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BOOK 10

JOSEPH BARCELONA

Oral History Project

I <u>Joseph Barcelona</u>	<u> </u>
recorded November 1970 Date	at my home Location
by Ronald Barcelona by	by the Roosevelt University Oral
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Interview with Joseph Barcelona by Ronald Barcelona November 1970

time - 1 hour

CONTENTS

	pages	
Early life in Colorado mining area	. 1	
Role of the union	2 -	4
1927 strike	.5 -	11
Ethnic composition of work force in mines (1920s)	12 -	14
Mine accidents	.15 -	16
Conditions of Work (1920s)	.17 -	22
Interaction of ethnic groups in mining camps	.23 -	25
Union activities	.26 -	29
Housing	30-3	4

Interview with Joseph Barcelona November, 1970

Interviewer: Ronald Barcelona

I: My name is Ronald Barcelona and I'm engaged in an oral history project for Roosevelt University. I'm interviewing my father, Joseph Barcelona, who comes from a southern Colorado mining community. He was born and raised in this community. He has some opinions on what went on in those days and he'd like to tell us a little about it right now.

R: I'm Joseph Barcelona. I was born in Hastings, Colorado, December 16, 1909.

I: All right Joe, at what age did you go up to the mines to work?

R: The age of sixteen.

I: That would be about 1926.

R: Right.

I: Now, at that time was the United Mine Workers
Union active in the area you were working in?

R: Not that I recall.

I: Were there any people at the area that you worked at, were there any Union members?

- R: No, there wasn't.
- I: There was no Union activity then?
- R: None. None that I can remember.
- I: What was the attitude of the company towards
 Union activity? Do you recall?
- R: They discouraged unions, and they discouraged any miner that talked about unions, or organizing themselves. They discouraged it very much.
- I: How did they handle grievances at that time?
- R: Well, all you could do is talk to the boss, to your foreman, and try to get him to do something about it. Of course, he listened to you and that was the end of that most of the time.
- I: Would you say that a lot of the grievances went uncorrected?
- R: Oh, many, many of them probably ninety per cent of them.
- I: All right, what type of grievances were most voiced by the miners at that time?
- R: Well, at that time most of the miners complained about being short weighted on the coal they loaded, safety conditions (although they were beginning to get safety-minded about that time).

 They hadn't begun to spray the mines with a white

powdery substance, but it wasn't too long after that when they did begin to spray that into the mines, as a safety precaution.

I: When you say miners were "short-weighted" does that mean that the company had to check weigh them in and not the men?

R: Right, right. That was one of the big issues with the miner. He wanted a man to represent him at the weigh station, and the company would not stand still for that.

I: They wouldn't start that policy at all?

R: Not a bit.

I: All right, from what I understand you were involved in a strike at one time or another at the coal mining camp. Could you tell us a little about that?

R: Well, from what I remember of it, somebody came in and said that they were from the Industrial Workers of the World and they were going to get US a wage raise if we'd go out on strike. Everybody walked-out. The mine was shut down for several weeks. Pretty soon the older miners started to go back to work when the company promised to give them a dollar-a-day raise, if they went back to work and

they wouldn't recognize the union or the people who were trying to organize a union. Of course, I was a young fellow at that time and most of the young fellows didn't go back to work. We believed these people, that they could get us more money. That went on for some time, and pretty soon we'd go to the union meetings and there was nobody there to speak to us or tell us anything--the so-called "union men" were gone. Where they went to we never found out. We never saw them again, unless they were arrested by the company owned policemen, or they were spirited out of town, or chased out--we never found but what became of them. There we sat not knowing what to do. We wouldn't go back to work, mainly because we were young kids. Our fathers had gone back to work by that time, so we weren't worried too much about working. After the company gave the miners a dollar-a-day raise, why the whole strike collapsed. The miners were never organized at that time.

- 1: Do you recall what date or what approximate month this strike took place?
- R: $_{
 m No}$, I don't recall exactly, but it must have been in the spring of the year. 1927. I didn't go

back to work again until the following March or April of the' following year, 1928.

