

ANN AND JOHN SPENSKO

Helper, Utah

An Interview By

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Carbon County Coal Mine Oral History Project

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THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNE AND JOHN SPENSKO IN HELPER, UTAH ON MAY 7, 1982. THE INTERVIEWER IS NANCY TANAGUCHI. THIS IS FOR THE CARBON COUNTY COAL MINE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

NT: I wanted to explain that this is being done for the American West Center at the University of Utah, and if you know any time you look at a history of Utah, they seem to leave out Carbon County. So that's one of the things we're working on now, is to get history of this county.

JS: Oh you want to get into this county?

NT: Yes, you bet. I mean I'm interested in this county anyway, but then for people who are writing history in the state of Utah we need the information and nobody has got it, because nobody's ever really bothered to do very much of it, so, but not a lot. Okay now, I don't even know your name.

AS: My name is Ann.

NT: Ann, and what is your maiden name?

AS: Stavensky.

NT: Oh, how about that. And are you from around here too?

AS: Oh yes, I've been born and raised here.

NT: Where were you born?

AS: Castlegate.

NT: And when were you born?

AS: In January, 1913.

NT: 1913. Well how come your parents were up in Castlegate?

AS: That's where they came from Europe, from Yugoslavia.

NT: Oh what part of Yugoslavia?

AS: Maklicka(?).

NT: Where is that, in Yugoslavia?

JS: That's in Austria.

NT: It is it in Slovenia, Croatia?

AS: Slovenia.

NT: Slovenia.

AS: Yes.

NT: What about your family?

JS: They are about the same place, in Austria. My dad was in Germany when they invaded Austria why they had to go in, it was at that time and they had them in concentration camp.

NT: Oh really?

JS: Oh you better believe it! They got, they had the German tatoo on his hand, on his arm where they tattooed them and everything when he was in concentration camp.

NT: So when did your dad come over here?

JS: Oh I wasn't even born then when he came over here. He came over here and he worked down the Utah Fuel in Summerset, Colorado.

NT: Oh really.

JS: When he first came out here in this country.

NT: Do you remember what year that was?

AS: 1900.

JS: Oh there are eighteen something, at the time that they come out here, I can't exactly remember.

NT: Yes, when did he come over to Carbon County?

JS: Well he was a, oh the eighteen...oh just about around nineteen hundred. When he come in Sunnyside, and I was born in 1913.

NT: Yes.

JS: In Sunnyside, but see when he worked in Colorado mine, in Summerset, Colorado, that was Utah Fuel, he and his partner, and at that time they were using squib fuses you know with caps to shoot the coal. They had to do everything by hand, and just as they lit that fuse it went off.

NT: Oh!

JS: Killed his partner and knocked him unconscious for twenty-four hours and knocked his eyes out of his head.

NT: Oh no! Oh no! Well what did he do in Sunnyside, then when he came over there?

JS: Well he was blind see, the Utah Fuel, they gave him a job to support the family. Father couldn't work and my mother, she was working at the office and I was at that time only about a year old, two years old, but after I got older they were talking about it you know. That's the way I got it.

NT: Gee, that's a real shame.

JS: Well five brothers and my sister she got poisoned in Sunnyside. They were playing house and they've got that - --?---. At that time we use to have that, well it's yellow in a yellow box. They used to spray to kill flies, and they made drinks out of it, and each kid and my sister drank it. We went through a rough life.

NT: Oh I guess you did!

AS: And then the mother died the year after.

JS: Then the mother.

AS: Left five boys.

JS: Then the mother died after that. I was about two years old.

AS: Of a broken heart.

JS: Three years old. I've still got the pictures of her.

NT: Oh, that's terrible! You were about three then when your mom died, is that right?

AS: Yes.

NT: And how old, you have older brothers right?

JS: Well I had older brothers that, two, three of them was working, see the Utah Fuel give them a job to support the family and my dad was blind and he couldn't do nothing. The borders felt sorry for him and they came in you know just to help him out, to keep us kids when we grew up and that, and that's about it on that.

NT: How much older are your brothers than you are?

JS: Well I'm the youngest in the family.

NT: Oh you are?

JS: Two of them had died, and two of them died and then there are three of us left and one is in California and the other one is up here.

NT: What's his name?

JS: Alfonse.

NT: Yes.

JS: And Lewis Spensko is in California.

NT: Yes. Were they all born in this country or where some of them born in the old country?

JS: Well two of them were born in Austria, see Leo and Rudy, Rudolph. The two of them, they were born in Austria. The rest of us were born in Sunnyside.

NT: I see. So how old were you when you started to work?

JS: Well I was twenty-one. I went in old Peerless, when I come down here, well I did work at Castlegate for a couple of years, and then they laid me off at that time they had company stores, that if we wouldn't trade up there we wouldn't have a job, so I was going to move up there and then just as we got the house cleaned and everything why the company laid me off.

AS: But he worked on welfare when they were younger you know. There was welfare, no work.

NT: Yes.

AS: But he started at...

JS: Then when I started, I started in old Peerless and, in thirty-four, right after Thanksgiving, and I worked up there until forty four, no coal, thirty six to thirty eight inches.

NT: Oh gee!

JS: No water, no rock dust, you go in there drill that coal, load it and...

AS: Is that taking all the information?

NT: Oh yeah.

AS: What he's saying?

NT: Yeah, sure cause then I don't have to write it all down.

AS: Oh.

NT: So what, did you have to work on your knees down there?

JS: Yeah, on my hands and knees all day long, and the boss says one is going under, one coming up, one flying the --
-?--- and I kept up that way for eight hours.

NT: Oh you're kidding!

JS: That's no lie.

NT: Is there water up in that mine? In up Peerless?

JS: No, they had water, by they, they couldn't pump it out see, it was just a seepage that they had inside and they'd have to pump it outside, but they never use it in coal.

NT: Hum.

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JS: And then that smoke and dust, just all day long, just load and load and load from one place to another one, it was just... short ---?--- machines they had at that time and I was drilling and I was cutting and we'd both, when he'd get so far and I'd move over there, he'd help me move over there and I'd rail(?) while he's finishing and when he got through I would put everything on the side and get the powder mat and load them holes, and we'd just howler at the men, "Stay out of the road" and we'd shoot, when we shoot ---?--- start getting it in smoke.

NT: Oh goodness!

JS: Till 1944 I couldn't take it anymore and I said, I better get out of here if I want to, if I want to walk right.

NT: Yeah!

JS: From there, then I went to Latuda, ---?--- a little higher coal, I went up there drilling, loading, helping on a machine, and helping on a--well I was drilling actually and ---?--- loaders helped me in the ---?--- and all that and then work started slacking down to two days a week, and I told the super, I say's, "Better lay me off and let the other guys that got a big family, to work." I said, "Two days a week, I might as well be on relief." and he say's, "Well John, we're going to pick up." and I says, "Well I might as well go on unemployment." He said, "I don't want you to go on unemployment." I said, "It

ain't worth twenty seven dollars, you get a family, he's got three, four kids, let them have it." and I said, "All I'm getting is two days a week and I can't go for that."

NT: Yes.

JS: So we're going to pick up and I went for a couple of months, nothing doing so I said I got to go for ---?---, then I went to Spring Canyon in 1951, and from there I worked till seventy. When they closed down, I said, that was it. Then I didn't work in the mine any more, because I couldn't work on account of my condition, my health and everything else.

NT: But you put in plenty of years in the mine!

JS: I put thirty eight years! I got the records and everything.

NT: Oh that's good.

JS: I applied for my black lung and they won't give it to me.

AS: He's got lung troubles now.

JS: I got lung troubles, heart troubles. They awarded me the money, but they took it away from me, won't let me have it.

NT: That's a problem I think a lot of times they don't want to give people.

JS: That is after you put all those years and all that in, and kill yourself for it and then they won't give it to you. So I don't know.

NT: Have you kept after them about it?

JS: Oh yes. They say that I got nothing wrong with me, that I was supposed to get it, and I took it to an attorney, he said, "Johnny, you don't need me, you're going to get it" he says. I hope!

NT: Oh I hope so too!

JS: So just about six weeks after that, I got a letter. Why there is nothing wrong with me.

AS: He is got to have another examination.

JS: I give it to him, and he looked at it and he said, "Well I can't understand this, this numbers don't match with this. This don't match with that!" Well whoever understand those papers you know.

NT: Yes,

JS: He calls them up in Denver and all that, but that is it.

NT: Yes.

JS: So now I'm waiting to see what he's going to do about it.

NT: Who's your attorney?

