

INTERVIEW WITH OMER VISE

Fr: Beth Nogay

Nogay: What was it like when you first started to work in the mines?

Vise: It was in 1918.

Nogay: Explain to me what your work day was like.

Vise: We went to work at 8 o'clock and you were supposed to work until 4 o'clock but they had it after that they'd tell you to go in and clean up your place before you come out. Sometimes you'd have 8 or 9 or 10 o'clock at night before you could come out. They made you clean up the place before you come out so they could load the coal.

Nogay: What was your work like?

Vise: You had to load coal. Loaded in cars. And they'd haul it out and the loaders didn't get around. You'd have to wait until they'd bring you a loader to load your coal in and you'd have to stay until you cleaned up your place.

Nogay: Did you work with mules?

Vise: Yes. You worked all the time. I've had to work ... they just pay you for 8 hours to lay track you know and you'd have to stay until you laid all the track up and they wouldn't pay no overtime just 8 hours pay... 3 or 4 dollars a day and you'd have to stay till you got all those place laid up. I'd come out of the mine at maybe 10 o'clock at night and I'd have to walk 7 miles home. No pay for overtime. Just pay for 8 hours that's all you got.

Nogay: Tell me about the mules.

Vise: Yes ... I've loaded many a car with the mules. Haul it out and bring the empty back. Well you know Eckles blowed up down here in 1913 and there was 186 men killed and there was about 60 mules down in there when it blowed up. Killed all them mules.

Sometimes it would kill two or three at a time. Slate fall would fall on them.

Nogay: Did young boys work in the mines?

Vise: If you had a boy you could take him in there and work him. But it got so that they wouldn't let you take a kid in there. If you took one in you had to learn him you know. Called him a backhand.

Nogay: What was some of the worst things you say happen back in those days?

Vise: Well I tell you. The worst thing I seen happen was when a man got killed. Sometimes ... this machine man got killed and I helped get him out of the slate fall and one of the fellows helped get him out, I don't believe any of the is living now, he said . . . we took the stretcher you know and he said which way should we lay him face down... no I said turn him over on his back. .. you know they turned that fellow over on his back and that was the worst sight I ever seen.... his whole head was just mashed all to pieces. That's the worst thing I ever seen...when men got killed and got tore up like that it was pitiful to look at.

Nogay: How much money were you paid and how were you paid?

Vise: You were paid so much a ton and they used to pay once a month and then they commenced paying twice a month but if you loaded coal and if you didn't load you didn't get much money. Lots of times they wouldn't pay but 4 dollars a day for day work or 3 dollars and something for 8 hour you didn't make much money in the mines back when I first worked in the mines course the last few years I worked they paid pretty good.

Nogay: How were you paid back then?

Vise: Lots of times you was paid cash. Go by the office and they'd pay in cash. then they started paying by check and they had script... you go to the office and draw script to go to the store and trade. Get a dollar or 5 or 10 script and go to the store and what you bought you'd give them the script and if you had change they'd give you the change. One time at the Red Dragon I wasn't working very much...just before Christmas and I owed the store \$4.00 and I was going to draw \$4.00 or \$5.00 for Christmas

that was all I had to get the kids something to eat...candy and stuff and you know that doggone bookkeeper went to the office and turned in where I owed to the store and took all the money and I didn't have nothing and I went to the store manager and I said what did you turn that in for that's all I had for Christmas you know I work everyday and I'd pay you. Well he said I thought you wanted to pay it. They didn't have no feelings for a man and then the kids...that's all I had to buy candy for them for Christmas and I was drawing about that much and they turned it in and took all of it.

Nogay: What was it like going to the company store?

Vise: They used to force you to trade at the store but after it got unionize you had a paper you had to sign,,,, they called it the yellow dog and you signed that paper to trade at the store. Wouldn't let you go someplace else and trade you had to trade at the store and they just charged what ever they wanted to for the goods.

Nogay: Were the prices high?

Vise: Sure they was high. Higher than anybody else. They took advantage of you.

