

INTERVIEW OF ERNEST GREATHOUSE

October 1, 1986

By Mildred Allen Beik

Johnstown, PA

MB = Millie Beik

EG = Ernest Greathouse (1916-1988)

Beginning of Tape 1 Side A (October 1, 1986)

MB: Why don't you tell me what your full name is?

EG: Ernest Alfred Greathouse.

MB: Ok do you mind telling me when you were born Mr. Greathouse?

EG: January 18th 1915

MB: And where were you born

EG: Born in Lean County

MB: Are you the sons of Immigrants then, so many people in this area had parents that came from Europe or maybe not.

EG: May Granddaddy's father was a full bloodied Cherokee Indian.

MB: Really?

EG: So I'm half I guess.

EG: And then my mother she's Irish and her father was Welsh.

MB: Your father was welsh, can you tell me a little bit about your parents.

EG: Yeah, they're both dead.

MB: Yeah, but what did your father do for a living, was he a miner?

EG: He was a miner

MB: Where did he work?

EG: He was a miner in cold port in Arizona, it was a little town in PA called Arizona, that's over by cold port

MB: Did he do that all his life?

EG: He did that all his life until he died from black lung. But they didn't know what black lung was.

MB: Was he from Wales then or was he of Welsh decent cause there were a lot of Welshmen that came in here?

EG: No his mother and father came here.

MB: Was there anything you tell me about your parents

EG: Well there isn't too much I can tell you about them it was just me and my brother.

MB: So there was just two children in your family, was your brother older?

EG: No he was younger, my brother just died two years ago cause of black lung.

MB: Well tell me about your childhood, did you go to school very much? And where did you grow up?

EG: Well we lived in Indiana on a farm.

MB: And that's Indiana County?

EG: Yes Indiana County on a farm down by a little town called Yuri, my uncle he worked over there for Knicker Bocker Coal Company in 1929. He told my dad they were making good money in the mine then. So he wanted to know if he wanted to work so we moved over there in 1929. A little place above whose vile they called number three and we come and he started to work in the mine I was going to school, but as soon as I turned 16 I went in the mine with my dad pit coal,.

MB: What company was that mine

EG: Knicker Bocker Coal Company, they don't exist no more In 1931 I went to work with him my dinner buckle would drag on the ground. We had to walk from hovers vile to Windber to work and that was about 5 ½ to 6 miles we go and work from daylight to dark that was before the

Union came, then after the Union came in we started 8 hours a day but we still had to walk from there to there, heck fellas could make 20 to 32 dollars a day and that was good money. Today you can't get a young kid to work for 30 dollars a day.

MB: Were the mines working every day, or were those depressed time then?

EG: Well I don't see how they called that depressing, you go down here and get a job at Windber and if you don't like it you can get another job at another mine. All over, work wasn't hard to find, I can't figure that out, you can get a Job mostly any place.

MB: I guess some of the mines only worked two days a week?

EG: Well we worked some days two days one day three days a week, it depends.

MB: Well tell me about your Jobs in the mine when you first started? You were a pick miner?

EG: Well when I first started in the mines my dad used to take me what was called a pick hole, and he used to pick and shovel, you pick it and load it 28 cent a ton. You wind and load the coal you had mules and stuff that would haul it outside.

MB: You had mules at the Knicker Bocker Company?

EG: Yea. And I went from there from Knicker Bocker to Kelso to work I didn't like it in Kelso so I quirt there and went to Indiana to work, my brother and I we heled dig the first underground pit, we dump the coal in that and then after we did that the conveyer put it out, and then from Kelso I drove mule there and then I went to hand load and then I was in Hills burg I was working over there I forget the name of the company but they did have a mine in Reading PA, and then I went to service, I come back from the service and then I got married.

MB: When were you in the service WW2?

EG: WW2, yeah 1941 to 1945, I come out in 15th Nov 45 and went to work on the 25th, but I didn't stay out of work I went right to work, army check or not I went right to work. When I

lived in a hoovers vile I was working all these different area mines then. Then I went to service, well before I went to service I meet my women, I went to service and I got a referral and got married, I got married and then after I got married and I got shipped overseas, and I was only there for over 7 years in the 7th fleet.