I: I see. When you say that the Industrial Workers of the World came around, was there a certain group who'd just go from area to area and speak to the men?

R: Right, at the beginning of the strike.

I: And what did they say, they could just get you better wages?

R: Better wages, better working conditions, get paid for a lot of extra work you had to do for no pay at all, like separating the rock from the coal. Better safety conditions. At the time the miners were demanding a check-weigh man to represent them besides the one that worked for the company. They promised us a lot of things, but the only benefit the miners ever got out of that was the dollar-aday raise, that the company gave voluntarily.

I: When you say the company gave it voluntarily, they gave it after the men had walked out of the mines.

R: Right, that was, it.

I: . Now you said that these Industrial Workers of the World were organizing the men. Did they urge the men to go back to that dollar-a-day or did they tell them to stay out?

R: They were gone by that time. You see this didn't happen till several weeks after they had walked out on strike. When I say several weeks, it may have been three weeks or a month after the strike was called, that the men started to go back to work except for the younger fellows (when I mean younger fellows I mean the guys between sixteen and twenty years old then working in the mines). These Industrial Workers of the World, their representatives are the ones that originated the strike but disappeared by that time. Where they went to I never found out, although in later years I realized what happened to them. That they were either chased out of town or arrested on some trumped-up charge.

I: By that do you mean that the local police were against union activities?

R: Well, they were owned by the companies, the coal companies.

I: What makes you say that?

R: They owed their jobs to the local companies, so they weren't about to lose their jobs for an outfit that comes in to call a strike,

I:

R:

That's the way we were always told because the companies owned everything—they owned the stores, they controlled everything, they owned the homes we lived in. We had to buy our groceries through the company owned stores and pay their prices.

There was no other store around that we could go to. Most of the miners didn't own automobiles at the time so they couldn't go to another town or a bigger city, to buy their groceries, so you had to pay the company price. Whether that was fair or not, I was too young to know at the time.

Before that they issued script to the miners in lieu of money and the miners could only spend this script at their company owned stores. You were always obligated to the company, and if you got out of line they told you to move out of town. Most miners didn't have the means to move. It was very easy to be blacklisted at that time.

When you say blacklisted what do you mean--you couldn't get a job in that particular mine, or--

Or any other mine owned by the coal company.

It was very easy for them to blacklist you because they owned many towns and many mines in many towns in southern Colorado. When you went looking for

another job in another town they'd just say to you,
"When we need a man we'll let you know". Well,
I've known guys that they never let know. They
had to leave the state to find another job.

We've heard from another source that there was a little bit of connivance at election time.
What do you know about political elections, if anything, in the coal camp?

R: Well, I don't recall too much of that, I guess I was too young. All I know about that is what I heard from the older people. That they had a local sheriff in the town. As far as I can remember hearing, either the company made sure they were elected or there was no other opponent to run against them; so they were elected automatically. All the ones I ever remembered were strictly for the coal company.

I: What political party did they belong to, do you remember that?

R: No. I don't. I don't recall.

A few days after the strike started, I believe it was on that following weekend, they asked all the miners in the area to rally to the central place where it would be easy for everybody to get

to. That was Trinidad, Colorado. What few cars there were in town, they asked everybody to take as many people as they could in each car. When this started down the highway, somebody, we never knew who it was but we could guess, had thrown barrels of nails on along the highway and naturally everybody that had cars had flat tires and by the time that they fixed their flat tires and cleaned the highway of nails, it was dark and the rally was all over by that time, or supposedly over. I remember I never got there.

I: Do you remember any other incidents of harassment like the one you just described?

R: Not in our particular town. There were incidents that we read about in the paper where they called out the militia or the national guard or company so-called police. There had been some trouble in a particular town by the name of Columbine, Colorado, where, if my memory's correct, they shot about seven people. Included were young boys watching people that particular day. That is something I read about. I wasn't there at the time, but I know that it did happen.

I: Do you recall what was the general attitude

of the people in your area when they heard about this shooting?