Nogay: There is a song that says you owe your soul to the company store.

Vise: Yeah we hear that song. Did you ever hear that song 20 tons of coal. Yeah you had to pay that company.

Nogay: Did you live in a company town.

Vise: Yes I lived in a company house a while and I finally bought a house in Whitesville and I got

Nogay: Can you tell me what the company house looked like:

Vise: They was just cheap houses. A fellow had a house for sale down there and I had got enough money ahead to make the first payment and I give \$1,000 or 1,200 dollars for this house and I paid \$333.00 down and I had three payments and I paid 6 12 and 18 months and I finally got it paid for.

Nogay: What did the company houses look like?

Vise: Some of them was plastered inside and some had wallpaper on them. They was cheap house. No water in them or nothing like that and they had outside toilets.

Nogay: What started the trouble in the mines? The fighting between the miners and the coal companies.

Vise: Well sometimes they'd fire a miner and that the rest would all strike over it. When they didn't have any union you just had to do what they told you to do you had to work just like I have and one time they shut this mine down I went over on top of the hill to another mine and something happened so they took us all down to this lower mine and I had a pretty good place to load there and so the boss give that to two more fellows and they made me to go down into what they called the curve and there wasn't no air and they had about 15" of slate you had to move and they didn't pay you for moving that slate. You had to shoot it and move it for nothing. You'd shoot that place down and it the air was so bad you couldn't go back to work. Sometimes you could only load one or two cars a day and a car only brought \$1.50 or \$2.00 so you wasn't making no money... if you made enough to get something to eat you was lucky.

Nogay: How did the company stop the union?

Vise: I don't know just exactly but they wouldn't let them organize. If you was union you couldn't get a job. You'd go to the mine just like one time I worked for this company once before and I didn't have a job and had kids to feed so I went up and seen one of the relatives and official of the company and he said go see Mr. Callcord he'll give you a job so I went over and seen him and he knew I was a union man. He said did you work for me before and I said yes I worked in Mill hollow well he said one times enough and he wouldn't give me a job so they didn't like the union men so they sold out to another company over the union and they didn't want a union there.

Nogay: Do you remember what lead to the march on Logan?

Vise: Well I'll tell you what it was all about as far as I know. See Logan was a nonunion mine the whole county was nonunion and they was trying

to organize and that was what the march was about. Over in Kentucky now there are alot of nonunion mines and they are always having trouble over there.

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Nogay: Who was in charge of Logan county.

Vise: No I don't remember.

Nogay: Was it Don Chafin?

Vise: Don Chafin was a thug. He was a sheriff but he told the people what to do they said he got 10¢ on the ton of every ton they run out of the mines to keep the union out and people would go up there and they wouldn't let him get off the train made him stay on the train and come on back out of it but the y finally oranized Logan County.

Nogay: Do you remember the Baldwin Phelps guys. What were they like?

Vise: Well they would keep the union out and they told me in 1912 they was striking on Lynns Creek mine and a union man they'd throw them out of their houses and said they'd keep the women across the creek. Old Mother Jones she'd go up there and walk up the railroad. Her husband and her boy they was killed in the strike and she was rough but she'd come down to Lynns' Creek and she told them strikers....

Nogay: Tell me the story about how you got to Lynns Creek.

Vise: A train over to Cabin Creek junction I think it was 5 or 6 miles from the junction to Lynns Creek and we walked from the junction to Lynns Creek and Lord there was an awful lot of people there. There must have been 10,000. I didn't go clean over in Logan but some got killed over in there in that march. But ain't many people living who was on that march.

Nogay: What happened when you got to Lynns Creek?

Vise: We stayed 2 or 3 days and crossed the mountain on Indian Creek and got there and they got somekind of settle but I don't remember exactly & so they run trains from Madison down to St. Albans & up Coal River & we rode that train home and it was full.

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Nogay: Tell me again about Lyms Creek and what Mother Jones said.

