

INTERVIEW OF JOSEPH ZAHURAK
By Mildred Allen Beik

October 7, 1986
Windber, PA

MB = Mildred Beik

JZ = Joseph Zahurak (1902-1989)

Beginning of Tape 1 Side A (October 7, 1986)

JZ: You remember Andy King, don't you? He was a good friend of your brother's [father's].

MB: Oh, huh, goodness. Small world.

JZ: Because your brother [father] was involved in 1922 up here. Him and I, we were both blackballed then.

MB: Yeah. You've got to tell me all of that. But maybe we should start systematically now [that] this [machine] is running and going well. Why don't you tell me what your full name is so we have that, and when you were born and where?

JZ: My name is Joe Zahurak, a lifetime resident here of Windber, Pennsylvania, and employed by the Berwind-White all those years, all but the two years we were blackballed out of here from 1922 to 1924. We had to get out of here and moved out to Indiana County, where, after John L. Lewis finally signed the contract with the union mines to go back to work so that they could support the non-union captive mines, like Windber, Berwind-White, and Bethlehem Steel, US Steel, for the union was not very strong financially in them days. So the union miners signed a contract and went back to work, and the miners was assessed \$12.50 a pay, that's in two weeks and \$25 a month, to contribute towards the people that were still out on strike. But at that time, in 1922, it was still not quite enough to maintain them. But it helped a lot at that time.

MB: Mr. Zahurak, was there any anger about Lewis signing the national contract of the miners among [the miners in] Windber because they were left out? I've always wondered that, if they were.

JZ: What's that?

MB: About Windber, about the Somerset County, miners being left out of the contract Lewis signed. Were people angry with that at all?

JZ: Oh yes.

MB: They were?

JZ: After 1922, that give the coal company an idea to discourage the ones that was out on strike. And they put out their men--that they had certain few in each nationality. They had the Italians up there. In the Italians there was Old Man Rich, they called [him]. He was a weigh boss for Berwind-White, and Dominic Marino. He was a foreman of construction, of ditch diggers and everything. And Sam Bertino and Frank Senillo [spelling?]. These Italians that they had to influence the Italians up there. They had the nationalities pretty well divided.

MB: I see. Okay.

JZ: Italians was in one district up there and had their Italian clubs, social clubs, the church, and everything up there. Then the Polishes, they had their set-up in the west end of town here in Windber, where there was mostly Slovak, Polish, and some of the Russians. They were down here in the west end of town in Windber, and each nationality had a leader or two that these miners give their faith in them men. Whatever they decide there was going wrong, what they should do. So finally these here obligated were men [obligated] to Berwind-White, they would, after several months of striking, they started discouraging the miners. There's not going to be anything to it. They'd better go back to work. 'Cause they're not going to get nowhere, and Berwind-White never did--or never will--recognize the organization--the United Mine Workers.

JZ: So that strike went on through 1922, 1923, and by 1924, the people began to get discouraged because the only assistance they would get is the union had a set-up, like a grocery store, and cold meats like bacon and things like that there. The union men would go in with their slip, with a credit card like, and on there stated the amount of people they had in their family. They would go to this store, the union store was supplying it, and they would get the amount of food--like beans, flour, bacon, eggs, whatever was donated--lots of them from people who tried to help out. This was the only living they had in that way.

JZ: Because the ones that were out on strike then for a while then, they was evicted. They was evicted from their homes. Now up here at 35 and 36 the first family that was evicted, maybe they give them 12 or 15 hours time. But Berwind-White, Johnstown Traction Company, Bethlehem Steel, Frick Coal Company, all them, they was in together.

JZ: Berwind-White run the Borough. They run Windber. They had all their general office employees--what they call the monthly payroll--they was all Council and Burgesses running the town, and they also run the county--Somerset County. Whatever they wanted, they went up to the judge, and the judge cooperated with them because the miners did not have their political freedom. It was taken away. Berwind-White says, "You've got a job, and if you're a citizen, all right, how are you registered?" You had to be a Republican, or else you didn't get much consideration. So when election days would come, why, they made sure that you went down there and voted--as they wanted you.

JZ: So everything in there, like the Borough Council, was all from the general office, the head of the engineers, the departments, and all of those, the burgess, the mayor that first that was in here by the name of Mr. Delehunt, and he was a Democrat. He was an Irishman but a good Democrat. So he was a liberal. So he was assistant mine foreman for Berwind-White at that time.

MB: Now, this was early in the century?

JZ: This was in 1922. Before '22 yet.

MB: Before '22.

JZ: So Mr. Delehunt was the mayor, the burgess, in there. So they left him serve out, I think, one or two terms, four-year terms. Then, after that, he was replaced by Mr. Barefoot, Blaine Barefoot. Now he was a staunch Republican and a Berwind-White man. He was general manager of all construction workers on the outside around the mines, around the tipples, and places there where he had a crew all the time taking care of him. He worked part-time as a burgess or mayor because you'd get brawls and different things, disagreements among the miners. Instead of sending them to the justice of the peace and everything, why,

he'd try to settle it over there. And if you was a favorite of his, you got off with a slap on the hand, what they call. But if you was not, then you was fined and penalized or even put in jail. So that [was the] kind of rule that they had set up at that time. They had everything in their hands. Same thing with the county court. We had the union in here organizing, and we got, the organizers finally brought in the miners' journal that's still in existence today. That was the miners', operated and printed by, the United Mine Workers' Journal. They brought some of them journal, papers and magazines, into Windber here, and we passed them out to the miners. And when we passed them out to the miners, well, they always had their stool pigeons--which you called [them]--at each mine. Or the bartenders. In every bar room, there was a bartender who was a stool pigeon, and the social clubs and every place else. You had to be careful what you said or what you done.

MB: I see.

JZ: And they reported back to the Berwind-White, and the next day, if you was involved or anything like that, it was, the report went to the General Office to Assistant General Manager--which was then Bob Baylor. And Mr. Booker in '22, he was the General Manager here at Berwind-White. So they was notified about this union paper coming in here and pretty soon they round us up--me Joe Zahurak, and Andy Kada here in the Hungarians, and Mike Magazzu in the Italians and O'Neil [spelling?] in the Irish and then Dan Murray was another Irishman. He was the president, then, [of the UMWA local] temporarily established here. And we was all taken up into the Somerset court, and they wanted to know who distributed that union paper that wasn't allowed.

MB: You [emphasis] were taken, Mr. Zahurak?

JZ: That's right. We had that trial in Somerset court, and they wanted to get down to the roots of it. Who brought them and distributed that union magazine paper here in the hometown. They said that Berwind-White is running the town. Berwind-White would not leave no other industry into this town, only coal-mining, 'cause they had quite a few mines here, about eight or ten, so they wanted to know who brought that paper in here and

everything to try to penalize them if they might when they got down to it. But everybody stuck to the story, stuck pretty good and everything else, and they never did find out, but they was all put on probation after that, at that time.

MB: You [emphasis] were put on probation?

JZ: It was a crime [emphasis] to come in here with literature at that time, you see.

MB: How old were you then, Mr. Zahurak?

JZ: I was twenty years of age.

MB: Okay, now, what's your birthdate?

JZ: February 7, 1902, and Austria-Hungary was where I was born. When I come here, I was coming here with the clothes on. (MB laughs.) I was two years old.

MB: Two years old? Oh, boy.

JZ: Yeah. My Dad come from Europe, from Austria-Hungary, here in about 1901 after he was married. So we had some relations up here in Mine 33, they called it. So he came over here from Europe to get a job here. And then, in 1904, my mother and her youngest brother and me--the only son that they had at that time--we migrated over here to meet them here. And he was working up in Mine 33.

MB: Do you know what village your family came from?

JZ: Now after that we could go into some that I recall of 1906.

MB: Okay, well yeah, I'd like to. You can remember that? You would have been only four.

JZ: I was only four years of age, but I can remember some of it.

MB: Okay.

JZ: Some highlights. The state police being in here guarding for Berwind-White on horses.

MB: Oh.

JZ: So I was about four years old then, in 1904 [1906], and then the stories that my father and my mother and boarders used to discuss about the working conditions and everything that went. And John Mitchell was elected president in the hard coal.

MB: Um, hum.

JZ: In about 1906. So he had the miners out on strike over there because that was the only place that was organized, in the anthracite there. So there was a lot of Slovak people nationality down there in the hard coal region, down through there. So some of them was blackballed from down there. Then they come over here to the soft coal. And they used to talk to these miners here then about what a difference between being organized and not being organized.

MB: Oh, really?

JZ: So my Dad, he was the kind of a man that, whenever he'd go into a bar room and start a discussion or anything, and he would stick up for the workingman. Because he had relations from the hard coal, and they told him everything about what was what over there and what the difference was. So, on the week end, these miners would probably go the bar room and have a few drinks and discuss the matter, the working conditions especially. And every hotel had a bartender in there that knew these men, who they were, and they memorized the exact conversation, if they complained about the way they was treated, see, on a Saturday night in a bar room. Then, when these men went to work on Monday morning, the assistant foreman'd come over when they were sitting in a mantrip car ready to go into the mine, and they'd say, "Hey, Joe, the mine foreman wants to see you." So he'd get out of the mantrip and go up to the mine foreman. The mine foreman would begin to ask, "What's the matter? Don't you like the way you're treated over here? I'll write a report." He was complaining about the working conditions. "If you don't like it here, you just take your tools and get out of here." See, now they'd say, "Now, don't let that happen again."

JZ: So my Dad was evicted in 1906 from Mine 33 during the 1906 strike. They went on strike here, the miners, in sympathy with the hard coal over there, but as I said, they had the nationalities split up so they didn't stick together good enough. They come out on strike but not 100%. The Italians, they dominated the 35 mine, the Hungarians like 36 mine and 40, and the Polishes and all them nationalities, separated, but they couldn't get together and discuss things and it discouraged them.

JZ: So I heard from my mother and my father. They talked about it a lot of times. In 1906 strike, Berwind-White, they employed the state police to come in here. Now, protecting-- officer groups are supposed to protect the state, Pennsylvania state, residents. They come in here as strikebreakers for Berwind-White, and they put out the rule--borough rule--that there wasn't allowed no more than two men together on the street. Like in town they used to call them, what they call, drug store cowboys. In front of a drugstore and talk, a group would meet and anything. So they made a rule, only two men in a group. If there was more than two men, the state police come there on the horseback and get in between them and divide them up. And some of them wouldn't listen, so right on Graham Avenue and Main Street, the state police dominated the Windber Fire Hall. That's the fire hall they use now. It's a meeting room upstairs. From the upstairs window, they would shoot--actually shoot--at the coal miners. Some of them they hit in the arm, and they lost their arm. Some they hit in the leg, and they lost their leg. There was half a dozen or more that was damaged that way. And the hospital belonged to Berwind-White. When they take them up there, instead of trying to save the arm or leg, they cut it off. Then these men, the only livelihood that they had after that, is to go from house to house is begging for a living, if they wanted to say around here.

JZ: So my Dad, he got a job from a hotel owner by the name of Mr. Duncan. He was in the lumber business up back of mine 33. So he was a pretty good working man, so he used to patronize him in his hotel once in a while. So he gave my Dad a job in the lumber camp then that he had there, the saw mill, while the strike lasted. So in the meantime we lived on the corner of 19th Street and Somerset Avenue, down where Solomons had a store. The store's still there, but it's not a store now anymore, but Solomons built it. The Solomons had a few homes on 19th Street. So they put us up after we was evicted.

MB: Oh, they helped [emphasis] you.

JZ: The Solomons did. So we stayed in there until the strike--It didn't last long, like I said, in 1906 because the men didn't cooperate and they wouldn't stick. They couldn't get

together or anything. Nothing was allowed in here. So then gradually they turned around and had to go back to work.

JZ: And the strike in hard coal, that continued there until it got into almost 1908. That's when John Mitchell came out real strong. He wanted the 8-hour day. So finally, Teddy Roosevelt, he was a Republican, an uncle of FDR's. He took a trip from Washington, DC, on a train into the strike region, into Scranton over there. And he got the coal operators and the union representatives together, and he got a settlement out there then, from a 10 or 12 hour day, he got the 8-hour day. So John Mitchell become famous over that, the 8-hour day. And so, they went back to work.

MB: Now, do you remember that, or did you mostly hear about this later?

JZ: No.

MB: You don't remember that personally.

JZ: No. So then, in Windber here, after that, that was the first attempt to strike. After that there was no more strikes here in Windber because it was no use. They couldn't do anything after 1906.

MB: Did the state police stay a long time?

JZ: They [the miners] come out on the field in 1922. That's when they first get out there. The haulage men of Berwind-White--the haulage men, I mean mine motormen and spraggers. They was in contact with all the miners in the mine because they always ordered their cars, the amount of empty cars that they wanted or the loads that they pulled out, the haulage men. So the haulage men got together in 1922 to get it organized to come out on strike, and we avoided these people that--informers. Make sure they didn't contact them so they don't know anything about it. So in 1922, when April 1st come, a union holiday, they surprised Berwind-White, shut them down completely [emphasis]. Even the captive mines, Bethlehem Steel, US Steel, and all them. They was all shut down. And Frick Coal Company in Pittsburgh. So in 1922, it was quite a battle.

MB: Now, when did you start working in the mines, Mr. Zahurak? Would you tell me that and what you did?

JZ: I started in the mine about 1916. I was about 14 years of age.

MB: Did you go in with your father?

JZ: And I started in there with my father in there. Then later on the mine foreman told me. He got another buddy in there, one of his brother-in-laws, my Dad, my mother's brother, he came in, and the mine foreman gave me a job, what they called as a trapper boy then, opening doors for traffic. That was back early in 1917.

JZ: So, in 1918, I had a mine accident and injury where the dispatcher at the mines--that's the motor boss. He'd like, he'd ask, the mine motormen and spraggers, before they went, what to do, when to start, start and everything else. And on a Russian holiday here then, they had, there was a lot of these motormen was off and spraggers for celebrating the Russian holiday. So the motorboss come into the mantrip by me and my Dad and says, "Boy, I need a spragger. We're short of spraggers."

JZ: "Well," I said, "I've never spragged before. I can't sprag." Now the state mining law said you must be 18 years or older before they can use you on the haulage as spragger and mine motorman. And I was only 16. But they detected the law. They had their own law here. So he told me. "You either go in spragging," he says, "or you go home if you're not going to work."

JZ: "Well," I said, "My Dad, how is he going to work himself?" Never mind your Dad. We'll take care of him. But if you go in with your Dad, you not going to get no cars." So finally I went spragging. When I went spragging, that's when I got injured pretty bad.

MB: Oh. The first day you tried to do that.

JZ: Another trip come and hit the back end of our trip, and I was a spragger on that last car. And I landed in the hospital, and I was six months in bed. And for one straight year, four operations on my arm, and the ribs there and everything was broken, partially disabled. And I was in the hospital for one year, and another year I was at home again on compensation.

That's two years. And then I tried to get partial disability in miners'--what they had--the compensation department. But Berwind-White had their own compensation department set up here. And he would investigate and cooperate with the doctors in the hospital. And he would always be up there to make sure that the doctors send the men back to work already to get them off compensation. So I didn't get off until after two years, though, because I was injured pretty bad.

JZ: So after two years I was off and everything. I went down. My relations advice from Johnstown [was] that there was a good attorney in Johnstown, Percy Allen Rose. And they says, "Why don't you go see him? Maybe he'll help you out." So I went down to see Percy Allen Rose, and I took the Reverend of our church, John Lach. He just passed away not too long ago. From the Slovak church. He come along with me as the spokesman at that time. So we went to talk to this Percy Allen Rose, showed him my injury, what happened and everything else, all of us. So after we was through, he picked up the telephone and called up the General Office, "Why don't you give this boy a job and put him back to work?" So I had to come back. So they give me a job outside, washing trolley poles and things like that.

MB: What mine did you work in?

JZ: 36.

MB: 36? Is this 1921 or--?

JZ: 36. That's where I was injured. In mine 36. So they give me a job outside then. So now I had to work with, I had to stock timber and things like that there. So from then, after the 1922 strike comes, when I come out in sympathy with the miners. So we went along with the strike as I said. I was blackballed along with my brother-in-law at that time, my brother-in-law Andy Kada, Mike Magazzu from the Italians, Joe Jasway from the Hungarians, and quite a few--numerous others.

MB: Now you had this trial.

JZ: We kept these miners out pretty good.

MB: Yeah.

JZ: Finally we found out about some of the miners that was talking that they're going to go back to work--[those] with larger families. So I--Joe Zahurak--I went with Andy Kada, my buddy. We travelled together. He had a car. And we talked to these miners [to try to keep them] from going back to work. I could talk the Slovak, Hungarian, Polish, Russian. I understand all of them, I do. Also, my buddy, my friend Andy Kada, he was a very good talker in there, but he was in Hungarian, he could talk. We tried to talk [to] these men [to keep them] from going in. The first thing, you know, why their wives reported us to the mine superintendent--

MB: Their wives?

JZ: (Shaking head yes). Mr. Cook at 35 and 36 and Mine 42, he had. So after that, when we tried that, why then, they [Berwind-White] already had the big, huge Coal and Iron Police strikebreakers. Berwind-White employed them at all these mines here that they had them here. They had them employed here at the mines to protect and make sure that there's nobody comes in here without knowing or reference where he was from and what he was coming in here for.

JZ: So we were reported about trying to get these men not to go back to work. So first thing we know, why, the Coal and Iron Police come and wrap on the door. And they ask my mother, "Is Joe home?" And she says, "Yeah." "Well, get him down here!" So I got six hours time--to get out of here.

MB: To get out of town?

JZ: (Shaking head yes), I was blackballed. And my friend then, Andy Kada, their family, I think, got twelve hours. The whole family had to move out. So we moved out of here. They had a relation friend in Scalp Level that run a bowling alley down there by the name of Joe Istvan [spelling?]. So he took them in for awhile. We stayed there in a clothes closet--broom closet--down there on cots.

JZ: So Andy Kada had a car at that time, a 1921 [unintelligible name of car] made by General Motors. We had to go in then to try to keep these miners out on strike and bring in

organizers. We had to go to Beaverdale to get a Slovak-speaking organizer--Mr. Slivco. We had to go to Nanty Glo to [get] the Hungarian-speaking organizer--which was Joe Foster. And we had Homer City [where there] was John Ghizzoni, and Charles Ghizzoni--was the Italian. And these organizers, they didn't dare come in here with their own car. You could not come in on the streetcar, the Johnstown Traction Company, because if they got on the streetcar in Johnstown, the Traction Company, the conductor would stop in Moxham and go to the dispatcher. And he would call the General Office that a "stranger" is on the streetcar, see, because they all knew the people [the organizers].

MB: Strangers?

JZ: The strangers are on the street car. They all knew who they are. So when the car arrived in Windber, the Berwinds' Coal and Iron Police was there. As soon as they [the organizers] got off, they wanted to know who they were, where they was from, what their business is. And when they found out, they told them: "If you know what's good for you, you'll get back on the streetcar and get back out of here." They wasn't allowed in here. So they had to get out.

JZ: So then my friend Andy Kada and myself--we would go and pick these organizers up and bring them in here on the car, and we'd have meetings in Windber, down in Scalp Level there [in what] they called Bantley Field, and meetings up in Central City on ball fields, meetings up in 42 mine and also meetings here in Windber.

JZ: You had all them nationalities at that time--that generation. You had to use the different nationality speakers to interest them in staying out.

MB: Right.