MB: Did you ever work for Berwind-White in those years?

EG: Who?

MB: Berwind-White, did you work for them or did you go there after WW2

EG: I went after WW2

MB: So were Berwind mines different mines?

EG: No, when I came back from the service I got a job at 37 upper. 37 upper in 1958 they had that big strike and big lay off. And I went from 37 over here to 40 and I worked there until they shut down.

MB: So you did work from about 45 until they shut down, so you had a lot of different experiences. And did you work in other mines after that?

EG: No I retired then

MB: Well let me back up and tell me about meeting your wife, Where did you get married, you came back from the service, where did you meet her?

EG: She lived in a little town called Scener, that town is in Somerset County you know where Scener is at?

MB: 38 mine?

EG: That's where they lived up in 38 up by the company store, and that's where I meet her and then I went to the service and then when I was in the service we decided to get married.

MB: What's her maiden name?

EG: [Marsichel]

MB: Is that Polish?

EG: No it's Czechoslovakian

MB: So was it common for someone of Welsh descent to marry someone of Eastern European decent?

EG: No

MB: No was it unusually?

EG: No

MB: Did it matter what Religion people were?

EG: No

MB: Well tell me about different places in the 30's when the Union came in? What can you tell me about getting the Union and so forth?

EG: Well I was working in Windber then and I a guy by the name of A martin, you know guys like John Lewis was going around and trying to put the Union together and they put A martin in charge of this district around here and they go around in these carts and get guys to sign up for the Union that's when we started organizing all Unions we organized Bethlehem Steel down Johnstown, we organized them all coal mines see one time both belong to UMWA then after that they split up. John L Lewis went UMWA all alone

MB: Once there were in the CIO together?

EG: Well they pulled away from that. They pulled away from the CIO in 1950. I'm not sure or that I'm not positive. I think in the 1950s we pulled away from them.

MB: Was it easier to unionize some towns more than others.

EG: Oh a lot of these places was rough, a lot of these places.

MB: tell me about that?

EG: Well a lot of these Ber joints you get in a lot of fights over the Union, a lot of scabs and stuff, and especially down by the 40 hotel down at the Zingy mountain house. Charades Hotel.

MB: Between the people who would work during strikes.

EG: And those who the company bring on Union guys for the Strikes and down here on the ball field you put tents up and you sleep in the tents.

MB: Do you remember that?

EG: Yes

MB: Do you remember you would have been a child, in 1922 there was a big regional strike. Do you remember anything about that? Was your father involved in anyway?

EG: 1922 we lived in Coalport, my father worked there on one side of the tracks is the Company on the other side of the tracks is Union. One side is Union the other side is no Union.

MB: That's was wicked

EG: Well I was kid then I still remember.

MB: Was that odd in this district there were some mines that weren't Union and some that were.

EG: Yes look around here, after they started to organize and stuff everybody commended the Union now there breaking away from it. I don't know why cause if it wasn't for the Union a lot of these people wouldn't have what they have, because they don't stop to realize if they wouldn't have the Union they wouldn't have what they have now, Like me now I'm on Pension now, and you take work that I get and insurance 1. 26 cent a month for funds pay for us you can't do it because you go pay for blue shield and blue cross they want 234 dollars a month to cover you and a lot of these old miners now their getting scared some even refuse to pay a nickel or dollar quarter dues. That's a shame.

MB: You're a member now of 5229

EG: I'm a past president

MB: Ok tell me about your offices and what you did with the Union?

EG: I been with the Union for 50 years, I just got my pin, when I come back for the service I started for Berwind-White, I started as an auditor, and after I was an auditor they elected me chairmen of the safety committee. And after that I was a Chairmen of the mine committee. After that I was elected vice president and then they elected me president. And I was president for 8 years, and when I had my lung removed for black lung because the by rules of the UWMA say that no retired miner is allowed in office. So Ed Crossman he was our Vice President and when I resigned he took over as president. Or probably I still be President down there.