Vise: Mother Jones made a speech and she told the miners to go home. That she'd go to Washington and see Uncle Sam and see if she could get something straightened out. There was another fellow I don't know his name but I think he was killed out West after that...the FBI aimed to arrest him for something over the march and they killed him and Mother Jones told us all to go home...but we didn't go but after that we move from Lyms Creek over on Indian Creek next to Madison and we stayed there 2 or 3 days and we got word from somebody told us...lots of them had done gone over in Logan and she told us to go home and they run a train from Madison to St. Albans and we come up Coal River to Edgewise. A few days after we got home they come and arrested 12 of us and took us to Logan jail. They never tried us. None of that 12 are living.

Nogay: Tell me what Don Chafin said when you were in jail.

Vise: I don't know ... the jail was full.

Nogay: What did Don Chafin say to you?

Vise: Well when we was in there he come to the outside and said all you rednecks line up along here and course all of us lined up. Don Chafin come in and he looked awful mean and they killed 1 or 2 miners in that jail. I don't know what for. The bunch that went to jail when I went there was 12 from that camp and none are living.

Nogay: Why did you go to Lyms Creek?

Vise: They was trying to organize Logan. It was a scab county. To get more money

Nogay: How many men were at Lyms Creek and did they have guns?

Vise: Lots had guns. I think I had a 45-70 and there was lots of guns and a plane come over and I don't know how many shot at that plane he was pretty low down and they hit the plane but that plane never did come back over the second time I never did see it any more. At that time there wasn't many state police there. They never fooled around there.

Nogay: Why?

Vise: I don't know. Some miners were mean. They'd kill you I guess

Nogay: How did the miners communicate with each other. How did they know when fighting was going on?

Vise: One man would tell one the other would tell another, etc.

Nogay: Did you have meetings?

Vise: Yeah...some would speak.

Nogay: What do you remember about when the miners were fighting with the coal operators?

Vise: The operators wouldn't give a contract. Lots of people that were on that strike never did work in the mines anymore. They blackballed them...one mine would tell the other and lots never got back in the mines.

Nogay: What happened to you when you came back from jail?

Vise: At Edgewise they would never give me a job but the next mine at Logan Country. I worked for that Logan Company a while and everybody was going back to work and I went to this company there and they give me a job. After a while I moved down to Unice and started running a machine in the mines.

Nogay: Do you remember the Baldwin thugs?

Vise: Not too much. But where they had trouble they had quite a few thugs.

Nogay: Did you ever hear stories about what the thugs did?

Vise: I don't know exactly. But they ... union management would not go where they were at. Them thugs killed lots of miners and down there they'd throw you out of your houses and some would go get some land and set up tents and move in tents and the union would give a little something to eat. Not too much. The miners had a rough life. No union and you had to do what they said. It was hard to make a living and I had 7 kids to feed. I thank God that I always managed to have enough for them to eat but they didn't have many clothes but it wasn't cause I wouldn't work.....

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I raised a big garden and had hogs to kill for meat and had potatoes, beans and I don't think my kids ever sat down and didn't have enough to eat but we had no clothes. Couldn't get money to get any. Sometimes I'd work one day a week and what can you make in one day. Nothing. It was hard times. Used to go on the mountain at 4 o'clock and come off at 7 or 8 the next day and if I made \$110.00 or \$120.00 in two weeks i thought I was flying and I always had a cow and had milk and butter and plenty of meat. My wife would wash clothes for school. All I had I got honest.

Nogay: How did the miners feel toward the company?

Vise: They didn't like the company. They treated you so bad and you had to do what they said. I worked when you'd go in 8 o'clock that morning and they'd tell you to cleanup or bring your tools out. I've stayed in the mines until 10 o'clock to clean up. I laid track and got \$3.00 for 8 hours . Had to stay late and then walk 7 miles home and got no pay for overtime. That was tough..

Nogay: What do you remember about the miners fighting?

Vise: Sometimes....they fired a man then strike. I don't uphold a man that don't do his job. I think he should do his job but all the rest would strike and I think that was wrong cause if you work at a job you don't care if you do the job or not I don't thing people should strike if you don't do your job and keep everyone out of work.

