me the day before the election. He says: Joe, I'm going to work against you tomorrow. I got paid \$20, Joe, I need the money. I said: Look here Steve, I don't care whether you work for me or for somebody else, it doesn't matter to me, I don't want this dang job anyhow. But the next day I found out, precinct four, precinct two, and precinct one, the Democrats were all paid off, the workers, by the Republicans. I carried one precinct, number three. That was a Republican precinct, get that. And I'm a Democrat.

Mildred: Right, running --

Joseph: I'm a Democrat worker and they knew it. They voted for me, number three. I got more votes in number three than any Republican candidate.

Mildred: Really, isn't that funny.

Joseph: Ain't that something?

Mildred: Yes.

Joseph: And I lost all the Democratic precincts, every one I lost.

Justina J: Isn't it terrible, how people could work against you?

Joseph: So then I --

Mildred: Did you ever run for anything else again after that?

Joseph: -- oh no, I quit politics, I just slid out of it real easy.

Mildred: What was this non-partisan lead that you were talking about?

Joseph: Well, let's see. See, in the union you have Republicans and Democrats.

Mildred: Sure.

Joseph: So we had a week, we organized what we called the non-partisan, you know, thing there. Some of the guys in the union, you know, would come and say: Now, look fellows, this Republican's a pretty good guy, maybe we ought to support him. It was true, some of them were better than the doggone Democrat that was running, see. So that's what we had this non-partisan week, see, that's why we organized it, for that purpose, you know. That way we're together, see.

Mildred: Tell me about, if you don't mind, Mr. Novak, tell me about your citizenship work, so I'll know something about --

Joseph: See --

Mildred: -- how did you get involved with it and what --

Joseph: -- I was secretary of the local union. It was in the '30s, that's after Roosevelt got in already, and I got into politics and I see that some of these people aren't voting. I said: How come you didn't vote? Oh, I'm not citizen. What's the matter, you're not citizen? Joe, got big family. Look, I got 10 kids. Can't afford to give this guy up here \$50, \$100. We ain't got that kind of money.

Mildred: This was a fee that you had to pay?

Joseph: The people, the people. You know, these guys, the justice of the peace and lawyers, attorneys, whatever, you know what I mean. A lot of these guys, you know, that was going to make them a citizen. They charged them whatever they could get out of them. Some of the guys told me they paid high as \$100 to get their citizen paper from these guys.

Mildred: There wasn't some sort of standard fee then or something, no nothing.

Joseph: No, everybody charged it. I said: Well, wait a minute, I'm going to change this. So I brought it up at the local union. I said: Listen, fellas, I'm going to start a citizenship school. What's that, what's that? I said: I'm going to train these people to become citizens. I'm going to have a school here. And I want this local union to back me up. And they said: Okay Joe, we'll back you up. You know what I mean, the motion got on the floor, everybody: Okay, that sounds good, that sounds good. You got to get it started. I wrote to Pittsburgh, you know, I got the address of a company. I even have some of those books left.

Mildred: You do?

Joseph: Upstairs, yeah.

Mildred: I'd love to see some of these things.

Justina J: He's cleaning the boxes now.

Joseph: I'm cleaning out my boxes now, you know, and I found these books yesterday, about three or four of them.

Mildred: Could I come back sometime and see them?

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Mildred: I'd love to see what you have.

Joseph: I'll get to it after awhile, it wont take me a minute to go up and get it. Anyway, right away I went through my list, I'm trying to figure out how many Polish, how many Slovak, how many Hungarian, how many Romanian and so on, Yugoslav and all that, you know what I mean. I went up to the local union, I said: I'm going to buy these booklets and we're going to give them to the people free. They said: Okay Joe, you just go ahead and order them, the local union will pay for it. So I ordered these books. So I called a meeting of all the people that want to become citizens, men and women, you know. So the first meeting I had with them was 350 people in that hall.

Mildred: Oh really? Which hall was that, Slovak Hall?

Joseph: Slovak hall. And I got on the stage there and I start explaining to them about the citizenship and I said: Now, whatever nationality you are, I have your book here. One side your language, one side English. I'm going to give each one of you one of these books, and I said, you're going to open up the book and I'm going to explain everything to you. I go, you have to answer these questions when you go down there. I told these people, you know, that. Joe, me no can write, me no can write. Don't worry about that, I'll see that you're going to learn how to write. I said: It really don't mean nothing. You just listen to me, when I ask questions, so when that guy asks you down there you'll be able to answer. I said: You keep coming to these classes. Every Saturday I had classes. And so, the people that couldn't write, I went to their houses and I practiced with them until they learned how to sign their name. I'll bet you, I taught over 500 people how to sign their name.

Mildred: Really?

Joseph: And you know what I got out of it? Satisfaction. (laughter)

Joseph: That's what I got out of everything that I did - satisfaction. I wanted these people to be citizens. And how many of them came back to me and said: Joe, I want to thank you for what you did. You know if I wasn't a citizen I wouldn't be getting some of these benefits that I'm getting now. Oh, what a big favor you did for me. And people from other towns heard about it.

Mildred: Oh yeah?

Joseph: And they come to me: Hey, can I go to your school? Sure, what the heck, what's the difference if I get some more here. You just come and listen, I said, you'll get a book too. (laughter) And I made citizens, you know, out of them. Well anyway, that's all on that part. But I go and start witnessing for people, see. You know, so this one day I was going to witness for about 15 or 16. So this guy, you know, this examiner, Mrs., I forget her last name.

Justina J: Don't ask me.

Joseph: I'm 35. Anyway, this woman, you know, I'm a witness for her. How good do you know this woman? I said: I know her good enough to talk to her. I said: Her husband works in the same mine that I do. I said, they were Polish see, I said: I can talk their language and they can talk mine, besides English. Her husband belongs to the same local union I do. I said: I pass that house everyday for work, I mean going to work. From work I used to run home. I was that kind of a guy, I used to run. And, well, I don't think you know her good enough! Did you ever go to her house and her husband wasn't home? I said: No, I only go to another house

when the husband's home. If he isn't home I don't go to that house. I thought what the heck do you think I am anyhow? I used to get madder than heck, you know what I mean. Well, I'll tell you, he said: I don't think you know this woman good enough and you can't witness for her. I said: Okay buddy, you're looking for trouble. I said: I'm going to report you!

Mildred: Who was this person?

Joseph: This examiner, I don't know his name. This was back in the '30s. I'm going to report you! Not to Pittsburgh, where you came from. Oh no. First of all I'm going down to Washington, DC, and I'm going to talk to John L. Lewis first. Then I'm going to go to the naturalization office of the United States of America and I'm going to tell them about this. I left. I didn't bother no more. I didn't care how many other people I had to witness for. I went to a restaurant, I ate, and that was it. Pretty soon police was looking for him. Yeah, Somerset Police and a detective and a sheriff, everybody was looking for me. You know, they wanted me to come back. So at last they found me. You leave, so that guy wants to talk to you out there. See, I guess these officials in Somerset, you know, they probably told him. He said: Hey, we don't know what you're talking about man. He said: That's a good man! He said: That's one of the best citizens in this county. He's a real good guy. They were telling him, but they all knew me. The sheriff knew me, the judge knew me, all these people down there, the district attorney, they all knew me real good. And you know, they knew I wasn't a trouble maker or anything. So I come back, and he says: I want to talk to you. I said: What about? I want you to forget this. Well, why should I forget this? You

started the trouble, I didn't! Listen, he said, I'm liable to lose my job if you report this. I said: You know man, I'm going to tell you something. You're lucky that I'm an easygoing and forgiving man. You're lucky that I'm a good Catholic and I believe. I said: I don't believe in revenge, because if I believed in revenge I'd have reported you. But since you were apologizing to me in front of these people, I'll forgive you and I'll forget all about it. Please, someone said, what the hell did you do that for? Why the hell didn't you report that rotten brat? You know how people are. (laughter) You know, I never wanted anybody to get into trouble. So that's where that school, you know -- and I got practically every citizen, that needed the paper. Yeah, then I didn't have --

Justina J: You didn't (inaudible) but he never got a penny from them. He never took a penny out of them.

Joseph: -- listen, they came to my house after they got there -- see, you have to fill out two papers. First the first paper. Then you take an examination. Then the second paper. That's your final examination before the judge. So after they got their citizens paper they'd come down here. Joe, we want to give you something. And they'd want to give you five, ten, whatever, you know. I said: Look, you have bigger family than me. You work the coal mine, I work the coal mine. I said: If I take that money off of you, it would be better for my family and my children. No good for your children. No good for your wife, if I take your money off of you. I said: You take that money and give it to your wife and tell her to buy something for the children that they need.

Justina J: It was depression time.

Joseph: Yeah, and I said: I'm going to tell you something. Don't think I'm going to forget to go to your house and tell your wife what I told you, because I'm not. I said: I'm going to go and talk to your wife, ask her if you brought the money home, or did you stay in a saloon someplace and spend it with your buddies. You know none of them ever spent that money, they took it home.

Justina J: They couldn't afford it (inaudible).

Joseph: You know, hey, if I wouldn't have said that, they would have spent the damn money and told their wife: Oh, I gave the money to Joe. See what I mean, I never charged them --

Justina J: You never got a penny.

Joseph: -- not a penny, from nobody.

Mildred: So after you had this incident with this examiner then, was it easier for people then to get citizenship papers after that, with your help?

Joseph: Oh yeah, he was afraid after that. He didn't get tough with anybody. You know, he was nice then.

Justina J: It did him out.

Joseph: I told him: Look, these poor people would like to become citizens. I said: They're not well-educated. They don't have the money, I said, but they're all good people, good workers. I said: They're not trouble makers. I said: Those kind of people should be citizens of this country. I said: And here you are, you're trying to, I don't know what you're trying to do, why you're doing something like that. I said: But it isn't right. I said: When you got mixed up with me, you got mixed up with

the wrong guy, because I'm a fighter. And I said: I don't fight this way, I fight with this. (laughter)

Justina J: Oh yeah, he finished all that, he went every week --

Joseph: Yeah, every week I had school. I used to go everyday to somebody's house and teach them how to write.

Mildred: It must have been a lot of house.

Joseph: And I'll tell you something. You know what this did? There were a lot of school teachers out of work, so when they heard that I was doing this, I had such big classes and everything and teaching myself, they said: Look, you can be one of our teachers too, but we want to split this us. We want all of these teachers to have a job, it was like, in those days you had WPA and PWA and stuff like that. So they had an organization for teachers too, see.

Mildred: Oh, they did?

Joseph: So on account of me having these people getting citizen papers, 6 teachers got jobs here.

Mildred: Really?

Joseph: Yeah and they were teaching these people how to read and write who wanted to, everyone got a class out of these people. And then I quit. You know, I used to go to their meetings, they'd tell me to come to their meetings, so one day I said: Look, I said, I'm not as dumb as I look. I'm going to tell you people something. All of you are educated except one person here, who has no education. I can show you no kind of a certificate. I don't fit with you people. Oh, yes you do Joe! No, no, no, no. I don't want to be a part of this, because I'm cheap, and they

don't believe in cheap. I said: You people go ahead and run these schools the way you want to. I said: I did my job. My job was to make citizens out of these people, which I did, so my job is finished. Now it's time for you people to teach these people how to read and write.

Mildred: Was anyone doing this before you did it?

Joseph: Nobody! Oh, how many first I started, man, where nobody else started doing things like that. First beauty contest, I called (inaudible). I got myself a game, pitching hat, you know what I mean. I tried --

Mildred: You were the judge?

Joseph: Oh, a judge and everything. I even taught these women how to walk. (laughter) I taught them how to walk, you know what I mean, when they were up there. I trained these ladies before they went up on the stage. See, we used to have this up at that Recreation Park, and there was a big grandstand there, you know, like a ball field too. And we'd have it in front, we'd have a big stage made in front, and we'd have our beauty contest there, see.

Mildred: I see. You started that, huh?

Justina J: You (inaudible). (laughter)

Joseph: I started that dang thing. Then when they had the motorcycle races, you know, 50-miler, they had it at the park up there. And they said: You know, Joe, you have a lot of experience with the Boy Scouts. People are coming from far away and they're going to be camping up there. We're going to get prizes for the cleanest camp or this or that. He said: Would you want to be the judge of that? Sure, I'll take it! So I was judging these camps, I had two other men, you know,

Tony Furline and I had John Zions, and I had Sue Logan, you know. Between use four, you know, we used to do these things. So we judged the campsites, you know, and we judged the beauty, motorcycles, you know. Some of the guys spent a lot of money on these motorcycles, just to beautify them. And we were judging this, see. We also had a beauty contest, motorcycle queen. (laughter)

Mildred: Recreation Park was a big center for things, wasn't it?

Joseph: Yeah, there were swings off of trees, there were, people would swing, you know, on ropes.

Justina J: And people were more active than they are now.

Joseph: Oh yeah. And we all walked up there. We didn't drive up, we walked, everybody, oh yeah.

Mildred: And did each nationality have a day that they celebrated? I guess now there's Polish Day but there isn't much else, is there?

Joseph: No, we never did have a --

Mildred: They never had a Slovak Day?