JZ: So that worked pretty good until we was just about ready to leave over here. We come out on April 1st. May, June, and after July 1st already was gone. So we delivered the organizers back home after they was here in Windber speaking. And the last one we delivered was to Beaverdale, Mr. Slivco. Then when we got back home from delivering, taking these organizers back home, we got back home here about two o'clock, 2:30 in the

morning, in the pool room where now Zigmond's [spelling?]. Kroskie's [spelling?] bar used to be in there. That was a pool room then, Znanecki [spelling?] then. We stayed there and parked the car on the outside. Then we went inside then to go in our closet, our broom closet room, to the cots to sleep. And we wasn't in there maybe one hour, not even quite sleeping yet, when all of a sudden, a big noise come up. And here the Coal and Iron Police come in there, and they dynamited the car.

MB: Oh!

JZ: So we could not haul the organizers in here after that. So one thing, we was working very hard to get places to meet. For meetings, for the miners. So the first place we started in, after we started meeting here, would be in private. Private owners. Mr. Nelson didn't mind if we met on 9th Street at his farm. That's the Nelson store on Graham Avenue. Mrs. Torquato, she was up there towards the cemeteries. And no relation to John Torquatos.

MB: Oh.

JZ: She had some land up there, farm land, a few acres. We met over there. And Mr. Hoffman, Dr. Hoffman's family here, was a farmer up here on the hill. And they allowed us to have meetings there in a cow pasture because the state police would not allow us to meet along the highway, no place. So we had to go either around the cemeteries or in Hoffman's farm or else up in Rummel up there.

JZ: So we had a meeting. The first meeting was scheduled here. And we was up in Hoffman's farm in the cow pasture up there. And we decided the next meeting, that was supposed to be the next Sunday, was in Hayes' [spelling?] ball field. Mr. Hayes run the dairy store up there, the ice cream parlor. It's still there. And a nice farm there. And he also had a baseball diamond down where Sheeby's [spelling?] garage is now. That belonged to Hayes. So he cooperated with us because he was a member of the Slovak Club from World War I and belonged to the band. So he promised us, we, the union, could meet on his ball field Sunday afternoon. So everything was all set for a mass meeting up there.

JZ: Finally on Sunday morning before the meeting, on Sunday morning about 11 o'clock, he called, and he says, "You have to call meeting off." He says, "You can't use my ball field because I got a call from the General Manager from Eureka Stores. If I allow the miners to meet on the ball field, they will not handle my product in their stores." He'd lose the business.

JZ: So we only had a couple of times to do something. The meeting was scheduled. So in a hurry we take contact with a man by the name of Mr. Shaffer, at the bottom of Rummel up there, at the bottom of what they call Lochrie Hill. And he had a Shaffer's grove there, like a park of his own. So a committee of us--about four of us went up there--Joe Zahurak, Andy Kada, Mike Magazzu, Joe Jasway. We contacted Mr. Shaffer, and he says, "Yes. You can have my park over here. You can have your meeting in there." And that's where we held the meeting there, the first mass meeting here in Windber.

JZ: And after that meeting, the following meeting, the next week we had to come to the stone crusher up here, owned by Nick Yakov [spelling?], up on what they call the 32 mine, see. They crushed stone to make sand for the mines here. So we met at that stone crusher then, the second meeting. Because we were not allowed to have no meetings. There was no hall in Windber would allow. They was under obligation to Berwind-White. They would get a grant of a couple of hundred dollars a year, and the Berwind-White had first say-so on who meets in that hall. If they wasn't satisfied what kind of meeting, they'd say the meeting wasn't allowed.

JZ: There was only one hall in Windber that did not submit to Berwind-White dictatorship, and that was the GBU, the German Beneficial Association. They was located on a hillside next to a creek they called Summer Street here, at that time, in Windber. So we contacted them over there, and they granted us, if it come down to that, we could meet up there. So anyhow we kept meeting over here at the stone crusher.

JZ: Then the next meeting we had was held up here at the Hungarian cemetery in Mrs. Torquato's field among the cemetery. So we had the meeting over there, and then that's

where the officers was elected. That was the first officers, and they had to be elected up there because we couldn't use no hall. So they had a nomination up there, and Charlie Zanke was elected as president; John Karakas was elected as vice-president; Joe Zahurak--that's myself--was elected as financial secretary; Mike Zaroff was the Polish, he was elected recording secretary. And then so on, all the others.

MB: This was in 1922, though? Yeah?

JZ: 1922. This was in 1922. Yes.

End of Tape 1 Side A

Beginning of Tape 1 Side B (October 7, 1986)

JZ: So after our meeting up there and nomination of officers and everything, why, finally we decided, and we got, a meeting at 21st Street garage. It was owned by an Italian. I forget his name. Now, anyhow, it was brand new there. And later on the garage turned out to be a Chevrolet garage, a Chevy dealership.

JZ: So then after 1922 and everything broke up, so we was transferred out of here, and people scattered out to different towns--to union towns--where they could get a job for their families. Like myself and Andy Kada and these people and their family. And quite a few other families went to Arcadia, Pennsylvania, in Indiana County. Some went to Nanty Glo, Pennsylvania. Some went to Portage, Pennsylvania. Some--quite a few--went to Dilltown. All over the place. They scattered around.

MB: Were those union mines?

JZ: In '22. Yes. Then, later on, after about 1924, the first part of 1924, they were getting disgusted. Most of the miners here was back to work because they [the company] turned around, they went to hard coal, and they brought in some strikebreakers. They told the people, the miners in hard coal, most of them were Russian people. They used to say that Russians was dumb. So they started migrating and transporting their furniture and everything free into Windber here, to come in here and break the strike. Berwind told them

that this is a new coal-mining town, just developing, and they had the town, the homes, painted up nice and everything else over here at that time.

MB: To bring in the people from the anthracite region?

JZ: From the anthracite. So they come in here because they had trouble down there then, too, on strike. So some of them come in here. They stayed a little while but not too long. So then the regular people that, slowly, in 1924, start coming back. So we also come back after almost two years from Arcadia, come back here, go back to work. We lost is what they thought. We won the battle, but we lost the war, and come back in.

JZ: The people went back to work, but myself, Joe Zahurak, Andy Kada, Mike Magazzu, Joe Jasway and those that were responsible as leaders here could not get a job very easy. We was ordered by Assistant General Manager to report to the General Office every [emphasis] morning to try--employment office--to try to get back on the job here. So we was going back there. It took me about two months before he finally hired me. And it took Andy Kada, that's later my brother-in law, it took him about six months or more. He had to keep going down there because he talked a little more than I did. And same way with Mike Magazzu. And Joe Jasway, he was a Hungarian representative of the Hungarian language, Hungarian speaker and everything. So he was sort of a communist sympathizer. So he was blackballed for quite a while, for two or three years before he ever got back.

JZ: So we went back to work. We finally come back here and went back to work, everything settled up. Then, after that, the miners kept on working, and their contract was signed for five years with John L. Lewis and the coal operators, with union mines, in 1922. And they called that the Jacksonville contract because it was negotiated in Jacksonville, Florida.

JZ: A five-year contract, from 1922 to 1927. They was here. In 1927 the contract run out, the five-year contract. So John L. Lewis was going to negotiate a new [emphasis] contract. And J. P. Morgan, the financier, millionaire, banker, of New York City, ordered the coal operators not to meet with John L. Lewis. That's one way to go and break the union.

JZ: So then we were over here, and that's where Powers Hapgood come in. Powers Hapgood was a big lawyer, assistant, and communist sympathizer. They come in here, and they thought, well, they were going to get the coal miners that the United Mine Workers didn't get. And they was representing the National Coal Miners Union, which was a coal miners' union dictated by communist sympathizers.

JZ: So he come in here, named Powers Hapgood, and some of the organizers, some people he picked up. And they called a meeting with us, the leaders from 1922, and what did we think?

JZ: And we told them then it was no use. The miners of Windber were still frustrated at what happened that they had to go back without the union. They'd lost, and in fact they wasn't [about to] go back, about to come out on another strike. It was no use trying it.

JZ: So, anyhow, in 1927, the first of April come, and the contract run out. The union mines shut down, and there was, oh, maybe 25 or 30 carloads of pickets come in here from Pittsburgh, from District 5, and places. They come in here, and they tried to shut this down. We told them it's no use. You can't do it. You're not going to get a shutdown. You just better let things alone, the way they are, because the people can't take it here. The union was still not financially able to take care of the strikers. So, finally, they tried it anyhow a couple of times, but it didn't work. The people kept on working and going back in there.

MB: Did some people go out at all in 1927?

JZ: That's right. They went right through the picket line. It didn't mean nothing to them because they was frustrated with what happened before. So, then, in this captivity and everything else, with their industrial and political freedom taken away from them--didn't have that right--you had to do everything what they wanted you to.

JZ: In 1927, they [the company] promised the miners that they will do anything that the union will do, anything else [but] sign contracts. So they raised the salaries then and the wages to a dollar and a half a day. Berwinds [did the] same as the union did at that time.

MB: How many days a week did the mines work in the '20s?

JZ: The mines only worked one or two days a week. And the miners had to work practically every [emphasis] week because the coal miner, they would work one day, and then the second day, the coal miner would go in there, the third day. Two days he'd work for nothing to prepare his place in order to post it up, drop tracks, or whatever. They did what they called "deadwork." That was work that was to be done for which there was no pay for or very little. But they went in anyhow to get ready for the next working day. When they were working, why, they'd be ready to load coal. And they called that stock-up days in these kind of days.

MB: What did they call it?

JZ: Stock-up days. You stock up.

MB: Oh, stock-up days. Oh.

JZ: All the empty cars that they have, they'd give to some of these miners then, see. And they would fill up the main heading with trips of coal, loaded cars, all loaded, and they would start their mine tipple then about a half an hour sooner and everything to start getting empty cars in there.

JZ: They kept on working and doing that for them, and there was no faith in dead work. Quite a few of them went in there, and they had to work five days in order to get two days pay. But there was nothing could be done about it. And most of them, why, they all had families (warmly said). They had families and everything else, and they was on a budget with the company store.

JZ: Because you had to buy and deal with the company store. If you didn't, why, the mine foreman's assistant would tell you, "Hey, you're not buying enough from the company store. If you want to work here, you'd better start buying over there." Now they would start that also at Eureka Stores. No matter where you'd go, to what mine, you could find a company store that they had at the camp. Like 37 mine, they had a company store. You had to pass that before you got into 37 houses. 30 mine was the same way. Number 1, 30 mine. They had a company store before you come to the company houses. 31 had a store on 10th Street.

They could come in there--outside businessmen. 31 and 32 mine[s] had a company store. 32 store is still there on the corner of Graham Avenue and 21st Street where it's no longer Eureka stores. And 33 mine, they had a company store up there for 33 mine and 34 mine, but there's only eight shacks there, four shacks for 33 mine, four shacks for 34 mine. And 35, then, has their company store, which is still here but not operating no more, right at the head.

JZ: Nobody could come in here without passing the company store, that is, private grocery or meat dealers or farmers or anybody. They had to pass in front of the company store. And when they did pass in there, the store manager would send out some of the boy clerks over there to stop them that they wasn't allowed in there. These are Berwind-White people. They employ them and everything else who were their people. And there was a prior problem over that.

JZ: And so some of them would come in here the back way if they could. Like at 36, they would come down here from a farm. There was an old tram road. With a wagon, they could come down here. And if you bought hay, you bought chicken feed or anything like that, from the farmers, or if you bought half a pig or pig you butchered, and some of your neighbors reported you, the company store would come out and write up the same order: "You had this" and send it out whether you wanted it or not because you bought if from them. You had to get the same thing.

MB: But this must have made a lot of businessmen mad, and the farmers mad.

JZ: Yes. That's right.

MB: You mentioned, though, some businessmen and farmers who wanted to help with the union people.

JZ: That's right.

MB: Could you tell me something about--anything about that?

JZ: Well, there was quite a few of these farmers and businessmen who wanted to help the people. Like in Windber, you had the Young family. They had a grocery store and a

butcher shop where Chester's Flower Store is now. It used to be Young's before. So Old Man Young, way back, he owned that store, and he was sympathetic with the miners.

JZ: And the Nelson store on 10th Street. They sympathized with the coal miners. They carried them on credit and everything else and dealt there, especially with the people who lived downtown. And you had quite a few other dealers there who sympathized with the coal miners that way. In the original butcher shops, they had like different nationalities, a Slovak butcher, and a Hungarian butcher, a Polish butcher, and everything. But they had to make their livings at night when the company store would be closed so that they wouldn't be seen in delivering.

MB: But the company store, did they try to run those people out of business?

JZ: No. They didn't do anything unless they was informed, and the informers reported them coming in.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: So like 35 store here, over here [pointing], some of the people would go down Windber to shop in the private business places. They would come home from downtown and carry their groceries in a basket then, maybe 15-20 pounds meat or so and groceries. But they walked up the track behind the company store, not to be noticed in front of the store.

MB: Right.

JZ: So, first thing you know, why, pretty soon Berwind-White got the railroad company to stop that and bitched to people for trespassing. You wasn't allowed to walk up on the railroad, if they got you that way. They had the miners going and coming. Every way that they could get away with it at that time.

JZ: So anyhow in these barrooms there, they had, the Berwind-White, they had, every barroom was stacked with bartenders that was acting as informers to them. Every club in Windber--like I said before--they had informers in there and would report everything to Berwind-White, who went in there, about certain ones that they talked, all but the GBU, as I said before.

MB: Why was the GBU different, do you think?

JZ: The GBU was independent. It's called the German Beneficial Union.

MB: How did it get to be independent, though, while all the others weren't?

JZ: It got to be independent because there wasn't too many of them employed by Berwind-White. They was mostly employed by Windber Brewery, brewing beer.

MB: Oh, I see. I see. Okay.

JZ: And then, besides that then, they run an association, like a lodge, for \$1,000 insurance. So they had a lot of these outsiders, then coal miners that joined then. So after 1927--do you want to go back to when Hapgood was here?

MB: Sure.

JZ: They had a meeting at GBU finally. Hapgood come in here and everything to talk to the miners here about [the strike], but we told him it was no use trying it. So Assistant General Manager of Berwind-White was Bob Baylor. So he instructed me as being blackballed before and taken back. He instructed Andy Kada and Mike Magazzu and Joe Jasway and them to attend that meeting at GBU as a favor because they give us our job back after 1922. And our job was to go there, and they give us some spending money, what they call, to treat the miners there and everything. But we were sent in there to take note who attended them meetings and what the meeting was about up there.

MB: Oh.

JZ: And they had a couple of these communist sympathizers that come in, and they held one meeting. So then we had to report back to the Assistant General Manager who was there and everything. So then, naturally, they got a talking to, reprimanded, whoever had anything to say in that meeting, who was under what leadership.

MB: So did you report these people then?

JZ: Yes.

MB: You did? To the company?

JZ: Yeah. We told him [emphasis]. We had to tell him something [emphasis].

JZ: But anyway, at that time, why, they didn't penalize or blackball anybody out of that meeting. They just put them on probation, not to talk or anything. So, then, later on, after we come into it here, where we finally, after all these strikes from 1927 to 1933, when finally [warmly said], the dark clouds disappeared.

JZ: Oh, [enthusiastically] the miners in Windber, and we got our sympathetic president that got in there, yeah, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and they got that law passed where you could organize. You're allowed to organize if you want to organize. And I'm telling you, we, that law was passed, and the union come in. The United Mine Workers was short on funds and money. So they borrowed \$500,000 from the American Federation of Labor to put men out in the field for expenses to go out and talk to these miners. And they brought cards for us to sign the miners up, who all wanted the union. And I'm telling you them cards went fast! Everybody was signing up. That's 1933 when they knew that they was finally safe. It could be done.

JZ: So after all that good and strong signing up, why, we held a meeting then. And Mr. Booker, General Manager at that time, he called us in. And they said they will do anything that the President--Roosevelt--wants to do. If they wanted to, you people, [if] the miners only wanted the union, they'll go along with it.

MB: Oh, really?

JZ: Or they'll pay the union scale. Either one.

MB: They didn't try to set up a company union or something?

JZ: No, no. They didn't try it because they knew that it'd be no use, see. They said they'd pay the union contract. But they done that before, and then they [did], for a few months, and they cut it off, shut it off.

MB: I see.

JZ: So then, finally, they said we could meet in any hall we wanted in Windber, see. [laughs].

JZ: So even then, they'd turn around, and we told a couple of halls--the Italian hall, the Slovak hall, and the Russian hall on 10th Street, and they had like a Moose and American Legion in there. So when we went and contacted them officers, first, they went, [and] they got the okay from the General Manager, Bob Baylor, at the General Office. They reported to them. Is it really all right?

JZ: We finally got our first union meeting in Slovak Brick Hall. And after a couple of meetings in there in July, in July 1933, we received our charter. And Berwind-White finally recognized the union.

MB: It's hanging down there in the hall, that charter, isn't it? Yeah, that's nice. Well, was it hard, though--I mean all those conditions and all those things--to get really going, to get it on its feet, I imagine?

JZ: Well, see, after we got the union then, everybody was so thrilled and everything. We, we'd start our union meetings at 7 o'clock on. They met Friday night. Every night they'd start at 7 o'clock, and we was there sometimes until midnight because everybody was so happy and thrilled that all our problems was coming out that they didn't want to do anything that they're not gonna get paid by the union. They felt then, why, we got the union now. They can get the baseball club and hammer the foreman or boss or anybody over the head. We're on top now. But you had a hard time like you see in the minute books. And some of them there, some of them meetings were pretty strident and lasted a long time, getting together. You still had a constitution and contract to follow. But the guys gradually got used to it and everything.

MB: So you were prominent, you were an officer right away again then?

JZ: I was elected up in the cemetery that time, and the financial secretary in 1933. I served for five years to 1938 as financial secretary. And Charley Zankey, the president, he served one year, and then Joe Jasway come in as president. But after five years, 1938, I become the president.

MB: Oh.

JZ: I replaced Joe Jasway that was in there, and from 1938 I was the president up 'til 1977.

MB: You were? President from '38 to '77?

JZ: I was president, elected every two years.

MB: Oh, wow, how wonderful.

JZ: And after 1977, it was 1974, the MFD come in here, these Miners for Democracy that broke up the United Mine Workers now. They got them broke. When they come in here, they passed a law and a constitution in a convention that all presidents and vice-presidents of local unions should be active [emphasis] working miners. So I was retired then already.

MB: Oh, I see. Or you might still be president.

JZ: I retired in 1966. 1966. So I stepped down as president. I still could have been elected. But I stepped down, and then I become the treasurer. And I'm still the treasurer even now over there after all them years. That's 53 years.

MB: Wow, a long time.

JZ: And right now, well, it's going to be coming to an end. 84 years of age, and I've got problems with my eyes and different things, and I can't be active as I was before.

MB: Well, not in the same way.

JZ: Yeah, that's right. But the history, where we first started from, first, even when Windber was first developed as a coal mine. I'll give you a little bit on that.

MB: Okay.

JZ: In 1897 Berwind-White come in here from Houtzdale to develop Windber into coal mines. The United Mine Workers was organized prior to that. They had the National Miners Union. There was a Progressive Miners Union, and there was the Knights of Labor. They had three or four different organizations of miners. And they could not get nowhere because they wasn't all together. They was all different, and they would be contracting different, different contracts.

JZ: So in 1890 they called a general meeting in Columbus, Ohio, by all these unions to get together, and that's where they organized into one United Mine Workers of America. So

that's when the United Mine Workers become one organization. All of them got together. The United Mine Workers that was now, at that [emphasis] time, was the Knights of Labor. And, from then on, why, they become, they was unified.