Nogay: How did they get the miners out of their houses?

Vise: If you didn't move the law would take you out and unload you if you didn't get out. Take your stuff and haul it out in a wagon along side the road and unload it.

Omer Vise

Q Can you explain what it was like when you first started to work in the mines?

A It was in 1918.

Q Explain to me what your work day would have been like. Like what time you got up, what you did during the day, how long you worked?

A Maam.

Q Explain to me what your work day was like. What you did in the mine. Whatever you remember. What time did you go to work?

A We went to work at 8:00 and you're suppose to work until 4:00. But they had it after that they'd--I've had to go in and they would tell you that you go in there of the morning and you'd have to clean up your place before you come out. Sometimes you'd have 8, 9, 10 o'clock at night before you could clean up the place. Get the cars loaded with coal. They made you clean up the place before you come out.

Q What would you do?

A Maam.

Q What was your work like?

A Work class?

Q What was your work like?

A You would have to load coal, you see. They would load it in cars and they'd haul it out and the motors didn't get round, you'd have to wait until they'd bring a car,

before you could load your coal. You would have to stay until you cleaned up your place.

Q Did you work with mules?

A Maam.

Q Did you work with mules?

A Yes. You worked all the time. I've had to work--they just pay you for 8 hours to lay track you know and you would have to stay in there until you laid all of the track up and they wouldn't pay you no overtime. Just 8 hours pay at 3 or 4 dollars a day and you would have to stay until you got all of them places laid up, you know. I would come out of the mines, maybe 10:00 at night and have to walk seven miles. Have to walk home after you come out of your work and you wouldn't--they wouldn't pay you for that overtime. They just paid you for 8 hours. That's all you got.

pay in the mines

Q Tell me about the mules. Do you remember working with the mules in the mines, what was that like?

A Yes. I've loaded many of car and the mule would come in and haul it out and bring you an empty back. Well, you know _____ blowed up here down in 1913 and they was 186 man killed and they was about 60 mules down in there when it blowed up. Killed all of them mules.

Mine explosions

Q Did the mules know their job very well?

A Maam.

Q Did the mules--were they good. Did they know what to do?

A Oh, yes.

They would -- if they took a green mule down in there, like they took a mule down in there that had never been in the mine--and one was down there they would put him in front of this and make a team out of him one in front of the other and they would work him that away until they would learn him. You know.

Q What did it look like when you were inside the mine?

A Well, you didn't have a light on. You couldn't see nothing it was just dark. You had to have a light on to see anything.

Q What was the temperature like, was it wet down there?

A What? Dark?

Q Explain to me when you had your light on, what it felt like when you were inside of the mines?

A Well, it was just--it wouldn't be any different if you was up here in the house. It use to, you know, you had oil lamps and you would put oil in them and a wick to keep the slate from falling on you you know. They would bring the timbers in and then you would have to set the timbers and when you--I worked on a machine and the machine--you had to have track right up against the face after they'd clean up this coal here to cut another cut in there and then they would shoot it and they would clean it up and then the track man would lay track up against the coal again and then you would cut that and the loader would boar holes and you had a breast hogger, you boared them holes in with a breast ^{auger} hogger. Then you shoot coal. Finally before I quit the mines

they got an electric hogger that would boar the holes. Lots of times you know, that--they had what was called a horse back in the mine. It was just like a tree you know, and sometimes that horse back would let loose and they would be fire 6 feet high in the mines and it would just drop right down. Lots of people got killed. You couldn't tell where it was at hardly and it just drop out of that top and kill, it would kill lots of people. I--one morning I went up to work loading coal and the man come out and said there was a man in under the slate fall in there. He was running the machine and I said well, where was he standing at. Where was he at? He said he was under the slate fall, I went in where the place was and I said to his helper, I said where was he at he said he was standing up on the machine, coming out. Well, I said there aint no chance for--I said if he had been on the side of the machine it might not have killed him.

Q Where there a lot of accidents?