AS: ---?---

NT: He handles a lot of these, doesn't he?

AS: Yes.

NT: Yes. Boy I hope he gets a lot

JS: Oh yes. He has got lot of them down here.

NT: Yes.

JS: I say. I don't know.

AS: Well, if he didn't have lung trouble, it would be different, but he does, his breathing is bad.

NT: Yes. Well sure, after all those years in the mine, it could hardly be otherwise!

JS: That's what they all say, but I said, "They got it in your journal, if you got over twenty years, you're entitled to it."

NT: Yes.

JS: I said, "They won't let me have it. I don't know what I done to them! Everybody else is getting it!"

AS: He lost his hearing in the mine. All those years, gee with all that noise in there and shooting.

JS: Well, you saw me shooting and all that.

NT: Hum. Yes it takes its toll. Well now, when you started out at Castlegate, right?

AS: Yes.

NT: Your folks were there, and how many are in your family?

AS: Eight. I had a brother killed in 1924 explosion.

NT: Oh there, at Castlegate.

AS: Yes, he was eighteen.

NT: Oh what a shame!

AS: Yes.

NT: What do you remember about that?

AS: Oh, not too much, because I wasn't home. Everything was such a turmoil that we didn't even stay home. We were

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with the next-door neighbors that didn't have anybody killed crying. I saw funerals.

NT: When the mine exploded were you at home or at school?

AS: Yes, at home. It was on Saturday.

NT: Oh, I see.

AS: It was on a Saturday.

NT: And how did you know that the mine had exploded?

AS: Well we heard the big shots you know, go off and we thought it was the boys, just shooting dynamite, so we saw a guy coming down from the canyon, from Castle Number 2. He was all black and torn because he was outside in the fan house. He said, "The mine blew up." Then everybody ran up there, you know.

NT: Did you go up, to the mine?

AS: No, my mother wouldn't let us go up there. She went, but we stayed home.

NT: And then when did your mom come back?

AS: They were up there all day, until the guys made them come back you know, because it blew up three times.

NT: It did!

AS: It blew up once outside, then twice inside the mine. What do they call that?

JS: Concussion ---?--- when it takes a hold, it takes timber and everything clear out of the mine.

NT: Oh gee!

AS: That was terrible, it killed a hundred and seventy-five men!

NT: That's awful, that's just awful. So how did your mom find out about your brother?

AS: Oh he was in there, we knew it.

NT: Oh you did?

AS: Yes.

NT: But did you know if he had been killed or not?

AS: Well they kept saying there is a few alive and then we would wait and the women would stand there and wait for them, and they said they all dead. No one survived.

NT: What about your dad, where was he working?

AS: At...

JS: They had boilers ---?--- they had steam for ---?---.

AS: Boilers, he was firing boilers. He didn't work in the mine, my dad had never worked in a mine.

JS: And they had coke coal up there, a couple ovens at that time.

NT: So how did your dad take it?

AS: Oh, it ended up in a divorce.

NT: You're kidding! Well why?

AS: Well what happened, [was] my mother thought that he should have went to school more.

NT: Yes.

AS: My dad said "No." He was old enough. He would get a job.

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Well then they fought that one should have sent him to school, the other one...

NT: Yes, I see.

AS: You know. Then so it ended up in a divorce.

NT: Well then did you stay with your mom?

AS: Yes.

NT: Well then how did she support you?

AS: My dad sent alimony.

NT: Oh he did?

AS: Yes. Ten dollars a month.

NT: Oh, I suppose in those days though, it helped didn't it?

AS: That was in 1926.

NT: Yes and did your brothers and sisters work?

AS: Oh no! My mother took four and my brother, my dad took three.

NT: Oh you split the kids! I see. And so where did you go with your mother?

AS: To Helper.

NT: And what did she do in Helper?

AS: Nothing.

NT: Just stayed at home.

AS: There was nothing.

NT: Oh gee.

AS: That was terrible you know.

NT: Well did you have a garden or anything.

AS: No nothing!

nt: Really nothing! No boarders, no taking in washing, no nothing?

AS: Nothing.

NT: And you went to school in Helper?

AS: Yes.

NT: Until when, how far did you get in school?

AS: Well then I went to seventh grade and then I went to Notre Dame.

NT: Yes. Over in Price?

AS: Yes.

NT: Boy that must have cost some money.

AS: Transportation you know with the buses, and then I went two years to high school. Then we couldn't go any more, just couldn't afford it.

NT: So what year did you leave high school?

AS: 1933-34.

NT: And then what did you do?

AS: Nothing. Oh I worked part time for welfare.

NT: Oh you did?

AS: Just for twelve dollars a week, just enough to...my mother said just enough to buy coffee. Then in 1935 I got married.

NT: And then you had John to take care of. That's good. What were you doing when you worked for welfare?

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AS: We were giving orders of commodities, and welfare. I...

JS: That's when we had the ---?---

AS: Welfare slips enough for people to live on. Maybe two dollars a week, maybe four dollars a week, it depends on the families.

NT: So you worked in an office, and where was it?

AS: At the city hall, in a basement.

NT: I see.

AS: And they give commodities. They give ham, bacon, eggs.

NT: Yes. Is that how you were paid too or did you get those slips?

AS: I got twelve dollars a week.

NT: Cash money?

AS: Yes.

NT: And did you bring it all home to your mother?

AS: Yes! You bet!

NT: And then you ---?---

AS: There was no work. There was no work.

NT: So the ones with your mother, was you and who else?

AS: An older sister.

NT: Yes.

AS: She went up to work for housekeeping. Then my two younger brothers were home.

NT: And how old were they?

AS: Oh, I think they were...

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NT: Well how much younger than you are they?

AS: Five years younger.

NT: Yes. I see. And then what happened to the kids that went with your dad? Did your dad stay around here?

AS: No, he stayed in Castlegate. Then they got jobs at the Castlegate tippie and worked.

NT: Did you see your dad very often?

AS: Oh yes!

NT: How often?

AS: Oh, maybe once a week, maybe twice a week.

NT: Did you go up to Castlegate, or did he...

AS: Yes.

NT: You did?

AS: We walked, no transportation.

NT: Would your mom go with you?

AS: No way!

NT: But you and your sister, and your brothers?

AS: No, just me and my brothers.

NT: Your sister didn't go either?

AS: Well she was out housekeeping, you know, she couldn't.

NT: Oh, so she lived with the families that she was [house-keeping for]?

AS: Yes.

NT: Oh, I see. Did your dad ever come down to Helper and see you, or your brothers?

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AS: No, my brothers did, but my dad never did.

NT: Sounds like your dad and mom just didn't see each other.

AS: No.

NT: Did they go to the Catholic Church there in Helper?

AS: One brother did.

NT: Yes, but not your mom or your dad.

AS: To church you mean?

NT: Yes.

AS: Oh my mother was a good church member, yes, but my dad wasn't.

NT: What was your mom's name?

AS: Maiden name?

NT: Her whole name.

AS: Mary Slavensky.

NT: And your father's?

AS: John Slavensky.

NT: John Slavensky. And what was the name of the brother that was killed in the explosion?

AS: John.

NT: Like ---?---, oh so he was the oldest?

AS: He was the oldest. His picture of the cemetery was in the paper not to long, was it? Where they were going to get rid of the cemetery?

NT: Yes.

AS: And they took pictures, and they had my brother's stone

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and grave in the paper.

NT: Hum. Do you remember the funeral at all?

AS: Yes.

NT: Who was it that performed it?

AS: Well there was. We have a picture. If my husband could only went to Tillies and get that picture and show it to ---?---

NT: Oh you don't have to right now, I'll be around.

AS: There was a preacher, you know given, and the bodies were all at the auditorium...at the amusement hall in Castle-gate, that all of them the caskets there and, some had a watches on them...coffins, my brothers grey coffin was opened and he had blood running through his nose, and he must have fell in water, cause he was white(?) around his face, and the rest was, you know.

NT: Just burned. Oh.

AS: There were bodies that had watched or anything to identify them, on top of the caskets, because they didn't open all of them.

NT: I guess the bodies weren't worth looking at, were they?

AS: No, they were burnt.

NT: Oh gee. Was everybody identified eventually?

AS: Yes.

NT: Did they have trouble identifying some of them?

AS: No, I don't think so.

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NT: I guess everybody knew who was in the mine.

AS: Yes.

NT: Oh that's a shame. Everybody has had a rough life in this coal mining!

AS: Then these kids say, it's rough now. They don't know what we went through.

NT: Yes.