JZ: So Berwind-White, after developing Windber here, they wanted to continue working to develop these mines, and they didn't want no strikes, stoppage of work. So Berwind-White sent representation to Columbus, Ohio, when, in 1897, when the coal operators was meeting with the union officers down there. Now the first president of the United Mine Workers of America was a man by the name of Rae, from Broadtop, Bedford County, here from Pennsylvania.

MB: Oh.

JZ: He was elected first international president of the United Mine Workers. He was in there for a couple of years. So, after that, they got in there, so Berwind-White went down there, sent a representative there in 1897 [?] to sign a contract with the union, and he wanted to keep on working. He didn't want to be shut down instead of working. Well, Mr. Rae and the international bargaining council told Mr. Berwind-White and his representative they couldn't do that. They wanted all [emphasis] the operators together, under one contract and not separate.

JZ: So Mr. Berwind, the old [emphasis] Mr. Berwind, Charles [?], he became angry. And he left that conference in 1897 [?], the conference in Columbus, Ohio, and he told them that Berwind-White would never recognize the union as long as he lived. Now he was a man of his word because he passed away in about 1932 [?], and we didn't get the union until 1933.

MB: You mean Edward, E. J., I think, was the--?

JZ: Yeah. He meant what he said.

MB: He meant what he said (laughing). Oh boy. So what else about the early founding of Windber then? It's interesting what you say about the nationalities. You think this was a deliberate policy on the part of the company.

JZ: That's right. Yeah.

MB: Do you think that's like other coal companies, [that they] did the same thing?

JZ: Yeah. That's right.

MB: Do you know how they got--?

JZ: They did, especially like Berwind-White and Frick Coal Company and then all these they call captive mines, that's the steel works, like Bethlehem Steel, US Steel, Weirton Steel, Inland Steel, and all of them. They was very strong. They slept together. No union could get in.

MB: Right.

JZ: Now you take, in 1915 they had a big strike in Colorado, the United Mine Workers. And Rockefeller, John D., the old man Rockefeller, now he was a millionaire in oil.

MB: Yeah, right.

JZ: Standard Oil or Atlantic Oil Company, and he got into the coal business in Colorado. In 1915 they come out on strike over there, the coal miners, and they wanted [the company] to recognize the union. John D. Rockefeller said "no". He would not. So they start evicting the miners over there in Ludlow, Colorado. And they evicted the miners, and they [the miners] got a piece of land from a private farmer that owned the land, and they set up camps like they did in all these other towns here that was evicted here. We had tent colonies.

JZ: So they was in tent colonies then in Ludlow, Colorado. So the miners and their wives and the children was in these tent colonies. And when they went over there, the Coal and Iron Police, John D. Rockefeller issued orders. They went on a hillside, and they started shooting into these camps, into these miners and their families, wives and children and coal miners. And quite a few of them were shot, women and children. There was a big monument with the name of everyone that was involved in that 1915 Ludlow Massacre where John D. Rockefeller, where he had it done. There was never anything done about it. They got away with it.

[As Joseph Zahurak tells the Ludlow story, Mrs. Zahurak, who has sat patiently throughout the interview without saying a word, began to cry softly for the victims at Ludlow.]

MB: Did you hear about that in Windber? Did you hear about Ludlow when you were growing up? Did you know about Ludlow?

JZ: They didn't allow much of that news. But at that time they had, the Johnstown Tribune was sort of a Republican newspaper. The Johnstown Democrat was sort of, about 50-50. So it come in that then.

MB: In that [emphasis]. So then you could learn about it from that.

JZ: In the Democratic paper they would give you a write-up of just what happened down there.

MB: So you found out about some events that way.

JZ: That's right.

MB: Did you get any ethnic newspapers at home or anything like that, too?

JZ: No.

MB: Okay. Like other foreign-language ones. So but, did you think then that Berwind-White had a policy with the housing then that kept the nationalities apart?

JZ: They got that system to keep them apart because if they all got grouped together, if you get in one group, you're strong, and as long as they could keep them separated, you was pretty weak. Just like in the 1906 strike I mentioned before. The Italians and the Hungarians and some of the Slovaks and the Polish people, they had a great leader in Stiney Roden. He was like a godfather to the Polish people.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: Now he received slush money from Berwind-White all the time, and he'd treat all the members in the Polish Club. They followed his rule, what he wanted.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: What Berwind wanted, and they followed him, and they believed in him. So they kept those people separated that way.

MB: I see. How did the company get the people to come to Windber? Do you know anything about that?

JZ: Well, the people here had so much [many people] here when they started to work. They migrated here. They come in here from Hungary, from Czechoslovakia, from Poland, from Russia and all these foreign countries in Europe.

MB: Do you know how they came to Windber, though, particularly?

JZ: And they come in, like, for example, myself, my Dad come in. Well, he had some relations from his home town in Europe.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: And you had to have somewhere to come to, see. So he had relations from his home town in Europe. So they come over here. So naturally they was Slovaks in Mine 33 and 34. Others maybe had relations in 35.

JZ: So Berwind-White was always looking for miners and everything, and they'd come over here, they'd migrate, they'd pick them up. They had these agents here like Stiney Roden, Joe Surkosky, and Marino and these Italians and anyone that would meet some of them ships in New York when they come in.

MB: Oh, they did? What was the Italian's name? I've never heard [of him].

JZ: Old man Realik [spelling?] Rich. Dominic Marino was the Italian.

MB: Oh, I see, I see.

JZ: So they used them as agents to go down there and lure them to come here for Berwind-White. So they already--

MB: So they had a real network all along.

JZ: Yes. Little by little. And in Europe then, when they [emphasis] come here, they would write letters and tell them how nice it was here and everything. So the ones that were left back there, they all, everybody thought that the streets in America was paved with gold, opportunity. But they never told them what had to be done.

JZ: Myself, I had a cousin--my mother's brother's son. He always wanted to come here from Europe. He was left back on the family farm over there in Europe, Mike, Mikey Juric. And he come over here, and he wanted a job in the mines. So his father was here. So he

took him in the mines. When he went, he loaded for about a week. He worked in the mines, and he said he's not going to mine no more. He said, "There's no windows or anything in there in the mine." He went in there in the dark, underground. Then he worked one week, and he quit.

JZ: Now when they would come here, the company store would give them credit right away, see, work clothes, and everything, give them a start, and on credit, on payments back to the store.

MB: Right.

JZ: Then they'd have to pay that back.

MB: Did they have to live in a company house?

JZ: They didn't have to live in a company house, you see. They would be boarding.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: They had a lot of people, and they boarded. They'd have to buy all their tools at that time. So the company would get their working clothes [on credit], and they [the miners] bought all their tools and everything, whatever they took. Now after the union come in here, now all the tools and everything else is free. See, it should have been that way. It was an awful gain for the union.

MB: Some of the company spokesmen say that miners could once buy houses in Windber back in those days. Do you know anything about that? Could a miner buy a house at all in Windber? I mean--

JZ: What they done, there, the miners could buy their houses, homes, like in mine 31 (That was down on 10th Street), see, some of them homes down there. Mine 31 and Mine 32 had their homes up here at this end up here. So Mine 30 didn't last too long. Mine 31 didn't last too long. Mine 32 and 33 and 34, there was mining up towards Ashtola and towards the water dam up there they had.

MB: Okay.

JZ: So they didn't go too far up there, not to destroy that water system.

MB: No.

JZ: So Mine 33 and 34, I believe, they [closed] about 1912. So they just operated for, oh, maybe 12-15 years, and they closed them down.

MB: A short time.

JZ: Like 33, 31, 32, 33 and 34 mines. Then when those shut down, well, we just had rick shacks up there. So then they hired up at these mines over here. These mines were more developed, 37, 40, 35, 36, and all these here.

MB: But miners didn't own the houses in 35 or 36 or 37 or--

JZ: No, no. They didn't own the houses over here until in the 1950s, when Berwind-White, when the union got in here pretty strong, and they noticed that they was going in pretty good. Now as far as the company houses, they was pretty reasonable. It was \$10.00 a month rent. There was no charge for water, but of course there was no plumbing. They had water pumps outside.

MB: Oh.

JZ: You had to go out there with water buckets. Like women, come laundry day, they wash a lot of laundry. For about each six homes, there was a water pump outside. They'd go up there--every woman and that--haul their water in water buckets for washing clothes or bathing or anything. They'd be out there in a big conference and everything else, and take their time, take their turns in filling up their buckets and haul the water in.

JZ: In winter time, you go out there, the pump was frozen. They had to go out there with the hot water to thaw out the pipes so they'd start getting water and everything. So they didn't start getting plumbing in here until after 1919, and there was no electricity.

End of Tape 1 Side B

Beginning of Tape 2 Side A (October 7, 1986)

[Beik asks if Zahurak is tired]

MB: You were talking about disability, and I was thinking. I know that the miners' union [UMWA] with Joe Novak started a citizenship school because a lot of people weren't citizens. Right?

JZ: That's right.

MB: So if you wanted to change the political structure you're talking about, you had to get people voting, too, and not to be afraid to vote how they wanted to, rather than what the company said.

JZ: They migrated in here. Most of them wanted to become citizens. So Berwind-White took care of that. They turned around in here to become citizens with some of these here that couldn't speak, even speak, American. They had old man Fruhlinger who was downtown in a secondhand store, furniture. It's still in Windber. And he used to be a junk dealer, old man Fruhlinger, but he could talk Slovak and Hungarian and all them, see. So he represented them. He'd get a whole group to take them up to Somerset, and they was sworn in in a group, see.

MB: But this was through the company?

JZ: Even if they couldn't sign [their names] over here.

MB: I never heard that before. That's interesting. I see.

JZ: Oh, yeah, see, Mr. Fruhlinger would take a group up there. And each one of them would pay him so much, and he would represent them up there. The judge would get them all in a group. And, for their citizenship, they'd take the oath. So lots of them, they couldn't even speak or understand the language, but they was sworn in.

JZ: Now the Italians was the same way. The Italians had, like Rich, old man Rich, or the Torquatos. Old man Torquato, he--that's John's Dad--he was a contractor here in Windber, and his brother, John and Albert. So they'd take care of most of the Italians, and send somebody up there that understood the Italian language, for the Italians up there.

JZ: Same way with the Polish. They had them clubs, like the associations, and they had so many members in their clubs, or the Slovaks or the Russians and everything, and they wasn't

citizens. So the officers of the club would take so many up, up to the courthouse and file application for citizenship. And when their day come for a hearing, they went up there. They was just like refugees are now. All, maybe couple hundred of them, take the oath at one time. Whether they could write or not, just put an X behind your name.

MB: Did the company want people to become citizens or not?

JZ: Oh, yes. See, you had to go up there, and you'd register and everything to become a citizen, and you had to register as a Republican. They insisted.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: Because up until 1933 there was no Democrat organization in the open in Windber. Steve Washko of the drug store, he was a Democrat, but on the q.t., and his brother Joe, his brother Andy, and his brother John--all Washkos. And then they had the Harding Shoe Store in Windber, that they had, right below where Whalley's is now, where the old telephone office was. Harding Shoe Store, in there, they were Democrats, but Democrats under cover. So they was not allowed to meet or anything until after 1933. When we got the union in, then we formed the Democratic Club, see, here in Windber. And people begin to change. And we finally got the majority.

MB: So you began to register voters and you helped them with the citizenship school?

JZ: That's right, that's right, that's right. We helped them with the citizenship school. I even had a manual here yet to--for different nationalities, [you] could teach them certain portions of what was asked up there.

MB: Oh, goodness.

JZ: I was looking around for it, but it's not easy to find now, that manual that I had, see, as a president to instruct these men in Slovak what they were going to be asked in English, in American. So we had a Hungarian by the name of Stunchick [spelling?], John Stunchick, and he was sort of a gabber. So he went up there to Somerset for his citizenship, and the judge asked him who was the president of the United States. He said "Joe Zahurak" [Beik laughs] because I was the president of the union.

MB: President of the union.

JZ: He said "Joe Zahurak." So Judge Berkey said, "Who?"

JZ: "Joe Zahurak." That's the way it was. But you had to think fast, see.

MB: Do you feel just like answering a few more questions then? I don't want you to get overtired because we can always stop and do more another time.

JZ: If there's anything else you want [indicates will go on]--

MB: But I was just thinking since we've covered this early [period], maybe we could talk next time about the 30s and 40s with the union. But maybe we could do a couple more things if you have time. I was wondering, like in the times when the union wasn't in, what about the churches and the priests then? Like in the 1922 strike, what happened? Now you mentioned Father [Lach] --

JZ: That's a good question.

MB: And Father [Saas], I guess, with the Polish church--

JZ: Father Saas, and what's his--

MB: The Hungarian was who?

JZ: The Hungarian priest.

MB: I can't think.

JZ: What was he [his name], Margaret?

MZ: I don't remember.

MB: I didn't know it.

JZ: [Fojtan].

MB: Fojtan. Oh, yeah.

JZ: Now there was Father Saas in the Polish zone, the Polish church, and Father Lach was here in the Slovak. But Lach didn't take no part in it to preach in church what the Berwind-White wanted. But Father Saas announced in the '22 strike, told the people to go back because they will not recognize, the company will not recognize the union. Father Fojtan of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, he also done the same thing. In his preaching in

church, he told the membership that they'd better go back to work because they're not going to be recognized as union that they're just going to be suffering for nothing. Up at the Italian church was Father Leone. He was up there. He also took part in it and ordered and asked them to go back.

JZ: So when these priests announced that in church in their sermons to the people and asked them to go back, Father Saas then next morning, he found a coal miner's tools--pick, shovel, nil, tamping bar, and augurs to drill the holes, a hatchet, saw, and a sledgehammer. That was the entire tools for a coal miner. That was tied up and put on his front porch at the parish. And it said on there, "Father Saas, you can take these tools and go ahead. Go to the mines!"

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: The same thing happened to Father Fojtan, the Hungarian priest. They gave him [emphasis] a set of tools and put them on his [emphasis] front porch over there at the rectory over there. And Father Leone, he got in trouble also over that. That's when he left up there then. [Beik laughs.]

JZ: And there was, I'll tell you, Father Saas was got rid of because the people got discouraged, most of them.

MB: Right, right.

JZ: And Father Lach, he had brains enough. He sympathized with the people; Father John Lach did. He sympathized with them and everything else. They're up against a tough battle. He don't think that the working man's going to be able to win, but he didn't insist [emphasis] that they'd better go back because it's in vain that they were striking. Now other churches now, like the Protestant churches and, you know, like the Evangelists or different American-speaking nationalities, they didn't get involved that much. Because they weren't up here. Italians, Slovak, Polish, Russian, and all these here [were] because that was a majority of the coal miners.

MB: Right. I always wondered that. You don't know anything about what the priests did in 1906, do you? In 1906, about what role they played there then?

JZ: No. In 1906 the only thing I know is what I could remember, something like I said, the state police on horses. And then what I heard from my mother and my father and the boarders. Now in 1906 there were born two boys. In my family there was eleven altogether, but in 1906, there was two of us, my mother, father, myself, and my brother Andy.

MB: Some people were killed in Windber in 1906 at the jail.

JZ: That's right. In 1906 they were shot at by the state police like I say.

JZ: In 1922 the state police come in here and in Frank Tarr's hotel. That was right across from the fire hall by the creek, by the bridge there. And Mr. Tarr there then---there was a barber shop in one corner, and they had a hotel building there. Gorgon, see, Sam Gorgon. And his son is a barber there now across from the fire hall. Phil Gorgon. So the state police come in there to Sam Gorgon, and they told him they want that part where his barber shop is. They want him to vacate because they want that for an office to meet there. Now that belonged to Frank Tarr. He was the hotel owner, and yes, you couldn't do anything about it, see.

JZ: So Sam Gorgon had to move out of there and find a different location, and the state police moved in there and set up an office right across from the fire hall. And after the strike was over and everything in '22, why, they turned it back over. But he had a big window blind about 20 feet long for one of these big panes that they had at the hotel lobby and in that barber shop. So that was broke, and they gave him \$20.00 to buy himself a new one--Sam Gorgon--to go back in there after the strike was broken, and the state police wasn't needed any more. But the Coal and Iron Police was pretty rough here with the coal miners like everything else.

JZ: Like we had in 1922, we had the Coal and Iron Police where they broke into a farm here in Mine 36--Swast [spelling?] farm. It was a private owner. He had a daughter that was just

married about six months before that, before the strike, and living with him on the farm here. And he used to have a team of horses and haul the house coal for the people. He didn't even work for Berwind-White. They were Polish. But his daughter's husband did.

JZ: So the Coal and Iron Police come in there one night after they was married about six months, and prohibition come in in 1920. So they come in there and went over there at midnight one night, and they wrapped on the door, and this young man that married the Swast's [?] daughter, he come down to see what they wanted.

JZ: And there was three Coal and Iron Police. So they got ahold of him and said they were revenue men. They were looking for moonshine. They heard that he was a bootlegger, and he was not, but they said he was. So two of them kept him occupied downstairs while one would be upstairs with his wife, raping her. When that one was through down there, he came down, and another went up. Then the third one went up. And when that come out, that was pretty bad for Berwind-White.

JZ: So we met then from the union. Matt Sherwin--he was a safety administrator for Berwind-White Coal Mining Company--adviser then. He was a pretty big man with Berwind-White. We told him all about it. Well, they turn around then, the three men that done the dirty work, they transferred them somewhere else and bring other men in here.

MB: Did they ever get to trial?

JZ: No, no. There was no conviction, no trial, same as John D. Rockefeller in Ludlow, Colorado. The same thing was, there was quite a few coal miners' daughters. After the Coal and Iron Police left here and everything, quite a few of them was pregnant, and then, they left the girls behind here, see. There was quite a few. They was pretty darned rotten.

JZ: Like I said, the miners always had something to eat. They never went hungry. They had to raise their own food. Coal miners, they had cows, and they made their own butter, their own buttermilk, their own cottage cheese. They had chickens, they had ducks, they had geese, and they also raised pigs. You was allowed to raise anything in the borough because it was all right with Berwind-White. So they raised their own food, most of then.

So in order to, they had to sell eggs, butter, or milk to get enough money to buy insurance for the family, for the children, Like our family, the Zahuraks, there was eleven of us.

MB: In 1922 were there eleven of you then?

JZ: Yes, 1922.

MB: Where were you living in '22?

JZ: I was living then in Arcadia then when I got evicted.

MB: When you got evicted.

JZ: And then, the eleventh one, a boy was born, my brother, the youngest, Elmer.

MB: Oh boy.

JZ: And so, I come home here, along with Andy Kada who was my friend. We come home here to, for, for his christening on a Sunday. And we come here on a Saturday. So we come in here just for the christening, baptizing my brother, my little baby brother.

JZ: So Sunday morning the Coal and Iron Police come over there and wrapped on the door. They said, coming to the door, "Is Joe here?" "Yes." "What are you doing here? You're not allowed in here. You should know better than that. Don't you understand English?"

JZ: So I told them what was what and everything else. They said, "All right." They said, "You are over here," he says, "for a few hours here. But after you have your dinner, after the christening here, after baptism, you'd better [emphasis] be out of here by 6 o'clock this evening." So I was evicted then, too, from my own [emphasis] brother's christening, along with Andy Kada, my friend who come in here from over there. So that was eleven in the family.

MB: They were, were they living up here at 35? Your family was living here?

JZ: Yes. They were living in 685 up here, right across from the shacks.

MB: Oh boy.