A Oh, yes.

Q In the early?

A Yes, sometimes down here at Edgewise it was all bad talk. I don't know how long they run there but I bet you there was 500 men killed in that mine. Sometimes it would kill 2 or 3 at a time. Slate coal would fall and--

Q Did young boys work in the mines. Did they have young boys work?

A Well, if you--use to if you had a boy you could take him in

there and work him. But it got so that they wouldn't let you take a kid in there. If you took one in there you would have to learn him, you know. They called him a back hand.

Q What was some of the worst things you saw happen back in those days?

A Well, I tell you, the worst thing I seen happen when a man got killed. Sometimes, you know, I--now this machine man that got killed and I have to get him out of the slate coal and one of the fellows that helped get him out--I don't believe any of them is living now, that helped get him out. He said--they took the stretchers you know--and he said, "which way do you lay him, face down." "No", I said, "turn him over on his back". And you know they turned that fellow on his back. That was the worst sight I ever seen. His whole head was just mashed all to pieces. That's the worst thing I ever seen. When men got killed and tore up like that. It was pitiful to look at.

Q How much money were you paid, and how were you paid?

A Well, you was paid so much a ton and they use to pay you once a month. Then they come to paying twice a month. But if you loading coal. If you didn't load no coal, you didn't get much money, you know. Day work, lots of times, they wouldn't pay you but \$4.00 a day for day workers or \$3.00 and something for 8 hours. You didn't make much money in the mines, back when I was working in--first worked in the

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mines, of course, the last few years I worked in the mines it went pretty good, they paid pretty good.

Q How were you paid back then?

A Well, you was paid lots of times you was paid cash, you know, you would go by the office and they would pay you in cash and then most of them they got so they would pay you in a check. They had script, you know, you would go to the office and draw script and go to the store and trade, you know. You would get a dollar or five or ten dollar script and then you would take that script and go to the store and what you bought you would give them that script and if you had any change coming back you would they'd give you the change back. I, at one time, at Red Dragon--I wasn't working very much and I--just before Christmas, you know, and I owed this store \$4.00 and something and I was drawing about 4 or 5 dollars for Christmas. That was all I had to get the kids something to eat, you know, candy and stuff. You know that doggon bookkeeper went to the office and turned that--what I owed into the store and took all of the money. I didn't have nothing. I went to the store man and I said, "What did you turn that in for, that's all I had for Christmas?" I said, "you know I work every day and I'd pay you." I never owed a man, I always paid him. Well, he said I thought you wanted to pay it. But you see, they didn't have no feelings for a man. Them kids, you know, that's all I had to buy candy and stuff for them for Christmas and they went and--I was drawing about

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about that much and they turned it in and took all of it. You know, you--

Q What was it like going to the company store, what was that like?

-A Well, they use to, they forced you to trade in the store. But it got after,=it got unionized you know, you had a paper you would have to sign. They called it the yellow dog. You'd sign that paper to trade the store. They wouldn't let you go someplace else and trade you had to trade at the store, you know. They would jsut charge you whatever they wanted to for the goods.

Q Where the prices high?

A Oh, sure they was high. They was higher then anybody else. They took advantage of you, you know.

Q They always say that--there is a song that says "You owe your soul to the company stores"?

A Yeah. Did you ever hear that song, "twenty tons of coal" Yeah. you had to pay that company. It was--

Q Did you live in a company town?

A Yes, I lived in a company house for a smart while. I finally the first house I ever bought I bought in Whitesville. I had got--

Q Can you tell me what the company house looked like?

A Oh, they was just cheap houses, you know. A fellow had a house sale down there and I went down and I got enough money ahead to pay for my first payment. I give him a-- I don't know, it's been a long time. I usually give him

a thousand or twelve hundred dollars for this house and I paid three-hundred and thirty-three dollars down and I had three payments and I paid 6, 12 and 18 months and I finally got it paid for you know.

Q When you were living in the company houses, what did they look like. Tell me as if you were walking inside them what did they look like?