MB: What years were you president

EG: 73,74,75,76, yeah up until 80 when I got my black lung.

MB: So you have black lung?

EG: Yes

MB: Can you tell me anything about how the Union got health and pension plans in the late 40s and 50s

EG: Well they got two pension plans set up, they got what you called the 1950 pension plan.

That is a pension plan set up for guys who were retired, but it was at a fixed salary 275 dollars that's all they got, that's under the 1950 pension plan.

MB: That's the total amount they got?

EG: that's the total amount they got, so many years they had in the mines, and when I went to the convention in Cincinnati Ohio, they changed that with the 1974 pension plan, then from the 1974 pension plan they paid you but so much for every year that you put in the mine. Then under the

74 plan, if you're retired under the 1974 plan depended on how many years in the mine which accumulated to a lot more money. See some of the guys got 700 dollars a month now on pension under the 74 but under the 50 there was no set salary.

MB: Was that for a month, 270 what?

EG: 275 dollars that's all they got for a month. But now it's different, yeah I got that from being in 50 years under the UMWA.

MB: What about the Hospitalization benefits, were here long enough to remember the whole thing about the Berwind-White?

MB EG: Burn the white hospital.

MB: How did the miners get in involved?

EG: Well, Windber hospital that was a Berwind-White Hospital, Berwind-White set that up for the Miners, and at one time all we paid was 8 dollars and 25 cent a month that covered everything you didn't have to pay nothing else, but when the Union came in and they started to get the Welfare a lot of guys would drop that 8 dollars and 50 cent from Berwind cause they figured it was no use because welfare still paid for it. That's was money going to waste, finally everybody started moving away from that hospital. Everybody then went on to funds from the UMWA

MB: When did they make that change was that eh 50's then?

EG: I couldn't tell you exactly what but a lot of people today still pay that 8 dollars and 50 cent to Berwind-White.

Mb: But they don't have that Hospital anymore do they?

EG: No, but the agreement was before they changed their hands to Windber clinic Willing, before Dr. George down believe me anyway who wanted to join that hospitalization had the right to keep their dues up as long as they paid but when they dropped out they were finished.

MB: So what kinds of changes have you seen throughout the years? Has the work in the mines changed a lot since you started at 16?

EG: Well I wasn't exactly 16 when I started, well everything was hand loading on the cutting machine and then you had to go in and chew it and load it by hand, and then after that guys like John L. Lewis said that more guys are going to start to see more sunshine and what he meet by that he was getting joy loaders in, joy loaders in you can do company work then, whatever the contract called for, I was a cutter then. We cut the plates, set the timber drill holes and all the spark fire would come around shoot the coal and then the joy loader would come in ship it out in belts and then after the joy loader the company figured it would get more out of them then miners and then eventually they replaced miners in the long run. And that's what took work away from the men machinery. If it wasn't for machinery these mines would probably still be in full blast.

MB: Today there's a lot more strip mining isn't that true?

EG: Yeas that's true a lot of places strip mine now, but before there was hardly any strip mining. Now today this whole area strip mines, coal going to come back.

MB: Oh really you think there's a lot of coal left in these hills.

EG: Oh yeah, there's a lot of coal, enough for my kids and their kids it's never run out.

MB: What were some of the issues that concerned miners in the 1930's that you worked with? And I guess getting the Union is one thing.

EG: Yeah that's the one thing we always wanted, we would call these massive meetings to hold them back in a field or something or somebody's barn and they would have a regular speaker there to tell you things what's going on, what benefits the Union would get for when the time would come, which would come true. And then we would all get together we said our quarrels, and we start grouping and joining Unions a little a time and finally we got them all year end.

MB: What were some of the issues, some of the companies made issues with dirty coal or something like that? Was some of their big problems have to do with that?