AS: They said well we, all the kids are going out of there minds and doing this, drinking and smoking pot because its so rough, what would we do? We're the ones that had it rough!

NT: That's really true. John, your dad, since he was blind, what did he do?

JS: Well he was cooking.

NT: He was cooking? He could do that blind?

JS: Oh yes, he'd cook for the borders you know, and what ever he want to put in, why he had asked, you know the brothers and that.

NT: Your brothers?

JS: Yes, what stuff there is and then he'd put it in and make either soup or stew, but if we had steak, once in a lifetime at that time.

NT: Yes.

JS: There was no high pay at that time, no money, but a little steak if we had it once in a life time we were

lucky to get that, all we would eat is, soup, soup, soup, and pork you know at those days. They would make their own ham. They make their own sausage and stuff like that, and they kept it for the winter. Smoke it, for the winter. For the winter that was all we were eating.

AS: You kids use to take your dad to coal camps to donate a little money.

JS: Well yes, my older brother would take him to you know, for donation, they would go up to Clear Creek and Winter Quarters, because that mine up there blew up before Castlegate. Killed a bunch of men, and they used to go around camp and ask for donations and that.

AS: On pay days, send them in ---?--- would give them a little donation.

NT: Oh that's good.

JS: To help him out. To raise us kids, they wanted to adopt us, but my dad said, "No they are going to survive." Or if we had to work I'll tell you when summer came we would go out and we would haul coal, chop wood, and get a beating for it.

NT: Who would beat you?

JS: Oh my dad, or my brothers!

NT: Well what for?

JS: Just over nothing, because they wouldn't do it and I had to do it. That's why I didn't want to do it and my dad

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said, "Well you better do it!" When they caught me, they caught me and then they would give me to him and then he would use a big strap on me, and I'm telling you I was black and blue!

NT: I guess you didn't have any choice but work, huh?

JS: Well I didn't have any choice, I had to do it.

NT: How many boarders did your family have?

JS: Well they generally had about three or four, not too many. See they would help my dad out you know, because he couldn't see and then the boys were working in the mine outside on the tipple and one of them was working in the mine ridding ---?---. Making a living that way and we was just little kids. To survive on what we did have and then after that why 1922 they went on strike and then my brothers they had to go, and the government put up tents for them, all the strikers didn't want to work so they were out for about, I'd say about six seven months.

NT: Gee!

JS: Then they went to, to ask for the job and they wanted to put them back, and they said no. They had to move out of camp, so my brothers, they come down here and started working at Kenilworth and up at Rollap and that. About 1924 we moved out of Sunnyside and we come down here.

NT: During the strike did, did your mom and dad stay in Sunnyside?

JS: Yes my dad, my mother before then she died, see.

NT: Oh, that's right!

JS: Yes she died, because my sister got poisoned and my mother a year after that she died.

NT: What year was that, that your mother died?

JS: Oh, I guess...

AS: 1918.

JS: 1918 That was just at World War I. When they were talking about, that's why I did take ---?--- otherwise I wasn't old enough to know you know what was going on, but when they talk about it, and we would listen to them, what they say and all that, that's where we get it.

NT: So it was just you and your five brothers?

JS: Five, yes.

NT: And your dad at home, and the boarders?

AS: There were four brothers.

NT: Oh, four brothers, there was five all together.

AS: Yes.

NT: I see. Whew! Did a, you have a garden or anything, did you raise your own pigs?

JS: Yes.

NT: You did, you raised your pigs, and you had ---?---

JS: Yes, well, we generally had one, and generally the farmers would come up and they'd sell pork.

NT: Oh, where did they come from?

JS: Sunnyside, they used to have a big farm up there. A fellow by the name of Pete Jones, he had all that, I don't know if you remember Dragerton, you ever been through Dragerton?

NT: Oh yes, many times.

JS: You know where they have that park up there?

NT: Yes sure! Up above?

JS: Right there where the cemetery is at?

NT: Yes.

JS: All of that down in there, that was all farm, every bit of that, there were no houses down there. That is where they had the stickers. They were down there on that desert. That was nothing but a desert, no houses, nothing there at that time, and this fellow he had pigs and cows and stuff like that, and he would come up with a wagon and sell meat and at that time they had the butcher wagons and they used to come up with the horses four o'clock in the morning and he would start going in camp and everybody would go up to the wagon and get what they wanted; salad, you know lettuce, chicken, or meat or whatever they wanted. They would buy it because that's the only way they could get it.

NT: Yes.

JS: Then he would come and sell my dad pork, say about a ten, fifteen dollar hog. They would go about six or seven

hundred pounds, big ones.

NT: Yes.

JS: They would get two of them and the first thing you'd know is that they would always pitch in and they start cutting it up and they got ham, they got bacon, they got sausage and all that, and that's what they lived on all winter.

NT: I see. Did you get in trouble with the company because you bought from Pete Jones instead of the store?

JS: No, because we had to do something because the store could not afford it. At that time, there wasn't much money, but this way the farmers they would sell it to the people in the camp.

NT: So the store was a lot more expensive than the farmers.

JS: Oh yes.

NT: I see.

JS: You better believe it! Company has always wanted that, that dollar...

NT: Yes.

JS: And what little bit they were making why they had to pay rent, and expenses and stuff like that, and you just barely make it.

NT: Yes. During the 1922 strike then, when your brothers left town, who was left home with your father?

JS: I was, and after they left, I was with my dad, and they started all getting together and they start, they moved

down here.

NT: They moved your dad down too?

JS: Yes, .

NT: Where to?

JS: Up here on this hill, ---?--- Street.

NT: Oh really!

JS: That is when we first come in.

NT: Yes. Did you rent a house? did you build a house?

JS: We rented. There had been little houses up there and we rented it and lived up there.

Nt: What were your brothers doing at that time?

JS: Well they were working in he coal mines, one was working Rollap, and was working up to Kenilworth.

NT: How did they get to Rollap or to Kenilworth?

JS: Well they rode up with people that had a little Model T. Model A's at that time, they would ride with them. Transportation.

NT: Yes and then would they come home every night, or weekend?

JS: Yes. Every night. Sometimes they would double back to, say they put about another four or five hours overtime. Then they ---?--- work. But, the family knew that they were working overtime and, and it wasn't bad. So they know that they were alright.

NT: Yes that's right.

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JS: They put in a lot of time, a lot of work.

NT: So you were up here with your dad, alone at home?

JS: Yes well my brothers were staying up there too, at that time.

NT: During the day what would you do?

JS: Me? Oh just had to work.

AS: You went to school.

JS: [To] get coal, go get wood.

NT: Where did you go to school?

JS: Oh I went down here, to as far as I could go, to fifth grade, and that's it.

NT: To the old Central school?

AS: Yes.

JS: Yes and they had to work all the time, so I never had no choice, we had to work and had to do this, had to do that. We all had to work.

NT: Then your dad, did he just sit at home or, did he go out?

JS: Oh yes, he had to be home.

NT: Did he ever do any selling, or anything like that?

JS: No.

NT: He just stayed home.

AS: He was a big man.

NT: Was he?

JS: Oh, he was 365 lbs.

NT: That's a very big man!

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JS: He was solid, he wasn't what I mean you know, sloppy fat, he was solid.

NT: Oh it must have hurt when he beat you!

JS: So a, well when he grabbed me, boy I'll tell you, it was just like getting into a vise. Cause we I could feel everyone of the ---?---

AS: He had to, because those five boys he had to take care of them you know.

NT: Sure.

AS: To keep them in line.

NT: Yes.

AS: If the parents would do that today to their kids, they would make better kids too.

NT: I'm sure that's true, but I don't think the kids would look forward to it!

JS: You can't get them to do anything. They want everything hand on platters.

NT: So your dad always cooked at home. Did you have to pick up the place?

JS: Well I would help, when I worked in old Peerless. I would get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and make bread, make the dough and everything. Got it ready for them, and I went to work, and take care of the rest.

NT: That's good.

JS: But the neighbors would come over and see how we doing

and that, but we tell them that they would go down and watch him, cause in his condition, why you never know, he could stumble or hurt himself or something like that, but they would come over there and they would check the bread and everything for him. My brother came up there and told my dad. He said, "What you trying to do, kill him off?" He says they're killing him off in the mine and then he comes home and you make him make bread, in the morning at 4 o'clock! I used to scrub the floors while the rest of them went to work and I went to work too.

NT: Yes.

JS: So that's...

NT: So your brother started to stick up for you after a while?