Joseph: -- we only had a local, like the United Mine Workers.

Mildred: Oh, tell me about that, I don't know much about that.

Joseph: The United Mine Workers would have a big picnic.

Justina J: Labor Day.

Joseph: On Labor Day, see. First Windber Local had it, and then Skell. But then I said: Why don't we combine? Why have two picnics, one year I said, let's combine. So we decided to have a raffle. See, I'm one of the guys that started raffles around here, you know, chancing off stuff. Me and CH Fitzsimmons, "Spotsy" we called

him, Spotsy was in American Legion, see. He said: Hey Joe, I'm going to have a raffle with American Legion. And he said: Would you help me out? And I said: Yeah, I'll help you out. So we got together. Chances were 10 cents each, you know. We put addresses on the envelopes, then Spotsy would tell me, put two in here, put 10 in here, put five in here. Then I would deliver them to these Legionnaires, see. And then later on we were talking and we said: Hey, some of these guys are only buying one chance. Let's make a change. Ten cents each or six for 50 cents. Ten cents each or 12 for a dollar. (laughter)

Mildred: So that worked?

Joseph: Did it work? I'm telling you, man, I'm going to buy 50 cents worth because I'm going to get an extra chance! You know how people work! (laughter)

Mildred: Yeah right.

Joseph: Now we were the first guys to start these raffles, and then the fire company picked it up. Yeah, you know, but anyway, about these United Mine Workers. One day, Joe Jazoway and I were talking. You know Joe, he said to me, we all buy these Moore stoves, you know, coal stoves. And we buy different kind of furniture. We buy it a golden, not golden, what is that flour, King Midas flour.

Justina J: King Midas flour.

Joseph: We buy King Midas flour. People buy most of that, and different things like that. I said: You know, Joe, I told Joe, his name is also Joe, let's go and see Ward Chris. He was the manager of the store, see. He had one big store and then he had store in every mine. Like 35 had one and 42 and 31 or 32. And here on 10th Street and 37, 40, all over they had stores. So we went to him and said: Hey, you

know we're going to have a picnic Labor Day. We're going to have a raffle.

Look, our people are buy the products from these certain companies. Would you talk to them and ask them if they wouldn't donate something towards this. Like for instance the Moore stove, and we'll sell chances, you know. But we get the stove free from the company. I told him, see, you know Ward, that's good advertising for the company. See, when they see Moore stoves --

Justina J: Yeah, we had two Moore stoves.

Joseph: -- let's see, what refrigerator was that, remember?

Justina J: Refrigerator?

Joseph: No, but the name.

Mildred: Kelvinator?

Joseph: Kelvinator, no. One of the old Italian, anyway. So we got a refrigerator, we got a Moore stove, we got 50 bags of flour. We got all kinds of stuff, donated! Other years we were buying it and raffling it off. Man did we make money. (laughter)

Joseph: You got to use your head, you know, when you're doing these things.

Mildred: But you thought that up. Did you have some experience with it somewhere else or know of other people doing it that you knew?

Joseph: The only place I had experience with it was when Fitzsimmons and I started doing it, 10 cents a chance, remember?

Mildred: Yeah.

Joseph: All right, now that's where I got my experience, with him. He and I started the raffles in this town, us two. And then when I got into the union I told Jazoway, I said: Hey, we should have a raffle, you know, sell chances to people to want to

buy chances because they want to win something. Hey Joe, that's a good idea.
And then we got the idea that we'd get the stuff donated, see.

Mildred: Was there anything else besides the picnic that you did on Labor Day then,
particularly?

Joseph: Well, we --

Mildred: Did you have a parade?

Joseph: -- oh yeah, we had a parade, big parade all over town. We had bands, you know,
and drum corps, we had organizations marching besides the United Mine
Workers. You know, different organizations marching, Boy Scout troops and all
that stuff we had.

Justina J: It was like what they had on New Years Day, with all the trucks decorated and
what you'd call it.

Joseph: Yeah, we had decorated trucks. Like you have in the Rose Bowl, that's the way
we had it, first.

Mildred: When did that stop? When did you stop doing that kind of thing?

Joseph: I don't know when, I think it's, it must have stopped around war time or after.

Justina J: Oh, I don't know.

Joseph: It didn't last that long, you know what I mean. See, like I said, anytime there was
a chance for advancement in the United Mine Workers, I never got it. And I did
all the work.

Mildred: Who got it, how did that work?

Justina J: Who do you think?!

Joseph: You know who got it? Any man that's willing to kill another person on a picket line, see. Like Butler Freeman told me: Joe, you'll never get ahead in the union. You'll never get ahead in politics. I said: Why not. You're too honest. He said: You tell the people the truth, and they don't want that kind of a guy. Nobody, the politicians don't want that kind of a guy, and neither does the union. That's why I dropped being active in the union, I dropped being active in politics. I devoted my time from then on with the Boy Scouts and fund drives. I forgot all this other stuff.

Mildred: When did you leave the union then?

Joseph: I didn't leave the union.

Mildred: Well, you didn't leave the union. But when did you stop being real active in that way? Was there --

Joseph: They always called me. Anytime they wanted something for the cross, you see.

Justina J: Even now.

Joseph: Even now they call me. Joe, come to the meeting, we want this resolution to go through. We know how you can do it, he said. So I do a little bit of talking, you know what I mean, and then the person will say: Well, it's time for the motion and I jump up and say: Mr. Chairman, I make a move we go along with this, or whatever, you know what I mean. That's it, you see what I mean?

Justina J: He doesn't go so much now.

Joseph: See, you work fast. And I'm that kind of a guy. So I was always active in the union, understand, but not as much as before when it was starting up. Because I saw that I wasn't going to get nothing out of it anyhow. I figured, wait a minute,

why should I work with these dummies. Why should these dummies get all the jobs, and me --

End of Tape 2 Side B

Beginning of Tape 3 Side A (May 19, 1985)

Mildred: It should be okay now. Yeah, you were telling me about the United Mine Workers and people getting ahead and that kind of thing.

Joseph: Well, I wouldn't get ahead in it because I wasn't the type, you know. So I decided I'd do more work other ways, you know. See, I was a Scoutmaster, even at that time I was working with the Boy Scouts, old times.

Mildred: You worked 50-something years or something like that, 58.

Joseph: 58, 58 with the Boy Scouts. I was always active. I was one of the most active men that there was. Listen, I was not only a Scoutmaster. I was Skipper of the Sea Scouts. I organized the Sea Scouts. They're boys from 15 to 20 years of age. And I used to take the Sea Scouts on the Chesapeake Bay on a week's cruise.

Mildred: Oh boy.

Joseph: Every two or three years I'd go on the Chesapeake Bay. I made all the arrangements. To be qualified to go on this cruise, the boy would have to come to every meeting for one year, that's once a week, and he had to learn all these terms that the sailors use. He had to know the rules of the road, that means the rules on --

Mildred: The sea.

Joseph: -- on the sea. They had to know that. We would start from Annapolis and we'd go for a week on the water. I'd write to the A&P manager, the A&P store down in Annapolis, give him a list of food that I wanted and he'd pack everything on the

ship. It was ice refrigerators at that time. Then we'd go on this cruise for the whole week. When we got back, I'd go to the academy. And then one of the commanders would take us around and show us around. Then I'd take them to Washington DC to see the sights. Then we'd come home, we went by bus and come home by bus. Now that was Sea Scouts. Boy Scouts, I took them to summer camp for a week.

Justina J: Tell her about that hike away from Bedford Trail.

Joseph: Yeah, I used to take the Boy Scouts on a hike, on the Forbes Trail. Not the New England Highway, Forbes Trail. We crossed the Lincoln Highway in different places but that's it and 22. From Fort Bedford to Fort Duchesse in Pittsburgh, that's where the point is. You know where the rivers meet, three of them.

Justina J: You were 70 years old.

Mildred: Wow.

Joseph: Last time I went I was 70 years of age. It takes 8 days to make that trip walking.

Mildred: Wow. You must be in good shape, Mr. Novak.

Joseph: And sleeping on the ground. You eat trail foods you carry them with you, trail foods

Mildred: Well, you've done so many different things, it's incredible.

Justina J: I think you should've wrote a book on it.

Joseph: You know how many guys tell me: Why don't you write a book about your life Joe? I said: The heck with it, what do I want to write a book about that stuff for?

Mildred: Well, this is nice because it'll be preserved a bit. If you want me to, I'll send you a cassette. I'll get a copy made of these interviews and you'll have a copy. That will be nice.

Joseph: Yeah, like when I got the Jefferson award, you know.

Mildred: What was that, I'm sorry, I don't know.

Joseph: Well, the Jefferson award is given by WJACTV, it's a national award, it's national, you know what I mean.

Justina J: Why don't you show it to her dear?

Joseph: I don't know where I put it exactly.

Justina J: I don't know either.

Joseph: It's in that there room, I think it's in the first box. It's on the floor. Since we, you know, we're papering the upstairs, that's why our upstairs is wrecked like. We had those four room papered recently.

Justina J: Yeah, about two or three weeks ago.

Joseph: Three weeks ago, and we're still not, you know, set up yet. But anyway, this Jefferson award is for exceptional public service, see. To the community, to the church, and so on. So the WJAC, somebody has to write you up and send it to them. And they select six people every year, out of their viewing area, WJACTV. Then they send your name, you know. But they don't write everything up, that's the trouble. See, I give this one woman 15 pages about, I think, about 18 different organizations I did things with and so on, 18. And they printed only about the Boy Scouts and the Red Cross, see what I mean? Well, that makes --

Mildred: Yeah, you were so --

Joseph: -- see, that makes the Red Cross happy. Well, those are the two organizations I worked with the longest, see. And I know when, see everybody gets a chance to see it --

Justina J: Somewhere he's in a museum too.

Mildred: Oh, that's good.

Joseph: Yeah, I helped start the Windber museum, back in 1972. Nobody wanted to be the treasurer, so then they look in the bottom of the barrel and they see little Joe down there. (laughter)

Joseph: Hey Joe, you're not working now, you're retired, how about you taking this treasurer job? And I'm still the treasurer. (laughter)

Justina J: You've got to see this letter, we made how much money?

Joseph: She made an afghan and donated it to the museum. And I put another \$100 dollars towards it, \$50, \$25 and \$25. Four prizes. So I went to summer camp with the boys, you know, the last part of July. And when I got home, she said: Your vacation's over Joe. Novak, she calls me. Your vacation's over, Novak. I said, What do you mean my vacation's over? I said: I didn't have no vacation yet. Oh no it's over, he said, you're going to start working tomorrow. I said: What doing? You're going to go house to house and sell chances. I sold 1640 chances, a dollar apiece, and I took in over \$900 in cash, people that didn't want to buy a chance. Yeah, a dollar a chance.

Mildred: Wow, that's really something.

Joseph: Two years later same thing, but this time I sold over 2000 chances, and I don't know how much money I took in. But I have a record of all of it. Still have the record.

Mildred: You've certainly done a lot. In your lifetime, you must have seen Windber change a lot, this community. It must have been much bigger in --

Joseph: Well, the town itself wanted --

Mildred: -- they brought more people in at one time.

Joseph: -- no, the town itself wasn't bigger. In fact, it was smaller. Now, there is two spots, 33 and 34 mine, those houses were on props. See, they had no cellar or nothing. That's where the fire house is, you know where the old fire house is? Well, see, this mine on this side is 33 and the mine on that side there is 34. So they didn't last long because the hills are not that far, they didn't go that far. But the town itself now has more houses than it did before. You know why it was so big before? There was over 10,000 people here. Because every house had maybe anywhere from 7-14 children. And boarders, besides. So you know what I mean. You go into this house and there's maybe 20 people in the house.

Mildred: I don't know where they put them all sometimes.

Joseph: (laughter) This house, you come in, there's about 20 people here, now there's only two. You get the idea?

Mildred: Yeah, right.

Joseph: Two here, two next door, two next door. How many down there, two?

Justina J: Two.

Joseph: Two or three?

Justina J: Well now she's sick, she has her daughter helping her.

Joseph: So there's three there, and next house one, you see what I mean? That's the difference, see.

Mildred: Yeah, and I guess, of course, then the mines were operating and there were jobs.

Joseph: Here, like our local union here in Windber, we had over 2000 miners. Skelt had over 2000. There was over 4000 miners and nearly all of them worked for Berwind.

Justina J: When you went down the street walking you couldn't help bump into each other. Now, I don't walk too good so I don't go no place. Don't let the old age fool you, that you want to do things, because you're not going to do a damn thing.

Mildred: Yeah, I sympathize. I'm feeling middle-age myself. It's different from being younger.

Justina J: I can walk down the street and come back. I don't drive, you know, and that's what makes it hard too.

Mildred: Do you still feel safe walking in Windber? You know, a lot of areas --

Joseph: I do.

Mildred: -- yeah, no problems with that, and all that.

Joseph: Not here.

Mildred: Now, let's see, the company left in the '50s, '60s?

Joseph: They started shutting the mines down in the '50s. And by the '60s they were practically all shut down, Berwinds. Then they start selling the houses to the people. First they sold them for \$500 apiece.