EG: Well when we was hand loading if you got over 20 pounds or 30 pounds of work on the time card you get two days off. And it just depends how much dirt you get on the coal, you bring it outside they put it on the side track they have two guys there, unload that coal from that cart and then their screaming dirt out and say, "Hey you got dirt" and if you had too much dirt in there like 30 pounds they give you two days off. Its dirty coal

MB: So did the Union take up this issue?

EG: After we got the union in a little changes was made here we got higher wages and shorter hours, we go down to a 40 hour week and from there we start gradually coming up the hill, more wages more wages.

MB: In the 30's did people celebrate Labor Day very much?

EG: NO, not too much, not like they do it now.

MB: Did Windber have some pretty big parades?

EG: Yeah we used to celebrate what we called Mitchel day.

MB: Yeah?

EG: Yeah, they used to have pretty good rallies though.

MB: Yea, well before Unions came in did companies pay very much like if someone died in the mines or an accident did they pay? You have a lot of experience with different companies.

EG: No

Mb: What would a widow of the family get for well with any of the companies?

EG: As far as I can remember if a widow in the 30's just before we got the Union, because I can remember this, cause one of my neighbors in Hosville, number three where I lived, her husband got killed in Windber, roof fall and the company all they gave here was free rent that's all.

MB: Nothing else?

EG: No, and then what they used to have in the company store what they called a script, you say maybe you go in there today you and your buddy maybe you load 10 or 15 pounds wells that's split in half, end of the shift the superintendent would send that report back to the company store, and if you wanted anything they would have to go and look how much you made today before they give you anything. A lot of people only make 50 cent on their pay day. A lot of them get 50 cent that's all, you had to buy in the company store, if you didn't but in the company store they would kick you out. When the Union came in that stopped.

MB: What if somebody or a miner got sick, what happened they didn't get any benefits them?

EG: Nope, then if your hurt or anything well compensation would pay. From the

MB: State of PA?

EG: PA state compensation, 1938 and 1939 I believe it was, I worked in Kelso and I got my back broke I was in a rock fall and I was in there for about 11 hours before they got me out. Then I wore a cast for 19 months, and my compensation was only 7 dollars and 50 cent a week. That's all.

MB: What year did you have that accident?

EG: I think that was 38 or 39

MB: Before you were in the service then?

EG: Oh yea, 38 or 39 was.

MB: Well when you came back from the service, you weren't here when John L Lewis had the strike during the war then?

EG: No, no.

MB: What strikes do you remember?

EG: I was in all of them, ever since the Union started, 1940 when I went into the service and until I came out and after 45 I was in all strikes I was involved in all of them.

MB: Did you have to lead any as president?

EG: Oh we had some pretty rough ones here, 74 we had some nice ones, and 68 we had some tough ones, that's was up in Somerset county, yeah I was involved in all of them.

MB: My dissertation focuses on this Windber area here, at one time the local like the one you belonged to 5229 has a large membership.

EG: At one time 5229 was the largest local in District 2 well over 2300 members.

MB: About when was that?

EG: That was up until 1958 when that big lay off was, then after that it started to wither away the mines started to shut down. We was the biggest local in district two.

MB: Just as Windber 6186

EG: Oh yeah we was the biggest in all of district 2

MB: Do you know what the membership is now?

EG: Right now it's about 46 working members, and 300 something pensioners.

MB: Well it must have been hard to start seeing all these people leave the region.

EG: Yeah a lot of buddy's left, died, go there go there, a lot of went to the city.

MB: But you stayed here.

EG: I stayed here and worked in the mines until 1980 when I retired, I had to retire I had no choice, lung was taken out.

MB: Were you in any other accidents besides the one that broke your back the one time.

EG: A lot of small ones, hand busting, and my hand would always get busted on the machine.

My hands would get busted a lot on the Jacks.

MB: We you afraid in the mines for things?

EG: No, it never bothered me, I never had no fear.

MB: No your father had been a miner, but your grandfather hadn't been.

EG: No he was

MB: He had been.

EG: Yeah he lived down in West Virginia.