JS: Well he did, yes for a while, because we all had to work and I was the youngest one, and they know what it is in the coal mine, because they worked in the mine before me. When I started to work in the mine, why I didn't know too much about it, but after I got broke in, I did everything! Operate machine, cut coal, and ---?--- loader, load coal, drill, I've done everything in the mine, in a ---?---.

NT: Did that make your dad go any easier on you, after your brothers talked to him?

JS: Well he did, he say's, "What are you going to do,

somebody's got to do it!" At that time we couldn't afford to buy it!" Well at that time I was working for \$6.14 in the mine, that's a day! And we worked nine hours a day! The boss said, "One going under, one's coming up and one frying in the pan!" The boss said, "I want it kept that way." Nine hours. So I'm not lying one bit.

NT: No, I'm sure your not!

JS: If I did work, I wouldn't say it. I almost got killed, killed up there [in Spring Canyon] four or five times, that was a bad mine.

NT: But why?

JS: Gassy, tough, and you had to have your mind on your work and what that roof checked up and that, it happen to come down why it would get you. And then they had that explosion you know, in 1958.

NT: In Spring Canyon? Was anybody killed?

JS: Four or five.

NT: Were you in that explosion?

JS: No. Almost, but I missed it.

NT: How come, did you just...

JS: Well I got sick, see I worked that day--

END OF SIDE ONE

--He says, "Okay, if you can't make it, I'll take you home, and I said, "No I'll make it." So I finished the shift, got sick and I was just glad that I got home.

NT: Yes.

JS: So at midnight that night is when it happened, and then they called my wife up and they asked her how she was doing, and she says okay, he said "Your husband home?" "Yes he is in bed", "You really sure?" [She Said,] "Yeah." He said they can't find a check number.

NT: Oh no.

JS: She said, "You want to talk to him, I'll get him out of bed." He say "Well no, as long as he's at home, that's okay." They were worried that I was in there.

NT: Yes.

JS: But I, they couldn't find my check, but I put my check in the cabin. When we came out, we just put our lights up and just put a check there, and they take it. That morning, I told her, I said, "If I don't feel good don't wake me up in the morning." Midnight [is] when it happened then after that I felt good.

NT: I guess!

JS: No, Well I didn't know it was going to happen, but after that happened, I felt good next day.

NT: Was your nephew in the mine?

JS: Well he was at Sevier, for that State, but he'd go in and survey the coal and he was in there that day.

NT: Yes.

JS: You know there is just so much of that coal that can get,

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that's Government coal, they allow so much coal and how wide it is and how much coal we take out, that one big area and all that, and he didn't work in the mine, but he worked for the State, but he was at Sevier.

NT: Yes. What was his name?

JS: Albert Soensko.

NT: And he was off by then, I guess?

JS: Oh yes. When he would get through, you see maybe they put maybe four or five hours in, maybe eight hours, it just depends how much area they get to go through. When they get through why then they would be through for maybe two three, between six months and then they call them back again and check it over so they don't go over the boundary line, if they do, then they have to pay the government that extra ton for that coal.

NT: Well sure they can.

JS: They could find then too. Save maybe a thousand ton you're allowed to take out of there, then that's it. They measure it and everything, and that's the way you go, to the boundary line, after that why that's it!

NT: I see. Mrs. Spensko, how did the two of you meet?

AS: I don't know! How did we meet?

NT: Where did you meet?

JS: Well, we met here, we met here in Helper, when she was working on relief. I was on relief myself, I use to go

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down there to get commodities, and that's how we met.

AS: But we knew each other, you know.

NT: Yes.

JS: And then the neighbors around here, she would go over there and talk to the neighbors and I would get over there and talk with them. In the meantime I said, well...

AS: Then he'd come to the house, you know.

JS: Then I'd come down to the house and we got acquainted better, and about six months, about in December I said, well lets get married, and I got a job. I couldn't get married, because I didn't have any work, and I said well when I get a job well I'll get married, so in December, 1935.

AS: December the 24th, 1935.

JS: The 24th, 1935, in December, Christmas Eve.

NT: Well good for you. Oh that was nice.

AS: There was no Christmas then. We didn't have Christmas presents.

NT: Really?

AS: They didn't have Christmas presents. We use to have, food and fruit, but no presents.

NT: Well what did you do to celebrate?

AS: We went visiting to our neighbors.

NT: Yes. Was that when you were a kid too? Is that how you did it?

AS: Yes.

NT: And they all came and visited you?

AS: Yes we all visited. The neighbors used to come over and we use to go to their houses.

NT: Well when did you start giving presents?

AS: I think after our children were born.

NT: Now when were your children born?

AS: In 1938.

NT: And then how many children do you have?

AS: Two. A girl and a boy.

NT: So when was the second one born?

AS: In 1943.

NT: I see. So then you had to give them presents, huh? Oh that's funny. When you were a kid and you were at home, either with your mom & dad there in Castlegate or here with your mom in Helper, what were you doing besides going to school? Did you get a chance to play or did you work?

AS: Oh yes, we got a chance to play.

NT: What did you do when you played?

AS: Played ball.

NT: You did!

AS: Yes.

NT: All right!

AS: Softball, we use to play soft ball and that's it.

NT: Did you have a regular team?

AS: No, just the kids around the neighborhood would run to the place you know, where we use to play ball.

NT: Yes. Who did you get your equipment from?

AS: We would bring our own. One would bring the bat. One would bring the ball, and have our own little team.

NT: Did the boys and the girls all play together?

AS: Together, yes.

NT: How were you as a soft-ball player?

AS: I was a good hitter!

NT: Were you?

AS: Yes I use to hit them balls.

NT: Where did you play?

AS: By our homes.

NT: With, well where was it tough, in Helper?

AS: In Helper.

NT: I mean where was the lot, or the park?

AS: It was the lot, around our house, no we didn't go to the park.

NT: I see. Just empty lots.

AS: Empty lots.

NT: Did anybody ever turn an ankle, or anything?

AS: Oh yes! We use to get hurt, but nobody complained, we use to go home and put a bandage on it and it was okay.

NT: Yes. I see.

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AS: Nobody complained or ran to the doctor's like they do now, yes.

NT: Did your mom ever get on you for hurting yourself, playing ball?

AS: Oh, sometimes she would say, "Good for you, why did you go play?" You know, but that's the only recreation we had. Where could you go? We couldn't go to a show, even if the tickets were 10 cents, we couldn't go.

NT: You didn't have the 10 cents.

AS: That's right!

NT: Did you play any particular position in the field?

AS: No.

NT: Just everybody got out there. Who was on your team?

AS: Oh, there was the neighbor kids.

NT: Yes. You would all just get together in the neighborhood?

AS: Yes whoever wanted to come play. We would run over there and play.

NT: What about in the winter?

AS: Stay in the house.

NT: What was there to do in the house?

AS: Nothing. Clean house!

NT: You must have had a mighty clean house all winter!

AS: I don't know! Same old routine, you know.

NT: Did you ever get to play at all?

JS: Yes, in Sunnyside we were kids. We use to play because we

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saw the others playing ball and we thought it was fun,
and we got together and played ball.

AS: And horseshoes!

JS: I was the catcher.

NT: You were?!

JS: And this one, well at the time this one kid, when they
hit that ball, instead of him laying the bat down, he
threw it and hit me right across the eye, here.

NT: Oh!

JS: And after that I didn't play ball no more that cured me!
I loved baseball!

NT: How old were you when that happened?

JS: I was about six or seven years old. Because we watched
older ones playing ball. They use to have good ball games
you know, and we said we better get a team, so they all
got together and they broke me in and, catching I was
doing good, but when he threw that bat, it him me right
across the eye here, I still got the scar there too.

NT: Hum.

JS: And that was it, and I said after that, no more!

NT: Did you go watch the games?

JS: Yes we used to go watch them, cause a, at that time
Sunnyside use to have a lot of people up there, about
9000.

NT: Mm, that is a lot.

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JS: And they had 999 coke ovens going full blast, they use to have coke coal.

NT: Yes.

JS: ---?--- for steel you know, and have their steel made and then ---?---.

NT: Yes.

JS: We used to go down there and watch them play ball, baseball and everybody when they make a home run, they'd throw money and us kids thrived to go up there and get it and man I'm telling you, they ran us out of there, with them clubs! ---?--- that's it! Man we tried to get hold of the nickels!

NT: Who would throw the money?

JS: Well it's different people you know.

NT: You mean from the audience?

JS: Yes.

NT: When?

JS: Yes like well there's the people that came from Japan, you know. They came up there with 900 of them people out there in Sunnyside and they were ball fans!

NT: Oh they were?