JZ: Now you take the same thing when we went to school. Like when I went to school, a large family and everything, I had to start to work when I was 14 years of age. So a lot of times, there was no footwear, no shoes, hardly any clothing or anything. We used to go

around in the alley because people used to throw everything out in the alley. And Berwind-White put a crew on in spring, high school graduates or college graduates, to clean up the alleys, a rake-up policy.

JZ: So we was looking for shoes and clothes. A lot of times we had to go to the Red Cross, and they would take us to the Harding Shoe Store. The Red Cross wants to outfit us in clothes or maybe clothing in order to be able to go to school. The Red Cross had to furnish them because we could not afford them in our families.

MB: Yeah, hard times. Did your father then live here and mine the rest of his life here?

JZ: Yes.

MB: Yeah, oh boy.

JZ: Yes, he worked here until 1966 when he passed away after 47 years over here for Berwind-White.

MB: Oh boy.

JZ: He started with nothing, and he left with nothing. He had no bank account. But to raise a family, nine some children, and having a paycheck. At first the miners wasn't getting nothing. [emphasis] They'd [the company] take everything off. Then later on they passed a law in the state. They had to leave them \$2.00 on the paycheck. \$2.00 has to be left on there. So that otherwise you got a payday in one month, \$4.00. That was to take care of insurance or something like that there. Besides, they had to sell butter and eggs and chickens or even geese and everything like that there because they had no money.

MB: To survive, yeah? Do you remember John Brophy, Mr. Zahurak?

JZ: Yeah.

MB: The district president in 1922 of District 2 was John Brophy.

JZ: Yes, John Brophy.

MB: Did you ever have any dealings with him? Or did he come here to speak at all ever or anything?

JZ: No. They wasn't allowed in here in 1922.

MB: They couldn't get in.

JZ: They didn't want to come in here because they wasn't allowed. It was just the organizers that come in here. John Brophy was district president here in District Number 2. And John L. Lewis had just become the International President--

MB: Yeah.

JZ: (continuing) about 1918 or 1919. A man by the name of Hayes was in there before him-

MB: Right.

JZ: (continuing) in there as President and John L. was Vice-President. So John Hayes, he turned around because some of these leaders in the United Mine Workers was offered jobs by coal operators. In there, for president, like John L. Lewis, was receiving \$25,000 a year. The coal operators or even the federal government offered them a job, with the influence of their coal operators and the federal government, a \$40,000 or \$50,000 job, just to get them out of there if he was a good leader. So like Hayes, he elected and took a better job. So John L. Lewis become International President.

JZ: After John L. Lewis was in there, they decided he was going to be some [emphasis] leader. He was a good influence man. And when, I'm telling you, when he talked, everybody listened. And some that heard him sometimes, speaking, when he spoke in favor of FDR. The closest he come to Windber, we could never get him in here, was in Indiana County fair over there.

MB: Oh, I wondered if he ever came here to speak. I had never heard that.

JZ: The Indiana fair in 1932. He come in here to speak. That's the closest he got in here. So John L. Lewis, he become International President, and the Vice-President was Philip Murray.

MB: Did he ever come here?

JZ: Yes.

MB: He did?

JZ: We had Philip Murray here on several Labor Day celebrations as a main speaker. Tom Kennedy was in there. Well, [William] Green, a fellow by the name of Green who was International Secretary-Treasurer, and later he was appointed onto the American Federation of Labor, Green was. So John L. Lewis appointed Tom Kennedy from the anthracite as secretary-treasurer of the International United Mine Workers of America.

JZ: So we had three great leaders here at one time, John L. Lewis, Philip Murray, and John [Tom] Kennedy. And they had Pat Fagan of District 5. He was a leader down there. He was very influential, a good fighter for the miners.

MB: Boy, it must have taken a lot of courage, or for people like you, in the '20s when there wasn't the union here. How did you muster that kind of courage? Because you were up against a lot of odds against the union and all.

JZ: Oh, yes.

MB: How did you and Jasway and some of these other people you earlier mentioned, how did you get the courage to stand up and try to do these things--when other people didn't have it.

JZ: Well, like I said, after my injury in 1918 and after two years of being on compensation and seeing that I couldn't do nothing about it. Nobody could touch Berwind-White. I even went to attorneys in Cleveland, Ohio. And when you mention Berwind-White, "No," they said, "you can't do nothing with them." So I decided then, right there and then, that if ever I get an opportunity to get a union in here, I'm going to do my utmost to get one in here for the miners so it wouldn't happen what happened to me. MB: So that accident was very influential.

JZ: That's what give me the courage to go ahead, see.

MB: Did your father have some union, well, he had said something in 1906, you said earlier-

JZ: Well, he joined the union when we got the union in 1932. And he last worked about 1943. So he was over there. But he couldn't understand or speak much American, see. So most of them had a reason.

MB: Yeah, but it still took courage. Some people might not have had that kind of courage in those days.

JZ: That's right. That's right.

MB: What other [stopping, as Zahurak is about to speak]? Go ahead.

JZ: It's the same thing as I said with representation for these conventions of the United Mine Workers. The first convention after we was organized in 1934. So I was elected from Windber here as a delegate to represent Local Union 6186, Joe Zahurak and Patty O'Neill. Patty O'Neill, he had a brother that was a district secretary-treasurer of District 2. And later on, why, Charles O'Neill, that was, later on, why, the coal operators hired him as a negotiator against the union. Charles O'Neill.

MB: Oh really?

JZ: So Patty O'Neill was his brother, and he worked here. So he was a delegate to the 1934 convention. In Indianapolis it was held. Myself and Patty O'Neill from Windber and Bill Parks, later a district board member here from Scalp Level local. And in 1936, the convention was in Washington DC. I was elected down there again for the delegate to the convention, Joe Jasway and Joe Novak. And in that convention, why, we took up a roll call to try to get our freedom, autonomy, back to elect the officers. But we had partial autonomy in the district. Lewis said, "Go ahead."

JZ: After we had a roll call, District 2, District 17, and District 12, they got their autonomy. But after they got it, it wasn't long, they didn't like it because when you got your autonomy, you was self-sustaining. The national wouldn't help you.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: When it come, whatever you had there [money], you had to live within that income.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: So in a couple of years time, some of these district officers, why, they mishandled the funds. And the first thing you know, why, they asked John L. Lewis, "We don't want autonomy. Take us back." I still have it from 1940, the fiftieth anniversary convention book, or in there, where District 2, District 17, and District 12, where the members petitioned John L. Lewis to take the autonomy away because the funds was mishandled.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: Now, and there was a lot of talk about Jock Yablonski being in there in District 5 when that happened, that catastrophe to Tony Boyle. Jock Yablonski, he worked his way up there in the union. He was pretty radical in District 5. So he worked himself in there as union representative down there in the district in the local unions and then later become a board member of District 5.

JZ: Then after he become, in 1940, John L. Lewis fell out with F.D.R. So John L. Lewis was backing Wendell Wilkie, the Republican. He wanted the convention in 1940 to endorse Republican candidate Wendell Wilkie for president, and the delegates turned John L. Lewis down. And he was very angry about that.

JZ: So he said, "All right. If that's what your want. You're down in the gutter and your're kicked in the teeth. Then I'm satisfied with you." So John L. Lewis sort of didn't like the idea that Philip Murray, the vice-president, wouldn't agree with him. Pat Fagan didn't agree with him. Tom Kennedy didn't altogether agree with him. [That was] the four of them [UMWA officers]. So he ordered some of them there then in different districts when the election come up to try and get them out.

JZ: But Philip Murray was well liked. Tom Kennedy was, too. And Pat Fagan, why, they say that they stole the election from him in District 5. They had their autonomy down there. And Yablonski had a good bit to do with it. And after he got Pat Fagan out from District 5, why, Yablonski begin to come up.

JZ: They had a man by the name of Jack O'Leary, an international board member from District 5. So John L. Lewis then elevated him to International vice-president, and Philip

Murray become president of the steelworkers. And then they judged O'Leary for International vice-president, and on O'Leary's place, then, Jock Yablonski come as a board member.

MB: Oh, okay.

JZ: So he was in as a board member there. Jock Yablonski run for president in District 5. When he run for president of District 5, he finally won out.

JZ: So on weekends--now this was the story that was over up in the Harrisburg newspaper. It come up later where he'd take week end trips to Las Vegas, Nevada, and he was shooting dice at a table. It was reported in the newspaper, and the board member of the United Mine Workers, Sam Slatco [spelling?], has a copy of that reporter's from the Harrisburg paper where Yablonski was shooting dice in Las Vegas at \$25,000 a roll. Now, then, later on, they found out that he took miners' dues money at weekends and get down there to Las Vegas, and he was using the miners' dues money to gamble. When he won, he put it in the bank. If he lost, the miners' dues money lost.

JZ: So then, later on, John L. Lewis got hold of him, and he put him out of there, and they put him on as a lobbyist. But in that newspaper there, in that article--Sam Slatco he has that--and it was in there, \$236,000 that he swindled from District 5, [that] he spent of coal miners' dues money in Las Vegas.

MB: Now was this the Yablonski--

JZ: This is Jock Yablonski.

MB: The father of the one who was killed?

JZ: That's right [Jock Yablonski, not the father, but the one who was killed]. Yeah. Because his sons did not belong to the union. Now you take like--to help to break the United Mine Workers there and come in here with these new Miners for Democracy, you can blame Ralph Nader. He talked Yablonski into running and that Reagan era attorney. Ralph Nader and Joe Rauh. He's another big city Jewish attorney. Then they had Dave

Brinkley as an NBC newscaster. And come in there, and they asked for these like Yablonski to run against Boyle.

JZ: Well, Yablonski knew he couldn't win anyhow, but he tried it. And then, later on, after he lost in the first election, why, Ralph Nader asked his sons, Why don't one of them run? But the sons said, "Are you crazy? You have got to work five years or more in or around the mines." And they didn't.

MB: Oh, the sons hadn't been miners and weren't union members? I didn't know that.

JZ: And Dave Brinkley, right before the International election in 1972, he run a great big advertisement that the International union had a truckload of pictures that they was taking, hand-painted. He blamed John Owens for that. International secretary of the union. He had his picture painted as bald-headed as he were. He didn't like it. Then he sent in to have his picture painted with hair. And they flashed a truckload of them pictures, which cost us thousands of dollars there, up at the International, was moved out of the office, and it wasn't true. He was paid to do that. I assume he was because all them pictures come out was from these cartoons that wrote about John L. Lewis and all kinds of graft that they put in the papers that was paid for by John L. Lewis's enemies. That is what it looked like and everything else.

MB: You liked John L. Lewis?

JZ: That's right.

MB: You thought he was a good leader?

JZ: Yes. They had that in the papers there. That's the pictures that was taken in the International headquarters, because, [changing thoughts] I attended the 1946 convention which was in Washington DC when the Miners' Welfare Fund and the Pension Fund was born. I was representing Somerset, Fayette, and Bedford County as a delegate, to represent these miners and actually sat in on the contract negotiations with John L. Lewis in action. So, one of the locals had a man by the name of Pete Steffish. He's still alive.

MB: Oh, he is?

JZ: He also was a delegate representing all the coal miners in Cambria County. So we was down there in 1946 when the Welfare and the Retirement Fund was born. And John L. Lewis could not get it from the coal operators. They did not want to give that to him.

JZ: Only we had, Truman was president then, after FDR passed away. So Truman, then, he took the mines over. He ordered the Secretary of Labor, which was Perkins, [unintelligible word], Mrs. Perkins, he ordered her to take the mines over. And while the Secretary of Labor took the mines over and managed them, then they signed a contract. Truman said, "Sign a contract with the United Mine Workers to recognize the Retirement Fund and Welfare Fund."

MB: The Retirement Fund.

JZ: Then after they signed the contract, the Labor Department, the Federal Labor Department, then Truman went to the coal operators and said: "Do you want your mines back? Recognize this contract with the Welfare Fund in it, as it is. If you don't, why, just forget it." So finally the coal operators accepted it. And that's how we got that Welfare and Pension Fund. It wasn't easy. John L. Lewis was penalized a couple of million dollars there. Of course, he didn't pay the fine. The coal miners did.

MB: Yeah. But then, soon after that, they got the Taft-Hartley Act in, too.

JZ: Yes, the Taft-Hartley come in there then against the miners, to contradict, the right-to-work laws. And you had the Landrum-Griffin law--

MB: Right.

JZ: (continuing) also come in there, that tied down and put restrictions on labor, what you could do and what you couldn't do, and penalized labor there. So that took a lot away from the coal miners then.

MB: I guess the United Mine Workers has never obeyed the Taft-Hartley back-to-work.

JZ: No, they didn't, no. That's right.

MB: No, in all that time. So you saw a lot of strikes then. There was one during World War 2. Were you working during World War 2 when Lewis took them out against FDR, during that time?

JZ: In World War 2, I was here then. I was in there. When the union come in '32, I was recording secretary, [correcting himself] financial [emphasis] secretary. See, I was working from 1916 on.

MB: Yeah. When was the last year you actually mined then, Mr. Zahurak? When was the last year you worked in the mines?

JZ: The last year, well, after I was injured, they give me a job on the outside. But after I was blacklisted--

End of Tape 2 Side A

Beginning of Tape 2 Side B (October 7, 1986)

JZ: In 1924, I went back loading coal over here, for Berwind-White here.

MB: And then, how long?

JZ: So I loaded coal for about two years. Finally, then, I got back on the haulage as a spragger or brakeman and gradually worked up where I become a mine motorman, and I was operating on the big motors that hauled empty cars inside and loaded cars out.

MB: Hmm-mm.

JZ: So I operated on that from after we was married in 1927 up until 1952.

MB: '52.

JZ: In 1952, why, the doctors at the hospital, Dr. Schlesinger and Dr. Orris and them, they told me I better get out of the mines. I begin to get short of breath. Dr. Benshoff also told me to get out of the mines. I'm foolish.

JZ: So then in 1952, then, they give me a job as a utility boy in a machine shop that Berwind-White had outside. Just as a helper for different ones on the machines and clean-up, after each machinery in the machine shop and in the armature room. So I worked in there until the mines shut down in 1962.

JZ: Then, after 1962, then, the General Manager was Robert Seese, and he liked the way that I handled the union and everything at that time because during the war we did not have no wildcat strike in Windber here. I kept them at work, all of them.

JZ: So we had problems with some of these communists, influential guys, men who come in here. Jasway was for it, for a shutdown. Carl Dutzman was a member of our local and a coal worker. He was a communist sympathizer. That was some of the men that were taking that meeting at GBU that time that I talked about, that they had a meeting there, and Bob Baylor asked us to attend that meeting. They was communist sympathizers. And. . .

MB: So that, you were talking about wildcat strikes. You mean, during World War 2, there weren't any?

JZ: Yes. There were no wildcat strikes or everything. So then, finally, Bob Seese, after the mines shut down, Berwind quit mining coal or operating. So they had over here at Mine 35 what they called a boiler house, a steam house, and that provided heat for Windber. Quite a few homes, especially the company, like the company store, the company bank, the company general office, the company electric office, and all the big buildings that furnished steam from 15th Street, from Borden's barber shop on up to 9th Street. On Graham Avenue, Somerset Avenue, Cambria Avenue, and all up on the hill up there. They all had steam heat.

JZ: Now that lasted there until 1966 sometime. So then that's when I retired because I was in the hospital half the time. And when I got back in the cleaning plant and that all, continuously in the coal dust, that didn't help the problem that I did have. I was in the hospital half the time.

MB: Oh boy.

JZ: So in 1966, in November, I retired.

MB: O.K. Well, that's. . . So you saw a lot of the changes, though, take place, and--

JZ: Yeah.

MB: The union was probably, do you know how many people were in, what was the maximum number of people that there would have been in your local at one time? And about when would they have been the top number?

JZ: When we first organized here, we had over 2,000 in the Windber local.

MB: In '33 and '34 you already had 2,000.

JZ: They had over at 6186, Windber local. Then 5229 was the Scalp Level local, Mine 40, Mine 37. They also had over 2,000. Then they had the Reitz 5, what they call, Reitz Coal Company, up there. Well, they had several hundred, but they had their own local union.

MB: Did 42 have a separate one?

JZ: And 42 Mine, they had their own local. Then they had, well, maybe, three, four hundred men up there. So altogether, under Berwind operations, the Berwind mines and the St. Michael [one]--

MB: Oh, St. Michael.

JZ: (continuing) was called the Maryland Shaft at that time. It was under Berwind, too. We had altogether, maybe, 12,000 coal miners at that time. So in District Number 2 we had 50,000 coal miners at that time. Now there's about, they're down to about 10,000.

Mechanical loaders. So that's quite a loss of membership. Of course dues were cheap with a large membership. We paid 50 cents a month from the beginning, and it cost \$10 to join in initiation fees in them days. Well, now, the coal miner's dues are up to \$37, and they're going to have a convention in Georgia over there [in 1986] and going to raise the dues to \$42 for a miner.

MB: How are the pensioners taken care of now?

JZ: Well, pensioners was taken care of pretty good because we had to form a Pensioners' Association here in District 2 when this new administration got in. Why, they was going to get rid of the 1950 pensioners with a new pension plan that the coal operators give them. They called it the 1974 pension plan. So they had the 1950 pension plan and the 1974 pension plan.

JZ: The 1950 plan you had to work 20 years or more in the mines, out of the last 20 years that you worked, to get on the miners' pension. And under the new plan, they pay like a lot of other pensions. You get so much each year. The more years you have, the more you get. You could try that.

MB: I see. Okay.

JZ: So then when they got the two pension plans, I opposed that here in Windber, starting, and Scalp Level and Tire Hill, and we formed a delegation. And [for the 1950 plan] the coal operators [had] told John L. Lewis they'll give him the new pension plan and a lot of other, like benefits, for the coal miners, their birthday, pay for their birthday and holidays and for a development in the family, if anyone dies. They were paid. If they dropped the pension plan and just adopted the '74 plan, that would have kept us out.

JZ: So in 1975 we wanted a meeting here with Arnold Miller. He wouldn't come in. We asked him to send a vice-president in here; he wouldn't come in. Then we had a pensioners' vice-president down there, and he also, Miller, would not let him come in. Now that was the kind of democracy that they did the miners!

JZ: Finally, in March 1975, after about three or four months writing letters and everything, Miller, he let the vice-president come in here. And we held a mass meeting in Windber for all around here in District Number 2, and I told them in that meeting there that, by being two pension plans in an organization, in a union, is not very good. Because you divide anything, you weaken it. I says, "We should be all as one, as it was before. But," I said, "even as it is now, the '74 [plan] is good. It should have been that way from the start, which you had to make a start someplace to get it." So I said, "Now we're divided, and that's the way it's gonna be."

JZ: So we filed suit against Arnold Miller in federal court which lasted five years down there, and Arnold Miller had to pay \$40,000 for court hearings, all expense[s] that we had down there. We had to hire attorneys at \$50 an hour down there, and they give us a bargain. They usually charge \$100 an hour. But we had four attorneys down there, and we filed a

suit. And we had the hearing by Judge Sirica. That's the one that was famous in the Nixon case.

MB: Yeah. Watergate.

JZ: Judge Sirica had the hearing down there, and I still have the proceedings and everything of that meeting where the judge ordered the International President that they must abide by the constitution that they had in there, and all members, miners, got to be treated equally. The 1950 pensioners are entitled to all rights and privileges of the local union and the district, all but the mines. Now I could not run [for election] as a mine committeeman, safety committeeman, or at the mines. Well, I knew that! I'm on pension. What do I want there? See, I knew that. But, otherwise, why, you could act in the local union. Officers-- the financial secretary, recording secretary, the treasurer, the doorman, all of those you could be on the pension. MB: I see.