R: Oh, they were fighting mad, but what could they do? If the people got aroused they were afraid they'd get thrown out of their homes, which was what was told to them by their company bosses--if they didn't behave themselves that they would be thrown out of their homes and they'd have to go look out for. themselves.

I: For these three or four weeks that you mentioned people were on strike, the older miners and younger miners were allowed to stay in their homes?

R: Yes they were.

I: Why do you think that was? Do you think that the company believed that they would come around soon?

R: Yes, because the miners had gone through this many, many times before and the company knew that they could handle these people very well. They'd done it before. The people had to eat. The only place they could get something to eat was through. the company's stores. The company would just hold that against them. They'd say, "You go to work and get credit". The miner was really up against

it most of the time. It didn't take long for him to be broke and without any means of support.

There was no other work to be found in that area.

I: At any time that you were in the mines do you recall that there was any activity by the United

Mine Workers in the time you spent there?

R: No, because I wasn't there. Probably the year after that, before I decided to get out of the coal mining business. I don't recall the activities of the other union that came in after that, but I do remember my uncles and my father speaking of other unions that had been in before trying to organize miners. It was a very difficult thing to do. To begin with most of the miners were illiterate, couldn't speak the language. They just followed like sheep is really what they did. They didn't have no leadership. They did what the company told them, or whoever could speak English told them what to do and these people followed them. They had no other recourse.

I: You mean in the later 1920's, when you-were working in the mines; a large number of the miners couldn't speak English?

R: Oh, many of them couldn't speak English. I

would say sixty per cent of them couldn't speak
English. Many a time I had to interpret for my
father and many young fellows had to speak up for
their fathers or explain to them what was being
said, because a lot of them didn't understand English that well yet.

Were there any attempts by either the company or private organizations or anyone at all to teach the miners English?

R: Not that I remember.

All right, we were just saying that a large number of the miners couldn't speak English well into the 1920's. Now Joe, I'd like to ask you what nationalities were the miners? Were they mixed?

R: Yes, they were. Mostly Italians, Austrians,
Polish, Greeks, Mexicans or Spanish-Americans as
they were known then, Japanese--that's about the
most prominent races that there were then.

I: Were most of the foremen these mixed nationalities too?

R: No, they weren't. They were mostly Welshmen, Scotsmen and a few Irish. All supervision, all bosses, were from the English speaking nations.

I: Why do you think that was?

R: They could speak the language and they knew how to get around. They knew how to speak up for themselves; they knew how to express themselves better that the other people. Naturally the better jobs went to them. Maybe the fact that they had been in the mining industry in England, or Wales, or Scotland, maybe it was due to that fact that they became bosses and foremen and mine superintendents, surveyors. The other races didn't have the education for jobs like that.

I: The time that you were in the mines, was there really any chance to work your way anywhere--into supervision, or even into a condition where you could leave the mine and go into some other job?

Could you get ahead?

R: No, all you could be was a mule driver, a coal digger, or a motorman. The brighter lads that had a little more on the ball, and who could speak up became motormen. How many motormen did they need in a coal mine? Four or five. Those were dangerous jobs too, they weren't easy jobs.

I: Then usually the-supervisor or the foreman weren't ex-miners from that same mine?

R: Right, that's right.

I: They were brought in?

R: They were brought in from, who knows, England or maybe they'd had experience in other companies in the coal mining industry.

I: Could you tell us a little about accidents or injuries that were sustained in the mines when you were there?

R: Yes, there were many accidents and many miners were killed. At that time they didn't pay a miner anything for being hurt or killed. Once he got hurt his nay stopped until he was able to go back to work again. The only thing that they did have was hospitals. You could go to their company owned hospital and they would take care of you. Your pay was null and void once you were hurt.

I: Well how was your family supported if a miner broke a leg or an arm and couldn't work?

R: That's a good question, how are they supported.

If you didn't have a few dollars put away you just did without. You just lived on bare necessities, or if friends came to your aid, it was the only way you could get by. Somebody would have to help you.