MB: And your father's father was a miner.

EG: And so was my mother's father.

MB: So you come from a tradition of miners?

EG: Oh yeah way back.

MB: So did you have any children?

EG: Yea

MB: Girl or boy

EG: Boy, he'll be 47 in July.

MB: Did he go into the mines at all?

EG: No, I put him through college and then he went on to work for Deriy Electronics. After we sent him to derive college out in Indiana, I wanted him to be a lawyer. Because how long did he work?

EG: He did work in the mine, for maybe a year or two in Bethlehem and he didn't like it .I started to get into the acts and the united mine workers. So he quit and started to work for the Cooley brothers down on the strip job and he still is working there today.

MB: I was wondering since you have some experience now, some people love John L Lewis, some people though he was too dictatorial and not democratic. What did you think?

EG: Well I had a quite few hearings with him.

MB: Oh did you?

EG: Oh yeah I was one of the ones, everybody knows me leading district movements, holding down motions, when I go on a case I spoke my mind, If I was right I was right, If I was wrong they had to prove it to me. One meeting we had down in Washington D.C. John L Lewis threw me out of the office. So he said I didn't shut up he would put me in jail which he had the power to do then. Powerful man, but that didn't shut me up still wanted an answer to why they shut 37 down. Why us fellas with more seniority didn't get a job over in 40. They overruled us, it was a different mine. Under the constitution, he was right and I was wrong, everybody around here knows me when I had something to say I said it. I wanted proof but I was wrong they had to. And I'm still on compact duty, I'm chairman of the compact committee

MB: Really is that political action?

EG: Yeah we have a meeting Friday up Ebensburg up Candle light, I'm still chairman of that. But I'm going to give that up, 71 is to

MB: Too hard huh, well what have you done with that, when did you join that?

EG: When I first came out?

MB: So what were some of the things you did with that?

EG: Its, compact is more political issues and stuff, and sale and safety you know that kind of stuff.

MB: Does that get involved with elections too? Do you find people to support that?

EG: We support for this and that and then you have to bring safety issues up around the mines, safety committees bring their reports there. Then you have the special meeting there and then you hold it then on down there and watch. A lot of running around.

MB: Sounds very busy, so you been pretty active with the Union.

EG: Oh I'm still active, but you see I don't have too much wind, I have to watch what I do now.

MB: Boy all those years, what did you think of James mark the president following those years?

EG: Mark, he was a good president because he was another good one.

MB: There aren't a lot of working mines right now?

EG: No

MB: Which ones around here are still working?

EG: I think up in Somerset there's only one or two Union mines, the rest are scabs.

MB: Gemstown has a long strike right now going on two years?

EG: yea, Cambria County they don't have too many working anymore.

End of Tape 1 Side A

Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (October 1, 1986)

EG: I think our membership has withered down to about 1100 in district tow, that's about all we have now.

MB: Have you been to any convictions?

EG: Oh yeah I been to a lot of convictions ever since 1945, when I joined the Union. They said I was active in the Union that I took interest in Union.

MB: So you were sent as a delegate for the local and you went to a lot of them?

EG: Yea, they seen that I was active in the Union, and I was a rough one everybody around here I was a rough one when I was younger

MB: Did the Sabronski and Mabroyo thing cause problems?

EG: No, that didn't cause too much, you see Arnold Miller when he came in he tried to up sit Bolye, that's when Sabronshi got killed, and after that things started to change drastically.

MB: For better or for the worst?

EG: Well a little some started to change for the better and the worst. Because the way that is now, you got a good friend they will appoint you, before John L Lewis if you was a good man he put you in there, if you was no good then you didn't get it regardless, but now it's different you go by votes now. If say here in district two like Paul Gornissav just made president they reelected him. If you got a lot of friends you'll get in. If a guy runs against him and if he has got a lot of friends he beat him. That's politics.

MB: Well this area has so many different nationalities and languages, and all of that was that hard to get people when they tried to organize? Was their conflict when they got together?