Justina J: Then \$1200 and \$2000, \$3000.

Mildred: Well, this area here were never company houses, were they?

Joseph: This is a company house.

Mildred: This was a company house?

Joseph: This is 31 Mine.

Mildred: Oh, all right.

Joseph: See, 30 Mine is way over there. They call that Paint Burrough. Now, this part here, from 5th Street this way, this is 31 Mine. See, the mine was over there on that hill there. See, this is a company house.

Mildred: I didn't know that.

Joseph: Here, yeah, this was the kitchen.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: And see, there was only two rooms down here.

Mildred: Three upstairs.

Joseph: Then the stairway, and then there was a hallway and there was three bedrooms upstairs. No bathroom. So, that kitchen there was built onto this house.

Justina J: The bathroom.

Joseph: The bathroom was built onto this house, and that other bedroom.

Justina J: So we have four bedrooms.

Joseph: See and that's --

Mildred: Where were the houses that people owned in Windber in the old days, when there was all this company housing. There were some places that were privately owned, weren't there?

Joseph: Might have been, but --

Mildred: They were all company houses, as far as you knew?

Joseph: Here they all looked the same. I'll tell you where, up on the hill.

Mildred: Up on the hill, yeah.

Joseph: Those people built there own. Up to Somerset Avenue was company houses. And Cambry, part of Cambry was company houses too. See, but then from there up that's all newly built houses.

Mildred: Everyone else.

Joseph: See, all these houses are a little bit different, you know, because --

Mildred: Yeah, people added on I guess, like you did.

Joseph: -- yeah.

Justina J: Oh yeah, some put it on, some didn't, you know.

Joseph: Yeah, see this was a dip here. And this is all filled in here, filled up, see. This street went like this and then, you know, see, the way they have it figured out -- see, the creek used to come down like this and then it went this way and up against that bank. What they're saying is, at one time the creek used to run through here.

Justina J: Through the houses.

Joseph: Hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: See, and what happened there, you know, the creek kept on washing like this and the next thing you know the creek was running down like this where the alley is.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: See?

Justina J: We had a big problem --

Joseph: See that part of the front, you take from down the bottom of Levin Street, all that up through there is new. And the whole way to the left there, under the bridge, that's all new. See, the way this creek used to run before, when you come to Graham Avenue, you know where the new building is? In front of the new building was the creek. Yeah, and then when it came down to the fire hall, you know where that's at, there was a bridge there and the creek went under that bridge. See, and it came down that way where the alley is now, where the stores are. See it come down that way that creek. Up to this avenue here, up to Jefferson Avenue and then it come along where Jefferson is this way then it come down by the alley and turned right, see. But then they straightened it out, see, that's what they did. See where the road is there? See there was a bridge went across there, to the 31 Mine.

Mildred: Yeah, it's all, when they got closed down and all these changes --

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Mildred: -- I wondered, I've seen references to all those things. And you used to have a lot of trains in Windber and transportation in and out.

Joseph: Oh, yeah, there was a train running between here and South Fork, out that way, to the main line, you know, the train would run. And then the train run from here to Central City, Pennsylvania Railroad, see.

Justina J: They had a train going to 42 to take the miners to work.

Joseph: Yeah, the way to 42, the train would take the miners to work. And the 36 mine, they took the miners to work.

Mildred: And there was a streetcar to Jonestown, too, wasn't there?

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: Did that go right down Jefferson?

Joseph: It went on Jefferson Avenue here.

Justina J: Yeah, we still have one girl here, she had her leg cut off. She's deaf.

Joseph: She's a deaf girl.

Justina J: She's a deaf girl, she didn't hear the streetcar and it just cut her leg off.

Mildred: Oh boy.

Justina J: She never got married or nothing. She's still living though.

Mildred: She's still living, huh?

Justina J: She's a nice girl, Margaret Doman. She never got married or nothing. I gave her food last week and an afghan. I said: Margaret, I'm giving you -- her sister was telling her, you know -- I'm giving this to Margaret. She didn't have a good time like you Mary and me. She said, she had a good time. I said: What do you mean a good time? Did she go out with a fellow like you did?! (laughter)

Justina J: I want to make Margaret a little bit happy so I made her an afghan to cover herself up if she wants to lay down on the Davenport or even on the bed. Boy, she was so glad that she got it.

Mildred: Oh, that's really nice. Wow.

Joseph: She gave afghans away all her time that's she's made them.

Justina J: Anybody that treats me good and appreciates, you know, I make it.

Joseph: If they do us a favor or something.

Mildred: Oh, that's really nice. Let me just ask you just one or two things for this interview and then I'll probably turn this off, unless -- Is there anything you want to talk about that we didn't talk about? Anything else that you can think of, like in the history of the community or in your background or your life or work or any of that, you know, I've missed? I really don't know what else to ask you.

Joseph: Yeah, well, we've been talking and talking. You know, and you can't remember, you know, some of the things maybe you didn't say or you wanted to say.

Mildred: Well, what were the '30s like? I mean, the depression was hard on people, I guess.

Joseph: Yeah, but I'll tell you, we were better off than some of the people are today. I mean it.

Mildred: How so?

Joseph: Look, everybody at least worked a little bit. Now, us two, we never were on relief.

Justina J: Never.

Joseph: Never. You know, one time there, I couldn't get a job. For six months. I was running out, I had four children. We borrowed money to pay our rent. And I got credit from the [Rica?] store. And after I got back to work I paid the [Rica?] store back and I paid this man back that I borrowed money from. But I could have gone on relief if I wanted to. But I wasn't going to do it because I was that kind of a guy. We didn't believe in that. See I tried to do it, you know, on my own, see. You take when we were building the turnpike up here. At one time there I got a political job, see. They thought I could do more, you know, by me having

this job, you know. Getting the people registered and getting them to become citizens and all that stuff. That was at that time, see. So when they started building this turnpike, first they put the sanitary sewer in here. So I went down to Johnstown, I had no job, I couldn't get a job in the mines at that time because, you know, the Republicans come in and I didn't want to, all I had to do -- change registrations, keep my mouth shut, and I'd get advanced on the job from junior to senior inspector. And I wouldn't do it. I said: No, I've got to stick by my fellow man and my fellow workman. So they were going to start the sanitary sewer here. So I went to Johnstown to the labor union office. I said: I'm applying for a job up here for Windber on that sewer job. Oh, we got so many names here. He said: You know, it's going to be a long time before we hire you on. Oh, it ain't going to be a long time, you're going to hire me right away. Maybe not today, but I'm going to be one of the first men working up there, I want you to know that. I said: My name is Joe Novak, and I'll tell you something, if I don't get hired on the first day that place is going to be shut down. And I said: And I mean it. And Joe [Magadoo?], what was Joe's name, that Italian fellow, not [Magadoo?], Patchen.

Justina J: Oh, Patchen, yeah, Joe Patchen.

Joseph: Joe Patchen, he got a job as a shop steward, we were good friends, you know. So I was standing down there by the drugstore. Hey Joe, he said, you start working Monday. I says, I am? Yeah, you go to work Monday, you're going to start working Monday. See? And if I'd have kept my mouth shut, just signed the application, I'd have never got that job. (laughter)

Joseph: So I got the job, you know. I never worked on, you know, construction before, like that anyhow. So I learned, I learned how to carve the joints, I learned how to lay pipe, I learned all that stuff. Then they put me on as a foreman, see.

Mildred: Oh. (laughter)

Joseph: Then they were going to start that tunnel job, you know, the Allegheny tunnel, this side. The president of the union, you know, he said: I'm going to send you on that job Joe, you're going to be the first man hired. Okay, so I went on the job and the guy from the company said: This is what we're going to do here. He said: We're going to cut the ride away here, over this mountain, cut all the trees out and everything, you know, to make the line. I said: One thing though, my friend. And I said: My name's Joe Novak and I'm the shop steward here, for the union. I get all the easy jobs. And I want you to know that. And he said: Okay, I won't even come around, but I'm going to tell you what I want you to do here. Then Bob said: You know, right here it's marked, this is where you cut this line here and cut that and then you cut the middle one. You just stand here and learn how to do it and that's it, that's going to be your job. That's all.

Mildred: What it easier to get a job because you were in the UMW then? You think?

Joseph: (laughter) No, my big mouth.

Mildred: Your big mouth, okay.

Joseph: I could scare them, you know. But you know, I was active, see, and they knew it. Whatever the heck they knew, I could do it. I'll tell you, even the contractors liked me. There was one contractor in Johnstown, he wouldn't sign with the union no how. He said: Joe, I'll tell you, I don't trust those damn guys. But you,

I'll sign a contract with you anytime, because you're an honest man and I know you're going to live up to your word. Now if those guys want you to sign this contract with me, it'll be a contract with the union, but I want to sign it with you only because I know that you're going to live up to your word. Those other guys I don't trust. So we had a meeting and I told these guys, you know, an officers' meeting. And I said: Look, this is what this guy told me. Over my dead body will he do that! And it was over his dead body because he never signed the union, and I could've had a union contract. All I had to do was sign my name on it, that's it. The people working there for him, union people, dues coming in, see. That's a dumb deal. But anyway, you know, I got this gentleman here to get in the tunnels, you see. And I made sure that people from around here got jobs. See, I told the superintendent, you know, the head one, I said: Look, I'm the shop steward here. Every man goes to me. I said: I want you to know that. I'm an honest man, I'll work with you as an honest man. Yeah, you'll be the foreman, you'll be shop steward, he said. We'll make sure that anybody we hire, we're going to see you first. So he did come tell me, there's a couple men in here looking for jobs. Where are they from? Oh, these guys are regular tunnel stiff. I said: They come from Colorado, there job finished up. I said: Listen, if you're looking for trouble, you're going to get it. But I said: If you want those men, if you need them and you want them, I'll go along with it. So that's the way, you know, it worked that way. But most of the men hired were, you know, through me, you know, the men I approved. If they were from Somerset County, Cambria

County, Indiana, Blair, Bedford, I hired every dang one of them. Every one of them got a job.

Mildred: Were the mines --

Joseph: You know what these dang guys did that came here from Colorado and from White Plains, NY, when they finished their jobs? They fired two of our foreman. Then they start chasing our local men out of the tunnel and bringing their own men in. And I couldn't do much about that. I tried to take as many as I could, you know. So they made one big mistake. They called a strike. But they didn't tell the shop steward, that's me. And I knew what was going on. So I went to the president of our union and I told him. I said to him: We're going to go in a caravan from Windber. So I called up all the men and I told them that we're going up together. I told them what I was going to say up there. And I said: We're going to put that tunnel through without those doggone dang guys from out of town. So we come up there, there's a picket line. I was the first car, I stopped my car. Why don't you go on along Joe? Go on along with what?! We called a strike here. A strike?! I says: I don't know nothing about it! I said: Heck, I talked with my president last night, he doesn't know that there's a strike here or he'd have told me. You know, I'm the shop steward here. Well, he says, we want you to go along with us. I said: I'll tell you what. I'm the foreman here too, so I'm going to work! I told them: Look, if a shop steward doesn't mean anything to you guys, I'm going to work. The hell with you. So I told those guys who were riding with me, five of them, I said: You guys want to go on the picket line here? No, we want to go to work. I said: Ask the rest of the guys what they want to do. I

said: I'm not telling them what to do. I said: You know that, you can hear it. Hey, I said, if any of you guys want to go home, go home. You want to stay on the picket line, stay on the picket line. I'm going to work. We all went. Then we got to the tunnel, and the bosses were all there, you know, the superintendent and all that. How the hell are we going to put this tunnel through? We lost all our miners. I said: You didn't lose nothing. Look at the miners here. But they don't have no experience. Here's your miners. I said: Hey buddy, I told the superintendent, the general superintendent, when you saw that machine -- it was a drill, you know, you drill holes -- you have a jumbo for the bottom, middle, and top. And you have your machines up there and you drill holes, you know. And then you shoot the whole dang thing up on time, the whole face, see. I went to the highest guy first, I said: See that machine there? When you first saw that machine, did you know how to run that machine? He looked at me. I had him, boy. I had him by the neck. All I had to do was keep on squeezing. And he said to me: No, I guess I didn't. How did you learn? Did you learn out of a book? Did you open up a book and say this is the way you start the machine? Oh no, no, I went in with another man and he showed me. Take two men and get the hell in that tunnel. That's just what I told him. And Wicky, he was a substitute, you too Wicky, you know better than him. Take two men in the tunnel, and before you guys go in, all of them had to take two men in. I said: Here's what you do. I'm giving the orders today, not you guys. You guys gave the orders, you'd still be on strike. I said: When this shift is over, these men stay in for a double shift, and they teach the men that's coming in. Then they go home midnight and the next

shift, those guys that's working on the afternoon shift will teach the guys on the midnight shift, till morning. Then you're going to have men that know how to run those drills. And my best friend, Edward Swetz, he could drill more holes than two men. By himself, that's how good he was. We made the world's record with local men, not tunnel stiffs.

Mildred: That's the Allegheny tunnel.