I: What would happen when a miner was killed?

What would happen to his family? Would they have to leave the company owned house?

R: No, they didn't have to leave. What happened was, if they had an older boy or a boy that was able to begin work, he quit school and went to work in the mines. That's how the people lived. If they had a boy anywhere from the age of fourteen, fifteen, and on up, the company would put him to work in the coal mines. If they were under that age, I don't know how some of those people survived, but they did. Many a widow left with six, seven, eight, and ten children. When the kids grew up they left the coal mining and went to the big cities.

I: Did most of the kids usually quit school and go to work in the mines?

R: At that time I would say forty per cent of them did quit school and went to work in the mines.

Most miners wanted their kids to get an education, so they tried to keep them in school at least to get a high school education. Most of the boys I started going to school with, maybe ten per-cent of them ever got to go to college.

I:. How many of them finished high school? Did a lot of them go on to high school?

R: Maybe thirty per cent of them.

I: What was the usual lot of a miner? Did he wind up spending his whole life in the mines? Or did most of them get away? Was it a very transient type of work? Were there always newcomers?

No, most of the people stayed and went to work in the mines. Every now and then one young lad said, "This isn't for me." And if he had relatives in the big city or somewhere, he'd take off and try to get a job in the city. A lot of them came back and went to work in the mines.

I: Why do you think that was?

R: They just couldn't adjust to the big city.

They had too many ties at home, probably. They couldn't get away from their families.

I: Before you mentioned something about safety in the mines. Were there safety committees at the time? Were they run by the company or organized by the men?

R: No, they were run by the company. All of the safety measures were taken by the company. The miner had to look out for himself. Of course, he was taught the basic rules of being a miner, like putting up props at a certain amount of distance.

He mined coal and he was told to watch for runaway cars, falling rock, things of that nature. He was taught the basic rules. After that anything else out of the ordinary that happened, why he was just caught up in it, that's all.

I: As I understand it, miners didn't work every day of the year. Do you recall, was there pretty steady work in the mines at that time?

R: No, there wasn't. Most of the time it was three days a week, four days a week. Once in a while if they got a big order for steel, if the steel mills worked four and five weeks steady and then you didn't work three or four days other weeks. Sometimes you went all week without working, which happened quite frequently. So I would say if you worked nine months out of the year you were doing very well.

I: Could you make enough in nine months out of the year to support yourself these other three months?

R: Well, you just have to tighten up. For those other three, could you make enough? Some people could save a few dollars and others couldn't. It all depended upon how big of a family they had, or

what they bought, if they went in debt, or if they had debts to pay off. They just tightened their belts and got by somehow. Don't forget in a coal mining town you don't have fancy furniture. At that time most of us didn't even have a radio. We didn't have telephones. We were lucky when we had one pair of shoes, and a pair of overalls. We never had very much, all you worried about is eating.

I: Many of the miners supplemented their income by taking in boarders?

R: Yes, many of them. As people came from the old country, most of them were townspeople of their's. They boarded them. That helped the family to get by, too. At that time I don't remember exactly what they charged them for board and room. Sure that helped a lot of families.

I: . When you say that they put them up as boarders, can we assume that there wasn't enough housing to go around for everybody or was this just a friendly act?

R: Well, it was just mostly a friendly act because these people came over from the old country; they couldn't even speak the language. They wouldn't know where to go, or how to live in a strange

country. So their relatives, friends, or townspeople put them up until they got adjusted and
learned their way around. They also taught them
(if you can call it) the art of mining.

I: From several different sources we learned that many of the miners couldn't speak English, couldn't read or write, didn't seem to know very much about this country, the way things worked. Can we assume that organizing these men for union activities was just about an impossible task, partly for the fact that they really didn't understand what it was all about?