MB: A lot of these fellas couldn't understand English, a lot of them couldn't even talk English. But we had guys that could talk English and they would talk to them and stuff, but we didn't have too much trouble.

MB: Do you remember any of the organizers that came. Like Dominic Giuliani

EG: Yea, Degrada, I know all them, old Fubert he used to be our board member, Carson Bruno he used to be or board member. Stanley Picus

MB: They could speak the languages so the old timers who didn't speak much English could understand.

EG: Stanley Picus taught them, I think he could speak 4 or 5 different languages. He was a good fella.

MB: Well also there would have been that, but politically the Republicans would have been much more powerful than these coal towns.

EG: They wasn't, they wasn't. See at one time there before the Union got strong the companies would come around and say "Hey you vote for me, you don't down the road you go. Then that broke up.

MB: How would they enforce them, how would they know who voted?

EG: I don't know that's a good question, but they know

MB: They know, do you know anyone that actually was thrown out?

EG: No, I couldn't say for sure about.

MB: Ok, I know that a lot of foreign people could not vote, and so that was a problem I understand that the Union ran a citizenship school?

EG: Same as in Hovetsville, my neighbor Soutlis he was a Hungarian. He was no citizen, he didn't have a vote or nothing he was just like a black sheep. Running out to feel alone, but he finally got his citizenship papers.

MB: I guess the Union did have drives to get people to get citizenship papers so they could vote then.

EG: Oh yeah they had the community building there, they had a meeting with the foreign people every week to teach them about citizenship and stuff.

MB: I just think it would be really hard to get all those people together because these things.

EG: We had a colored fella down in Hovesvile, Harvey Green, his was the only colored family there, and he was a good fella. He could talk three different types of languages.

MB: Could he?

EG: Yes

Mb: Was there any kind of prejudice to him because he was black?

EG: No, he was the only black people down there, down in what you call maple ridge, I think it was 3 or 4 them, up in number three where I lived there were two families that lived up there but they didn't stay two long they didn't like it up there. They didn't want to work in the mine, they worked in the mine for about 2 or 3 weeks and said that's too hard work for them.

MB: Well you been to all different types of coal towns, do you think there all very similar?

EG: Well it just depends what part of the country you go to. Some it's how you made it. You can make a batch for yourself and it will be good it depends on your attitude.

MB: Is there anything striking about Windber and Scalp that you thought when you lived there that was different than any other town that you lived in.

EG: Bigger communities and stuff, we had more mines around here close to work, see in Hovers vile at number three where I worked, we had to walk from there to Windber 4 and 5 and a miles to work, work all day and then have to walk home.

MB: Tiring.

EG: Especially in the winter time you come home and you're all soak and wet. And you come home didn't have no shower so you had to wash in a tub. You took your clothes off and stand them up by the stove, they stand up themselves and you would think you was in them.

MB: That mine doesn't still operate in Hoversvile?

EG: No that shut down, Knicker Bocker shut in the 40's I don't know for sure, because after I left her I went to service and I never went back there. They said I started a fight while I was in Hoversvile I was a boxer.

MB: Oh you were a boxer?

EG: Yes

MB: That was not unusual there were boxing matches around there weren't there

EG: Yeah we had them everywhere, Windber, St Michael, Evansburg, and Somerset all over I used to fight all over.

MB: How has entertainment changed, what did people use to do for fun?

EG: Well before I used to go with my wife they used to have a color band up there, round square dance all the time we couldn't wait for Saturday. But todays different they do the jigaboo and all that stuff.

MB: So there were dances?

EG: Yes, and on the weekends we would get together go out but a keg of beer and have picnics. It's a lot different than it is today. You didn't hear about young kids smoking dope and stuff them.

MB: Did the Unions sponsor picnics and stuff like that?

EG: yea

MB: Do you remember anything about that?

EG: Well back here in Windber we used to hold pig picnics at 4 days a time, all of them here had picnics, we had big picnics, but gradually the mines started to down and gradually no more. We are poor these days,

MB: Did you belong to any clubs at all?