A Well, some of them was plastered inside and some of them you had had wallpaper on them. They was cheap houses. They didn't have no water in them or nothing like that. They had outside toilets.

Q What started the trouble in the mines? Do you remember when that started?

A Which?

Q What started the fighting between the miners and the coal company's?

A Well, sometimes they would fire a body, you know, and the rest of them would all strike over it you see. When you didn't have any union, you just had to do like they tell you to do. You've got to work. Just like I have. One time--they shut this mine down and I went up on top of the hill to another mine and something happened so they took me down--they took us down to this lower mine and I had a pretty good place to load there and so the boss give that to two more fellows. The place that I had before and they made me go down to what was called the curve and they wasn't no air and they had about 15 inches of slate

Bad time

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you had to move. They didn't pay you for moving that slate. You had to move that slate--shoot it and move it for nothing. You'd shoot that place down and it was air was so bad, you couldn't go back in to work. Sometimes you wouldn't get to load but one or two cars a day. The car didn't bring you but a dollar and a half or two dollars. You wasn't making no money, if you got--if you made enough to get something to eat you was lucky.

Q How did the companies stop the union?

What were there ways of stopping the union?

A Well, I don't know just exactly what it was but they wouldn't let them organize, you know. If you was union man you couldn't get a job. You would go to the mines--just like one time--and I worked for this company once before and I didn't have know job and had them kids to feed and--so I went up and I seen one of the officials of the company and he said, "You go see Mr. Callford, he'll give you a job." So I went over and seen him and he knowed I was a pretty good union man you know. He said, "Do you work for me before?" "Yes", I said, "I worked up in Mill Hollow" well, he said, "One time is enough , I aint got nothing for you." He wouldn't give me a job, you see. So they didn't like the union then, so they sold out. They sold the company--the company sold out to another company. Because of the union you know, they got a union you know and they didn't want no union there.

Q Do you remember what lead to the march on Logan?

A Well, I'll tell you what the march was all about, as far as I know. See, Logan was a non-union mine. The whole county was non-union, you see. They was trying to organize and that was what all of the march was about. But you take over in Kentucky now. There's lots of non-union mines over in Kentucky and they are always having trouble over there you know.

Q Who was in charge of Logan County?

A Maam.

Q Who was in charge of Logan County? Do you remember?

A No, I don't remember.

Q Don Chaffin?

A Don Chaffin was a slug. He was the sherrif but he told the rest of them what to do, you know. He got--I think they said he got 10¢ on the ton. Of every ton they run out of that--where they had mines over there--to keep the union out. People would go up there--a union man would go up there and they wouldn't let him get off of the train. They would make them stay on the train and come on back out of it. They finally organized Logan County, you know. Finall

Q Do you remember the Baldwin-Felts guys, what were they like?

A Well, they would keep the union out, you know. They told the men in 1912--they was striking on Lynns Creek mine in there, you know and they--a union man, they'd throw them out of there houses. Said they'd kick the women across the creek--they'd live on that side of the creek and they'd kick the women across the creek, you know. Old Mother Jones,

she'd go up there and walk up that railroad, clean up //
to the head. She--her husband and her boy, they was killed
in striking, you know. She was rough. She would come
down there at Lynns creek and she told them strikers,
said you go on back--

Q Tell me that story from the beginning about how you got to
Lynns Creek, do you remember? From the very beginning
what happened that got you there?

A Well, we went from a train over to Cabin Creek Junction
and I tell you--it's been so long, I think maybe it was
5 or 6 miles from Cabin Creek Junction to down in Lynns
Creek and I think we walked from Cabin Creek Junction to
Lynns Creek. Lord there was an awful lot of people there.

They was--they must of been 10,000 they was an awful bunch
of people. Some people, you know, went--now I didn't
go clean over in Logan--but to some people around where
I worked in there got killed over in there, In that march.
But there aint many people living was on that march.

Q What happened when you got to Lynns Creek?