R: Yes, it was very hard to organize them due to the fact that these people had been taught one thing, that' you go on strike--you can't work. And they came here to work. They didn't trust the organizers. They didn't know them, they didn't understand them. So you see, they were bound to be distrustful of somebody that promised them better things. There was always a few miners that were always trying to get the other miners to go along. With them and get organized. Somehow or other the companies always made it hard for the miners to get organized. As I recall, they had been through

too much, these miners; they'd been sold down the river, you might as well say, too many times. After a while a certain amount of miners just—they could always play the wait—and—see game. Just wait—and—see what the other guy is going to do before we do it.

I: I'd like to ask you, did the average miner usually stay in one mine or did he move around from mine to mine? Did he go where there was more money or better conditions?

R: Right. Miners moved around. A lot of them did. They went where they felt the grass was greener. Where they thought that they could make more money. Or they figured this mine is getting too dangerous. By that I mean that the mine was getting too deep, too much gas in the mine. They were always afraid the mine was going to blow up. So they went to another town and got a job, or they found out that another mining town was working steadier so they went there. A lot of reasons for miners-leaving the towns and moving around. A lot of them figured it was going to be better in another town for them.

I: They were always free to pick up and leave any

time they wanted?

R: Yes, they were. They could quit any time they wanted.

I: Could they usually just get another job in a mine, just by going up and asking for it?

R: Yeah, many times because the mine was a big thing in those days. There was a lot of mines; there was a lot of people that came to work in mines. A lot of them got scared and went away. There was always jobs in mining towns, most of the time, certain times of the year anyway. There was work to be had. Some of the coal mining towns were "Room Towns", at one time or another. They employed a lot of men, especially when they found a vein that was producing clean coal and coal was high. By that I mean the vein ran high. Miners didn't have to stoop over all day long to dig coal. where he'd go. Some mines, the vein was only four foot high and they wound up with bent backs working in mines like that. In due time you saw many stooped over coal miners that had bent backs--never able to straighten them out.

I: Do you recall who owned most of the mines?

Were there mines owned by small independent com-

panies?

R: Very few. Most of the big mining was owned by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, the Rocky Mountain Fuel and Iron Company, and I believe there was a third one, the Victor American Fuel and Iron Company, I believe. Those were the only three that I recall. Independent mining, there was one here and there, but not too many of them.

I: Was there any difference in working for one company or another? Was the only difference in the type of mine it was?

R: That I really couldn't answer because I only worked for Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. What I heard about the other mines was just through what my father told me, or what some relative spoke about and I happened to hear it. Whether conditions were better in another company owned mine, or different company owned mine, I really don't know. I really don't.

I: You mentioned before that there were various types of nationalities in a typical mining town where you were at. Did these nationalities mix together socially or were they all separated into little groups?

I:

R:

R: Right. The Italians stuck with the Italians, the Austrians with the Austrians. Oh, once in a while some of them became friendly, but they couldn't speak too well so that was the extent of it. If they couldn't communicate with each other what did they have in common? Especially women, women stuck to their own kind of people because they had a hard life. There was plenty of work for them to do; most of them had big families. So what did they have in common with somebody that didn't speak their language—not too much.

Now, were there any cases that you know where there was out-and-out antagonism? Like did the Italians dislike the Spanish speaking people there?

Sure, sure they did. They didn't mix with the Spanish speaking people. Usually Spanish speaking people were the ones that owned a piece of land on the outside of the mining towns and they had their own gardens. They had just learned to be miners, or come to work in the mines when they heard that other people were working in the mines. They'd come in and work sometimes for three or four months and that was enough to keep them going because they could live off of their plot of ground

where they raised vegetables and things like that. Truthfully they weren't hard-working people. They weren't too industrious in those days, as I remember it.

I: Were there any Negroes in the mines at that time?

R: Yes, there was, maybe one or two--three families at the most. If I remember correctly, in the mine where I worked there was only one Negro miner that actually dug coal. He was a hard-working miner, I remember that.

I: Was there racial prejudice at the time? Did the miners dislike him?

R: No, I couldn't say that they did. They all spoke to each other, they said hello to everybody.

Of course, miners were friendly people anyway.

There was no antagonism that I remember.

I: Do you think that they would socialize together--like Spanish socialize with the Austrians?