JZ: That's the way I stayed in there.

MB: I see. I see. O.K. Your union, Local 6186, spearheaded this then, to bring it to court?

JZ: Yeah, that's right. We're the ones that spearheaded this trial that we got in federal court in Washington DC against Miller. Now he never attended any sessions. He had Chip Yablonski, one of the Yablonski boys there, the gabby one, because Ted and Chip, they were both attorneys. Their father put them through law school. So Joe Rauh [was] representing the Yablonskis in that catastrophe that happened to Tony Boyle and two Yablonskis.

JZ: Now the court action and everything else. Joe Rauh, he turned in a bill of \$125,000 to be paid to the union. Then Yablonski wanted to sing, but the judge says, "No" (Zahurak laughs sarcastically.), he says. They split the difference, see. They got \$62,000 and that, \$125,000 between two of them, like Joe Rauh.

MB: Do you think that Tony Boyle had Yablonski killed?

JZ: Oh, yeah.

MB: You do? Because some of the miners I've talked to. . .

JZ: Otherwise, we have protection with our steward that the 1950 pensioners are not going to be dropped. See. [Zahurak's answer and comments seem not to relate to the killings. He was continuing his train of thought and perhaps had not heard the question.]

MB: Oh?

JZ: Now we also have under that order, we have a right to have a pensioner from the district, from each district, one pensioner of the 1950 has to be called in into the International Board meeting when they vote on the contract, if it's suitable for adoption in the United Mine Workers' bargaining council. So one of us pensioners, one man, a pensioner from each district of the United Mine Workers has to be a pensioner from 1950, to attend that session, make sure that we're getting fair representation.

MB: Uh-huh. You referred to Tony Boyle in all of this. Do you think that--some miners that I've talked to don't think Tony Boyle had Yablonskis killed.

JZ: No.

MB: Do you think he did have them killed or not?

JZ: He was a victim of circumstances.

MB: Is that what you think?

JZ: Because this Joe Rauh, I explained there. He was a big city attorney and lawyer, and they wanted to get their hands on the funds that the United Mine Workers had in there for years, but they dared not touch John L. They couldn't manage to handle him. Just like editorials by Victor Reisel [spelling?]. He opposed John L. lots of times, but he was careful because John L. Lewis could give him a tongue-lashing. He'd come back at him. And he did many times. And Tony Boyle come in training under John L. Lewis in 1948. John L. Lewis took him on up until 1960. That's when John L. retired.

MB: Lewis died pretty soon after that. [1969]

JZ: And Boyle was in training under him to learn the procedure for bargaining, the bargaining council.

MB: Right.

JZ: Now there was experience that Boyle had that could never be replaced by a common man like Miller who would know nothing.

JZ: I myself would say [Boyle] was better qualified than Miller or any one of them.

Because [of] all these conventions, I think about 14 conventions, and being on the policy [committee], negotiating the contract, right, and as active as John L. Lewis was in 1946, why, he got pretty good knowledge of what was what, where these men did not.

JZ: The miners were misled. That's all. And right at the time when they had an opportunity, on the catastrophe that happened, they used that, the Yablonski case, to get votes. That was manufactured by these attorneys.

MB: Well, who do you think killed the Yablonskis then, if it wasn't Boyle?

JZ: The Yablonskis and Boyle [contemplatively]. It's sort of a mystery. And like when Boyle's secretary, she come in, and she was, I guess, well-paid off over there to testify that she did issue the check to be paid to District 19, where they was from there, where it was supposed to originate, to make plans and everything. But why would Boyle have that carried out when he beat Yablonski in election, see? Why would he?

MB: Hmm-mm, yeah.

JZ: So there's something happened someplace that nobody knows. And someday, someday, there'll be an answer to it.

MB: You say you had some experience with negotiating? How was it in the '30s then when the union came in? How did you turn around and deal with these Berwind-White people that you had to deal with, with grievances and all of that, when I think back, and how that might have changed?

JZ: Well, negotiating with Berwind-White--before, we had no say-so at all.

MB: None?

JZ: That's right. That's right.

MB: What if a miner had a complaint that he didn't get any cars for a turn or something, what could he do?

JZ: If a coal miner complained that maybe he forgot to put a check on a car, then he'd go to the tipple, to the weigh boss, and tell him he's a car short on his weigh sheet.

MB: Yeah.

JZ: The weigh boss would say, "Get out of here. There's no car come out of here without a check from your section of the mine." He wouldn't get nowhere.

[The buzzing sound is that of coal trucks driving by on the street outside the house. They continued to drive by throughout the rest of the interview.]

MB: Nowhere, huh.

JZ: But after the union [emphasis] come in, when they had representation, see, if they was short a car or anything, they went on the tipple. They had a checkweighman there. The union liked it, and he was in there for their protection.

MB: And there wasn't one ever before in any of those mines, huh?

JZ: No, none before. There was nothing. Just the weigh boss, the company weigh boss. And the mine cars--loaded cars--never stopped on the scale at the tipple before the union. They just come one after another. And after the union come in, they had to stop the car on the scale to be weighed, to make sure the miner got his full weight on the cars.

MB: So did you personally handle grievances and take them to Newbaker and the Berwind-White people or whoever?

JZ: If we had grievances that could not be handled at the mine in a settlement with the assistant foreman, from the assistant foreman it would go to the mine foreman. If we couldn't agree with the mine foreman, then, we went to the General Office. And the meeting was held then before the assistant general manager and/or the manager also, like Mr. Kerr and others in there, see. It would be taken with them with our Board member from the District. And we'd present the case there.

JZ: Like, for instance, the miners had to pay for all their tools before. We didn't think that was right because when the jack hammer system was established here. Now a jack hammer

you see on the streets--what a heavy machinery that is. The coal miners had to use that in the mine, the jack hammer, and buy picks for their machinery.

MB: Oh boy.

JZ: And that's the same thing as a coal-cutting machine, and they used bits. Well, the coal miners didn't buy the bits for the coal-cutting machine, but they made them buy them for the jack hammer.

JZ: So later on, we got results, and the bits come in free. They had to buy four different kinds of bits. They run about two-three dollars. The picks and shovels and all tools, the coal miner had to buy all of that. With the union, they became free. [The noise of the coal traffic continues.]

MB: You had to negotiate that?

JZ: It had to be negotiated in, all, at the start up.

MB: In the '30s?

JZ: And then taken into the convention, if we didn't get no point here, in a resolution to the convention, and ask John L. to get that in the next contract, and he put it in there. Same as with the miners' lamps. The miners had to pay for the use of light, the battery lamps, the coal operators made it. Well, later on it was free. The miners' lamps, the tools, and all that come in. The grievances had to be negotiated at the mines, then the general office, then the district. It had to be.

JZ: But we was pretty well recognized and respected that the union come in here. There was very little denials that we got.

MB: You didn't have much trouble negotiating with the superintendents and things?

JZ: No, no, there was not much trouble. In some cases we'd run into problems, but you had a number of people with you. You had to take into consideration who the problem was with, whether they were telling the truth or not.

MB: Yeah.

JZ: Because you had to have the truth.

MB: Sure.

JZ: There was no use, because we just had the union, to go in with something big if it wasn't true. Because that made it bad then for the union. So we knew all the men, how they worked, how they produced, and if there was any grievance, we knew if it wasn't there. So we just went in and got the best settlement we could. However, we didn't file suit, like they was called for [in an] arbitration case, go in between the coal operators and the district. We didn't file them that way--

MB: That way.

JZ: (continuing) unless we had the facts. That had to be.

MB: Yeah. You said as president you had problems with communists sometimes then. What did they want to do that you would have objected to? What were they trying to do that you didn't like?

JZ: In--?

MB: Or whenever, I don't know.

JZ: In the present?

MB: No, in the mines. What were these people who you called communists who--what did they--how were they a problem to you? You were president of the local in the '30s. You said--

JZ: They mostly wanted to come in, and they wanted communist recognition.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: And when they come in, we had several of these here communist sympathizers in the Windber local, like Carl Dutzman and Jasway and these here. Now they was recommending a shut-down during the war. They found some reason, you know. And all they asked for right away was, "Shut them down." "Let's go on strike," see.

JZ: Like we had an agreement that come up here at 36 mine. One time they, Berwind, recommended a certain system of mining coal. You had to leave 12 inches at the top, what

they called impurity, "boney", and mine coal below that for loading purposes, "clean coal."

Now if you didn't mine that system, why, they could penalize a miner.

MB: Oh.

JZ: Jasway was president then, and one of the mine committeemen, Tony Santucci, was fired on account of that because he did not mine his coal properly.

MB: Oh.

JZ: He didn't boney up and get the clean coal out first. He got ahead and blasted the whole thing and downloaded everything. [The buzzing sound of the coal trucks is ongoing but sporadic.]

JZ: Well, then, finally, the company give him notice, after several notices on it, and gave him notice they want clean coal mined or else. Well, we took that up here with the mine manager and everything. We couldn't do anything about it. That was agreed upon as a coal-mining system with them, and we was a part of that, signed in the contract. And it was taken to the arbitration board, and we lost there.

JZ: So Jasway was president at that time. That happened in 1935. He was the president, and everybody was looking to him because he was a great, what you call, an influential man. That everybody thought. He wants everything good [emphasis] for the miners. They talked that way, see. Everything that the miners wanted to hear, that's the language that they talked.

JZ: So they was gonna', very much interested in what's gonna' happen now after this mine committeeman was fired about how to mine coal.

MB: Oh, I see, the case.

JZ: So the miners come out to work in the morning. The mine superintendent, Mr. Eddie Sequel [spelling?] was up there to see what was gonna' happen by Jasway, what he threatened where he promised the miners, what he said he was gonna' do.

JZ: When they come out to work that morning, all the miners was waiting for Jasway to take the leadership and say, "Let's go home!" Well, Jasway didn't dare do that. He surprised

everybody that he let that go through and didn't act on that, as he said that he would. That's when the miners begin to learn not to listen to them because they don't mean what they say. They just want to dominate you. So he didn't even run for, after that, for president because he knew he lost his influence. You lose your influence over the miners or anything, you're done. You've got to have their backing or else.

MB: Did you ever have any problems with your [emphasis] influence with the miners?

JZ: Oh, I had lots of problems and everything, but the problems was legitimate. Sometimes we had to deny the miners if it was not in the contract. There was nothing much we could do about it. We done the best that we could. There was nothing else when you went up to the highest arbitration board between the district and the general manager of Berwind-White and where they handled it there. And even [when] the arbitration board handed down the decision in favor of the coal operator and against the union, but you can't do any more. See. They finally begin to see it anyway.

MB: So was that kind of thing hard to establish, though?

JZ: That's right.

MB: Because people thought-- yeah, okay.

JZ: And, of course, I had a lot of backing then from the other officers, see. That was true, then. That was on the level. That was not hiding nothing.

MB: Yeah.

JZ: It wouldn't be done that way, what can't be done. We're not going to say "yes," and then we know it's not.

MB: Well, there used to be big Labor Day celebrations in Windber, didn't they? Could you?

JZ: Oh, yeah. We always had a big day on Labor Day celebrations. They went on big time. In Windber here we celebrated Labor Day. One year [the] Windber local would have it here. Local 6186. Next year the Scalp local would have it. Then we sort of combined them

together. We tried it at first. The first two years we tried, the two of us, together. Well, that didn't work.

MB: Oh (laughs).

JZ: We had a group from one local [union] group and from the other local, and you always found somebody in there who wasn't doing the right thing. One for the union and one for me. As it was there.

JZ: So then we abolished that system and agreed upon here to turn about. One year, Scalp local that was yours. Next year it was the Windber local. That was ours. So whatever happened then, it was one local union's responsibility, and you couldn't pass the buck from one to the other local. We learned that.

MB: So you had big picnics and things at Recreation Park then?

JZ: Yes, we had picnics. Recreation Park was granted free by Berwind-White. They were very generous in that. They didn't charge anything for the park. Then we would advertise for the largest group in the march, [the] parade, before noon, before they go up to the park for the speaking programs and activities up there. A big parade downtown, and we'd have local unions out of Central City, Cambria, Hooversville, from all around here in the area. They come in here with their groups, with their memberships, and the largest group in attendance in that parade would win a pretty good prize, maybe \$100-150. They would take that prize money and then stop at the beer stand up at the picnic, and the money would come back.

MB: (laughs) I was reading something in the papers. In the '30s there was a trophy and a tug-of-war contest between the Scalp local and the Windber local to win. Newbaker had a trophy of some sort? A silver trophy or something, and there was a tug-of-war contest, I guess, for Labor Day. I think it was for Labor Day, where [there was] a tug-of-war between men from the two locals. And then if they won it three years in a row, they got to keep it. Did they have things like that?

JZ: Well, there was, you mean the difference between the local unions?

MB: No, I meant, they had, at some of these celebrations on Labor Day, among the prizes and things they had, was a trophy and the contest between, not a baseball game, but a tug-of-war thing between the two locals, things like that.

JZ: Oh, yes, yes. They had a tug of war there, and the state mining department, the safety department, come up there with some of the inspectors and put up a coal mine explosion--

MB: Oh, yeah

JZ: (continuing) to show them what the coal dust does in a coal mine explosion demonstration. Then we used to bring shows in here, Western shows--

MB: Oh, did you?

JZ: (continuing) singers, such as that, and sometimes we brought in acrobatic acts. We contracted other show people for that and had like rides and things for children because it lasted all day.

MB: The whole community celebrated, didn't they, pretty much?

JZ: And then, also, we'd have these chancing off prizes--electric ranges, refrigerators, living rooms, maybe have five different kinds of prizes that were a gift from the Eureka Stores then that would cooperate with us and would donate them to us. So the profit was all belonged to the local union then. It was made, money, on the prizes. That was very nice of Eureka Stores then.

MB: But Windber doesn't have any big Labor Day thing anymore?

JZ: No, later on, now, already for, after the shifts was laid off the mines, the local unions getting smaller, they abolished them, the celebrations. The younger people, the younger miners, was not influenced, not so crazy about it, like the older ones were because they really won [emphasis] something. They really had something, and they patronized and respected it. And, these younger fellows, "Well, we got it anyhow so what's the difference?" They wouldn't attend. They wouldn't take part in it. You couldn't get anybody to work up there or anything else. We had a hard time to form committees on different things.

MB: Did you try to do that because you were president pretty late, and that got harder and harder?

JZ: Yes, yes.

MB: Well, so many people left the area, too, didn't they? So that must have been hard with the declining numbers.

JZ: That's right, declining numbers.

MB: And your population getting older, I suppose.

JZ: That's right.

MB: Harder to do those things.

JZ: Soon as they start mechanizing, the mines come in here, conveyor mines, and they start laying off hand loaders. And then a good thing, that's where John L. Lewis had the foresight to come in with a pension plan. Because if it wasn't for the pension plan, the miners would be in awful shape, see. So John L. Lewis stated then, a pension plan at 62. If they are desired, the miner should be paid for what he donated, his brow, the sweat of his brow, in there. They are entitled to that. And the coal operators were bitterly opposed to that. But it took the federal government, Truman, to help the coal miners to get that--

MB: Yeah, I bet.

JZ: (continuing) along the way. Then you had a difference between the South and the North contracts they had. In the South they had the good working conditions--high seams, coal, and everything.

MB: I see.

JZ: And over here, it was low coal. So there was a higher scale here, maybe a dollar, a dollar and a half a day, maybe two dollars, than it was in West Virginia. It was less because they had an opportunity to produce more over there. So, after 1946, [the] contract by John L. Lewis abolished that. He got the Southern coal operators to come in here with the Northern, with us, and they got an awful boost.

MB: They got that. Oh, I see, huh.

JZ: So the miners, between the bituminous and the hard coal, they are the only ones that have a different contract than we have. Well, that's anthracite, and this is soft coal.

MB: Do you remember when the CIO was formed?

JZ: Yes.

MB: Did that have much of an impact upon you?

JZ: CIO, it was--

MB: And when they organized the steel industry?

JZ: (continuing) John L. Lewis slipped out. And the United Mine Workers belonged to the [American] Federation of Labor. We was part of it. And John L. Lewis, he wanted the Federation of Labor to get out here and organize the unorganized. The steelworkers were not organized. The automobile workers were not organized. A lot of other construction [workers] were not organized. Gas and all kinds of different plants that were not organized, chemical plants and everything. So John L. Lewis wanted the American Federation to get in there and organize them, and he wanted them organized not on a craft, as a craft union that each union wouldn't have its own wages and scales. Like he wanted it general, as it's one, like the coal miners had it, see.

MB: Right.

JZ: The coal miners didn't matter. You was a coal loader, you was a trackman, you was a timberman, you was a motorman, whatever you was, it was all one union, see.

MB: Right.

JZ: So John L. Lewis, then, he broke off with the CIO in the American Federation of Labor convention, and he withdrew the miners out of the Federation of Labor. And we never did go back because they wouldn't listen to him.

JZ: So he decided then in 1936 convention in Washington, DC, and he formed a committee on organization--independent, and he went out. He started out. The United Mine Workers was pretty well-financed then already, and we had the money. So he started out to organize. So the steelworkers was organized in 1937.

MB: Do you remember that?

JZ: Yeah, Philip Murray come into Johnstown, Point Stadium, down here, and we had a big mass meeting there for the steelworkers. See, John L. Lewis didn't come here. The closest he come was, like I said, Indiana County, the fairgrounds. So Philip Murray, he come in here to Johnstown, and he spoke to the steelworkers at a mass meeting. Lots of coal miners were there, especially the officers of the local unions.

MB: Right, yeah.

JZ: So the miners paid for that, [for the] organizing expenses, which ran into a million dollars or so. But the miners was assessed, each miner maybe twenty dollars a year, put into this fund. So then he organized the automobile industry. And I guess you heard some of that.

MB: Yeah.

JZ: When John L. Lewis went to assay the strike, he stayed in with the strikers in the General Motors plant in Detroit. And they would not vacate the plant until they recognized the union. And [Zahurak laughs] John L. Lewis was fined then, too, but they got everything they wanted out of that. They [General Motors] had to recognize the union. So that brought in the automobile workers. Then they got a lot of the other workers. And then, in 1940, when the union wouldn't agree to back up Wendell Wilkie, Republican for President against FDR, he turned around and he...

End of Tape 2 Side B

Beginning of Tape 3 Side A (October 7, 1986)

JZ: Lewis threatened the miners: If the miners will not endorse Wendell Wilkie, he is going to resign as the leader of the CIO organization.

MB: Uh-huh, yeah.

JZ: Now, his brother, Denny Lewis, he was the vice president in the CIO, and his daughter was the secretary-treasurer, Margaret Lewis, and she was secretary-treasurer. So after that scene in 1940, he threatened that he would withdraw as leader of the CIO, and the

convention would not endorse Wilkie. So he resigned from the CIO. And that's when he fell out with Philip Murray and Pat Fagan and a few other leaders then, and Tom Kennedy.

He had a long name. He was a really good man, influential, from the hard coal [region].

JZ: So John L. Lewis come in then. He was only president of the United Mine Workers.

Philip Murray, he resigned from the United Mine Workers. He went on as the United Steelworkers president. Philip Murray went there. And Pat Fagan and a few others, they was accepted and taken under, to govern them CIO locals then, under Philip Murray, and everything.

JZ: They was formed, an organization that kept organizing, that didn't stop today. It wasn't 'til under Boyle, under Boyle, about 1970 or 1972, when Boyle picked up the United Mine Workers that was not going to support the CIO, and he took the CIO away from the United Mine Workers. And the CIO was self-sustaining then. So the CIO got their own organization. The automobile workers had their own, and you had all other, chemical organizations and similar groups, and they all got their own organizations in the CIO.