JS: Oh you better believe it! They were for baseball and they even buy mitts and balls and they play themselves on the main highway.

NT: The adults would, the men?

JS: Yes.

NT: Huh.

JS: Then we got interested in that, and every time they go, well we'll go down there and watch them, we'll try to sneak in there and get their nickels. Boy they throw that money out there when they make a home run.

NT: Who was supposed to pick it up?

JS: Well, when they would come in and then they start throwing that money and the man that made that home run, he goes over there and pick it up see. Then the others help him pick it up. But they say if they make a home run, that is yours, but if you don't make a home run they don't throw it until you make a home run. Then they start throwing their money out and then he goes over and picks it up, it's his.

NT: Unless the kids get it first!

JS: We tried to get some of it and we couldn't. Man they had them guys watching us, I said, "Boy that guy over there with the bat, you get hit in the head, boy we've had it!" Oh we'd get out of there. When we got a nickel, we thought we were millionaires.

NT: I bet!

JS: But there wasn't much money in those days.

NT: Did the Japanese have their own team?

JS: Yes.

NT: In Sunnyside?

JS: Yes in Sunnyside they had their own team, and then say, like Price, they'd have a team and then they'd come up there and play ball one time. Then they would come down Price and play you know, sort like the big league, but at that time they had a pretty good ball diamonds, they took care of them.

NT: Yes.

JS: After that, that kind of faded away and ---?---

NT: When did it start to fade?

JS: Well, I'd say just about in 1922, 1923. At that time everybody had to move out of camp at that time, after the 1922 strike see. They were all out. They wouldn't go to work because they broke the union that time they had unions ---?---. They sold out and the company they sold out. They told the people there would be no more work because they wouldn't go back in the mine, you know, for less wages, what they were supposed to be getting.

NT: Yes. Well before that though, when was it really popular, the ball games, when they had the 900 people there?

JS: Oh, 1918, 1919, that is when they started.

NT: Yes I see.

JS: But when the fellows were working in the mine, they were young men and they'd come out and, one or two would get them started and the first thing why they went down there

and start playing ball and then they start at it. Then they got a team from someplace else and came up and play[ed] ball and if they won a game, they would say, "We'll go to Salt Lake or, down Price and play one game, you know."

NT: So Sunnyside company had its own, or the town had its own team? Was it a company team or a town team?

JS: Yes it was. They had their own team, every city or town, whatever it was, they had their own team.

NT: What about the Japanese team in Sunnyside, couldn't they play with the regular team?

JS: Well yes they played.

NT: Oh they did?

JS: Yes but all of them wouldn't play, because they didn't know too much about the game, but maybe there were two or three of them in there that played years ago and they knew a little bit about it.

NT: Yes.

JS: They played with them, yes they played with them.

NT: But they didn't have their own separate team then?

JS: No. They would say, "Well he's a good batter, or he's a good pitcher or good baseman, or a good fielder, get him in there!"

NT: Yes I see.

JS: And then they'd talk to him. They were interested in the

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game, they loved it! And I'd say, "Well that is one people I really don't blame them a bit, because I like baseball myself, that's all."

NT: Yes.

JS: That's all, it's interesting.

NT: But after the 1922 strike.

JS: But after I got hurt, I said, "That's it!"

NT: Yes. Well then when the union finally did come in here, it was in 1933 right?

JS: Right.

NT: Where were you when they were trying to get the union in?

JS: Right here.

NT: In Helper?

JS: We were organizing when they had National Miners Union that started it.

NT: Oh yeah?

JS: I--

NT: What were they like?

JS: Well it was a different group. Now the National Miners Union, when we go out, we go to the camps. We didn't want anybody go in there and work.

NT: Yes.

JS: We wouldn't start any violence or killing, or beating or nothing, but we were doing the best peacefully, you know, that would help us out and wouldn't go in there and you

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don't go to work we could ---?--- from going to work. At that time we went down here to Emery County mines. Them LDS Mormon Churches had their mines down there.

NT: Which mines were that?

JS: They are down in Huntington, and down in Salina. They only had their own mine and their own people working in there, even their wives and women were working in there.

NT: They were?

JS: That's right?

NT: Gee!

JS: We'd go down there organize them, keep them from going in there and, boy they had a battle! Just couldn't give in, then that's what brought the United Mine Workers in, see. When they come in, we were up to Spring Canyon.

NT: Yes.

JS: And then they had all these men with their guns up there, and they came in and, that's it! I left up there. I come home and I heard all the noise going on. They had them in trucks taking them down to bull pen, all the guys...

NT: Hm.

JS: That was on National Miners Union.

NT: Yes.

JS: That is when the company signed up with the United Mine Workers, that's what brought the Union in, the National Miners Union see. They had to have two of them, and one

the company wanted to pick, that was it. They took the United Mine Workers. That is how we got it. Charlie Gewn and Fontachio and Bonacci, and all of them was, they were the big shots, union representatives.

NT: And who contacted you to help organizing?

JS: Well, the men.

NT: Just heard about it?

JS: Yes they said, "Hey John come on! You gotta go, we gotta, get on this organization." Then they had meetings at the park, and they talked to them, and all that you know, but, then we got together. We went for it, I said, "Well we gotta do something, either for better or for worse." So we went for the better.

NT: That's good.

JS: That's the only way we could have got that union in, but the company, they didn't realize at that time, when they had it, 1922, they...

AS: They better watch the Union, its the best thing that we ever had.

JS: Like I say, now they better take care of it. If they lose this they [are] going [to] talk about depression, they [are] going to find out they would be luck[y] if they get...

AS: United Mine Worker is a God blessings!

JS: Well that's what helped all the poor people out.

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NT: Boy it sure sounds it, the kinds of conditions you had to work under.

JS: But the way it is now, I don't know these young kids. They don't want this, they don't want that, they don't want to even work in the mine! They work three days a week, that's it! The company even begs them to come to work, and it's the older ones going in the mine working. Some of the old timers are working up there, working seven days a week, and those young kids can't even work. They don't know what it is until they get another depression, and when they do, they are not going to tell a kid what to do.

NT: Yeah ---?---

AS: I hope that never comes.

NT: Oh I do too!

AS: I hope it never comes because--

JS: But, if it comes, why?

AS: It's terrible!

JS: We are going to see a lot of things before this is over.

NT: Yes I think you're right.

JS: Before we go.

NT: Did you, yourself, go down to Emery County to organize mines down there?

JS: Well, all of us.

NT: Yes I mean, you were part of the group, that did.

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JS: Yes, well ---?--- at that time, what little bit work we did do. I said, "We'll we go down there." They would appropriate so much money, and the people in the business houses and all that they give them food and everything, bread and lunch meat and that. They would help the men out.

NT: The businesses here in Helper would?

JS: And Price.

NT: Would give you food and money and so...

JS: Yes. They would go around and ask if they want to help donate. Give us bread or something for the men that organize these mines.

AS: Coffee, doughnuts, lunch meat..

JS: Oh they were happy to do it, and they did too!

NT: And that was for the National Miners Union?

AS: Yes.

JS: Right.

NT: And then when you went down to Emery County, what kind of a reaction did you get from the people down there?

JS: Well every ---?--- came in their truck. Well say the organizers, they would stop them, we'll we would stop them.

NT: Now wait a minute, let's say you went down to the mine at Salina, is that right? Okay. You went into the mine, to the camp, to the town, what did you do?

JS: No, just on the outskirts. We had to get away from their property.

NT: Okay.

JS: See, we were just on State ground.

NT: Okay, yes.

JS: We stopped on the side of the road.

NT: Then what would you do?

JS: Well we would stay there and when a truck comes, well we would stop them, and we would talk to them and tell them.

NT: Yes.

JS: Don't go up there and get that coal, if you want to join with us, or kind of help us out. We would get this all settled.

NT: Yes.

JS: They would explain to them. But they wouldn't listen. They wouldn't do it, so.

NT: And that was the men and women both? Were in the truck?

JS: Yes they'd--

AS: Were the women in the truck too, or just the men?

JS: Oh the men!

NT: Just the men?

JS: Yes. Well like I say, like these big trucks here, they go up the mine to get coal.

NT: Yes.

JS: Well, that's what they were doing down there see, and

even up to Spring Canyon in the mines. At that time.

NT: Yes.

JS: Well, that is what they were doing down there see, and even up to Spring Canyon in the mines. At that time.

NT: Yes.

JS: And, then we had some of the fellows there were organized and they were the ones that did the talking.

NT: Yes.

JS: But we would stand right behind them.

NT: Who was it that was doing the talking?