A Well, we stayed there two or three days and then we went
across the mountain over on what was called the Indian
Creek and when we got over to Indian Creek they got some
kind of a settlement. I don't know now, I can't remember
exactly. So they run trains from Madison down to St. Albans,
you know where St. Albans is, and then up coal river and
we rode that train home and it was full.

Q Tell me again about going to Lynns Creek and what Mother

*March
#5*

Jones said?

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A Well, she told--they told us to go to Lynns Creek and we went to Lynns Creek and we stayed a day or two there, I think. And then Mother Jones come, I don't know how she come there. Now, but she made a speech and she told them miners to go home and she would go to Washington and see Uncle Sam and see if she couldn't get something straightened out. Well, there was--I don't know his name, but I think that he was killed out west after that. They aimed--the FBI agents aimed to arrest him for something, over the march. They killed him. Mother Jones told them--told us to all go home, that she would go to Washington and see if she couldn't get something worked out with the president Uncle Sam. But we didn't go. But after that, after Mother Jones spoke then we moved from Lynns Creek over on Indian Creek, next to Madison, and we stayed there two or three days and we got word to somebody--somebody came in and told us--now there's lots of them that have done gone over to Logan--they told us to go home and they run a train from Madison to St. Albans, and then would come up coal River to Edgew^{ide}see-- see the train come up--its come up and crossed the mountain at Kay Ford and we come home. Then a few days after that--after we got home, then they come over there and arrested 12 of us at Edgewide and took us to Logan jail. But they never did try us. That was 12. But they aint none of that 12 living that I know of.

Q Tell me again about when they took you to jail, what

happened with Don Chaffin?

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A Maam.

Q Tell me about what Don Chaffin said when you were in jail?

A I don't know the jail was full, I don't know how many.

Q What did Don Chaffin say to you?

A Well, when we was in there he come to the outside of the jail and he said, "All of you red necks, line up along here." Of course, all of us lined up.

Q Can you tell me that again and say Don Chaffin's name?

Chaffin
A Yeah. Don Chaffin come in and come over to the jail, the bars, you know, he said, "All of you rednecks, line up here." And he looked awful mean and of course, everybody lined up. They killed one or two miners in that jail for something-- I don't know what they killed them for. So I stopped-- the bunch that went to jail when I went, they was twelve of us from that camp, and they aint none of them living that I know of. They are all passed on.

Q Why did you go to Lynns Creek?

A well, they was trying to organize Logan County, see it was a scab county, you see. They was trying to organize it so they could get more money. These other--the miners was a backing them you see.

Q How many men were at Lynns Creek and did they have guns?

A Lots of them had guns. There was an airplane--I don't know, I think I had a 45 70 and they was lots of guns. They was a plane come over and I don't know how many shot at that plane, he was pretty low down. They hit

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the plant, but that plane never did come back over the second time. I never did see it anymore. But at that time, you know, there wasn't many state police in there. you know, in the state then. And the state police never fooled around there.

Q Why?

A I don't know. Some of the miners were pretty mean you know they'd kill you, I guess.

Q How did the miners communicate with each other? How did they know what was going on when there was fighting going on?

A Well, one miner would tell the other one and the other one would tell the other one. That's about the only way I knowed anything.

Q Did you all have meetings or passwords or anything?

A Yeah. They would have meetings, you know, and some of them would speak, you know.

Q Tell me what it was like back then when they were fighting. What do you remember about when the miners were fighting with the coal operators?

A Well, you know, the operators wouldn't give them no contract and they was lots of people that was on that strike, never did work in the mines anymore. they called--what they called blackballing them. One company would tell the other you know, and there was lots of men never did get back in the mines he had to do something else.

Q What about you when you came back from jail, what happened

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to you?

A Well, then they moved all of us out and they broke the strike, but Edgewise, they never would give me a job. The next mine, they had another mine up--it was a coal or a logging company logging that country in there. I worked for that logging company awhile. Everybody was going back to work so I went up to this company up there and they give me a job. I started to work in the mines then. I went back and worked in the mines and then after I worked there awhile I moved down to Unis and started to run a machine in the mines.