MB: Were you at the 1936 convention when Lewis punched--who was it he punched?--somebody in the convention that made the newspapers?

JZ: In the 1936 convention, some of these here sympathizers, the communist sympathizers, was in the convention. And I was sitting in one row behind Watkins, and he was related to John L. Lewis's wife some way.

MB: Oh.

JZ: So these organizers then, they would scatter among the delegates, and there happened to be a couple of delegates sitting in front of us. They was criticizing John L. Lewis in the 1936 convention. And when he started speaking and talking, a couple of these delegates were talking with one another. They called him a son of a b..., see, John L. This Watkins was sitting right alongside of them. So he just got up, and he took a punch at the delegates and started yelling at them. Well, then, he got up and explained what was what.

MB: So some of those conventions were pretty--

JZ: [continuing his train of thought] And also John L. Lewis in the CIO, [correcting himself], in the Federation of Labor convention, he punched and knocked out the carpenters' president, Hutcheson.

MB: Yeah, that's who it was that I was thinking of!

JZ: See, Hutcheson, president of the carpenters' union. John L. Lewis wanted the Federation of Labor to go off the craft union and go onto the industrial union.

MB: An industrial basis.

JZ: Too many locals, different unions, [unintelligible words]. And this Hutcheson, he was opposing John L. Lewis. John L. Lewis (laughing) just hauled off and--

MB: Were you at that [emphasis] convention? That was the AFL one?

JZ: No, not at the American Federation of Labor. No.

MB: No, it wasn't.

JZ: John L. Lewis and the International officers attended that.

MB: Yeah, I see. Okay.

JZ: During the '36 convention, I was there when Watkins took a punch at the delegate that called John L. [an] s. o. b.

MB: (laughing) Yeah, okay.

JZ: Then, in 1940 convention, we had the 50th anniversary in Columbus, Ohio, because--

MB: That's right. It was the 50th.

JZ: (continuing) that's where the first meeting come in. I was in that convention, too. And while John L. Lewis was speaking, how far the miners had come up until now, up until 1940 and the 50th anniversary and everything, the communists somehow had it rigged up, and while he was speaking, they dropped a plaque like behind him, like these curtains on these stages go, and on there they had a hammer and sickle, the Russian symbol of the flag. While Lewis was speaking, when he was speaking, they dropped that down. Whoever it was. Now when they dropped that down, there was some, what you call ushers in a convention, you know, the strong-arm men, if somebody got out of order and causing a commotion or

anything. Some of them would start going back on the stage to see what was what, but by the time they got back there, they didn't know who dropped it, who done it. But there was quite a bitter sentiment about that because the communists wandered in that way.

MB: That was--World War II was already going in Europe at that point.

JZ: (continuing his thought) into the Mineworkers, one of the richest unions that there was, and now we aren't of course.

MB: So you think it's in bad shape now?

JZ: It went from all the assets that the miners had and the banks and about 36 million dollars of cash in hand when this [emphasis] organization took over and everything. By the time Trumka got in there, they was a million dollars in the hole. Hard.

JZ: Arnold Miller, he give a bank here, a United Mine Workers bank, in Ebensburg here, for District No. 2. Ted Yablonski come up here, and he spoke because District No. 2 never voted in favor of Miller. He never carried District No. 2. So Ted Yablonski says that the miners in District No. 2 should acknowledge what a leader and [what] progress Arnold Miller is making building a million dollar bank here.

JZ: But he didn't tell the miners that Miller sold a building in Washington, DC, that used to be a printing, a miners' journal before, a union paper, down the stairs, and the upstairs was rented out. So Miller sold that building for a million dollars to build this one here in Ebensburg. And yet Yablonski, Ted Yablonski, tried to tell the miners that, you know, we were making that progress, see.

JZ: So they sold, Miller, they sold, three buildings for over four million dollars while was down there. They spent the 36 million dollars, you know, and they had the union a million dollars in the hole by the time Church took over and Trumka come in now. So they only had one parking lot that was worth about 10 million dollars, I guess, or something like that, in the heart of Washington, DC. And Trumka had to sell that in order to pay off the debt that these put in because the interest was too great for the union to continue paying on that money, what they borrowed, you know.

MB: Boy, hmm. [A short silence.]

JZ: So--right now things are pretty awful looking, looking not too good for the coal miners. So--because [of] when these MFD took over. Under John L. Lewis and Boyle, there was 80 per cent of the coal that was mined in the United States was United Mine Workers. And one of the best financed unions in the country and everything. Now, after 1972, when they had, the MFD went in there, they're down to about 40 per cent union.

MB: Coal isn't used as much as it was either.

JZ: No.

MB: They're importing coal from other places, too.

JZ: See, they overdone [it]. A lot of places, they went too far. A lot of demands.

MB: Well, how do you--Do you think Windber is really a declining town, then, bringing it back to Windber, because it was a coal town? It was a company town. It was founded on this basis, and now, I guess, Berwind leases out certain mines or something now.

JZ: Now, they lease out some of the mines here that [have] some coal left in it but not enough for them to go back in, see. Because you take all their B seam now as, like they say, the Mine 42 is connected to, into Mine 36 you can come. And from 36 you can go into 35, and from 35 you can go into Mine 40, and from Mine 40 you can go into 37, and it's all one chain.

JZ: Now they, all the B seams are all pretty well worked out because they only allow a certain percentage of mining. They have to leave so much coal in there for support where there's like towns, buildings, and farm houses, and cemeteries. That's all on maps. The coal's got to be left under there. So Berwind-White is through.

MB: So there had to be a lot of changes when they left town and when the mines closed up then.

JZ: They come in here now when they finished mining here, Berwind-White. I seen an article in the paper, where Berwind has grossed 36 million dollars clear profit. Now that's a clear profit that they, in the time from 1897 till 1962, that they managed--

MB: That's a lot of money.

JZ: (continuing) besides the great overhead that they carried. Miners worked one or two days a week, but all the foremen and the official families, they worked six days a week, monthly salary. So that's a big overhead, and yet they managed, and they give away in art over 40 million dollars worth of art so they donated to different museums. Berwind-White had [donated]. So they made out pretty good here--

MB: Yeah.

JZ: (continuing) on the backs of the coal miners.

MB: Yeah. Do you want to say anything about the company hospital at all? I don't think we talked about that, and the doctors and stuff.

JZ: The company hospital that they had here, that was pretty reasonable, too, for the coal miners, but, of course, the coal miners indirectly paid for that on the tonnage they had, with the company weigh bosses and the checkweighmen on that.

JZ: So that started out as a dollar a month for a family man and 75 cents for a single man. Now that give you all the hospitalization. You didn't need no other doctor unless you wanted to go to a home, a private doctor, to visit your home or you go to his office. You paid there, but at the hospital, you didn't pay.

JZ: Now that was all right until after the union come in. And after the union come in, why, things begin to be a little rough because Berwind had to be paying out more and couldn't hold its back on the coal miners to defray the expenses that they had with mining.

JZ: So then they, Dr. Wheeling they had at Windber Hospital then, he called a committee in, of Windber, Scalp Level, all Berwind-White coal mines, and St. Michael, and he said that they'll have to increase the dues, the hospital dues, to meet the expenses.

JZ: Well, it stands to reason. So they raise it up to two dollars a married man and one dollar for a single man. That wasn't so bad. That was still good. Then, after we got the welfare fund here and everything, so they turn around then, and they asked the miners that want to belong to that would pay about twelve dollars a month for husband and wife, and a single

man would pay about six dollars. And then, when they become of age to get Medicare, they come under social security.

JZ: So then they asked that some of the miners like myself, they wouldn't have to carry, the Windber Hospital, because the union miners' welfare, hospitalization, took care of us, and Medicare. What Medicare didn't pay for, the union does. What the union don't, Medicare does. So that way we got off.

MB: I see. I see. Okay.

JZ: And the ones with silicosis have problems, with their respiratory problems, they even have a card from our United States Labor Department. That's if you're hospitalized for your breathing, for your lungs, if you have black lung, silicosis.

MB: Well, that was a struggle to get things like black lung, silicosis, pneumoconiosis, recognized, wasn't it?

JZ: Yes.

MB: How did that--do you know anything about how that happened locally [emphasized], that they finally could get doctors to say that people had these and get benefits?

JZ: Well, otherwise, they treated people very good. You could go up there any time, any time, for anyone in your immediate family. They took obstetricians and everything that was up there, and you only paid a certain amount of that.

JZ: They had doctors, part-time doctors, on call, like Dr. Benschhoff was a private doctor, and Dr. Hoffman, and those, in case of emergencies, why, they was called up there at night there. Or the clinics. 42 Mine had a clinic and Dr. Benschhoff.

MB: Oh, did they? I didn't know that.

JZ: Dr. Benschhoff used to go up there every morning. He took a couple of hours for the people of 42. And Dr. Eperjessy used to go to Wilmore mines. After they opened up over there, they had a clinic there. He was taking care of that. That was Dr. Eperjessy.

JZ: But now, since the mines closed down, the clinic is not available at 42 no more. Neither is that one at Wilmore or St. Michael's and places.

MB: It's all different now.

JZ: So the hospital's on their own, and they have a clinic, I understand, at Central City, but that's a hospital plan.

MB: Yeah, it's all different now.

JZ: That was all charged out of Medicare and the United Mine Workers hospitalization fund.

MB: But doctors didn't always diagnose the lung problems, did they?

JZ: No.

MB: In this [emphasis] town. Well, not just here, but everywhere. They were--

JZ: Right, yeah. Well, you got the, before, it was pretty rough to get disability on lung trouble before the union come in because the doctors was employed by Berwind-White, paid by Berwind-White, so they had to testify according to the way the company wanted them to.

JZ: Some of them wouldn't do it. Young Dr. George Wheeling, if he testified in a case, he come out, he said: "If a miner has it, he has it. There's no use opposing it anymore."

MB: Oh, really?

JZ: So they quit having him as a doctor to testify.

MB: (laughing) Oh, I see.

JZ: Now Dr. Orris was pretty rough. He just worked right with it, the company. And Dr. Miller was the same way because he, indirectly, he was related to the Berwinds, Dr. Miller.

MB: Oh.

JZ: So their testimony, if it come to a trial, it was against you, against the miner.

MB: Did you ever meet any of the Berwinds? The old ones, I guess, would probably--

JZ: Oh, yeah.

MB: I guess they came to town often, but I don't--

JZ: I met the Charles Berwind.

MB: The young one?

JZ: The junior, the second one. Then I met the Graham, what they call, Graham Berwind, this number three. Now he come in here.

JZ: So when they'd come in here for meetings to see how the business is, the coal business and that is, they'd call a general meeting of the supervisors, you know. And if he thought there was some problem, he wanted to know why. Why, they could come in here once in a while, why, we was called in, some of the union officers, a certain amount of us would be called in there and to meet and so forth.

MB: Okay.

JZ: Or if we met him down the street in the Eureka Stores, which he was owner there anyhow, too, why, we was introduced by a general manager or [one of] those.

MB: I see. But you never met any of the old timers like E.J., Edward, and those old [ones] like Harry and John, back before the union days?

JZ: No. They had their own club here, Berwind did, above the company store there, and we never met any of them.

MB: What else have we not talked about that we, what else would you like to talk about?

JZ: Everything was covered this morning.

MB: Is there anything else that we've missed? Think for a minute (laughing). I hate to-- [Zahurak was obviously getting tired, and Beik stopped the interview. However, he continued to talk, and she turned on the recorder again as he began to say various things about the strike of 1922.]

MB: Yeah, I guess the tent colonies were here in 1922.

JZ: In the bitter winter, the families being in the cold, the families.

MB: Do you remember James Mark or Albert Armstrong? Those were some of the names of those other people. I guess Armstrong was a labor leader in the Consolidation Company and--

JZ: No.

MB: I don't know, and Mark--

JZ: Some of them in the Consolidation Coal Company over there, I didn't know much of them. They operated mostly out of Pittsburgh.

MB: Did you have much contact with the Dunlo people or some of them? They had a union, some local, I guess, some of those earlier years because there were scattered these union places like some in Nanty Glo and stuff. But you just couldn't get it in this town at all (laughing), no way, in those days?

JZ: No, you had it in Nanty Glo. You had the union in Dunlo. You had the union in Beaverdale. There was very few places, I would think.

MB: That's about it.

JZ: You had a union in Cresson.

MB: Were you active in any other organizations in the town? Were you a Slovak? Were you active--?

JZ: Yes, I still am.

MB: (continuing) in the Slovak club and any of those things, or--Was that very important? Did the clubs then support the union generally when it came in, pretty much, because they were all the same people, weren't they, miners?

JZ: Oh, yes, all the same people and everything, yes.

MB: Well, did some of these people like the ones that, before the union come in, like you said Roden or the Italians like Rich who were in the clubs then, did they, when the union came in then, did they go along with the union, too, or did they--?

JZ: Oh, yeah, they had to.

MB: They must have been in a--

JZ: After the union come in and everything else, why, then, they turn around, why, they were demoted. Like just take, for instance, Mr. Rich, who was the weigh boss up at 35 upper. He come down. And old man Marino, he was foreman over the ditch diggers, construction around all the mines and everything. That [job] was eliminated. Just Blaine

Barefoot was left on--the General Manager. So when they took them off, they [the company] give them a job under the union. They was on the tipple, you know.

JZ: They put on, there used to be one shift here all the time, even in World War I, and later on they put double shifts on. More men worked. They even had three shifts on. So they got, stuck, some of these men in there, like the weigh boss and the outside foreman in there. Well, there was nothing we could do about it because this was new [emphasis] jobs, created. They didn't push nobody out, see. The jobs didn't belong to anybody else then.

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: And we had to take them in then. They paid the initiation fee. But what was a hundred dollars [to them]!

JZ: So we got criticized a lot when the welfare and pension fund come in. When the welfare and pension fund come in, these men got on the pension plan--

MB: Oh.

JZ: (continuing) because they worked in and around the mine. And they didn't have, they was not responsible for, a large amount of the business that they [the company] had. Like the construction and ditch diggers, well, they only had maybe 8 or 10 men. And old man Rich, why, he was just weigh boss out there.

MB: Oh.

JZ: He was only one man, see. And also, they had these here sub-station workers because, when they first started here, you know, every mine had their own power plant.

MB: Yeah.

JZ: That's going way back then, to the 1890s, see. (They laugh.) [Mines] 30, 31, 30 and 31, and 32, they had their power plant. 33 and 34 had theirs. 35 had theirs. 36, they had theirs there, too, a boiler house and a producing-power generator, see. And then, 37, they had one over there. And 38 is way out in Seanor--

MB: Seanor.

JZ: (continuing) they had there, and 39 was out there. And the 40 mine here and St.

Michael.

JZ: Then they decided there after, along World War I, and they build one large power plant up here. They build one central where the power plant produce all the power for all the mines and eliminated all these other. Because, at the mines, they was run like club jobs, the firemen and also these sub-station men. They had three, oh, several hundred, jobs eliminated there. But yet the benefits of that didn't go to the miners--the savings. It just reduced the cost of production, that's all. They gained more in business.

MB: Do you remember the Berwind night school that they started in the '20s? I guess this was after the strike. How did that work?

JZ: They had a night school here, established the same one, that was, you go in and learn about mining to become a fire boss or assistant foreman or a mine foreman. So they called that the Scranton school system. So Berwind-White established an office here, a school room upon the third floor. I attended it.

MB: Oh, you did. Oh.

JZ: I attended that before the union come in. I got married in '27.

MB: Oh, okay.

JZ: So I attended school in 1929, '30, and '31, and I had a rough time because I didn't get enough of grade school. I only went to fifth grade. At 14, I had to leave and go to work.

MB: What school did you go to, Mr. Zahurak?

JZ: (continuing his train of thought): So I got into fifth grade, and I didn't get much of fractions then, in school. So my wife had to teach me.

MB: Oh.

JZ: See. She taught me all the fractions. I had subtract, add, and times, you know, that you had. I had those. Long division, I had those. But fractions, that's [emphasis] a problem. And she had a problem with teaching me. She taught me the fractions, see.

MB: Oh, great! So tell me--go ahead.

JZ: So I got in there and everything, and I took the examination. The State Department of Mines, the mine inspector would come in here, conduct a test, a test for us, an examination. They give you papers and everything, and you had to answer all them questions--

MB: Right.

JZ: (continuing) that pertain to state mining laws.

MB: Right. Did you pass?

JZ: The first try, the first try that I started in there then, I didn't do so good because there were some things I just couldn't pick up.

MB: It was different and new, too.

JZ: But the next time, it wasn't too bad. By then the union come in. But then, I was elected a union officer so we forgot this. But that school was good for quite a few of them. That give the local boys, the miners here, the miners' sons, an opportunity to be taken on and given a job as assistant foreman or fire boss and even become mine foremen.

MB: Could they have become that before that school?

JZ: No.

MB: You don't think so?

JZ: No. That [school] was conducted by Berwind-White, and some of the heads of their department was the teachers. They had some very good heads there, you know. They had engineering and clerical, and the property they had here and everything else, so. They had pretty good instructors.

MB: But, before then, there wouldn't have been any way for a miner to rise, you think, in some way?

JZ: No. Not before. Before Berwind started [that school], you'd probably have to go [to] like Cambria-Rowe, or whatever they call, and wherever they taught mining.

MB: Right. I see.

JZ: You'd have to go and pay as a student on your own, see. And this over here, if you was an employee of Berwind, it was free, see.

MB: Oh, I see. Okay.

JZ: It didn't cost anything, see.

MB: That's right after the strike of '22 that they do that really? Yeah? Okay.

JZ: Yes (nodding). See, the only ones that didn't require an examination or papers is a dispatcher. That's a motor boss. I worked at the desk where I even become an extra. If the regular motor boss was injured, like the motor boss Mike Tokotsky [spelling?] across the street, he fell down the steps, injured his skull. So I was the next highest man on the haulage. So they put me on there, until he got better, as motor boss there. I got some compliments from the super and all on the job. So that didn't require a miner's certificate.

MB: I see. Okay.

JZ: The timber boss, you didn't have to have certificate. The track boss, you didn't have no certificate. The coal inspector, you didn't have to have no certificate. And, then, they had like a pipe line, they had pipe lines for air and different things, for water pipes, you had.

MB: I see.

JZ: If you was a pipe boss, it didn't require no certificate. Just when you had a group of men under you, and mining, according to mining laws, and safety was at stake, [it was then] that you had to have a paper. And even then, if they felt like you was qualified, they was in a position to put you on anyhow. I saw them act as assistant foremen, and they'd put them on when the title was a safety inspector. And yet they was assistant foremen, and they'd examine coal miners' places.

MB: I see. I see.

JZ: But they took the responsibility for that, though.

MB: Hmm, hmm.

JZ: So if nothing happened, it was all right.

MB: So you must have seen a lot of changes, too,--

JZ: Oh, yeah.

MB: (continuing) in time with death and benefits and safety, like if there were accidents. Because families in the old days, did they get anything if there was an accident and somebody died in the mines? Or was injured before the union came in, did the families get anything from the company before, if there was an accident in the mine? [Zahurak, who was clearly tired, did not seem to hear the question.] If a father, if a man died in the mine, a miner died, did his family get any benefits before the union had come in?

JZ: If he died?

MB: In the mine, in a mining accident?

JZ: If he was injured in a mine accident?

MB: He got--

JZ: State compensation.

MB: Okay.