Joseph: And I'll tell you, you know, what they were doing then, you know, these guys, they got the UMW in. What's wrong with you Joe, going through a picket line? Now wait a minute you damn guys, I says, I wanted a job in the mines. Did the UMW help me get a job? Huh? I had to join the AFL to get a job, because you guys wouldn't talk for me or nothing. I said: Don't talk to me about going through a picket line. I said: Some of you damn guys are bigger scabs than I ever was, or ever will be, I told them. I said: You guys mind your own damn business. Let that guy show you his union cards. He's carrying three of them, he belongs to three different unions. If one doesn't work, he goes to another one. If that doesn't work, he goes with another one. So they're calling you guys here. Forget about it, these are all local men that's coming in to this work. They're all from Somerset County, Cambria County, Bedford County, and so on. Now we're going to put this tunnel through and you UMW better get the hell back to Windber where you belong because you're going to have trouble if you don't. I wasn't afraid of them, I didn't care how big they were. Well, so what they were doing, if the guys were coming by themselves they would stop the car and beat the hell out of them. So

one day, I was working on a Sunday, we were putting a crossover in and working with the men and --

End of Tape 3 Side A

Beginning of Tape 3 Side B (May 19, 1985)

Mildred: Was this a particular union that was trying to form? I mean what was the title or name?

Joseph: These guys were, you know, were tunnel stiffs. They worked in tunnel work only. You know, anyplace where there's tunnels, they got a job, see. But what they were trying to do what take it over.

Mildred: I see, yeah.

Joseph: And get rid of our men.

Mildred: It was sort of like a jurisdictional battle in a way.

Joseph: Yeah, and I wouldn't let them get away with it. I wasn't that dang dumb because I wanted our men to work, see.

Mildred: Yeah.

Joseph: So, I came to the place where they beat this guy up. Boy, when he took his clothes off, he was cut up and kicked and black and blue and everything all over his body, from head to foot. I mean it, he undressed in front of us guys to show us how bad he was beaten up. And I said: Well, I'll tell you what. I said: The state police are going to hear about this so they're going to be watching for us. But I said: I know all the shortcuts. I said: All I want you to do, I told the general manager, you guarantee that I bring a job. I said: We'll get rid of these dang guys. I said: You get your gang together and we're going to meet on Negro Mountain. I

told him where to meet there. So there was state police on every crossroad, you know what I mean, but I know all the shortcuts. Through the woods and every place else, you know what I mean. Everybody follow me, I says, I know these roads good in Somerset County. I've been walking them looking for ginseng and stuff, you know, and stuff like mushrooms and nuts and stuff. I know, you know. We got to Berlin and I said: Now we have to find these guys. So we were looking for them, you know. Wouldn't find them no how. Glast and me and two other guys. We went down to this hotel where some of them were staying. And there they were, the whole gang getting ready to go on a picket line. So I got all my men together, and I went away, and I had men coming out of this alley and that alley and that alley and that alley. We come ganging in, you know. I said: I'll give you guys a signal when they start coming out of the hotel. So I was coaxing them out, all three of us were, they said: No, no come in, we want to talk to you guys. I said: No, come on out. So they started coming out. When they did I gave the signal, see. And when the last guy got out, we got behind them, closed the door to the hotel, you know. We got behind them and our gang come in. You know what happened, we got beat up so dang bad, you know. Broken legs and arms and they got their broken ribs and concussions and all that stuff in the fight. So the next day, 2:00 in the morning, I get a knock on the door. It was [Blain Barefoot?]: Don't go to work today, Joe. The state police are after you.

Justina J: (laughter)

Joseph: And he says: Who were the other two men? I told him. He said: you guys stay home. [Blain Barefoot?] said: I'm going to go down and talk to the judge, district

attorney, sheriff, and see what I can do about it. So he did, he went down there and he told them about me. Oh, we know Joe, he's a good citizen, he's a good guy. We have to help Joe out. Everybody said that, you know. And I told Blain why we were doing it. I said: Look, those guys were only trying to save the jobs of their people. I said: These guys were coming in and taking over. So the damn state police, you know, they wouldn't go along. They said: No sir, those guys are going to jail. The state police said: Those guys, we're going to go down and have them arrested. So they went to these guys, you know, they were all in the hospital in bed. The state police explained to them that they pressed charges against us. And you know what those guys said: Oh no we wont. We're all brothers. We're going to get them on the next job. We know who was the leader. We know that little guy who was the leader but we're not pressing no charges. And they didn't.

Mildred: So then did you --

Joseph: I went back to work that afternoon, see. I'm down there, you know, telling some of the guys down there what to do, I was a labor foreman, see. And there's Blain Barefoot, chief of police [Hal Solfo?], the sheriff and the district attorney and the state police. The police are walking up there, that little guy, there's the leader!

(laughter)

Mildred: So that settled the strike then?

Joseph: Oh yeah, that settled the strike. You know, three men came back. I recognized them. So one day I got to talking to them. I said: Hey, you know some of these people recognize you guys. I said: You know, I heard them talking, when you're going to be down on the bottom there, they're going to drop a plank on top of you.

I said: You're liable to get hurt pretty bad and maybe even killed, I don't know. You know, they all three left. And we finished the tunnel, made a world record with local people.

Mildred: When would that have been, Mr. Novak?

Joseph: '38.

Mildred: Yeah, okay, because I didn't have any concept of what year.

Joseph: Yeah, 1938.

Mildred: So, and then WWI, did the mines work a lot around here?

Joseph: Oh, we worked good.

Mildred: Tell me about that a little bit.

Joseph: If you was a coal miner, and you got deferred, you'd never be called like I did. You know, Blain Barefoot was the guy, and I said to him, I says, when you do think I'll be called Blain? Joe, you'll never be called. You're married, you have four children, and he said: You're a mine foreman. We need men like that in the coal mine. Coal miners are all deferred right now. We can't take a coal miner into the service no how. If you're a coal miner -- my brother John, he quit the mines three times, and the third time they told him: Okay, you don't want to go, we're going to send you. You can go back in the mines but not here. We're going to send you to a mine. We don't know what kind, maybe a lead mine, maybe whatever. But it's not going to be here. And you're going to be paid the wages of a soldier. So you want to be a coal miner you get the heck in the mines because we don't need you. See, coal miners were deferred because they needed the coal, see.

Mildred: Did they work lots of hours then, everyday and stuff?

Joseph: Oh, we worked everyday, you know, regular shifts. But instead of two shifts or one shift, they put it on three shifts, see. Working 24 hours a day, see, sometimes seven days a week.

Mildred: Now did that abruptly end, when the war ended then?

Joseph: When the war ended, they even shut the mines down.

Mildred: Did they? Oh boy.

Joseph: Oh yeah, in the '50s. Yeah, they started in the '50s, that was finished, yeah.

Mildred: Do you remember when Lewis called out a strike when Roosevelt was president? When the miners went out?

Joseph: Oh yeah, I voted for it. I went along with John Lewis.

Mildred: And these miners went out?

Joseph: Everybody, everybody, we didn't care. John L. Lewis was the boss, boy, we knew he knew what he was talking about.

Mildred: Yeah.

Joseph: He got his way too. (laughter)

Joseph: Yeah, they were going to do this, they were going to do that. They did nothing. Yeah. Big scare that's all. Dang congressmen. The men liked John L. Lewis, he was a regular guy. He associated with us. He wasn't one of those presidents who just went with the big shots. He was right with us, he'd even go on the picket line with us guys.

Justina J: And you know that wasn't right that they put that one in jail.

Joseph: No sir, Boyle, he's innocent, Boyle is innocent. I know Boyle, I was on a picket line with him.

Mildred: Well, tell me about that.

Joseph: Boyle was elected president but Yablonsky, you know, was running for president, too. But Boyle beat him out. Know why would he want to kill Yablonsky after he got elected president? Now, the president of a district in Kentucky is the guy that borrowed money from Boyle, from the union. And they got false witnesses to testify against him, see. And so did that guy testify against him because he was afraid, you know, he'd be up for murder. Now the people that murdered him got free. And the innocent man is living in jail today.

Mildred: Is that the way most of the people around --

Joseph: See, this woman and her husband, they're the ones who hired the killers. They hired the killers and they're free today and the government is supporting both of them.

Justina J: Nobody knows where they are.

Joseph: Nobody knows where they're at, their names are changed, nobody knows where they went after the trial. That's how rotten some of these politicians are.

Mildred: So did the miners around here support Boyle and President Roosevelt?

Joseph: Oh, absolutely, oh heck. If it came to a vote, he'd have been in again. You know, no miner, none of the miners were against him.

Mildred: There weren't any big issues between the men then like that?

Joseph: And this Miller, he was the rottenest president we ever had. He was a crook, that's all he was.

Mildred: So is --

Joseph: You know what he wanted to do? He wanted to make an agreement with the operators to disband this 1950 trust fund. That's right, back in the '70s. And we took the lead in Windber here.

Mildred: Did you?

Joseph: Us guys.

Mildred: Do you still have a --

Joseph: There's how many? One, two, three, four, five of us. We went to Washington and we found a good attorney, a Jewish guy, a young man. And he says: You know, he says, I don't like that Miller. I hate his attorneys. He said: They're all Jews but I hate them. He said: I'm a Jew myself. He said: They're the ones that's messing you guys up. And I'm going to fight this case for you guys. So we come back and we raised money, all over, all over. And West Virginia came along with us, Kentucky, Ohio, all these coal mine states close to here went along with us, you know. We raised enough money for the attorney, you know, to take this case to court. And we beat the UMW and the operators. We got a darn good judge. See, this Jewish guy, you know, was telling us, the attorney. He said: There's 12 judges here, I missed what the heck they are, I don't know. Anyway, he said: Four of them, if I get one of those four the case is lost. If I get this four, there's a possible chance to win. If I get one of these four, it's a won case. And boy he got the good guys. So the good Lord was with us, see what I mean?

Mildred: That was in 1970, about that, when -- I was trying --

Justina J: Don't ask me about that.

Joseph: When the heck was that? That was in the '70s, yeah, because that's when Miller was in, early '70s. And we went on our own. We bought our own meals, we paid for our own transportation, that's fine. Because we didn't want to lose that 1950 trust fund.

Mildred: No. What all did they 1950 trust fund do that you --

Joseph: Well, see. Us guys, even the 1974 guys are in on it. See, 1974 was a new contract year, from 1974 back. All of us guys belonged to this 1950 trust fund, that's where you get your pension out of that, see. And your benefits, whatever they are, you know, like death benefits to the wife, and so on. And you're a member of the union, you can elect officers and all that stuff. See, what they were pulling off was this. Everybody got a letter from Miller. He said: Now you don't have to pay dues no more. You're still a member of the UMW but you don't have to pay dues. I told some of these dummies: Oh, I don't pay no more dues, hell, why should I if Miller says we don't have to? Man, you're going to be sorry someday. If you don't pay your dues, who's going to back you up?

Mildred: Right. With what?

Joseph: I said: You know dang well Miller ain't going to back you up and his gang. He'll say: Your dues aren't paid, you're not a dues-paying member. You can't vote. I said: I'm going to keep on paying my dues. I said: Because I want to vote and I want to be a paid-up member. You know these guys that did that, that got into bad shape, they got nothing. Yeah, no pension. I get a pension now. See, at that time we didn't have no pension yet. But I got one, it was a small one, but we get more and more all the time. You see, if they'd have cut us out, we'd have gotten

nothing, from then on. All of us guys that worked, you know, that was under contract before '74, see, would have been kicked out.

Mildred: There must not be that many miners --

Joseph: No, there isn't.

Mildred: -- actively now. Which mines are working, just the Bethlehem one, right, in this area?

Joseph: Yeah, that one, and a bunch of small ones. Houtzdale, that's all.

Mildred: Are the union locals functioning at all then? Well, you must have a lot of retired people.

Joseph: Oh yeah, we have retired people. As long as you have retired people, you have a local union.

Mildred: Yeah, I see.

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: Would you like to stop now?

Joseph: I don't care.

Mildred: I think I'm --

End of Tape 3 Side B

End of Interview (May 19, 1985)

Beginning of Interview (May 21, 1985)

Beginning of Tape 4 Side A

Mildred: You worked sort of 'til the end, Mr. Novak?

Joseph: Part-time I worked. Yeah.

Mildred: Yeah. Now we wanted to cover some things we'd forgotten in that previous interview.

Joseph: About how mining, you know, about how coal was mined.

Mildred: Okay. That would be interesting. I'd like to know --

Joseph: When they first started mining coal they mined it by pick and you know, by hand. So what they'd do, they'd lay the shovel down like, lets say this is the front of the shuttle like this. They'd lay the shovel down like that, you know, and they'd start from -- cutting the coal from the middle, you know. They'd go maybe up that high.

Mildred: Mm-hmm.

Joseph: And then go down and start -- and this guy started this way see, one guy would have to cut coal with this hand and the other guy with this hand and soon as they'd cut at the end there, so far, then they'd put like a piece of post in there, see, like that. And that'd stick a wedge down through there, that's to hold the coal from falling.

Mildred: Mm-hmm.

Joseph: When you go so far digging like that, then you get put another one. When you have to cut the whole way across and -- so after you've got you're holes drilled you loaded up with black powder or dynamite or whatever you use. We used black powder and then you -- with squibs, you know, you shot it down like I told you before.