R: No, not at all.

I: They would keep separated?

R: Right.

I: Were there ever fights on account of differences like that, that you know of?

R: Yes, at dances, Saturday night dances there was always a fight. Who knows why? Maybe a few drinks and things looked different to some miners. Sure there were always fights. Miners were hardworking people and hard-living people. On Saturday nights at dances there was a lot of fun and a lot of heavy drinking too. They always managed to find something to drink.

I: Let's go back now to that strike in 1927 that you were involved in. You stated before that the older miners went back when they realized that they were going to get a raise from the company. The younger miners didn't go back, what usually happened to them?

R Well, they just hung around town, that's all they did. There was no place for them to work.

I remember I went with an uncle of mine to Utah, to try to get a job in the ore mines. They told me I was too young, In a month or two I had to come back home and sit around again—do nothing.

All the young miners that had been out on strike didn't get their jobs back after a while. They wouldn't even hire us, until nine or ten months later. They finally asked all the young kids if

R:

they'd like to go back to work and naturally all of them jumped at it. All of us went back to work.

I: Do you think after that long a time they were pretty well convinced that they weren't going to go on strike again?

R: Yes, we knew that the strike was over and done with because we never had anybody come and tell us anything about it. So, we went back to work.

I: Do you recall, what did the company usually say about these organizers for the strike?' Did they spread the word that they were just agitators?

Right. They told us they were just agitators and all they were trying to do was cause trouble. They couldn't get anything for you. They couldn't do anything for you so you might as well go back to work. The jobs were there if you wanted them. They discouraged it very much, and you could see it too, after a while. You didn't have anybody representing you. All you got was the information the company gave you.

Did any of the miners that you know of join this organization, the Industrial Workers of the World?

R: No. Nobody that I ever knew of joined it be-

cause we wouldn't know where to join, or who to join with. The people that had taken us out on strike to begin with, we never saw them again.

Maybe I was too young to know who was leading these people on strike, or who they were, because I never saw them again.

- Do you recall in town was there a union hall of any kind?
- R: Yes, there was. Whenever they called a meeting usually there was one of the miners that spoke to you or talked to you. Never anybody that was connected with the people that had originally come to town to tell you that there was a strike,
- I: Was this a United Miner Workers Union Hall or a IWW?
- R: No, as far as I know it must have been an IWW hall or a hall that had been donated by the people on strike. It was just a small room in an old dance hall. Who owned it I don't know, I don't remember.
- I: But the miners took charge of the strike once the IWW men left?
- R: Right. Miners took charge. Every time they had a meeting there was less and less people there.

Pretty soon all there was is the young kids there. There was nobody to tell you what to do or how to do it. Most of the time you went home in disgust.

I: Was the fact known at that time that the whole state was on strike?

R: Yes, word got around, we knew that all the miners had gone out on strike, all the coal camps had gone out on strike. We knew it through the newspapers, word of mouth, we found it out.

I: Was there any strike funds at this time?

R: None that I remember. None at all. Another way that the company had of breaking a strike--they told them that such-and such a mine up the river was working, the strike-was over over there. So a lot of miners that needed work would go up there and get a job. Even though they were called scabs they'd go to work in another mine. That's how the company would break up strikes at various times, by spreading the word that the mine up the river people had gone back to work, or that some of them had gone back to work--would they like a job up If a guy needed it bad enough he'd go to there? work there, even though he was called a scab. was one way of breaking up trying to organize miners, or trying to keep them out on strike. That's how they'd fall apart most of the time.

I: You said before that there was no really effective organization among the miners. You don't know of anybody who was a union member while you were in the mines, who had a union card?

R: N_0 , I don't. I didn't know anybody that had a union card.

I: What do you think would happen to someone who was known to be a union member in the mines?

R: Well, it wouldn't have been too long and they would have found an excuse to let him go and excuses were always plentiful. They could find too much rock in his coal or he was abusing the mules that he was driving. There was a lot of ways that the company could get rid of a man. They could lay him off for loading too much rock in his coal or they could find excuses. It was their word against his, if it came to impure coal that he was loading.