JS: Well you're union men.

NT: Well who were they?

JS: Oh, I can't think of their names, but they are gone.

AS: Different ---?---, who we don't know.

JS: Yes different organization, organizers and that.

NT: But were they from here, or were they local people?

JS: Oh they were from Carbon County. They had their own office down here, but they were from outside.

NT: Oh, they were some outsiders that came in to organize --- ?---.

JS: Yes they come in here to organize them, and they said "We will be here for so long." Then like in Montana, over that way, they came down here, to get them all set up and then they would go back over there and get that mine checked. We would go over here and take care of these.

NT: Yes. So you would stand behind the organizers while they would talk to the men on the truck right?

JS: Right. They would talk to them and they know just...

NT: But the men wouldn't listen?

JS: They wouldn't go for it.

NT: How did you know there were women working in the mine?

JS: Well they would own the mine themselves.

NT: Yes.

JS: See?

NT: The men that were in the truck owned the mine?

JS: Yes they owned the mine themselves, and we tried to get them to not do that, and see if we get them organized. But they couldn't see it.

NT: Because they didn't have the problems with the bosses I guess, huh?

JS: That is right, but these big companies, the one that there was mostly ---?---. I tired to get to too, but if they got them they got them out. They had been alright but there was a lot of them. They had to fold up after, because they couldn't make it, because they had to pay royalty on the coal. When the union took over, and then they had to pay the union royalty. If they didn't they wouldn't buy their coal.

NT: Who was buying the coal at this time?

JS: Well, you take the power plants, like Geneva Steel and

all those and people had furnace in those days and locomotives. They didn't sell much in town and that, but what that they did sell, why that's where they got it, and then they started putting these power plants in. They had one up there in Provo. They had a power plant started out with, and then they started with these big ones.

NT: Yes.

JS: They kind of improved the mines, and kept things a going. They can afford it.

NT: Then they had to buy the union coal?

JS: Yes.

NT: And so then they couldn't buy from the Emery mines?

JS: No, they couldn't buy. But now the way it is with, it's switcher mine, that is union mine.

NT: Yes.

JS: If they, want their coal washed, they'd have to pay royalty on it, if they want their coal shipped out they have to pay royalty on it.

NT: I see.

JS: because they couldn't get away from it.

NT: Yes.

JS: But they still tried to get them organized, but they wouldn't sign up for the union. They wouldn't sign up with the union.

NT: And neither would the Emery County mines?

JS: No, they wouldn't, but still they would be paying their men wages like the union, paying more than the union, see.

NT: Yes.

JS: They said, "We are paying the men the highest wages, and giving them benefits and everything."

NT: Yes.

JS: That is why they got some of the men to go into that mine and work and try and organize them to try and get them to get in the union, but the company said no.

NT: Yes.

JS: If you do, we'll fold up and that will be it! That's why we're paying them the highest wages, give them the benefits and their and their faction and everything.

NT: But then these Emery mines had to fold up anyway, I guess, huh?

JS: Well, they finally fold up, they couldn't take it any more, they couldn't ---?---. So now the Utah Power and Light, they took over. Now they're operating the mines down there. They got power plants, two of them down there.

NT: Yes I know it.

JS: So they went into the mines and they took over and bought them out and now they're operating in this union mine, see? Now they're union!

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NT: That's kind of funny, that it works out that way!

JS: Well that's the way it works, if they couldn't afford it, then he would of had to fold up, because they wouldn't buy their coal.

NT: Yes.

JS: Because naturally you wouldn't say, "Well, you're union, I'm union" well, you say, "Well I gotta sell this coal, and I gotta ship it out in cars." "Well you pay so much royalty on it."

NT: Yes.

JS: "Okay, if you don't pay royalty, you don't move that coal."

NT: That's right.

JS: Because the power plant, they won't buy it.

NT: Yes.

JS: Because you can get after them, and we said, we gotta have union coal, we can't buy your coal.

NT: Hum.

JS: But that is where they have to pay their royalty? Was that as soon as the union came in, or later on?

JS: Oh that was, as soon as they got to United Mine Workers then, see?

NT: Yes.

JS: National Miners Union didn't have anything to do with that, but a just to get the company all stirred up so at

the sign up, they singed up for the United Mine Workers. That's what they, United Mine Workers just pushed them in there and finally said well we'll sign with the United Mine Workers and get rid of that National Mine Workers and they won't have nothing to do with us no more, that's it, and then National Mine Workers they just broke up and that's it. That's what we wanted, for the United Mine Workers to come in, but they couldn't understand that.

NT: How did you feel when the National Mine Workers broke up?

JS: Well, I was mostly for the United Mine Workers. That is the way we were taught, and that is the way they talked to us about.

NT: Yes.

JS: They said this organization don't start no trouble, no violence or nothing.

NT: Yes.

JS: What we are going to do, you go up there and just kind of get them all stirred up, and don't let them go in there, and don't let them, you know, if you're working up there try to stay out and not work and we're trying to do this and try to explain to them.

NT: Yes.

JS: Then he says, "Now when you do that, we are coming in with the United Mine Workers, we are just going to come in slow."

NT: They told you that?

JS: That's right, they said, "We are going to come in slowly. Until you get things stirred up and then they are going to have to sign." They said, "Now we'll go up there and talk to them." He said, "Now what do you want to do?" "Get these guys causing you a lot of trouble or you're going to take us!" Well they said, "We want United Mine Workers, these guys are too radical. We don't want them." That's all we wanted.

NT: Yes.

JS: Because United Mine Workers ---?--- than National Miners, that's it!

NT: Did it make you feel bad, that they called you radical?

JS: No, we understood that.

NT: Yes.

JS: See we were talked about. Charlie Gwen was the one that was the big shot. He came from Washington you know. He is a lawyer. He was just the big shot and he knew what he was doing. He was the one that brought it in here, and John L. Lewis that sent them!

NT: Yes.

JS: He sent them out here to organize and get them, and they tell them what to do, and how to do it and that is what they did!

NT: Yes.

JS: He said, "You just get this other part in there, just kind of let them take over and, they'll get tired of it and you come right behind, get closer and then they will sign the contract and you got it!

NT: That is great.

JS: So that [is] where we got if these boys would hang on to it, and got it. They have got it, but if they don't, they will just have to go back, depression only be worse.

NT: That's right.

JS: Than what we went through. I said I went through it, but I could go again.

AS: We have got to save this United Mine Workers.

NT: Yes.

AS: This is, the best thing that ever happened to the people.

NT: I'll bet it is. When you went down to Huntington to organize, what happened there?

JS: Down a--

NT: Huntington.

JS: Huntington. They wouldn't make a budge. They just go up there and get coal and haul it over the hill.

AS: They had the patrol. What patrol did they have?

JS: Well it's a patrolmen, a State Officer. They came up there and see that we wouldn't cause no violence or that. We wouldn't.

AS: Nobody caused violence.

JS: But it's just maybe one or two.

NT: Yes.

JS: ---?--- that would get upset you know, and they say, "Oh no, you better not." We would tell them, "You better not do that."

NT: That was down in Huntington?

JS: Yes. Well that was down in, wagon mines, when they had the church mines.

NT: Yes, and when you say they hauled it over the hill, which way do you mean?

JS: Well they go to Provo, Salt Lake.

NT: Yes.

JS: See they would take it over there and they got a yard over there and they dump it off and they sell it to the people, and not pay royalty on it.

NT: Yes, I see.

JS: See, what they tried to do is, say well they don't pay royalty, we won't let them go take it out. That's what they tried to do and they couldn't stop them. The United Mine Workers came in and then they had to fold up, because they had to pay royalty and everything on the coal. That way why, they said, "Well, we can't do it", so that is it.

NT: And that patrol that was there, did they bother you?

JS: Oh, they stayed there, to see if we didn't cause

violence or nothing, but we wouldn't cause any trouble or nothing. It's just, you know, some of them. They were good, some of them truckers ---?--- They would park on the side, they went with us.

NT: Yes.

JS: They said, "We'll back you guys up too, no we won't go up there, if your company likes it or not, we won't go up there."

JT: Did you know the people? Did any in your group know some of the people down there, when you went down?

JS: Well, Jim Madrigal he was one of them. There is a lot of fellows ---?---, Bill Madrigal, and myself, oh there was a bunch of them. Well they all had to stick together to hold, hold the Union and get them organized into the United Mine Workers, but they wouldn't do it, but after they were told what was going to happen, why that's when they folded up, they wouldn't operate any more.

NT: How was it for you in 1933, when the union came in. Were you at all aware of what was going on?