Mildred: Mm-hmm.

Joseph: So they started coal with -- they mined it two ways that time. They either dug it by hand with picks or they blasted it out of the solid. See there's a certain way to do that too, you know what I mean? You got to be experienced in that. Now, like me and my dad we would cut both ways.

Mildred: Mm-hmm.

Joseph: See some men can only cut one way and you have to work with that man someday, you know. Like for instance, you know, sometimes some of the men get sick or something and maybe my buddy was out or something or they'd split us up. You go with this man, you go with this man, you know what I mean. So, you know, my dad and I we learned to dig coal both ways! This way with the right hand and with the left, see? That way I could work with anybody! Some of the men they only knew one way and that's all. But anyway, like I said, when mining first started they did it by pick and hand and blastening (sp?) it on the solid. Then they got these steam, you know -- so at every mine they built a building there, you know. They made steam.

Mildred: Generator? Kind of?

Joseph: They generated the steam and they put fives hallway into the mine. Like a bottom cutter, you know, but it dug the coal differently, like with picks, see?

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: You know what I mean? You have to know how to do it, everybody couldn't do it then. But anyway, they did it with steam, that's the big companies! Not the little guys. The little guys, the small guys they still picked.

Mildred: But borrowing into the steam?

Joseph: But then, then they started making them state mining coal. At first there was no state mining law. Then they started the state mining law, they put the law through, you know, that you have certain safety conditions in the mine you must have, you cut the coal certain ways, you set your post so far a part, like four feet apart, or what -- you need four feet. But if the roofs bad you put plank, you know, that's about four inches thick or two inches. You put it across there, one post here, one post here, see, that way you can get your car through. So that's to hold the roof up, you know if it's bad, but if it's a good roof you just put your posts four feet apart. And they made a ruling that you have to put a center post in front of your car, see? Lots of times the men, you know, wanted their car closer, see, to the coal so they wouldn't have the center post. But the boss wanted it and if he caught you too many times well, you know, you (inaudible) work. Well, then see, the bigger companies, they used this steam, you know, then came the cutting' machine, the bottom cutter. They were six and eight foot bars that -- so they'd start from this end here, see? Then they had these pipes -- dig up in there so the hole, you know what I mean? And you had these ropes, you know, steal ropes you had. From this machine, on this vipe (sp?) and then you put the -- over on the wheel there, you know, of the cutting machine and you'd put it right along the pace, you know what I mean?

Mildred: Okay.

Joseph: And you'd put the other -- over the other end, you know what I mean? And you start your machine, you know, that would go along that general cable and it would cut the coal, you know, on the bottom, see? Maybe not that high from the bottom

but you had to put sprags in, you know, like I told you before. You know your piece of post and a wedge. There it is so far. When you're just about ready to shoot you take these wedges out, see?

Mildred: Mm-hmm.

Joseph: 'Cause you have to blast you know. Then later on, they devised a top cutting machine, where they cut the coal on the top, see? No it wasn't -- they did devised that and another thing in about 19 -- in the 19, let's see, '30s. (pause) They started the pick hammers.

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: See, that was by ear, you know. They pushed air into the pipes and your pick hammer -- it was like a jackhammer, you know, like these jackhammers today? That's what the pick hammer was. If you was cutting up coal, it was bent on the end like a pick, see?

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: From this side and from this side, you started it in the middle. You could cut your coal, you know, from the top the whole way down like that if you wanted to and some guys would just put a cut in with a pick or something like that, see? But, you also could drill holes with it, see? Which made it easier for the men then. You didn't have to have that hand (inaudible) no more, see? So that was the next way that they mined coal and then they started these top cutting machines, they cut it on the top. And then what they could do there, what they -- then they devised it where you could turn your boar like this, see? Then you cut across

there and right down to the bottom. So you had your coal split there. It's easier to shoot, see? Easier to blast. Well, then they got these joy loaders.

Mildred: Joy loaders?

Joseph: Joy loaders. That's why three of them would be joy machines, see, so they call them joy loaders. That was next. See, they'd still cut the coal, you know? But then the machine -- this joy loader would go in there and he'd go in there and load up all the slash, you know, so that a guy could come in and draw the holes. Sometimes, if they were busy loading coal in this place and the other place was cut, these guys would just clean across there and then they'd draw the holes and shoot it. Now with these joy loaders, they put the tracks so far down, you know. Then these cars -- they had a motor, you know, trolley with a cable. This motorman would push the cars way off of the tracks, close as he could and these joy loaders, these machines -- you know what I mean, these machines, they'd get into the coal like this, you know, and load the car. See, then he'd pull the car out and drop it down, you know. He'd go back in with these cars and get another one loaded and then kept on like that until they got a whole a trip, see? Then when they got a whole trip the big motor would come in. And he took these cars out and put them into what they call the side track, you know, when he's full. And when they got the big load ready then the six wheeler would come in from the outside, you know, those guys would come in and they'd take this strip outside. Maybe 100 cars at one time, you know, three ton cars. So that was with the joy loaders, see? The Miner was next. The Miner was a machine that just dug the

coal right out of the soil/solid. They still use the joy loader, you know what I mean, but they didn't use cars no more. They had a conveyor going in there.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: See, chain conveyor, see.

Mildred: Would this have been in the '30s or '40s or?

Joseph: Oh this was farther up already (laughter), '40s and '50s, you know.

Mildred: Oh okay. (laughter)

Joseph: It kept on going you know what I mean?

Mildred: Right. Right.

Joseph: Those are the big changes, see?

Mildred: Yeah, that's good.

Joseph: Today, they have the miners, see? First they had these buggies, they called them buggies. See, the guy would come up there with the buggy and this joy loader -- this miner would load it up, see? Or the joy loader. Then he'd take it and dump it on the belt. The belt would take the coal out and dump it into the cars and the cars would keep on going around like that and the more -- after they had all the cars loaded the motor would come in there and shove a bunch, empty, so they could start again and he grabbed the loads in the way he went.

Mildred: (laughter)

Joseph: That's the way, you know, they worked it. But today, they just dig the coal right out of the solid, every bit of it. So they have cleaning plants. So you take back, in the early days, you had to clean the coal -- the miner! And if they'd find a can, this full, dirt -- see, what'd they do, they'd take your car once in awhile and they'd

have a man, you know, and he'd scrape every bit out of there and every bit of dirt he'd put on a pile for you. If you had a pile that big you got a day off.

Mildred: Really?

Joseph: Dirt. (laughter) I'm telling you, you know what I mean! See, I was on a mine committee. I was chairman of one of the union committee. Chairman of the mine committee, they always took my cars! (laughter)

Mildred: (laughter) They did?

Joseph: (inaudible) And they never put the case for me, you know, because I cleaned my case, see? I learned the tricks, you know. How to get rid of the boney -- you know, like I told you, you know. And the boss didn't know I was doing those -- that guy that stuffed the, you know, he's wondering, what the heck everybody else gets piles of dirt, and you get nothing! Cause I cleaned my car, see? They couldn't figure out -- they couldn't catch me, no. You know, they always try to catch the guy that's on a bike, but (laughter).

Mildred: (laughter)

Joseph: You take these nice cases out, see? And first you go to the mine forming. The man makes the complaint to us and we go to the mine forming. If we can't settle it with him then he makes arrangements and we go and see the superintendent of the mine. If we can't make an agreement with the superintendent, you know, of the mine then we go to the general office.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: See? The superintendent of all the mines or the general manager, you know?

Mildred: In the '30s who would have been that for Berwind? Would that have been new bankers still or somebody else?

Joseph: New banker was here. Kurt came later. Baylor, yeah, Newbacron (sp?) and Baylor were here. Those are the men I worked with most -- with those two when I had cases coming up. They liked me you know because I was -- I knew the mining law, see, because I went to school. I went to their school, Berwind School, night school. I knew the mining law, and I knew the contract.

Mildred: Right. (laughter)

Joseph: They couldn't fool me and I couldn't fool them, see? If my men violated the mining law I gave in right away. Or I'd tell them, the men like this, Hey, you have no case. We're all going to the union! I said, I don't give a damn what you do! You have no case, I'm telling you! So they'd go down to the local union, the guy that'd want to take their case up. The other two committee men and they say, Oh let's take it up, we'll get a couple hours of peace out of it. (laughter) So you'd get paid, you know, for going to see the mining incorporators, you're pretending or something. But I said, No, no, no, these guys have no case. I said, It's no use of us monkeying around with that kind of stuff. So the guy would come down to the local union, make his report, and I'd get up and I'd tell all the men and everybody there -- the person that would get up, he says, well, Mr. Novak's right - - no, they never called you mister, they called you brother.

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: We were all brothers you know.

Mildred: That's nice.

Joseph: We never said Mr. President, we always said Brother President.

Mildred: Oh, did you do that with Johnny L. Lewis, too?

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Mildred: Call him Brother Lewis?

Joseph: We were all brothers in the union, everyone, we still are. Like you take, like I belong to the Moose. We're all brothers. We call each other brothers, you know?

Mildred: That's interesting.

Joseph: So, that's the way it is and was in the mine. The president would get up after he heard my side of the story and he said, I want to tell you fellows that Brother Novak's right. He says, we can't take cases up like that, just forget about it. And we would, you know? And the company liked that because, see, I wasn't wasting their time. I know I had one case there, it was a yardage (sp?) case, that's after the union commencing. See, they paid a little bit higher and the union mines, see, the Berwinds, when you put a cross over in, a cross over from one heading to the other, see? They paid same yardage as here and going ahead, you know, gets you two headings. But some of the union mines, when you went to do a cross cut, from one place to the other, you took the same amount of rock up, same width, everything, but they paid less yardage when you went through the cross cut, see? From one place to the other. You had to always have a cross over, you know? So, the Berwinds were paying same yardage there, so they cut that out, and they said, we're going to pay the union scale. I said, you better read the contract, I told the superintendent.

Mildred: (laughter)

Joseph: Mine forms (inaudible) with the general manager. You better read the contract, I told all of them. I said, what does the contract say? Past practices. I said, you're trying to break the past practice. I fought that case for six months with my committee. We won the case in the end, they gave up.

Mildred: Did you have to go to a board or something to do that?

Joseph: No, no, we did it with him. We didn't want to go to arbitration.

Mildred: I see, uh-huh.

Joseph: I said, I don't want to go to arbitration. I told them, we can settle that here! I said, you know I'm right, you guys are wrong. I said, we have to go by past practices. I said, the next contract, you'll be equal with the union, this contract, you have to pay.

Mildred: Right. Mm-hmm.

Joseph: The way in the past practices were that they always paid a little bit more because they didn't want the union, see? So, I won the case. When I won that case I won that case for every Berwind mine. For every one, yeah, and we won that case that time.

Mildred: Did you have any other big contract things that you were involved with, Mr. Novak?

Joseph: Well, I had a lot of things you know --

Mildred: Working on --

Joseph: But I can't remember what everything was --

Mildred: Everything was (laughter) --

Joseph: You know what I mean? (laughter)

Mildred: Yeah, right. I have some questions, particularly about the earlier times, because that's what I don't know very much about. How did they distribute the cars to the miners?

Joseph: Well --

Mildred: Before -- I mean, in the early part of the century?

Joseph: At first they did it this way. Okay, so our rooms were 60-foot centers, you know. There were sixty people from this switch to this switch, see? Rooms were driven up like this for 300 feet, see? So they'd place so many cars in between here.

Mildred: Oh I see.

Joseph: Now first, you pushed your cars in. Boy sometimes you know you had to come up a hill and well they had light cars, they didn't have the steal cars then, yeah? Just the wooden cars, you know.

Mildred: Oh, I see.

Joseph: So I'd get on one side the rail and you know, push, and my dad on the other side the rail and we'd keep pushing up that hill until we got the car up, you know. But then they got hoists, see. The hoist was down here, posted up with four posts, then you had a cable, you know, a steal cable, and you took it way up to the face and you put your post up there, you know, tightened it up, and on a wheel, you know, you'd put your -- it came around that wheel, see? The one man would go with the car up and the other man would work the hoist, see? And he would spoon the car up and soon as he got pretty close to the face, you know, so he wouldn't knock the post down or hurt some body or hurt his buddy or something, you'd go like this, see? And you'd turn the hoist off, see? When you wanted him,

like for instance, let's say we went downhill, so he had to pull the loads out. So, when he got up there, I hooked the thing on and he'd look up there and I'd go like this, that means he can start pulling up the car, because we're ready to go, you know.

Joseph: Could you get as many cars as you wanted?

Mildred: No, you couldn't. In the first place they were, you know, they gave you so many. But you had to load all of them. See, now my dad and I, we were fast. We always loaded one car more than the rest of the men, see? Maybe our buddies there were loading slow? Hey, you're going to load that car, because you know he's going to be here pretty soon. No, we're not going to load that car, we can't make it. So, with jiggly's (sp?) danglutton (sp?) cars around we'd take that. So we got one extra car on that tarp, see?