JZ: State compensation paid about \$3,000. But if you died of a heart attack or anything like that there, nothing.

MB: So you had to prove [emphasis] something to get that probably.

JZ: Now there was cases that we had here, after the union come in, if a coal miner had his son in there with him, and they was working together, see. And the son wasn't married yet, and if anything happened to that son, they didn't want to pay for anything, see.

JZ: They tried to, the compensation adjuster that Berwind-White had, he come to the house and tried to talk them out of it.

MB: Oh.

JZ: He'd tell him [that] Berwind-White treats you nice. They give you a job and everything else and, like a partnership, they'd probably settle on the lesser rate, see, maybe a thousand dollars or something like that there.

MB: Yeah, oh boy.

JZ: But after the union come in, why, that was settled in a hurry.

MB: Well, most of the miners had to have these, belonged to these fraternal societies, so they had some insurance, didn't they?

JZ: That's right. Yeah.

MB: So they would have, just to have some protection, before there was the union in, I guess.

JZ: Oh, yeah. They had some but not much.

MB: But not much. That. Okay. Well. Did your brothers go in the mine then? How many brothers--you had 11 in your family, you said? Did your brothers go in the mine, too?

JZ: I had four, four of us.

MB: Four boys.

JZ: Four boys worked in the mines. Myself, Andy, Steve, George, and John. Five!

MB: Five. Oh, boy.

JZ: George and John. Five. Then, the others, why, they was drafted in World War II into service, and, oh, just out of high school. So they never went in the mines.

MB: Who didn't go in? Which ones didn't?

JZ: That was the--they turn around then, when they come out of service, why, they located in cities.

MB: Someplace else.

JZ: Okay. I got two of them in Cleveland that never worked in the mines.

MB: And how many girls were there in the family?

JZ: Three.

MB: Three.

JZ: Three girls. One's in Cleveland, well, two of them in Cleveland. And one moved back from New York. Catherine. You know Catherine?

MB: Yeah, I know Catherine, yeah. She's marvelous! And now you got married in 1927?

What's your wife's name? And tell me about that. Tell me. You got married in 1927. In Windber here?

JZ: Yeah. We got married in 1927, November 19th. And we was married here in the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church. Father Lawrence Horvath. That was after the other one got the miners' tools [Beik laughs] when we were on strike. And Lawrence Horvath come in here. And she sang in the choir.

MB: Oh.

JZ: So she was well admired by the priest and everything. And she went to the Hungarian church, and I was Slovak.

MB: Was that a problem?

JZ: So I served, went to parochial school, that Slovak school. That's what kept me back in American school then, see, about four years of parochial school. And at parochial school, all they give you was catechism, see.

MB: Oh.

JZ: Mostly religious. Very little spelling, and everything Slovak-- writing, see, and everything. So when I got out of parochial school, after four years of that, I was 10 years old. I started in third grade, see.

MB: Oh. So that was a big adjustment.

JZ: Now my wife, she was a Hungarian, see.

MB: What's your wife's name? Just maiden name and her first name, so we have that.

JZ: Margaret Kada.

MB: Oh, Kada.

JZ: Her brother was my pal. [Beik laughs.] We got blackballed from Windber because ...

End of Tape 3 Side A

Beginning of Tape 3 Side B (October 7, 1986)

MB: So your family really knew her family and so forth.

JZ: Oh, yeah. Well, when I was blackballed out of here, they had to, they moved out of here, so I went along with them.

MB: Oh.

JZ: So I was a boarder over there, for a while there, while we were there. Then after we come back over here and everything, and then I went back up to my [emphasis] family.

MB: Uh-huh.

JZ: Because they come back here, when they start coming back here, there was no home. The strikebreakers they brought in here. They [the returning families] had to double up. See, now, my wife's family, when they come back here, they moved into a four-room house, like this is here, but there was already two families in there, see.

MB: Oh. The company just said they could do that or told them to do that?

JZ: Well, the company, they took you [the old mining families] in. They didn't object as long as somebody paid the rent.

MB: Oh, they didn't care how many--

JZ: They took you in, and I don't know, they'd [the families] pay, they'd have to pay for rent, somehow, the rent.

MB: Oh, I see, yeah. But did most of the families that came, strikebreaking families, stay, or did they leave Windber then?

JZ: Well, some of them stayed. Very few left, [correcting himself] stayed [emphasis], though. Most of them left, went back when. They didn't stay here long here, after that when the regular miners start coming back.

MB: I see.

JZ: Because there's a lot of difference from the hard coal to soft coal.

MB: I see. Okay.

JZ: But some of them stayed. Not very many, though. For instance, up here at 711. Anyhow, some of them went in the trucking business, and after they made good money, stayed. Wojecki [spelling?], a girl that met the Hitchcocks in New York Park.

MB: (laughing) I've heard about that name.

JZ: They lived where my sister Catherine lives now.

MB: (laughing) Yeah, that's where I heard about it, I believe.

JZ: She was working in New York, and a pebble got in her shoes. So she sit down on a bench in New York to get it out of her shoe, and here one of the Hitchcocks happened to be coming around and helped her out, and he fell for her. [Beik laughs.]

JZ: He married her and everything, and then he come over here for awhile. He stayed here. He remodeled her parents' home. They was from hard coal, her people. All new furniture, [he] bought them a car and everything for the rest of them here. But when he come over here, why, it was great over here, like Whalley was Congressman. He come up here to meet him, see. He was a great man. Hitchcocks, you know. Coal brothers! [Beik laughs.]

MB: Could we go back just one minute to your marriage with a Slovak and a Hungarian? If you read some books, they would say this would be a big problem, they say, because the antagonisms between Slovaks and Hungarians existed some places. Now I don't know about Windber. Is that true in Windber? Slovaks and Hungarians seem to intermarry a lot in Windber. And there didn't seem to be this problem the same way. Do you have anything you can tell me?

JZ: Well, there was some difference in there. But--

MB: The nationalism that they had from the old--

JZ: The nationalism, the old-timers.

MB: Can you tell me anything about that that I could--?

JZ: But now the younger generation's altogether different.

MB: But you didn't have any problems yourself personally?

JZ: No, no.

MB: In the '20s because of that?

JZ: No. Not personally, no. We had no problems there. Everybody minded their own business. And if you had a celebration or anything like that there, what was the Hungarians, they had their celebrations, they had their hall. The Slovaks had their celebrations; they had Slovak hall. Greeks, Russians would have their celebrations. They had a Greek hall on 10th

Street. The Italians, they would have theirs. They had three halls. They had the Abruzzi, Sons of Italy, and Columbus hall.

MB: But they, outside of the difficulty of getting the get together for unions, did they get--?

JZ: They all stuck together good.

MB: They all got together. You didn't have any problems like that with--?

JZ: They didn't matter. No. Whatever the problem.

MB: Okay.

JZ: They adopted everything as one family.

MB: And the English, whatever English people were around, too?

JZ: Well, they come, too. Because they had to. Because we were the majority then--the foreigners.

MB: Yeah, right.

JZ: When we got united once. We got in the drivers' seat.

MB: (laughing) Do you have any children?

JZ: Two boys.

MB: Two boys. And did you ever want, did they go in the mines at all? To work in the mines?

JZ: No.

MB: No. Did you want them to?

JZ: (proudly) Both college graduates!

MB: Oh, wonderful.

JZ: Now the oldest one, he works now, he started out with Bethlehem Steel, and you know how private industries are. They push, and they want results. So he was kind of soft, you know. If something went wrong in his department down there and it wasn't his fault, but some of the sharp ones in there would blame him for it.

MB: Oh.

JZ: And to get the recommendation there from the higher ups, he would take it without saying anything. He took the blame. So he took that out until he couldn't stand it anymore. So he quit, and he went to the federal government, army and navy supply depot. So he's in Maryland.

MB: Oh.

JZ: And the younger one, why, he stayed here in Johnstown with Bethlehem Steel. But he was one when they tried to blame him for something, he stood up and fought. He would not take no responsibility that was not his fault, and he proved to them.

JZ: One time they was going to lay him off. One of the department managers said he's gonna put him on [layoff] because he was too timid. He's kind of soft, you know, and everything. So he said, "All right, you think I'm timid." So he started to reel away then.

JZ: Now he's considered one of the best. He's still working. He was never laid off. And he went in there in 1970, about 1970 or '68, when he graduated college.

MZ: [Margaret Zahurak, Joe's wife, who had been sitting there throughout the interview but never said anything]: Right after he graduated.

MB: Did you ever--?

JZ: He's still working. He's down there, and now they put him on where he's like a traveling salesman, where they had problems, where they had customers for steel before and for some reason they're losing them. They sent him out to find out what's wrong. So he's doing a good job, and he's getting pretty well paid for it.

JZ: He lives in Richland over here on Laretta Lane. That's off, what's that other main street where the [Long] John Silver's is, you know? Luther Road, off Luther Road.

MB: Oh, okay. I know where that is.

JZ: They have a home down in there. There's a Baptist church like there near the home. And he, that's Mr. Erickson, named that street after his wife, Laretta.

MB: Oh.

JZ: So he owned a good bit of that property, Erickson. And he was an electrical engineer for Berwind-White.

MB: Oh, yeah.

JZ: And the older one, he's still able. He's got a good job, he's a good boy, his head is good, he saves his money.

MZ: He'd make a good husband. But I don't know why he can't get the girl.

MB: Well.

JZ: Some are backwards, you know, bashful.

MB: There's still time, still time.

JZ: He had a couple of girl friends. I don't know. Some of them. One of them was a school teacher in Richland.

End of Tape 3 Side B

End of the interview with Joseph Zahurak (October 7, 1986)

Excerpts from the oral history interview with Joseph Zahurak on October 7, 1986
By Millie Allen Beik

This Slovak-American miner was an activist, a strike leader in 1922, and a union officer of UMW Local 6186 from 1933 until the interview. Here are some excerpts on the strike of 1922.

JZ: The haulage men of Berwind-White--I mean mine motormen and spraggers -- were in contact with all the miners in the mine because they always ordered their cars, the amount of empty cars that they wanted or the loads that they pulled out. The haulage men got together in 1922 to get it organized to come out on strike, and we avoided informers. [We] made sure not to contact them so they don't know anything about it.

JZ: In 1922 when the union call came on April 1st, we surprised B-W, shut them down completely. Even the captive mines--Bethlehem Steel, US Steel, Frick Coal Company in Pittsburgh--were all shut down. In 1922 it was quite a battle.

JZ: I was blackballed along with my brother-in-law at that time, Andy Kada, Mike M. from the Italians, Joe J. from the Hungarians, and quite a few--numerous others.

JZ: We kept these miners out pretty good. Finally we found out about some of the miners that was talking that they're going to go back to work--[those with large families]. So I--Joe Z.--I went with Andy Kada, my buddy. We travelled together. He had a car.

JZ: We talked to these miners [to keep them] from going back to work. I would talk the Slovak, Hungarian; Polish, Russian, I understand. Also, my buddy, my friend Andy Kada was a good talker in Hungarian.

JZ: We tried to talk [to] these men [to keep them] from going in. The first thing, you know, why their wives reported us to the mine super-intendent, Mr. Cook, at 35 and 36 and 42.

JZ: After that ... they [B-W] already had the big, huge Coal and Iron police strikebreakers. B-W employed them here. At all these mines they used to have them here. They had them employed here at the mines to protect and make sure that there's nobody comes in here without knowing a reference where he was from and what he was coming here for.

JZ: We were reported about trying to get these men not to go back to work. So first thing we know, why, the Coal & Iron police come and wrap on the door. They ask my mother, "Is Joe home?" She says, "Yeah."

JZ: "Well, get him down here!" I got six hours to get out of here.

MB: To get out of town?

JZ: (Shaking head yes), I was blackballed. My friend then, Andy Kada, their family got twelve hours. The whole family had to move out. So we moved out here.

JZ: They had a relation friend in Scalp Level that run a bowling alley down there by the name of Joe --. He took them in for awhile. We stayed there in a clothes closet--broom closet--down there on cots.

JZ: Andy Kada had a car at that time, a 1921 ? made by General Motors. We had to go in that to try to keep these miners out on strike and bring in organizers.

JZ: We had to go to Beavertown to get a Slovak organizer--Mr. Slivco. We had to go to Nanty Glo to [get] the Hungarian-speaking organizer--which was Joe Foster. In Homer City [there] was John Ghizzoni and Charles Ghizzoni--was the Italian.

JZ: These organizers didn't dare come in here with their own car. You could not come in on the streetcar, the Johnstown Traction Company, because if they got on the street car in Johnstown, the Traction Company conductor would stop in Moxham and go to the dispatcher. He would call the General Office that a "stranger" is on the streetcar. They all knew the people [the organizers].

JZ: When the car arrived in Windber, the Berwinds' Coal and Iron police was there. As soon as they [the organizers] got off, they wanted to know who they were, where they was from, what their business is. And when they found out, they told them: "If you know what's good for you, you'll get back on the streetcar and get back out of here." They wasn't allowed in here. They had to get out.

JZ: Then my friend Andy Kada and myself--we would go pick these organizers up and bring them in here in the car and we'd have meetings in Windber, down in Scalp Level there at Bantley Field and meetings up in Central City on ball field and meetings up at 42 mines and also meetings here in Windber.

JZ: You had all them nationalities at that time--that generation. You had to use the different nationality speakers to interest them in staying out.

[Sometime later, the car the men used to pick up District 2 organizers and speakers was blown up, presumably by company agents, in the middle of the night.]

(Comment on the 1922-1923 strike's defeat after 17 months):

JZ: We won the battle but we lost the war.

[Beik asked Zahurak what had happened in the Windber churches during the strike of 1922. Here was his response.]

JZ: Now there was Father Saas in the Polish zone, the Polish church, and Father Lach was here in the Slovak. But Lach didn't take no part in it to preach in church what the Berwind-White wanted. But Father Saas announced in the '22 strike, told the people to go back because they will not recognize, the company will not recognize the union.

JZ: Father Fojtan of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, he also done the same thing. In his preaching in church, he told the membership that they'd better go back to work because they're not going to be recognized as union that they're just going to be suffering for nothing. Up at the Italian church was Father Leone. He was up there. He also took part in it and ordered and asked them to go back.

JZ: So when these priests announced that in church in their sermons to the people and asked them to go back, Father Saas then next morning, he found a coal miner's tools--pick, shovel, nil, tamping bar, and augurs to drill the holes, a hatchet, saw, and a sledgehammer. That was the entire tools for a coal miner. That was tied up and put on his front porch at the parish. And it said on there, "Father Saas, you can take these tools and go ahead. Go to the mines!"

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: The same thing happened to Father Fojtan, the Hungarian priest. They gave him [emphasis] a set of tools and put them on his [emphasis] front porch over there at the rectory over there. And Father Leone, he got in trouble also over that. That's when he left up there then. [Beik laughs.]

JZ: And there was, I'll tell you, Father Saas was got rid of because the people got discouraged, most of them.

MB: Right, right.

JZ: And Father Lach, he had brains enough. He sympathized with the people; Father John Lach did. He sympathized with them and everything else. They're up against a tough battle. He don't think that the working man's going to be able to win, but he didn't insist [emphasis] that they'd better go back because it's in vain that they were striking.

JZ: Now other churches now, like the Protestant churches and, you know, like the Evangelists or different American-speaking nationalities, they didn't get involved that much. Because they weren't up here. Italians, Slovak, Polish, Russian, and all these here [were] because that was a majority of the coal miners.

 Comment on the ongoing Windber/Somerset county strike for union (after Lewis signed the national contract with operators for previously-unionized mines in August 1922):

JZ: My name is Joe Zahurak, a lifetime resident here of Windber, Pennsylvania, and employed by the Berwind-White all those years, all but the two years we were blackballed out of here from 1922 to 1924. We had to get out of here and moved out to Indiana County, where, after John L. Lewis finally signed the contract with the union mines to go back to work so that they could support the non-union captive mines, like Windber, Berwind-White, and Bethlehem Steel, US Steel, for the union was not very strong financially in them days. So the union miners signed a contract and went back to work, and the miners was assessed \$12.50 a pay, that's in two weeks and \$25 a month, to contribute towards the people that were still out on strike. But at that time, in 1922, it was still not quite enough to maintain them. But it helped a lot at that time.

MB: Mr. Zahurak, was there any anger about Lewis signing the national contract of the miners among [the miners in] Windber because they were left out? I've always wondered that, if they were.

JZ: What's that?

MB: About Windber, about the Somerset County, miners being left out of the contract Lewis signed. Were people angry with that at all?

JZ: Oh yes.

MB: They were?

JZ: After 1922 why that give the coal company an idea to discourage the ones that was out on strike. And they put out their men--that they had certain few in each nationality. They had the Italians up there. In the Italians there was Old Man Rich, they called [him]. He was a weigh boss for Berwind-White, and Dominic Marino. He was a foreman of construction, of ditch diggers and everything. And Sam Bertino and Frank Senillo [spelling?]. These Italians that they had to influence the Italians up there. They had the nationalities pretty well divided.

MB: I see. Okay.

JZ: Italians was in one district up there and had their Italian clubs, social clubs, the church, and everything up there. Then the Polishes, they had their set-up in the west end of town here in Windber, where there was mostly Slovak, Polish, and some of the Russians. They were down here in the west end of town in Windber, and each nationality had a leader or two that these miners give their faith in them men. Whatever they decide there was going wrong, what they should do. So finally these here obligated were men [obligated] to Berwind-White, they would, after several months of striking, they started discouraging the miners. There's not going to be anything to it. They'd better go back to work. 'Cause they're not going to get nowhere, and Berwind-White never did--or never will--recognize the organization--the United Mine Workers.

JZ: So that strike went on through 1922, 1923, and by 1924, the people began to get discouraged because the only assistance they would get is the union had a set-up, like a grocery store, and cold meats like bacon and things like that there. The union men would go in with their slip, with a credit card like, and on there stated the amount of people they had in their family. They would go to this store, the union store was supplying it, and they would get the amount of food--like beans, flour, bacon, eggs, whatever was donated--lots of them from people who tried to help out. This was the only living they had in that way.

JZ: Because the ones that were out on strike then for a while then, they was evicted. They was evicted from their homes. Now up here at 35 and 36 the first family that was evicted,

maybe they give them 12 or 15 hours time. But Berwind-White, Johnstown Traction Company, Bethlehem Steel, Frick Coal Company, all them, they was in together.

Comment on a trial and the lack of civil liberties in Windber on the eve of the strike:

JZ: Berwind-White run the Borough. They run Windber. They had all their general office employees--what they call the monthly payroll--they was all Council and Burgesses running the town, and they also run the county--Somerset County. Whatever they wanted, they went up to the judge, and the judge cooperated with them because the miners did not have their political freedom. It was taken away. Berwind-White says, "You've got a job, and if you're a citizen, all right, how are you registered?" You had to be a Republican, or else you didn't get much consideration. So when election days would come, why, they made sure that you went down there and voted--as they wanted you.

JZ: So everything in there, like the Borough Council, was all from the general office, the head of the engineers, the departments, and all of those, the burgess. . . .

So Mr. Delehunt was the mayor, the burgess, in there [before 1922]. . . .Then, [by 1922] after that, he was replaced by Mr. Barefoot, Blaine Barefoot. Now he was a staunch Republican and a Berwind-White man. He was general manager of all construction workers on the outside around the mines, around the tipples, and places there where he had a crew all the time taking care of him. He worked part-time as a burgess or mayor because you'd get brawls and different things, disagreements among the miners. Instead of sending them to the justice of the peace and everything, why, he'd try to settle it over there. And if you was a favorite of his, you got off with a slap on the hand, what they call. But if you was not, then you was fined and penalized or even put in jail. So that [was the] kind of rule that they had set up at that time. They had everything in their hands.