Q Do you remember the Baldwin thugs?

A Well, not too much. But where they had trouble, you know, they had them Baldwin thugs. Some of them had quite a few of them you know.

Q Do you know what the thugs did, did you ever hear stories about what the thugs could do? What would the thugs do?

A Well, I don't know just exactly what all they did do, but they--if you was a union man you better not go around where there at. They killed--them thugs killed lots of miners. Down--they would throw you out of your house, you know. Some of them would go and get a piece of land and they'd set up tents and move in tents. The union would give them a little something to eat, not too much. The miners, back years ago, when I first started in the mines, they had a rough life. Well, when they didn't have no union you just had to do what they said to do. If you, they would

they would tell you to work that place or take you tools out and you just--back years ago it was pretty hard to make a living and I had seven kids to feed you know. I thank god that I always managed to have enough for them to eat. But they didn't have many clothes, it wasn't cause I didn't work. I raised a big garden. I had hogs to kill for meat and I had--I raised a big garden you know. Had plenty of potatoes and beans and sweat potatoes and stuff like that.

poor didn't have no clothes

I don't think my kids ever set down to the table and didn't have enough to eat. But I'll tell you the truth, you didn't have no clothes. You did have no money to get any. Sometimes I'd work one day a week and what are you going to make in one day. You aint going to make nothing. It was a pretty hard time, when I use to work in the mines. I use to go up on the mountain at 4:00 and come off at 7 or 8:00 the next day and if I made 110.00, or 115.00, or 120.00, in two weeks I thought I was flying. I always had a cow. We had plenty of meat and milk and butter, and I had plenty of meat. We always had meat but we didn't have many clothes. My wife, I give her credit, she would wash their clothes when they come from school and dry them and get them ready to go to school the next day. I give her credit. I aint got no education.

I never sat down to the table that I had something stold or got dishonest. Always got it honest. But we just didn't have no clothes.

Q How did the miners feel toward the company?

A Well, you know, they didn't like the company much. The miners didn't. They treated you so bad--you just had to do what they'd tell you you would do. Then I worked in the mines down there and you'd go in at 8:00 that morning and they would tell you to clean up that place or bring your tools out. I've stayed in the mines until 10:00 to clean up that place. You didn't get cars. You had to wait to get the cars, you know, to load the coal. Then I would come out and have to walk home. I laid track and got 3dollars and something for 8 hours. You had to lay the track up so the machine--the machine had a track and they'd run it on this track and cut from this track. You had to lay up all the track. Lots of times these miners didn't clean up til late you know, 4 or 4:30 and I would have to stay, me and my buddy and lay up this track for them. Sometimes I would come out about 8, 9 , 10 o'clock at night and then I had to walk 7 miles home. And they didn't pay you for no extra time. That three dollars and something you got. For 8 oclock until you come out--til you laid all of that track up. You know that was tough, you know.

*tough
working in
the
mines*

Q What do you remember most about those mines, when there was trouble in the mines? The trouble with the miners fighting the coal men?

A Well, sometimes--I didn't believe in what they do, like you know, well--they fired a man then the mines would strike. Maybe--I don't uphold a man that don't do his job, myself, I think he should do his job. But then all

all of the rest of the men would strike, well I think that was wrong. Because if you working a job down there where you work and you don't care whether you need a job or not I don't think the rest of the people--if they discharged you for not keeping up with his job--for all of the rest of the people to strike and throw everybody out of work. Do you?

Q No. Do you remember when they would--how would they take the miners out of the houses? What would they do?

A What.

Q How would they get the miners out of the houses, what would they do?

A Well, if you didn't move out the law would come in there and load you up and take you up on the side of the road and unload you. If you didn't get out. They'd come up and take your stuff and put it in a wagon or something and haul it out of there on the side of the road and unload it.

Q Is there anything else, that you remember, that you were going to tell us about?

A No, I don't believe so. I forget lots, you know, when you get old, you forget a--

Q I think you remember a whole lot, thank you for talking to us.