AS: No. I stayed home more, you know.

NT: Yes but what about all the meetings? I'm sure you heard about [them]?

AS: We heard of them. We didn't, I didn't attend them.

JS: You weren't mining. What about your dad or your brothers, did they talk to you about it?

AS: My dad, no I never heard my dad talk about it, but my brother did.

NT: How did they feel about the Union?

AS: They liked the United Mine Workers.

NT: They did?

AS: I never heard of that National, see.

JS: I have to explain on that, when they had, when we, when they first come in. We use to go down here to Price and go to Main Street, they use to, well we was on relief, and with relief there wasn't, the women and that they wasn't satisfied, they didn't like the ham, they didn't like the bacon it was all just side pork.

NT: Yes.

JS: You know, just more fat, and they'd go down the street marching down Price, until the mayor and all of them they would get the fire hoses and throw them gas bombs at them and run them off the street and they scattered like a bunch of sheep, the people.

NT: But the problem was really the relief more than anything, right?

JS: Well it was, but...

AS: No work!

JS: There was not work, and what they were getting, the people it was just no good, they was just, say moldy, the ham was moldy and everything and the people would go down

there and they got to organize them to give a little better food, but they wouldn't put up with it, and that's what kind of kicked the ---?--- business people out of Helper and Price. They left here on account of that, because they were more for the company than they were for the people.

NT: And the people wouldn't trade with them?

JS: God they wouldn't trade with them. Well they would say bad things to them, what they'd done and all that. Mayor would join with the city and that and go get ---?--- the poor people and that. A lot of good doctors we had here left here on account of that, because they were ashamed of what they had done and they said, no. They moved out, Dr. Genata, he was the mayor here at that time.

NT: Oh here in Helper?

JS: And he was for the city, run people with the fire hoses and all that, you know when they would go down through the street and protest against this and that, and after he left, a bunch of them left on account of that. They couldn't face the people, because they were ashamed of themselves, what they had done.

NT: So the problem seems like the companies had a lot of friendships with the business in the town, is that right?

JS: Right.

NT: And so the protest wasn't just against the mining, it was

against the business.

JS: No. Well it's business when they went against the poor people.

NT: I see!

JS: See, when you again, say [the] words go down, I'm more, protest for, for better stuff, and then the mayor and that, they see these guys are marching down through Main Street and that and hey, well they're for the City.

NT: Yes.

JS: To protect the City and get rid of the poor people, so that they went against them on that. A lot of them that left Carbon County there used to be a lot of store open in Carbon County here years at that time.

NT: Well then how would it help to get into the National Mine Workers? Alright, you bring in the Union, and it helps you with wages, and all that, how does that help you deal with the businesses though?

JS: Now?

NT: Before, in the 1930s?

JS: Oh, well at that time we would go to the business, but there was not choice, we didn't have no choice. We had to go ---?--- and buy out of the store. We would go over there and buy from them. Well it ain't the businessmen, it's mostly the mayor and the city. He is running the city, and the Councilman and that.

NT: Yes.

JS: They don't let the people, go like they want to protest for this and that, they didn't like that.

NT: So the problem with the mine was---

END OF TAPE

AS: Glad you're younger?

NT: Oh yes! Now explain it to me again, the problem with the mine was the wages and the conditions, and then you wanted to protest?

JS: Well, no we were not protesting against the City, but this was on relief at that time.

NT: Yes.

JS: Before they organized, see during the Depression time at 1929 and 1930.

NT: Yes.

JS: When they go down and get their relief, they get a ham, a what that side pork, and they, they weren't satisfied. That ham was moldy. You couldn't eat it. They would take it with them and put it on a stick and march through town, protest again for a little better ham and little better side pork or bacon, to get something a little better, like butter and stuff like that. Then they start getting the people a little better stuff and that quiet[ed] them down.

NT: Who gave you the ham in the first place?

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JS: Well, it was the government.

NT: So you get the slip from the welfare, right?

JS: Yes.

NT: And then what would you do, go to a local ---?---

JS: Well we would go down there and get our commodities from her.

NT: I see.

JS: She used to work down there. Well they'd write out that slip, how many were in the family, that was just, my dad, and my two brothers and I. I was the one that went on work, for relief, and I'd go down there and they'd give me that ham, they'd give me bacon, they're stuff like that, but they wouldn't give me cigarettes or they wouldn't give me, you know other stuff, but for food, yes!

AS: Maybe four dollars a week, five dollars a week.

NT: Then would you take the--

AS: --slip and go to the stores.

NT: Then you felt like the stores weren't giving you what they were supposed to?

AS: Oh no, the stores were alright.

JS: Oh they would give it. The stores, they would give it cause that was their business.

NT: I see.

JS: See, they weren't making too much at that time, but still

the business men--

AS: They were in depression too.

NT: Oh sure!

JS: They were in a hard pinch too.

AS: Oh the stores were alright.

JS: Because they weren't making nothing. They had to get business in there. It, just the City part of it, see --- ?---.

AS: And we had credit, people had credit. They would make them wait and maybe they'd go two hundred dollars and the store would wait till the people got back to work and they'd pay you.

NT: Oh my goodness!

AS: They were good.

NT: Yes. So the stores were basically on the side of the miners?

AS: Yes.

JS: Yes they was after that. They were for the miners, because they knew what that a business was going to come in, but if they wouldn't, they lost your business.

NT: Sure.

JS: But still they went for the money, and they all signed up with United Mine Workers, the stores, because they went and told them. You take Smiths.

NT: Yes.

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JS: They try and, ---?--- the Union, and that's what brought them a quite a big business.

NT: Oh yes!

JS: Safeway is not a Union. See they try to get them to be Union, but they wouldn't go for it.

NT: Yes.

JS: Now I don't know if they, what they can ---?--- for people that trade there anyhow. What I mean they just, wherever cheaper, we'll go there and get it.

NT: Yes.

AS: Well everybody doesn't belong to United Mine Workers.

JS: See, they all don't belong to United Mine Workers, but still they're paying them, that they're paying them good wages and that they don't care.

NT: Yes it's true.

AS: When there are strikes, the Smiths you know, told them they were welcome to trade there.

NT: Yes, I see.

JS: Oh, they had a sign up there, United Mine Workers, UMW of A.

AS: We patronize, UMWA, you know.

NT: So back in the 1930s that really made a difference to the business?

JS: Oh, you better believe it!

AS: Now.

NT: Now it does.

JS: Yes after they got the Unions and then that brought them in a little better business, then after that they organized the stores. Then they get the store going in, you bet you, and any time when a contract is up and they go out, why they have to go picket the switch down there, keep him from getting that coal, but they still take the men in the buses up there and they got the state highway patrolmen up there escorting them into the mine, and we can't do a thing for them.

NT: Yes that's the way it's always been, hasn't it?

AS: Yes!

NT: Yes.

JS: You can't now when you got the officers leading them. Why you just got either stay back. If you do any harm, why they can get rid of you!

AS: Well, you don't want any violence.

NT: Oh no!

JS: They don't cause any violence, but they give them trouble. Then they will, but otherwise why, this last contract they had, to sign up why they had, I think it was two hundred men and some officers from Salt Lake came down here.

NT: Gee!

JS: To march, old men were down here at Jordan Creek Flat up

there, but they were scared, too

NT Oh I bet!

JS They had them clubs and they had them shields that cover their face, but the men wouldn't start any trouble, but those fellows they were kind of scared too, and they said, "Well if they don't do nothing, lets leave them alone." They were told, "You better leave them alone, if they don't bother you people If they do why then you can start something but they don't You people lay your hands off them " You can get in big trouble You can lose your job over it. If they ---?--- you, well just let that bus go by.

NT Back in the 1930s, who would organize those parades complaining about the relief? Was it the same folks organizing for the Union, or was it just a bunch of people getting together?

JS Well it was just, just a

AS Welfare people that was on welfare.

JS Welfare people, poor people See we was on, on welfare, that's the one.

NT But how would you get together to have a parade? how would you organize?

JS Well, it just takes a bunch of them that aren't satisfied Then they talk to the other group of people When you have a meeting or, on a ---?--- and then they all,

all the women and that, they talk together and they say, "Well, were not satisfied and we got to have this, and we got to have, just a little better!" That they weren't going to be pushed around I guess, they figured well if we went far enough, so were going to have to get in line

AS This didn't have nothing to do with United Mine Workers?

NT No it didn't, huh?

JS No, that doesn't have anything to do with United Mine Workers [sic] It was before the United Mine Workers were coming in

NT Oh I see So when were the parades?