Mildred: I see. How many would you have done in a day? Like about --

Joseph: Well, see, you could load -- it all depends on the condition of your place, understand? If the place is normal -- but we always loaded ten cars, my dad and I. Some of the guys would load seven, eight, or six, something like that, see? It all depends.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: See? But when conditions are good we loaded more coal because see, we always got these other guys to give us directions.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: Because you know, we -- well, they called us hungry.(laughter)

Mildred: (laughter)

Joseph: (laughter) When you like coal, when you know about -- it's hungry, they call you hungry.

Mildred: Were you assigned like the specific amount though -- like six or something or seven? And then you could just get them from -- or did that vary from day to day or month to month?

Joseph: Yes, it did, see? Because we had idle days. So you'd go on an idle day and you loaded one trip, maybe four cars, and you pick your place out. What my dad and I did, you know, we'd get this (inaudible) we'd shove it way down, see? That way we'd (inaudible). We'd get more cars that way. Then later on, they start pushing the cars to the Earth's face with PD banks, you know, little motors, with a cable on it. They'd hook it on the trolley and push your two cars in for you, you know, to get your place. He was loading them by twos, see? Then when I had to come back they'd take the cars back out and gave you two more. They kicked that out all day long.

Mildred: I see. Okay.

Joseph: So, you know, they used the consistency all the time.

Mildred: Well, how did you get credit then for what you laid. Did you put a check --

Joseph: There's a check on.

Mildred: How does that work? What is it? Is it a little --

Joseph: For instance when I started with my dad our check number was 51.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: So all the cars that came out with check number 51 --

Mildred: Were yours?

Joseph: One car they'd put on my dad's number, one car on my number, see? One on my dad, one on me, one my dad, one on me. We had our own check number and the wayboss (sp?) knew who to give the credit to, see?

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: They knew that our number was 51 so he'd give my dad one car, then he'd give me one car.

Mildred: Did you have a check weighman (sp?) then? You did --

Joseph: Yeah, well see, we had a weight boss, you know, and then when we got to the union then we had a check weighman. He sat with weighboss to make sure that it all --

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: That, you know, it was done right, you know. Now, we had a good guy, there are 36 mines, but he was good. He was honest. But some of the mines, they cheated the men. That's why they did that.

Mildred: So there were grievances about that? Yeah, okay.

Joseph: We used to get the weigh master (sp?) in too, you know, to check the scales every so often.

Mildred: Oh, did you?

Joseph: Yeah, you know, because sometimes they fixed up the scales, or you lose on them. We thought we were losing --

Justina: That was the same thing as start, don't you think?

Joseph: (laughter)

Mildred: (laughter) Then did you get paid a couple times a month, Mr. Novak?

Joseph: Yeah, twice a month. Yeah, twice a month we got paid. Twice a month.

Mildred: And you got --

Joseph: See, every so often you had what they called the three-weeker.

Mildred: Tell me about that.

Joseph: They may pay a lot of men, you know, because there isn't 28 days in a month, see, so, you know, it would add up and every three months you'd have to wait one more week for that one pay for all three weeks. But they always called that the three-week curve.

Mildred: Oh boy. (laughter) Hard to wait, I guess. The more money it was.

Joseph: And some of the mines paid every week, see? Some paid every week, but the big mines, they paid twice a month.

Mildred: Twice a month.

Joseph: Big money. Yeah, you know. It was about this big, like this, statemen, they call it. That's what you get.

Mildred: Oh, you don't have one, I'd like to see one!

Joseph: Yeah, I know, I did throw some away.

Mildred: I would've liked to see what one was like. My father --

Joseph: (inaudible) has everything on it! You know what I mean --

Mildred: Like what?

Joseph: Rate by the hour, you know, you did the hourly work. You get so much a ton for your coal, and all that, how much tons you had for the day, everything that, about you know . . .

Mildred: And then, did they deduct --

Joseph: The union, who's taken off, all the other kind of stuff taken up. First, you had to buy a room, stuck in the store. You know you're powder and all that stuff that you needed.

Mildred: When did that change? Was that not until the --

Joseph: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) When the union --

Mildred: Matilda and you had to buy your own place?

Joseph: Then they had that supply house, right by the mine. You went and bought your explosives there, see? You didn't have to keep them at home anymore.

Mildred: Yeah.

Joseph: What you need, you went there and bought and took it inside the mines, see? You had wooden boxes, with a sliding cupboard, and it had no nails in it, no nails at all. We just made a hole out off wood. That's where you kept your explosives, see? First, they had the powder in 25 lbs cans, black powder. So, you'd make cartridges out of newspaper and rolled it out, you know, about that round, and then you turned it over on one end, filled it up as big as you wanted it, you know, for -- you figure out, well, this is what it's going to take to shoot this coal down and how big the cartridge should be. And then you pushed it in with knee. Then, they start making them like dynamite, like a stick of dynamite, like there were two pieces in there and black powder. So we'd push this in then, you know, until you have well, maybe it will take two of these, or one and a half. That's why they had them, you know. You always had to figure out how much it would take to shoot that coal down, you had to figure that out, see?

Mildred: A lot of judgment involved.

Joseph: Oh, yeah. And everything in the mines. You'd be surprised what a miner had to know, had to know, you know, to get the coal mined.

Mildred: I bet.

Joseph: (inaudible) in those days. Yeah. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

Mildred: Just for safety I would imagine, for heaven's sake. Could you tell me a little bit about what the difference job classifications were and describe them for me. I know there were different titles that miners had.

Joseph: Yeah, well, see the coal miner usually got paid by the ton, see? Never by the car, by the ton, usually, you know, sell them by the car.

Mildred: How much would a car hold?

Joseph: Well, it all depends on how you loaded it. You take these cars and this rope hold, like we had, they brought in steel cars, that's why they had to use hoists. Now, see, some men would just load it up and heave it. Well, they got maybe, better than a ton and a half.

Mildred: (inaudible) had more than a ton. Yeah.

Joseph: Oh yeah, these were ton and a half cars. Now, but some guys, knew how to shoot the coal so they got lots of lumps. So when you get your car alone almost then you lumped it up all the way around, with lumps. So instead of getting 3,000 weights you got maybe 4,000-4,500-4,800 out of a car. These guys here loaded as many cars as you did, but they didn't have the tons that you had, because they didn't lump their car, you know.

Mildred: I see. Okay.

Joseph: They didn't make lumps, they shot their coal to heavy. They had lots of slap. We always tried to make lumps so we could load our cars bigger, you know, make more money, right? Well, see, then they had what they call, they had them -- the size of the mine foreman, they had the assistant mine foreman (sp?).

Mildred: What was his job exactly?

Joseph: Well, he had a certain section in the mine that he had to take care of. He had so many men, he had to visit those men at least once a day. So he went from one place to the other and they'd tell him what they need or this or that. You know, if they needed timber or they needed certain supplies or stuff that -- they'd tell the assistant. Well, then he'd be -- it would be two weeks and he come in there and he'd measure if they had any yardage coming or something, you know, he'd measure it. (inaudible) Or if they were in the heading he'd always measure the heading, how much rock they took up, that was their yardage that time. So, then you had fire bosses. A fire boss is mining examiner. He always went in before the men, to check the mine, see, but then later on they had three shifts, but they still had the fire boss, see? So the only time he did any good was the first day, after that, he still examined the mine, you know, the places, but the men were in there too, so you get the same standing when you were on three shifts. When you had two shifts in you had to have a fire boss for the one shift and a fire boss for the other shift, see? And you had your motor boss. He was in charge of transportation. Anything on transportation that was his, see? And then you had your track boss. He had men working in the mine, fixing the track, you know. So, you know, maybe some of that -- see they use these wooden ties you know

and spike them. So, these men would have to change ties and then maybe have to put a switch in some place or something like that, you know what I mean? So, you had to move but you had a motor boss, track boss, and you had a timber boss.

Joseph: Okay, what did the timber boss do?

Mildred: The timber boss -- the roof isn't like this all the time in a mine. You come to start in a mine where the roof is bad, you know, it's cracked out and so on.

End of Tape 4 Side A

Beginning of Tape 4 Side B (May 21, 1985)

Joseph: Okay, it'll be all right.

Mildred: They figure out how heavy that is up and above there. And then they'd put in timber, maybe four-inch stuff, maybe six inch thick, eight inch, ten inch, twelve inch, all the way around like that. And the legs were the same size, you know. If it was a twelve-inch timber, the leg was twelve inches, on each side you know, when they put this up. That's to hold a roof up, see?

Mildred: Right.

Joseph: Otherwise if you didn't have that, the whole damn thing would cave in and sometimes it did. Oh, then you'd see. Boy, (inaudible) go way up you know. So you had to watch that stuff. Then later on they had a new system of timbering, see?

Mildred: How did that work?

Joseph: Well, they'd drill holes so far, see? And they'd put a bar up in there, see? Then they'd put a plate over here and tighten, with a screw you know what I mean? And that way you didn't have your timbers all the way across.

Mildred: Oh okay.

Joseph: See, now, you put them as close together as you have to. Sometimes, you're four feet apart, six feet apart, two feet apart, one foot apart, it all depends, see? But you drove up in there until you drove into the solid. Then when you drove into the solid then you'd put your other pin in there and that held the roof up. It's the lower part that wasn't too good, see? But they kept on leaving, doing that in good stuff, you know? They'd do it for every four feet, or six feet, or something like that, you know? Even in good stuff, you know, that way, they wouldn't have a cave in or anything, any kind, see? That was the last way that they timbered, you know with that --

Mildred: Where did they get the lumber from?

Joseph: The woods!

Mildred: Did Berwind (sp?) have their own lumber or did they buy lumber from someone?

Joseph: Well, see, they leased -- Berwinds bought everything out, the farms and all.

Mildred: Right.

Joseph: So they leased this timberland --

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: Like (inaudible) see? They took all the trees out, big trees and everything. But see, for a mine you don't need these real tall trees and all like that, you know?

Mildred: Oh, you don't?

Joseph: You know, the difference side, like the posts, but three of them might like (inaudible), see?

Mildred: Not as big as telephone poles? No, nothing like that.

Joseph: No.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: You use those kind, but not that big, you know what I mean? See, like you're supposed to have your timber say -- you're supposed to have your place six feet. So, you have six-foot legs on your timber. So, you have to have the place on it. You know, more rock taken out, see? If you're taking bark, sometimes they take the (inaudible), sometimes they take the roof down, see? But still when it's bad day they have to timber it. See, that's where they did it in Heading, some places they take the deep shoot in the bar, and other places they shoot in the top. Some of the roofs got pretty dang big, you know? Why, the goons start taking the tops down, little by little, you know what I mean? In other wards, they'd come up at the bottom like this and then they brought the roof and drop it like, you know what I mean? And they kept timber in it and that's the way they did it, see? And on the outside you had your tippo (sp?) boss. He ran the tippo, you know, where they dump the coal. You always had a man there with -- who dropped all off the empties under there to load the coal, see? And he dropped another (inaudible), load it, he'd bring the next one down, you know and each year and let the coals -- let them start loading that coal, he'd drop this one down, and to the next loads, you know? That's the way they did it. The tippo (sp?) boss, you know, he was in charge of the old tippo, unless sometime he had to have an assistant, you know what I mean? Especially when they had the cleaning plants, see? At first, like I said, you had to (inaudible) the cleaning of the (inaudible). After awhile when they got these machines, you know, to load the coal, well, it didn't matter no

more, especially when they started with the miner, you know, taking the coal out. They just took everything out, they didn't care of there was rock in the dirt, boney, or sulfur or something like that, it went through the cleaning plant and the coal come out clean and the refuse was taken to the wrong dump.

Justina: Tell them about that day when you're girl got that iron (inaudible) in your places

Mildred: You didn't tell me!

Joseph: See maybe you have three, four and a half feet of coal, you know what I mean?

The bottom gets even. So especially when we were on conveyors, you know.

See, you didn't do this when you took your cars in, but when you put your conveyor in there, you know, everything on the bottom heaved up, you know?

The car went up, you know, the conveyer went up --

Mildred: The conveyor went up --

Joseph: Closer to the roof, closer to the roof and the bottom was heaved and it went like this.

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: So you'd take your dinner but you'd be eaten up, you know, up in the face. So you took your dinner bucket and you pushed it ahead of you and then you crawled towards it and then you put it in. (laughter)

Mildred: Oh wow.

Joseph: It was like this, see? It went through a spot like that.

Mildred: (laughter)

Joseph: I'm telling you!

Mildred: (laughter) Oh boy!

Joseph: That's no bologna! Our backs would be rubbing the roof while we're going on our hands and knees.

Mildred: Hard work, boy, yeah! (laughter)

Joseph: It was mostly knee work! Kneeling! I used to make pads over my overalls.

Justina: And he had rubber pads too, you know!

Joseph: And then I had other rubber that I bought, you know, and I put those over top of that.

Justina: He was operated once already on his knee.

Joseph: Yeah. We all had operations on our knees on account of -- working. You worked -- you shoveled coal on your knees, you dug the coal on your knees, when you was on the conveyors that's all you did.

Mildred: Oh boy!