EG: I belonged to the falcons I belonged to the Polish club, the Angles and American Legion, the veterans that fought in the war.

MB: Was the Veterans that fought in the war, is that were the Union used to meet sometimes?

EG: Yes

MB: I don't know if you know enough about Windber and scalp but one time Berwind-White wouldn't let anyone use the halls for meetings?

EG: No they wouldn't.

MB: How did they break through and finally someone said you can rent or hall and let you have a meeting here?

EG: Well I think uh, especially over here in 40 we used to hold over here in 40 in a garage, Stafankco I think his name was, he use to hold it in his Garage. I don't know if you know him or not, he use to hold it in his garage, then finally Berwind-White ceded, the Union started to get stronger and stronger. And they gave up.

MB: Did you ever belong to a fraternal society, before the Union a lot miners, especially foreigners had insurance plans, and did your family ever belong.

EG: No, never belonged to any.

MB: No because some people did there was any insurance for them.

MB: Do you think the relationship, this is something that always intrigued me, the relationship between Windber and Scalp has changed a lot visa ve Johnstown and the transportation and the roads, was it isolated I guess is what I'm asking or were there lots of bonds with other towns.

EG: Well you take Scalp and 40 you take separate people and each one has their own Mayor and stuff like that. And there still running it the same way, they still have the same down there, same

as up here in Richland where I live. See when I lived here there was only two lanes down there now there are only 5 of them. My grounds used to go way out there.

MB: Oh you lost a lot of that?

EG: Yea, see at one time up here in Richland there was only I say two lanes from here clear way out there. Then when I moved here in 1950 we built this house out here in 1960 that's when they was putting the road up and now is police up here. Herb McDonald, Me and Davis but now I guess it's about 15 or 20 of them.

MB: Were miners able to be in contact with people in other towns in the old days of the 20's and you were growing up in the 30's, because miners moved so much and it strikes so much because there were trains, do you have the feeling that coal towns were sort of isolated or is that a false impression of them?

EG: No I don't think it was, when they knew that you were a miner, you go in there at different times and they know that you is a miner. The treated you pretty good, the experienced I had when I traveled around the state and we go on the picket line or anything like that, you go into a say place like Rockford or Somerset a lot of those places there was a Union, but still if you went in there they wouldn't hold nothing against you. Deep down in their heart they want to belong to a Union but they can't, because if they join their fired. It's hard and they don't want to take a stand, but we'll get them, were going to get them.

MB: So you see so many changes, do you remember and you wouldn't of lived here but you would have been in Hoverville part of it maybe. Was the President of the district named John Brophy, do remember?

EG: District 2?

MB: Yeah he was once

EG: Was he ever president here in District 2?

MB: Well he was during WW1, when you were a first born?

EG: No I don't remember him

MB: Or Powers Half good who were involved in anti-Lewis, and you were too young.

EG: John L Lewis took it over when we first started organizing around here, he was or organizer here, A Martin was the first organizer around here when we started our big push around here.

MB: What was he like?

EG: He was a rough one, he was rough, when he said something he meant it, he was John L Lewis right hand man back when he was an organizer.

MB: Did a lot of the companies try to forum their own company Unions?

EG: Oh yea, they also done this, they also done that, but at first the men thought the companies was telling the truth but 3 or 4 months they found out how the companies was lying and fouling around and they found out that John L Lewis was telling the truth, because they organized a section up here at St Lake and Barnsburg, and over here in Spangler, that was a big scab holder in Spangler they had a big barracks building over there. And they had scabs living over there because they was too scared to come out. They lived right there and they worked, well that wasn't no life they found out later on figured they can't go see their families, they too scared to go see their families because Barnsburg and Spangler is real close together, Carrolltown a little closer, they was scared to get the hell knocked out of them. They finally decided that they would join the Union too. Finally they got them together.

MB: So those were rough times?

EG: Oh they was, I never want to see it again.

MB: So do you remember when the Wagner act came in and so force and the Taft harty?