JS Oh that was in 1920, 1929

NT Oh it was!

JS In 1929 That was after United Mine Workers came in 1931 No that was when they took over then after that, everybody was working and then they, they was no more relief Just the ones that couldn't get work or older people

NT Yes.

JS That's who was on relief

NT So back in say 1929 and 1930 when they were having these protests about the relief?

JS. Yes

NT Was that the first time that the city seemed to turn against the people?

JS. Well when they demanded for their better hams, and stuff

like that, and that's when they started marching.

NT Was there any trouble with the city back in 1922?

JS No.

AS We don't remember that far back

JS· In 1922, that's when they went on strike and they had,
and they had--

AS Well we don't, you know, we were younger I don't even
remember 1929 and [the] 1930s

NT It's hard, isn't it

JS Well I remember all of that

AS Honey, I don't even remember what I ate last week!

NT Well it sounds like that up until about the depression,
that the city was kind of in the middle, between the
miners and the bosses But that maybe that they started
getting more with the company That's what I'm trying to
figure out, if that's true or not

AS I don't know about that

JS It's a--

NT I surely don't either!

AS· Well what it was, is that people were sick and tired I
guess, the older people you know

NT They had had it hard for so long

AS Yes.

NT And then I guess if you complain, maybe you get some-
thing. Is that how would you feel about that? Is that

what was happening was the city being caught in the middle or was it just a question of how people felt, what was going on?

JS: Well it's just the people how they felt

NT Yes.

JS See, what they didn't have before, and they thought, well, just somebody to talk to them

AS It takes one to start it

JS It takes one to start it. Whoever that one is, I couldn't say.

NT Oh it's probably not even just the one

JS You know, like I say, we weren't there that time We was always monkey around, trying to solve something else Well the older people they start on up and they talk to them about it, the ham, they said, "We don't have to put up with this "

NT· Yes, sure.

JS: And, at that time when Hoover was in, that's the one that made the depression

NT· Yes

JS Hoover. That's when people said, "Well were not ---?--- We're going to see if we can get it we'll get it!" They were better off ---?---

AS ---?--- people were out of work, what was going to happen?

NT Darned if I know!

AS There was no work. If people are getting laid off and they say, "Well were we going to get work, there's not work to go to."

NT That's right! Yes I can see how it might be very much like what's happening right now

AS Look in big cities what's going to happen, they're ---?--
- right now, they want work

NT Sure they do, sure they do Then after the Union came in, now tell me, what were the good years and the bad years
Alright, the twenties were pretty good, and then they got bad, under Hoover

AS After United Mine Workers came in, it was good!

NT It was good

JS After 1930, 1932, 1933, 1934 and 1935 there was work for everybody They would work I'd say two days out of a week, somedays two days in a month

AS That was depression time.

JS See, no that wasn't 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, and 1936
After they got up then they started working better all the time They were selling more coal and people were getting work in three days, four days, and then they, went to join the war They went up to six days, and after that they were working good Everybody was working
Everybody was happy

NT· Then after the war, when did things start to slow down?

JS Well right after 1944, after the war At that time when they were selling coal, they were selling everything in it, the rock, and everything, but this way why when they got blue slip, they had to send them ---?--- back, too much rock in it

NT Oh, I see!

JS Too much rock in that coal

NT And that started out when?

JS Oh, that was right before the war

NT Before the war ended?

JS Yes see they were selling everything Selling slack, and mix slack with that coal and everything else, well they had to buy it!

NT Yes they needed it

JS They had to buy it, to keep things rolling, all that coal, but after the war, why they tried to sell that ---?--- with the coal, but they'd get that slip back He says, "No you can have that coal, we don't want it, get rid of that rock, and we'll take the coal not the rock " So they had to cut that out

NT And when did the people have to start cutting back on the number of days they worked?

JS That was before the war That's when we were working only one, two days a month

NT And what about after the war?

JS Well they were working good after that They went up to four, or five days a week

NT Yes.

AS During the war.

NT During the war.

JS Oh, they went five, six days during the war, but after the war we cut down After the war, they went down to four days, three days, until they picked up again and after that they started going .

NT When?

JS Four or five, and then they shut down

NT Okay, when did they shut down?

JS Well .

AS 1970 in Spring Canyon

NT Spring Canyon?

JS 1970, that's when they, they closed Spring Canyon down

NT And was it?

JS And Castlegate shut down, and they couldn't demand what their inspection, like state and federal. They were getting stricter all the time with the mine on account of the explosions they had

AS Safety rules

JS Bad conditions, safety rules they had on, and they had to put more ---?--- They had to do this, they had to do

that, and a lot of companies they couldn't afford it, not Spring Canyon It cost them a little over a million dollars to clean The company said, "No shut her down "

NT Gee Before they shut down Spring Canyon, had it slowed down a lot?

JS Well they were working up to five days a week. Yes they were going good They were doing good on the coal, but when it got after that explosion and everything in Spring Canyon, then the state recommend them to have clean water in the mines, for the men They had to have bathrooms in the mine They had to have to have all that, plenty of rock dust

NT Yes

JS They had all that stuff, they brought it up to the lamp house and we were all waiting to go to work and the superintendent came up and he said, "Well fellows, looks like we're not not going to work no more." I said, "What's the matter?" "Well the company is closing it down "

NT When did they tell you that?

JS That was in 1970

NT Yes

JS See they shut down in April after the second They shut her down in 1970, and that was before they shut her down at, ---?--- The big shots of the mine they talked to the

superintendent and [asked] "How much will it cost you to clean ---?--- up?" He said, "Well, maybe it cost you about half a million," He said, "Well shut her down!"

NT Huh

JS ---?--- rock in that mine it had to be out there It took about one year to get that mine cleaned out, and all the wages they had to pay the men, it was up to thirty-six, thirty seven dollars a day, and everybody worked to get all that rock out, they had tons and tons of it that had to come out there, and all they [were] doing was paying dead money for dead work So they said, "Shut'er down!" So they shut her down after the effect of such ---?---, they gave me my slip, everybody's slip, well that's it So we had to go around looking for jobs outside, and I couldn't have worked in the mine, so I worked down on the county a little while, and that was getting me down and all that, and I quit that I took my retirement in 1976

NT Yes. Oh, you'd think you were entitled to it after all those years!

AS Oh ---?--- the years

JS That's right.

NT Gee

AS I'm learning a lot through him.

NT Oh, me too!

JS So like I say, I went through everything, the right way,

and tried to do everything the best

NT Yes

JS And why, why there ---?--- me for it, I don't know

NT Oh, I don't know if it's that I think the trouble is with the bureaucracy!

JS I think of that sometime, I say, "Well maybe they're ---?--- " I don't know what it is

NT It, not personal It's, "You know these bureaucrats, they don't know "

AS They don't know!

NT They just got their little booklets, and that's what they look at

JS Well, I hope ---?---

AS He has had so much hardship, that he thinks that

NT Yes

JS Well, when they push you around when you work your head off The boss tells you, "You do this, you do that, you gotta do it!"

AS Well everybody has to do that

JS I did my work I never got fired. That is one thing They layed me off Spring Canyon, they wouldn't lay me off, up there, they sent me to Standard mine They said, "John, " "We ain't going to lay you off, we need you So we'll send you to Standard Mine "

NT And how long were you at Standard?

JS. I was up there, for about a year

NT Yes

JS Then they transferred me back to Spring Canyon

AS That was after the explosion, in Spring Canyon

JS: See, that was a--

NT Oh what year was, that was in 1958, the explosion? I see
And who was the guy who transferred you up to Standard
after Spring Canyon?

JS Yes.

NT What was his name?

JS The Same Co..

NT But what was the name of the boss?

JS A. Ray Woodward

NT Oh, I see

JS He was the superintendent He was the superintendent at
that time.

NT. He wanted to keep you working

JS: Yes he wouldn't lay me off, he says "John, we ain't
going to lay you off, we're going to ship you to Stan-
dard!"

NT Yes.

JS But from there they shipped me back I never got fired,
never got criticized. I did my work, and I did everything
they told me I said, "That's it, I did my eight hours
work and that's it. They were satisfied

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NT Well you should get what's coming to you Maybe you will!

JS Well, I don't know Well I'm still hoping for the best
It's like ---?--- says, "Keep your fingers crossed "

NT Yes it's a good idea

JS Whatever is going to be, I don't know

NT We'll see! Well thank you both, for spending all this
time with me!

JS Well, that's fine I hope this.

AS Now what are you going to do?

JS ...that we created

END OF INTERVIEW