Joseph: Oh yeah. You had to drag these pads in and some of these big guys they had a heck of a time, you know, getting through with a pan. Because you know, you went so far and then you had to put a pan on you. Then you'd put another pan on, so you had to go back and get a pan. I was just lucky I was small, see? These other guys had to get on their knees like this, see? And grab the pan and pull it over to themselves and then move back again, see? Now, me, I was too short. I'd get the pan along here --

Mildred: Oh boy!

Joseph: (laughter) I had to bend like that too!

Mildred: Ah.

Joseph: That's the way I dropped the pans. So they always wanted me to drag the pans.
(laughter)

Mildred: (laughter) Oh boy.

Joseph: It's pretty hard for them. We wanted to take turns. Everybody do a certain job, see? See, like when you're on these conveyors, there's one guy, he cuts the coal and the other guy scrapes, he throws the coal on the side like this, see? Or if the conveyor is close enough he throws it right into the conveyor and there's another guy who throws it into the conveyor, you know? And his slack. And then there's a guy who follows him and keeps posts, setting posts up close to the face so that it wouldn't fall down on these men. You know, the roof and coal and all when they're cutting the place. Well, when you get your place all ready, then you started going home. But first it -- was it rough, oh jeez. You had to push against each other with your feet to get -- do it by hand, but then they gave us electric grills (inaudible)

Mildred: (laughter)

Joseph: (laughter) Oh yeah!

Mildred: Oh boy.

Justina: You've got to see it.

Joseph: What you have to know, work is torture, one angle to hold it so you hit the roof, see?

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: The hole had to be long enough to hit the edge, the other edge, you know? Because if you didn't hit it to the edge of the cut well, what would happen there,

some of the coal would just stay there, you know what I mean? You didn't get all your coal. Then it's hard to get it you know when you -- when you get that away, so the cutter, you cut again.

Mildred: Did we forget some jobs -- other jobs in the mines? Job classifications?

Joseph: Well, that was about it.

Mildred: What were sprigers?

Joseph: At first they had trolley wires going in. Trolley Wire. That was direct current. See, if you have two wires it's alternating, goes in one wire and out the other. Now, on this current, you know, the rail is the return.

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: See, there's no power in it or nothing, but you have one trolley wire, you know, and the motors either have a slide, a slide over the wire likes this, or they have a wheel, see? The motorman, you know, he's in front of the motor and the trips behind him. See, so he has a brake and then he has his control there, you know, five or, you know, six points, you know, you can go. Six points, that's the fastest you can go, see? Then he has a sand fee. That's why you have to have two hands when you -- you can't run a motor with one hand because if you're going up a hill you have to -- with one hand you guide it, you know, with the other hand you feed the sand under the motor see? You work it, you know. With the other hand, you know, you work the control there, how fast your motor can go, you know. See, that's the way that goes, you know, sometimes we even had to work the -- if you're going down hill you have to work your brake see? You have to have two hands, you know, in the mine when you're running a motor. Well, at the end of

trip is the spriger, see? He's the guy, he puts on the red light, you know? In back of every trip there must be a red light. I'll tell you, they pulled a trick on one guy, you know? "Hey, you can't go out that way!" The guy said, "What do you mean I can't go out this way?" "Well, you don't have a red light! You got to have a red light in behind you when you're going out!" So the guy (laughter) -- he hugged doggone heavy red light on (laughter) (inaudible). So the greedies -- you know little guys coming in that pulled that off -- they were walking out, you know? Usually you have a manter, but if you clean your place up quicker, you figure you can get outside quicker, and get home quicker, like you walk out, so (laughter) -- he had the hang of that (laughter) Boy it's heavy! That dang thing is horrible, man! That dang thing's heavy, it's all iron, you know? It has a thing like that, you hang it on the back of the car. You see when the trip goes out, they have to have a red light, you'll have to have a red light too. (laughter)

Mildred: (laughter) That's cute. So did you -- How did you treat Greemies (sp?) when you found -- when he came -- did you tease him a lot?

Joseph: Well, we just had some fun with him like that, like -- Hey, at the working place there was no foolishness. Oh, no, no.

Mildred: No.

Joseph: You taught that guy how to work safe. Safe. You wanted everybody there to work safe because this like one time, we were on a conveyor, we were finishing up, I took and I put a post up for myself. I said listen, you guys better put a post up. Oh, we'll get this coal on. Next thing you know they were down, rock on top of them. I had to dig them out. My two buddies, right on a conveyor. One went

to the hospital, the other one walked home but he had a broken ankle, he had to go to the hospital the next day, see?

Mildred: Doesn't pay, does it --

Joseph: Listen to me. I was a young guy, see? They were older men.

Mildred: Oh. They thought they knew better. (laughter)

Joseph: They thought they'd be able to get that coal out, but I told them, I said, I think -- I don't think this is too safe. They bumped it, oh it sounds good, yeah I said, sounds good, but look it here, look at the break here. So I put that up and I was lucky I did or all of us would have been laying under that rock. Yeah --

Mildred: There's so much judgment involved in all of this.

Joseph: There you had to be careful.

Mildred: I guess all those miners who first came like to Whimburg (sp?) area and if they hadn't ever been miners before they must have gone in very young and inexperienced.

Joseph: Well, somebody had to train them, somebody had to how them -- you know, how to mine coal and so on. Now see, when my dad came here, well you know, then other men start coming from the old country. So my dad used to take them in as buddies --

Mildred: Show them and teach them.

Joseph: Because he knew them, they were related to him, you know, so -- and teach them how to work and -- well after they learned how to work then he'd go with someone else. Oh, I know my dad always worked with younger men than he was, all the time. I know this one guy to him, he said, Joe Shepgo (sp?), you know,

Dad Shepgo, you knew Dad, big man. He said, Joe I can't keep up with you're dad.

Mildred: Oh boy. So --

Joseph: And he knew how to, you know, to work it, to make money, to get the coal out, he knew the tricks. I'm telling you, I learned a lot form him.

Mildred: Did the father bringing the son in or two buddies like that, continue like all through, did that system change of people working together in the mines at some point? Or how does that --

Joseph: Well, you see, you know with these different systems at work -- see, when you first had your buddies is when you had your pick coal, and you had your shooting on solid, and you had your bottom cutting machines, you know, where you drill up. You know, there were too many in each place --

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: You were usually two, you know. The only time they had three is if there were two relatives came in from the old country, well, the guy would take the three together. But then they'd split them up, see? So there'd be only two men, see? See, you don't get to number -- you don't get cars for three men when -- you get cars only for two --

Mildred: Two, yeah.

Joseph: So, you know, that way they do it. So, but then, you know, after awhile, you know, when you had your conveyors you had maybe four men at the base. Two on this side, two on this side of the conveyor, you know, shovel your coal in there.

Now, the fastest guys always worked in front of the conveyor, see? And the slow guys on the edges.

Mildred: Right.

Joseph: Me, I was always where most of the dust was.

Mildred: Oh dear.

Joseph: Yeah, you know, where the conveyor was (inaudible), so you know? So, I'd be on this side and my buddy on that side and we'd go right to the face and then we'd turn around, see? Now maybe I was shoveling left and my buddy was shoveling right. After we go to the face, I was shoveling right and he was shoveling left, into the conveyor, see? Because you know, you'd turn this way, see? So when I was there, I was there on this way, that's when I -- you know, we put guys that could shovel both ways in front and for that reason, see? That way you'll never have it change sides. When I got to the face I turned around and -- this way, I had to go towards that guy, you know, started from the end, the slow guy.

Mildred: Wow.

Justina: You learned more today! (laughter)

Mildred: Yeah, well, that's very useful. I don't know, you know, because I would like to tour a coal mine and I don't know if -- are there any open? Is there anybody who could take me through one, you know, it would help so much to see something.

Joseph: No, I don't. I don't think there are any of them open right here. I always used to take -- I used to take people to the mine where I worked at, 37 Upper, you know what I mean. That was way back -- and I'd take them there, it was a nice place, you know, for you to go and see -- you'd see how high the coal is. You'd see how

the timber is set, you know, inside there because the roof was bad there yet -- show you how the dishes are, the water running out of the mine, you know, and so on. Oh yeah, I used to take people in here.

Mildred: Is it open at all, now, or not? They're all closed? No one could get into them?
No?

Joseph: No.

Mildred: Cause I would like to try and find one to see.

Justina: Where do they have -- they have (inaudible)

Joseph: There is a mine, wait, by Hastings ain't it? I think it's out by Hastings in Cambria County.

Mildred: Okay.

Joseph: I forget the name of the place. Anyway, you can make a tour -- they give you a tour of the mine. They have, you know --

Justina: Our kids went over there to see it --

Joseph: You pay something here and they have like a museum there where you can see the different kinds --

Mildred: See the different --

Joseph: -- Of stuff that were used from the beginning until now.

Mildred: I'd like to do that.

Joseph: Different kinds of lamps, cap seat -- our caps were cloth first.

Mildred: Cloth caps?

Joseph: Cloth caps and --

Mildred: What kind of light did you have?

Joseph: Carbine.

Mildred: Carbine.

Joseph: Well, then we got these electric lamps see. Well, then they started making these hard hats. So us guys used to put these soft hats in our pockets, see? Or hide them some place in the mine, you know? And then when the boss came to see us, we knew he wouldn't come back no more, so we'd put the hard hats down and put the soft ones on. (laughter)

Joseph: Oh. (laughter)

Mildred: Because the hard hats were heavier. That's the tricks they used to -- and they used to cool off. But if you go to that mine there, he takes you on the mantrip (sp?), takes you inside there, and there's a working place there, not Galitzen (sp?) -- it's over that way, it's over that way, I forget.

Mildred: Hastings, you said. Yeah.

Justina: Sometimes it's on TV, they show you --

Mildred: Okay, well I'll find out about that. Is it pretty authentic do you think?

Joseph: Oh yes, yes! Oh yeah! Shows you exactly how they mined coal and everything.

Mildred: Okay, good, cause that would help to see it.

Joseph: They have a conveyor there that shows you how they mined coal with conveyor. They have a pick there that shows you they -- how you can mine -- you see the coal and all and how high it is and everything. And you see how this machine works and all that. Oh yeah. God was there, you know, it's just the way the men worked.

Mildred: I'll have to find that out.

Joseph: I forget where that -- dogginit!

Mildred: Well, if you thing of it, let me know --

Joseph: I'm going to try and find it.

Mildred: Okay, cause I would like to take my sons to go see it.

Joseph: Oh, yeah! Hey, that's a good thing to see. You see exactly how miners worked in the old days, you know, that is.

Mildred: Okay, I would like to see that.

Justina: Pete Gorilla (sp?) should know that name.

Mildred: Yeah, Pete! He'll know about it. They should know about it. (overlap in dialogue; inaudible)

Joseph: If I find it -- it might be in the telephone book too!

Mildred: Okay.

Justina: (inaudible)

Joseph: Oh yeah, not (inaudible), because they're not worth us. That's right. They're not in our telephone book.

Mildred: Okay, I'll ask around about it. Aright.

Joseph: It's called Seldom Seen Mine.

Mildred: Oh, okay.

Joseph: Seldom Seen Mine. I think that's what they call it.

Mildred: Okay, aright. I'll find out -- thank you.

Joseph: Oh, a lot of people go there every year. It's always open -- see, it's open, you know. Certain hours they're open and you can go over there --

Mildred: Oh, that's very nice, I'll do that.

Joseph: You can go through their place where they have all kinds of equip -- the old caps and the newer caps and the old lamp -- first they used -- before carbine they used oil lamps.

Mildred: Well, wasn't that dangerous?

Joseph: They put oil in there. And they had a wick coming out. See, you light the wick and the oil would go through the wick, you see?

Mildred: Wouldn't that be dangerous with gas or anything?

Joseph: And they -- wait what is that stuff they used later on? I forget it. It's like a candle, you know? It has a name to it. And see, when you light your what-do-you-call-them it sort of melts it and that oil comes in. Yeah.

Mildred: I see, oh.

Joseph: I forget what --

Mildred: Did you ever use that? Did you use oil?

Joseph: Oh yeah, I worked with that.

Mildred: They never used any --

Joseph: See, some of the men used that at that time when carbine was coming in, which was a lot better, see? That was an advancement in lights, see? But when the electric came in, you know, you're battery lamps, that's why we called them electric, but they're batteries you know? And you hang your battery here, see? Right there on your belt, see? And you have a wire come out over your cap here and you hook it here, close it, and it comes to your lamp here, and you hook the lamp on like that, see?

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: But this wire, you know, doesn't interfere with you when you're working because you put it back here like this and you know, you hook it on your cap, you know, back here.

Mildred: Okay. I'll have to see that then.

Joseph: Hey, that's the best thing if you could go to Seldom Seen Mine.

Mildred: Okay.

Joseph: I know that's the name of it.

Mildred: Okay. Great.

Joseph: It's up there -- you got to go to Carroll Town, then you turn right.

Mildred: We'll find it.

Joseph: Anybody up there would tell you.

Mildred: Okay. Great.

Joseph: See, what you do is you take 219. Now 219 goes to Ebensburg and then the next town is Carroll Town (sp?), see? And it's to the right of Carroll Town.