EG: Oh that ruined us, and that other case

MB: Blander Grifford Act

EG: Blacken shift case boy that really blanket us.

MB: What are concerns of petitioners right now?

EG: Well I'll tell ya a lot of pensioners is getting worried cause you know membership is going down and down, and all the 1950's pensioners they all dying off. Now they 1974 pensioners their getting all this high money, that treasurer is he going to be keeping up like that forever. I look for it to be cut pretty soon, they going to do them just like the 1950's pension plan they cut it way back. See the one time they cut their pension back it was 105 dollars a month cause they didn't have no money, but they got more money now, how long is it going to last, it can't last too long if you keep drawing that big money and no royalties are going into the funds that's impossible.

MB: Is somebody from 5229 going to go down to the big international convention this month?

EG: No I was supposed to go but...

MB: You don't feel too well?

EG: Atlanta is too far for me, so we gave or credentials to or president in district 2 Paul Gormish, so he going to represent our local. It's different from when we was working, you take for instance when I first started working in the mine my mother and father was strict with me, I worked two weeks I make 25 or 30 dollars, but if you made 40 dollars in town weeks that was big money. Payday come Dad would give me 50 cent to a dollar, he say "Here son that's good until the next pay day". That's all I would get, now a kid he go out on a Saturday night, you don't give him 20 over 50 he's no good. The kids today are definitely spoiled.

MB: But you had to give your paycheck over to your parents?

EG: Yea, today they don't want to give nothing out.

MB: Did your parents keep borders when you were growing up?

EG: No

MB: They never kept any borders?

EG: No, my wife's she had a lot of borders.

Wife: I think everyone did then, because really it was like a new town coming up and the men didn't have no place to stay.

MB: Maybe you would like to do an interview with me?

Wife: Oh I don't have nothing to say.

EG: When I went to school we only had one room and one teacher, 5 6 7 8 grade, not today, they got a teacher for everything. With then you only had one teacher in one little wooden classroom.

MB: Now did you graduate from 8th grade, you didn't go to high school at all?

EG: no, eighth grade, right after I finished 8th grade I went right to work.

MB: That was usually wasn't it?

EG: Yeah very of them was in high school, right away they wanted to go in the mine.

MB: What about the girls what did they do? Did they just look forward to getting married?

EG: Just get married yeah

MB: Did they go to high school much?

EG: Some of them, but most of the when they finished 8th grade they become 16 when you had to become 16 and quit school. And if your 16 you could quit school, if you wasn't 16 you still had to go.

MB: Did you like or dislike school?

EG: It didn't bother me too much, it bothered me too much because I wanted to go to work, you take 1935 after we first had our first or was that 34 when we first brought a brand new Plymouth

for 950 dollars now look what they cost, but see we lived on a farm out there I used to go out on a horse and buggy.

MB: Did your parents grow food then?

EG: On yeah, we had a big farm there in Yuri.

MB: Did your father also mine at that time?

EG: Oh yea

MB: You did both

EG: Yea

MB: Was that uncommon, for farmers to do both?

EG: Yea, you come to a place when he had to quit the mine so he could keep the farm up because he couldn't do both. Which was the truth, there's a lot of hard work on the farm. I know we used to go work on the farm for 50 cents a day.

MB: S you saw those changes too, did a lot of people speak different languages when you went to school.

EG: Yeah Hungarians, Italians, Polish, Czechoslovakian, and Russian

MB: But you spoke English all your life because it was in the home, it wasn't like the farm born first generation people who grew up with their parents who grew up speaking other languages and they had to learn it at school.

EG: Well you see my women she learnt her's from her parents, no all we had to do was talk English.

MB: Do you remember anything to say about the company stores in the area.

EG: Well at one time if you didn't deal with the company store you didn't have a job. They forced you to deal at the company store.

MB: Do you know when Rican left, when they closed down in Windber?

EG: No I don't remember it wasn't too long, it was 50 when they closed.

End of Tape 1 Side B

End of Interview