JZ: Same thing with the county court. We had the union in here organizing, and we got, the organizers finally brought in the miners' journal that's still in existence today. That was the miners', operated and printed by, the United Mine Workers' Journal. They brought some

of them journal, papers and magazines, into Windber here, and we passed them out to the miners. And when we passed them out to the miners, well, they always had their stool pigeons--which you called [them]--at each mine. Or the bartenders. In every bar room, there was a bartender who was a stool pigeon, and the social clubs and every place else. You had to be careful what you said or what you done.

MB: I see.

JZ: And they reported back to the Berwind-White, and the next day, if you was involved or anything like that, it was, the report went to the General Office to Assistant General Manager--which was then Bob Baylor. And Mr. Booker in '22, he was the General Manager here at Berwind-White. So they was notified about this union paper coming in here and pretty soon they round us up--me Joe Zahurak, and Andy Kada here in the Hungarians, and Mike Magazzu in the Italians and O'Neil [spelling?] in the Irish and then Dan Murray was another Irishman. He was the president, then, [of the UMWA local] temporarily established here. And we was all taken up into the Somerset court, and they wanted to know who distributed that union paper that wasn't allowed.

MB: You [emphasis] were taken, Mr. Zahurak?

JZ: That's right. We had that trial in Somerset court, and they wanted to get down to the roots of it. Who brought them and distributed that union magazine paper here in the hometown. They said that Berwind-White is running the town. Berwind-White would not leave no other industry into this town, only coal-mining, 'cause they had quite a few mines here, about eight or ten, so they wanted to know who brought that paper in here and everything to try to penalize them if they might when they got down to it. But everybody stuck to the story, stuck pretty good and everything else, and they never did find out, but they was all put on probation after that, at that time.

MB: You [emphasis] were put on probation?

JZ: It was a crime [emphasis] to come in here with literature at that time, you see.

Comment on the miners coming out on strike in 1922 and bringing in speakers to keep the diverse nationalities out:

JZ: They [the miners] come out on the field in 1922. That's when they first get out there. The haulage men of Berwind-White--the haulage men, I mean mine motormen and spraggers. They was in contact with all the miners in the mine because they always ordered their cars, the amount of empty cars that they wanted or the loads that they pulled out, the haulage men. So the haulage men got together in 1922 to get it organized to come out on strike, and we avoided these people that--informers. Make sure they didn't contact them so they don't know anything about it.

JZ: So in 1922, when April 1st come, a union holiday, they surprised Berwind-White, shut them down completely [emphasis]. Even the captive mines, Bethlehem Steel, US Steel, and all them. They was all shut down. And Frick Coal Company in Pittsburgh. So in 1922, it was quite a battle. . . .

JZ: So from then, after the 1922 strike comes, I come out in sympathy with the miners.

JZ: So we went along with the strike as I said. I was blackballed along with my brother-in-law at that time, my brother-in-law Andy Kada, Mike Magazzu from the Italians, Joe Jasway from the Hungarians, and quite a few--numerous others.

MB: Now you had this trial.

JZ: We kept these miners out pretty good.

MB: Yeah.

JZ: Finally we found out about some of the miners that was talking that they're going to go back to work--[those] with larger families. So I--Joe Zahurak--I went with Andy Kada, my buddy. We travelled together. He had a car.

JZ: And we talked to these miners [to try to keep them] from going back to work. I could talk the Slovak, Hungarian, Polish, Russian. I understand all of them, I do. Also, my buddy, my friend Andy Kada, he was a very good talker in there, but he was in Hungarian, he could talk.

JZ: We tried to talk [to] these men [to keep them] from going in. The first thing, you know, why their wives reported us to the mine superintendent--

MB: Their wives?

JZ: (Shaking head yes). Mr. Cook at 35 and 36 and Mine 42, he had. So after that, when we tried that, why then, they [Berwind-White] already had the big, huge Coal and Iron Police strikebreakers. Berwind-White employed them at all these mines here that they had them here. They had them employed here at the mines to protect and make sure that there's nobody comes in here without knowing or reference where he was from and what he was coming in here for.

JZ: So we were reported about trying to get these men not to go back to work. So first thing we know, why, the Coal and Iron Police come and wrap on the door. And they ask my mother, "Is Joe home?" And she says, "Yeah." "Well, get him down here!" So I got six hours time--to get out of here.

MB: To get out of town?

JZ: (Shaking head yes), I was blackballed. And my friend then, Andy Kada, their family, I think, got twelve hours. The whole family had to move out. So we moved out of here.

JZ: They had a relation friend in Scalp Level that run a bowling alley down there by the name of Joe Istvan [spelling?]. So he took them in for awhile. We stayed there in a clothes closet--broom closet--down there on cots.

JZ: So Andy Kada had a car at that time, a 1921 [unintelligible name of car] made by General Motors. We had to go in then to try to keep these miners out on strike and bring in organizers.

JZ: We had to go to Beaverdale to get a Slovak-speaking organizer--Mr. Slivco. We had to go to Nanty Glo to [get] the Hungarian-speaking organizer--which was Joe Foster. And we had Homer City [where there] was John Ghizzoni, and Charles Ghizzoni--was the Italian.

JZ: And these organizers, they didn't dare come in here with their own car. You could not come in on the streetcar, the Johnstown Traction Company, because if they got on the

streetcar in Johnstown, the Traction Company, the conductor would stop in Moxham and go to the dispatcher. And he would call the General Office that a "stranger" is on the streetcar, see, because they all knew the people [the organizers].

MB: Strangers?

JZ: The strangers are on the street car. They all knew who they are. So when the car arrived in Windber, the Berwinds' Coal and Iron Police was there. As soon as they [the organizers] got off, they wanted to know who they were, where they was from, what their business is. And when they found out, they told them: "If you know what's good for you, you'll get back on the streetcar and get back out of here." They wasn't allowed in here. So they had to get out.

JZ: So then my friend Andy Kada and myself--we would go and pick these organizers up and bring them in here on the car, and we'd have meetings in Windber, down in Scalp Level there [in what] they called Bantley Field, and meetings up in Central City on ball fields, meetings up in 42 mine and also meetings here in Windber.

JZ: You had all them nationalities at that time--that generation. You had to use the different nationality speakers to interest them in staying out.

MB: Right.

JZ: So that worked pretty good until we was just about ready to leave over here. We come out on April 1st. May, June, and after July 1st already was gone. So we delivered the organizers back home after they was here in Windber speaking. And the last one we delivered was to Beaverdale, Mr. Slivco. Then when we got back home from delivering, taking these organizers back home, we got back home here about two o'clock, 2:30 in the morning, in the pool room where now Zigmond's [spelling?]. Kroskie's [spelling?] bar used to be in there. That was a pool room then, Znanecki [spelling?] then. We stayed there and parked the car on the outside. Then we went inside then to go in our closet, our broom closet room, to the cots to sleep. And we wasn't in there maybe one hour, not even quite

sleeping yet, when all of a sudden, a big noise come up. And here the Coal and Iron Police come in there, and they dynamited the car.

MB: Oh!

JZ: So we could not haul the organizers in here after that.

Comment on the problems of getting a place for union meetings in the company town:

JZ: So one thing, we was working very hard to get places to meet. For meetings, for the miners. So the first place we started in, after we started meeting here, would be in private. Private owners. Mr. Nelson didn't mind if we met on 9th Street at his farm. That's the Nelson store on Graham Avenue. Mrs. Torquato, she was up there towards the cemeteries. And no relation to John Torquatos.

MB: Oh.

JZ: She had some land up there, farm land, a few acres. We met over there. And Mr. Hoffman, Dr. Hoffman's family here, was a farmer up here on the hill. And they allowed us to have meetings there in a cow pasture because the state police would not allow us to meet along the highway, no place. So we had to go either around the cemeteries or in Hoffman's farm or else up in Rummel up there.

JZ: So we had a meeting. The first meeting was scheduled here. And we was up in Hoffman's farm in the cow pasture up there. And we decided the next meeting, that was supposed to be the next Sunday, was in Hayes' [spelling?] ball field. Mr. Hayes run the dairy store up there, the ice cream parlor. It's still there. And a nice farm there. And he also had a baseball diamond down where Sheeby's [spelling?] garage is now. That belonged to Hayes. So he cooperated with us because he was a member of the Slovak Club from World War I and belonged to the band. So he promised us, we, the union, could meet on his ball field Sunday afternoon. So everything was all set for a mass meeting up there.

JZ: Finally on Sunday morning before the meeting, on Sunday morning about 11 o'clock, he called, and he says, "You have to call meeting off." He says, "You can't use my ball field

because I got a call from the General Manager from Eureka Stores. If I allow the miners to meet on the ball field, they will not handle my product in their stores." He'd lose the business.

JZ: So we only had a couple of times to do something. The meeting was scheduled. So in a hurry we take contact with a man by the name of Mr. Shaffer, at the bottom of Rummel up there, at the bottom of what they call Lochrie Hill. And he had a Shaffer's grove there, like a park of his own. So a committee of us--about four of us went up there--Joe Zahurak, Andy Kada, Mike Magazzu, Joe Jasway. We contacted Mr. Shaffer, and he says, "Yes. You can have my park over here. You can have your meeting in there." And that's where we held the meeting there, the first mass meeting here in Windber.

JZ: And after that meeting, the following meeting, the next week we had to come to the stone crusher up here, owned by Nick Yakov [spelling?], up on what they call the 32 mine, see. They crushed stone to make sand for the mines here. So we met at that stone crusher then, the second meeting. Because we were not allowed to have no meetings. There was no hall in Windber would allow. They was under obligation to Berwind-White. They would get a grant of a couple of hundred dollars a year, and the Berwind-White had first say-so on who meets in that hall. If they wasn't satisfied what kind of meeting, they'd say the meeting wasn't allowed.

JZ: There was only one hall in Windber that did not submit to Berwind-White dictatorship, and that was the GBU, the German Beneficial Association. They was located on a hillside next to a creek they called Summer Street here, at that time, in Windber. So we contacted them over there, and they granted us, if it come down to that, we could meet up there. So anyhow we kept meeting over here at the stone crusher.

JZ: Then the next meeting we had was held up here at the Hungarian cemetery in Mrs. Torquato's field among the cemetery. So we had the meeting over there, and then that's where the officers was elected. That was the first officers, and they had to be elected up there because we couldn't use no hall. So they had a nomination up there, and Charlie

Zankey was elected as president; John Karakas was elected as vice-president; Joe Zahurak--that's myself--was elected as financial secretary; Mike Zaroff was the Polish, he was elected recording secretary. And then so on, all the others.

MB: This was in 1922, though? Yeah?

JZ: 1922. This was in 1922. Yes.

 Comment on the dispersion of the strikers, the arrival of strikebreakers, and the difficulty of activists getting their jobs back in the aftermath of the lost strike:

JZ: So after our meeting up there and nomination of officers and everything, why, finally we decided, and we got, a meeting at 21st Street garage. It was owned by an Italian. I forget his name. Now, anyhow, it was brand new there. And later on the garage turned out to be a Chevrolet garage, a Chevy dealership.

JZ: So then after 1922 and everything broke up, so we was transferred out of here, and people scattered out to different towns--to union towns--where they could get a job for their families. Like myself and Andy Kada and these people and their family. And quite a few other families went to Arcadia, Pennsylvania, in Indiana County. Some went to Nanty Glo, Pennsylvania. Some went to Portage, Pennsylvania. Some--quite a few--went to Dilltown. All over the place. They scattered around.

MB: Were those union mines?

JZ: In '22. Yes.

JZ: Then, later on, after about 1924, the first part of 1924, they were getting disgusted.

Most of the miners here was back to work because they [the company] turned around, they went to hard coal, and they brought in some strikebreakers. They told the people, the miners in hard coal, most of them were Russian people. They used to say that Russians was dumb. So they started migrating and transporting their furniture and everything free into Windber

here, to come in here and break the strike. Berwind told them that this is a new coal-mining town, just developing, and they had the town, the homes, painted up nice and everything else over here at that time.

MB: To bring in the people from the anthracite region?

JZ: From the anthracite. So they come in here because they had trouble down there then, too, on strike. So some of them come in here. They stayed a little while but not too long.

JZ: So then the regular people that, slowly, in 1924, start coming back. So we also come back after almost two years from Arcadia, come back here, go back to work. We lost is what they thought. We won the battle, but we lost the war, and come back in.

JZ: The people went back to work, but myself, Joe Zahurak, Andy Kada, Mike Magazzu, Joe Jasway and those that were responsible as leaders here could not get a job very easy.

We was ordered by Assistant General Manager to report to the General Office every [emphasis] morning to try--employment office--to try to get back on the job here. So we was going back there. It took me about two months before he finally hired me. And it took Andy Kada, that's later my brother-in law, it took him about six months or more. He had to keep going down there because he talked a little more than I did. And same way with Mike Magazzu. And Joe Jasway, he was a Hungarian representative of the Hungarian language, Hungarian speaker and everything. So he was sort of a communist sympathizer. So he was blackballed for quite a while, for two or three years before he ever got back.

On the role of the churches and priests, and the response of the miners, during the strike of 1922-1923:

MB: I was wondering, like in the times when the union wasn't in, what about the churches and the priests then? Like in the 1922 strike, what happened? Now you mentioned Father Lach--

JZ: That's a good question.

MB: And Father Saas, I guess, with the Polish church--

JZ: Father Saas, and what's his--

MB: The Hungarian was who?

JZ: The Hungarian priest.

MB: I can't think.

JZ: What was he [his name], Margaret?

MZ: I don't remember.

MB: I didn't know it.

JZ: Fojtan.

MB: Fojtan. Oh, yeah.

JZ: Now there was Father Saas in the Polish zone, the Polish church, and Father Lach was here in the Slovak. But Lach didn't take no part in it to preach in church what the Berwind-White wanted. But Father Saas announced in the '22 strike, told the people to go back because they will not recognize, the company will not recognize the union.

JZ: Father Fojtan of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, he also done the same thing. In his preaching in church, he told the membership that they'd better go back to work because they're not going to be recognized as union, that they're just going to be suffering for nothing. Up at the Italian church was Father Leone. He was up there. He also took part in it and ordered and asked them to go back.

JZ: So when these priests announced that in church in their sermons to the people and asked them to go back, Father Saas then next morning, he found a coal miner's tools--pick, shovel, nil, tamping bar, and augurs to drill the holes, a hatchet, saw, and a sledgehammer. That was the entire tools for a coal miner. That was tied up and put on his front porch at the

parish. And it said on there, "Father Saas, you can take these tools and go ahead. Go to the mines!"

MB: Oh, I see.

JZ: The same thing happened to Father Fojtan, the Hungarian priest. They gave him [emphasis] a set of tools and put them on his [emphasis] front porch over there at the rectory over there. And Father Leone, he got in trouble also over that. That's when he left up there then. [Beik laughs.]

JZ: And there was, I'll tell you, Father Saas was got rid of because the people got discouraged, most of them.

MB: Right, right.

JZ: And Father Lach, he had brains enough. He sympathized with the people; Father John Lach did. He sympathized with them and everything else. They're up against a tough battle. He don't think that the working man's going to be able to win, but he didn't insist [emphasis] that they'd better go back because it's in vain that they were striking.

JZ: Now other churches now, like the Protestant churches and, you know, like the Evangelists or different American-speaking nationalities, they didn't get involved that much. Because they weren't up here. Italians, Slovak, Polish, Russian, and all these here [were] because that was a majority of the coal miners.

 Comment on the state police, the coal and iron police, and a rape during the strike of 1922-1923:

JZ: In 1922 the state police come in here and in Frank Tarr's hotel. That was right across from the fire hall by the creek, by the bridge there. And Mr. Tarr there then---there was a barber shop in one corner, and they had a hotel building there. Gorgon, see, Sam Gorgon. And his son is a barber there now across from the fire hall. Phil Gorgon. So the state police come in there to Sam Gorgon, and they told him they want that part where his barber shop

is. They want him to vacate because they want that for an office to meet there. Now that belonged to Frank Tarr. He was the hotel owner, and yes, you couldn't do anything about it, see.

JZ: So Sam Gorgon had to move out of there and find a different location, and the state police moved in there and set up an office right across from the fire hall. And after the strike was over and everything in '22, why, they turned it back over. But he had a big window blind about 20 feet long for one of these big panes that they had at the hotel lobby and in that barber shop. So that was broke, and they gave him \$20.00 to buy himself a new one--Sam Gorgon--to go back in there after the strike was broken, and the state police wasn't needed any more. But the Coal and Iron Police was pretty rough here with the coal miners like everything else.

JZ: Like we had in 1922, we had the Coal and Iron Police where they broke into a farm here in Mine 36--Swast [spelling?] farm. It was a private owner. He had a daughter that was just married about six months before that, before the strike, and living with him on the farm here. And he used to have a team of horses and haul the house coal for the people. He didn't even work for Berwind-White. They were Polish. But his daughter's husband did.

JZ: So the Coal and Iron Police come in there one night after they was married about six months, and prohibition come in in 1920. So they come in there and went over there at midnight one night, and they wrapped on the door, and this young man that married the Swast's [?] daughter, he come down to see what they wanted.

JZ: And there was three Coal and Iron Police. So they got ahold of him and said they were revenue men. They were looking for moonshine. They heard that he was a bootlegger, and he was not, but they said he was. So two of them kept him occupied downstairs while one would be upstairs with his wife, raping her. When that one was through down there, he

came down, and another went up. Then the third one went up. And when that come out, that was pretty bad for Berwind-White.

JZ: So we met then from the union. Matt Sherwin--he was a safety administrator for Berwind-White Coal Mining Company--adviser then. He was a pretty big man with Berwind-White. We told him all about it. Well, they turn around then, the three men that done the dirty work, they transferred them somewhere else and bring other men in here.

MB: Did they ever get to trial?

JZ: No, no. There was no conviction, no trial, same as John D. Rockefeller in Ludlow, Colorado. The same thing was, there was quite a few coal miners' daughters. After the Coal and Iron Police left here and everything, quite a few of them was pregnant, and then, they left the girls behind here, see. There was quite a few. They was pretty darned rotten.

Comment on a family Christening during the 1922-1923 strike:

MB: Where were you living in '22?

JZ: I was living then in Arcadia then when I got evicted.

MB: When you got evicted.

JZ: And then, the eleventh one, a boy was born, my brother, the youngest, Elmer.

MB: Oh boy.

JZ: And so, I come home here, along with Andy Kada who was my friend. We come home here to, for, for his christening on a Sunday. And we come here on a Saturday. So we come in here just for the christening, baptizing my brother, my little baby brother.

JZ: So Sunday morning the Coal and Iron Police come over there and wrapped on the door. They said, coming to the door, "Is Joe here?"

JZ: "Yes."

JZ: "What are you doing here? You're not allowed in here. You should know better than that. Don't you understand English?"

JZ: So I told them what was what and everything else.

JZ: They said, "All right." They said, "You are over here," he says, "for a few hours here.

But after you have your dinner, after the christening here, after baptism, you'd better

[emphasis] be out of here by 6 o'clock this evening." So I was evicted then, too, from my

own [emphasis] brother's christening, along with Andy Kada, my friend who come in here

from over there.

Comment on the 1922-1923 Strike's defeat after 17 months:

JZ: We won the battle, but we lost the war.

End of Excerpts from the Interview with Joseph Zahurak (October 7, 1986)