Mildred: Aright, I'll find out.

Joseph: Oh yeah.

Justina: Foxwheel or Foxstem?

Joseph: No.

Mildred: Is there anything else about working in the mines like that and how things change -- you want to tell me while we have this interview?

Joseph: You know what I mean, when something comes to me, then I--

Mildred: No, that's fine -- that's great -- I'm glad you thought of this.

Joseph: I should have told you, you know, before that's why I told you about these different systems of mines. You know what I mean.

Mildred: Yea, that's good, no, that's very helpful and useful.

Joseph: Because you know from one to the other to the other you know? These changes came, see?

Mildred: That's good. That's good.

Joseph: Look how many changes I went through. Look, I had the oil lamp, I had the carbine lamp, I had the battery lamp, that's the last one. You see, I went through all of them. I had the cloth cap, I had the hard hat -- I was one of the first guys to get hard hats, you know what I mean? I mean that crew that got the hard hats first.

Mildred: Right. (laughter)

Joseph: We did, see? I was in that group where we got steal cars, instead of these other cars. First when I started I was pushing cars in, then we got a hoist, then we got the steal cars, we would put more coal into the car. See, those other cars were only around a ton or so --

Mildred: And they were wooden.

Joseph: All wood, you know? So they'd be easier to push in!

Mildred: When did they start to get the steal cars? Do you have any idea about when?

Joseph: Oh, I'd say in the early '30s. In the late '20s and early '30s they started getting these steal cars in.

Mildred: So they used wooden ones a long time?

Joseph: In the last '20s and then they started.

Mildred: Yup.

Joseph: Oh boy.

Mildred: Yeah and they were --

Joseph: A lot of changes. (laughter)

Mildred: Oh yeah.

Joseph: Wow.

Mildred: Well, then -- now some mines are built where they have the conveyor running right to the outside. The whole way. Every thousand feet this one dumps into this one, see? The motor is here on this one, cause it goes around like that, see? That tails way back here. This one dumps it here, one thousand feet, then the next thousand feet that one drops, next thousand feet that one drops. You know some of those belts are that wide. Three, four, it all depends how big the mine is. The bigger the mine the wider the belt, you know? They get wider as they go outside because, you know, more coal coming in through one of that.

Mildred: Okay. Well -- Oh boy.

Joseph: When they're on a river like the Allegheny or Monongahela River, you know, out there, in eastern Pennsylvania or down the Ohio River, where Ohio, West Virginia, is on the river there. They dumped the coal right into the barges, out of the mine! No cars, no nothing, just -- they dump the coal right in there, see? Unless they have to clean it -- they clean it first and then it goes into the barge. See, if they, you know the system now is where they clean the coal. That way they don't have to worry about the rock, you know, mixed in there or sulfur or boney or something like that cause the cleaning plant cleans all of that. At the

cleaning plant they clean all that out and then it's all clean coal then that goes in there. See, they crush the coal now? Usually, you know. When we were mining coal first when I went into the mines, they wanted lumps for household. See, all of our coal went to the east of the Massachusetts -- Connecticut all of those states, New Jersey, New York, and all that. And they wanted lumpy coal too, see? Lumps so they could use that for household. So what they'd do, you know, they're run that coal and screen it over screens. The first screen would be slack. The next screen would be little bigger lumps and so on. The bigger stuff would go over and then the next one would be bigger lumps, the next one would be -- the last one would be the big lumps.

Mildred: Did they use coal from around here for the steam ships too, didn't they?

Joseph: Yeah, that's why I said they shipped them all over there, see? See, there's an A-vein (sp?) that's under us here. The A-vein runs anywhere up to 18 feet thick, that's this way, up and down. But the A-vein usually has a piece of rock going through the middle of it like -- and it's a dirtier coal. We haven't been mining it here, very little. Well, that's the A-coal. The b-coal is the steam coal. See, that's soft, that coal is soft and it's cleaner than the other coals are. Then the c-prime is next. Now that's the coal that they use for house coal around here.

Mildred: I see.

Joseph: It's a harder coal. It's lumpier.

Mildred: Lumpier can get it in (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

Joseph: So, you know, when they were shipping that coal away, they had to break it up into slacks, see? If they wanted the slack, because they didn't need the lumps,

they wanted the slack to go out, so they busted it up and that way they were able to clean it quicker, easier, you know. Then you had your d -- a, b, c, d, d-vein, see?

Mildred: What did they use that for? What was that like?

Joseph: Anything.

Mildred: Anything?

Joseph: That was usually in households. See, the D is way up high and it doesn't run like, you take like the a-coal and it runs from here -- I don't know where, everywhere. And the b-coal same way, see? And the c is pretty good -- down, down. See, there's so many feet -- there's maybe about 90 feet between each vein, usually, see? Now, you take like the one place where we worked, you know for Berwinds in the mine -- the cover above us was 800 feet or more, 800-900 feet covered above, see? Now, here you have all these veins here and in this one here. Now, like I said the A is here and the b-vein -- you see where the highway is? Just a little bit above the highway, maybe ten feet, that's where the b-vein is, see? Then you go on another, maybe 90 feet, then you have your C. Then you go a little more you have your D. And some places, you know, they even had the E, you know?

Mildred: So when they strip -- like they were doing, which kind of coal do they get?

Joseph: They strip the -- if they're on a high mountain --

End of Tape 4 Side B

Beginning of Tape 5 Side A (May 21, 1985)

Joseph: So he can tell her --

Mildred: Oh, that's great!

Joseph: He's getting after me to call you!

Mildred: Yeah, well that's nice.

Joseph: I said listen if she wants to know something she'll come down herself.

Mildred: (laughter)

Joseph: (laughter) Well, I think it's nice because --

Justina: (inaudible) She's going to get nothing out of you!

Joseph: Well, that's right, that's right.

Mildred: Well, it's nice because it's good and people will know.

Mildred: Hey, I'm lucky I'm alive then, ain't it?

Justina: You know he's a lucky cat, you know. He has nine lives! How many times he's had close shaves? But God didn't want him yet! He said uh-uh, you're good here --

Joseph: In December -- you didn't tell her about how sick I got, dear.

Mildred: Could I -- I'm making sure this is on now, because I want your -- started it again.

Joseph: Yeah.

Mildred: Could I ask you a little bit about prohibition, what you remember about that? If anything? Cause you wouldn't have been too old --

Joseph: Well, I'll tell you what I remember about prohibition. See, everybody made their own whiskey. See, what they did --

Justina: We used to take it -- my brother put it -- served it under (inaudible)

Joseph: (laughter) What you'd do you know, you'd get this mash, you know, you'd let it lay for quite awhile and then you'd put the mash in this big pot. Then you put a lid over top of that. Overtop, you know, put dough around there so it wouldn't

leak, you know what I mean? Then you had your pipes you know, it would come through the pipes, you know, and then it would drip down there into a pot or whatever. You wanted it --

Mildred: Did people --

Joseph: They made their own, most of them. But I know the football team used to come from Pitt, you know from Pittsburg, and they'd camped up there at Camp Hamilton, see? That's back here. And us guys, we lived at 38 and we used to swim with these guys, you know, they played golf and there was a place there, like a little swamp you know. Well, when I hit the ball in there they forgot about they didn't even bother. We would go up there and pick up those balls and we made our golf sticks out of roots of a tree, you know, like this, see? And we played golf too, us guys. But they used to always ask, hey, where can we get some good moonshine? So we'd take them down to town and we'd show them, you know, because some people were making it for profit, see? So we'd show them, you know, where they could get the moonshine and everybody made homebrew --

Mildred: They make mostly wine or beer or? --

Joseph: They made whiskey, wine, beer, and root beer.

Mildred: Root beer?

Joseph: Oh yeah, root beer! We had a cork, you know, with a hickey like this on it, you know? Like rocks and, see? You pull it up and it's open. Oh yeah. We made all of this stuff. You know, when I became a Boy Scout, you know, that 38 mine, you know that was shut down. A story came out that there was a headless man

running around out there at midnight. So I became a Boy Scout at 12 years old and I talked to some of the guys, hey, let's ask Scout Master, if he'll let us camp out here over night, you know, I want to see that headless man. "We do to! (inaudible)" So we asked our scout master if we could camp up there on the tippie, you know, up there or something, because we wanted to see that headless man. So, we camped up there that night, but you know how kids are. You start monkeying around and looking under the tippie -- the moonshine we found! Man! Gallons and gallons and gallons of it! What do I do? I go and tell my dad. We weren't too far, then Johnny Buckshut (sp?) told us he had -- he tells his dad. And my dad and Johnny Buckshaw's dad, they were good friends with the judge, district attorney, and sure so they called up the Berwinds first and told them, you know, the boy's got to their camp and they found all that moonshine up there. So, they also called up summerset see? They got a hold of those people and told them about it, you know? And they all come in, you know, from Summerset and local police from Winbury are -- constables and that, you know? Here these guys got wind of it somehow, you know, that we found their moonshine. And they were out there getting ready to take it away, they caught them all! (laughter)

Mildred: Oh dear. (laughter) Oh boy.

Joseph: Yeah, that's right.

Mildred: Do you think that the company in town didn't want the miners to drink or would they have been for the prohibitions -- or did they care?

Joseph: No, they never said nothing! Nah.

Mildred: They didn't care about that. Well, what happened to the brewery then? Weren't there are lot of Germans in town who worked with the brewery? And did they leave town or -- how --

Joseph: I didn't know why this brewery didn't go, you know, why they always shut it down, you know what I mean? That was good beer! They made good beer! Heck, make one supply enough of that beer for Washington, D.C.

Mildred: Oh, this was in the later in period when it reopened after -- yeah.

Joseph: Yeah. You know, when union came in they reopened, see?

Mildred: Yeah.

Joseph: Because you know I was one of the officers in the union and that guy that ran the plant, he used to call us down there, you know, and give us a drink of beer, show us how good it is, you know, and everything. He's said you know I can't supply Washington D.C. with enough of this beer. Soon as he brings it down there, it's sold! Just that quick. It didn't even go over the borders lots of times! People bought right away, by the cases, see? Cause that's how good that beer was, but I don't know --

Mildred: Do you remember anything about it in the earlier years? Course you would have been -- prohibition, you would have been 17 or 18 then. Do you remember what happened when it closed down then? Did the people who worked at the brewery leave the town or did they stay around or --

Joseph: They all stayed. Yeah.

Mildred: They stayed? Did --

Joseph: Now we only had two black families in this town.

Mildred: Oh yeah?

Joseph: See what they did -- the Berwinds you know, they brought a bunch of these black people in here but they wouldn't work in these mines, in this low coal. So they went down the steal mills to Georgetown, see? Yeah, because coal was too low, you know? We only had two families here.

Mildred: But weren't there mostly Germans at the brewery though -- in the old days before it reopened? Or maybe not --

Joseph: Yeah. It was run by Germans.

Mildred: Germans. And then they --

Joseph: German people. Yeah.

Mildred: And did they just live around the brewery then? Like around Stockholm and that --

Joseph: Yeah. Everybody lived there.

Mildred: Everybody lived there? I just wondered because I don't know much about them

Joseph: People, you know -- in those days, you know, if you worked here, you lived here. But then later on, you know, the people started moving to the mines, you know. So, they lived here and they went maybe two miles to work, five miles to work, three miles to work. Yeah.

Mildred: Do you remember anything about steamship agents at all? You know bringing people over or anything about that? Or immigrant bankers or anyone?

Joseph: Well, I don't know --

Mildred: Maybe not. Okay. I just wondered.

Joseph: Nothing. No, I don't know much about that. You know, we have a museum up here -- see, I helped start that museum.

Mildred: Yeah. That's nice.

Joseph: And you know you could get a lot of information there. See, but we don't open up till Memorial Day.

Mildred: Okay.

Joseph: Then we're open. But I'll tell you, we have to watch the people when they want to look something up. You know, what was going on -- you know, these people from Pittsburgh University, they come down here and you know what they were doing? We have these old [Winberahs] from way back. They were cutting articles out.

Mildred: Oh no.

Joseph: Yeah. Pictures and articles and stuff like that. And one time one of our people was looking through that, through these papers, and they saw this cut out. So from then on they put a personal watch on them.

Mildred: Yeah. No one should be --

Joseph: You can't trust people, see?

Mildred: No, you can't. You can't cut things like that out.

Joseph: Yeah, I'll tell you. There's where you can get a lot of information. And at the museums.

Mildred: Well, okay. Do you remember were there -- these are just sort of odd questions -- were there gypsies around? (laughter) I've heard some stereotypical -- Yes. (laughter)

Joseph: Hey, they wore long dresses, way down to the ground and they'd stake chickens and you know, kill them and then hang them under their dresses. Chickens.

Yeah. Nobody knew that they were doing that but that's the way they were -- the women.

Mildred: But did they come through town or live here or what?

Joseph: Yeah. They always lived -- they used to go from town to town. But there was one group that lived here.

Mildred: Oh.

Joseph: Because when we got married in 1928, we had a gypsy band! Right in this house. Yeah, they came here before we went to church and they played music. Ain't that right?

End of Tape 5 Side A

End of Interview (May 21, 1985)