I: Could you describe some of the feelings the miners' wives or female relatives had about the whole mining business?

R: Most of the women would like to see their men

get out of the mines because it was dangerous work, it was hard work, and the rewards weren't that good. It was just a hard life for the miner and his family. Most of the women wanted their husbands to get out. A lot of them did, if they could find a place to go to or if they could get a different kind of work. Once a man became a miner it was very hard for him to leave his job because it was a way of life with him. Most of them knew what to do and to start on a different kind of work was just too hard for them. They didn't have a good grasp of the language to begin with and someone would just have to help them if they ever wanted to get out of the mines. It's the only way they got out, unless somebody had a lot of determination.

I: Do you think any of the miners actually liked their work?

R: Oh, I suppose a lot of them got used to it, probably some of them were even happy at it for all I know. I know I wasn't.

I: We spoke before about superintendents or the foremen or the pit bosses. Did these people who worked for the company, did they usually enjoy more benefits that the average worker?

R: Yes, they did. They lived in the better home on the hill--bigger home. Where the average miner lived in a four room house which consisted of a front room, a kitchen, and two bedrooms. The privileged people, people that were foremen and electricians (one electrician in a coal mine town), they enjoyed better quarters. They enjoyed the bigger house with more rooms in it, situated in a better place on the hill, maybe a little secluded, a couple of blocks away from the ordinary miner. In other words you might call it discrimination because the ordinary miner had to live in the row of houses where all the rest of the miners lived, which consisted, like I said before, of four rooms (two bedrooms, front room and a kitchen, running water outside, no sink, outdoor toilet). Those were the things that the miner had to put up with.

I: Do you think that the company charged a fair amount of rent for this?

R: Yes, I will say that the rent was very reasonable for the times. I recollect that rent was about eleven dollars a month plus one dollar for electricity a month--which amounted to twelve dollars a month. I believe at that time the water

was free. So I would say that that was very reasonable.

I: And how much did the average miner make per month at that time?

R: It's hard to say, it's like everything else.

He got paid by the tons of coal he loaded. If he worked in a good place he made more than the next guy who worked in a place where the coal is harder to get at. Maybe he was a bigger man and a stronger man so he loaded more coal. I would say at that time, I don't remember exactly what they made.

They got 90¢ a ton for coal. Maybe the average miner could load twelve tons, fourteen tons of coal.

I: Per day?

R: Per day.

I: Which means he was probably making about ten dollars a day. And so the whole month's rent was about one day's wage.

R: Right.

I: That's pretty cheap..

R: Yes, it is. The rent was reasonable I would think, the rent wasn't that high.

I: One of the reasons we could assume that the company provided all the housing and the store and

the doctor and hospital was that possibly there was no other way to get these things for the miner to use.

R: Right. The miner couldn't afford to buy his own home so he had to live in the company home.

It's a good thing the company provided a home for him. If the town was working to capacity and wanted to hire other miners, sometimes miners couldn't find a house to live in until somebody left town.

He got on the list and he had to wait his turn for a house to be empty.

I: If a miner took in a couple of boarders he could cut his rent down to just about nothing.

R: Right. A lot of mining families made money with boarders in their home. I would think they did anyway. Another way the miners lived when they were out of work is he could charge groceries at the store. Some miners at times were so in debt to the store that they had to wait until their children were able to go to work and finally paid off their debts that way, by having their children go to work and help them pay off the grocery bill.

I: Then one family might have two or three or even-more people employed by the company, and in

a way they could really make quite a bit of money in the business.

R: Right.

I: Where as a large family with twelve children and one person working in the mine would really have a rough time.

R: Find it very hard. That is why a lot of the boys went to work when they got to be of age. In those days I believe they hired you at the age of sixteen. Before that I imagine a lot of them went to work at a much younger age, too. I recall the miners being in debt as high as a thousand dollars to the store for groceries, and paid it off when their children went to work in the mines.