

Argonaut High School
Oral History Interview
Biographical Sketch

Subjects full name: Emil Vaselovich
Address: 145 Hill St. Jackson, CA

Telephone: Home: 223-0119 Work: _____
Date of birth: 7/4/23 Place of birth: Jackson, CA
Date of marriage: 8/30/36 Place of marriage: Jackson, CA
Name of spouse: _____
date of birth: 11/7/29 Place of birth: Italy

Subject occupation: Retired
Spouse occupation: Retired

Name of mother: Mary
Date of birth: _____ Place of birth: Yugoslavia
Occupation: Wife

Name of father: _____
Date of birth: 1885 Place of birth: Yugoslavia
Occupation: Miner

Subject's children and dates of birth: _____

Subject's brothers and sisters and dates of birth: _____
6 Brothers and Sisters

Subject's primary and secondary education: (Schools attended and dates) High school

Subject's higher education: (Schools attended, graduation date, majors, degrees)

Subject's profession or occupations: (Job, dates, where)

Bricker 50 years

Military service: (Branch, rank, dates of service)

WWII Navy

Civic and community activities: (Offices held, activities, etc.)

Miscellaneous information:

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Date: 3/1/2016

Project:

Interview of Evo Vasilovich

Interviewer: A

Interviewee: B

Interviewee's wife: C

A: It was your father that worked in the mines?

B: He worked about 43 years. He worked in the Kennedy, and he also worked in the mines over in Sutter Creek. No he didn't. His brother was working (in Sutter Creek). I had an uncle that got killed in the Eureka Mine that sits out here where the mission property is. The skip jumped the track and he fell down the shaft. I'm sorry I can't tell you the years that Dad, like I say he put 43 years under ground. He was working in the Kennedy Mine when the fire broke out in the Argonaut which was in 1922. Dad was working in the Kennedy at that time. After the fire, how soon after the fire, that was 22. I was born in 23. I don't know when exactly he went to the Argonaut, could have been 23, 24, but then he went to the Argonaut after the fire. That's where he worked, he spent most of his years. He was shaft foreman all the time he was there. I don't know when he first got there, but I know he was, lets assume he was, he became shaft foreman (mumbles) of a mile deep shaft. Which is quite a deal when you stop to think that my dad came here from the Old Country (Yugoslavia). He never had no education, no schooling,

no engineering, and yet he was able to come down and go into a mine shaft that was a mile deep and, a two compartment shaft, and keep it in A number 1 order. He was recommended by his shaft being so straight and in good shape. Dad worked there until the war came along. When the war came along they closed the mine down but they didn't close down the pumping of the water, the mining was finished but they kept pumping water. They kept the water level at 3900'. That's where Dad had the bottom pump and they kept the water level at 39 thinking that some day they might open the mines up again. They went on pumping water until some time in the 50's. Then they decided they weren't going to operate the mine any more so they pulled the pumps and abandoned it. Dad came. That was when he was threw with his job. Of course you know the two mines are connected underneath. There is a tunnel between the two mines now. Of course that's all water. Where the water level is right now in the Argonaut, how far down you can go before you touch water, I don't know but it has to come up an awful lot in the Argonaut and also the Kennedy.

That (referring to a picture of his father taken at the opening to the Argonaut Mine) was taken some time in the 40's. Some woman came along. She was a tourist. Dad was on the skip, as you can see there. He was being ready to be released down and this woman came by and asked if she could take his picture. He said yeah, but you better hurry up, I already rung my bell, (To start releasing him). So she snapped a picture. Dad didn't know who the woman was, but she did send the photo back. Of course we had these enlargements made. See Dad is standing right on top of a skip. I don't know if you,

a skip was a big metal, like a great big metal box. The shape of it was (drawing a small sketch on some paper). This was open, this was open, this was all open in here. You see, it was hooked up to the cable here. They would take and put all there timber and everything was picked up by horse. A lot of people wondered how they ever got those timber down into the mines. They had, right here by the shaft, they had a steam hoist. They would bring those, there was a little track that would come up from the saw mill and they would bring those great big, huge timbers. The timbers were massive, big, round timbers. Then they take the steam hoist and they pick it up. The steam would pick it up. They would bring up, then they'd drop it down, just like this pencil (referring to the one he had in his hand, using his arm as the steam hoist). They would pick up and they would drop it down, and drop it down into the skip. Put someone in there. They'd maybe load one up and there'd be another, maybe another skip. They'd load that one up and then take (it) to the miners down below. Then how, how they extracted that timber from down there (I don't know). They must have had the same apparatus down in the mine to pull the timber out of the skip. I never did see that. Most of those tree, you know they, they were huge pieces of timber, my god some of them were two, three feet in diameter, or maybe four feet in diameter but they were used for the timber. The shaft was going to have timber, big timber on both sides. It would go up, and they got a cap, a big cap that went across. Those would be pretty close to one another, I can't tell you exactly how close. Then they had cribbing. Cribbing up on top of the little rock were nothing but (mumbles) come down (mumbles) dirt was always moving you know. My dad would come in the

morning (and), get on the skip. He'd go down. He checked the shaft always going down. He would tell the hoist man to lower the skip slowly. As he was going slowly he could watch, you know, look things over. He could tell what was bad. Maybe he would take a head of timber or a pick to see if they were rotting. But anyways he would do that. He would see what was bad then he would come back up top and he would order timber through the saw mill and tell them what he wanted. He'd tell them what he wanted, what he needed. Like I said they'd use the hoist to put the timbers in the skip and lower them down. Also, realizing that the Argonaut was a mile deep. You got to remember that you are going a mile deep into the earth. You had dry spots, you had wet spots and you had hot spots as you were going down into the mine. A lot of the wet timbers made you move faster or dryer. I wish I could tell you but I can't, I tried to find out. I asked different guys how long, down here. Here, here's a picture. This is the bottom of the Argonaut. That's the bottom level there. 55, they're at the 55 (5500 ft. level). That's where the Lions, the local Lions Club went down and had a dinner. That's my dad. This is my dad over here (referring to the picture). (mumbles). That's the bottom of the Argonaut. Then they had, they have stations. As the mine went down there was like a big room that pulled out to the side. It was separate from the shaft that was going down, like this here (referring to a picture), they called them stations.

C: It would be the same in the Kennedy.

B: The only thing about the Kennedy that was weird was that the Argonaut was on an incline, and the Kennedy was vertical. The reason we can tell so much on this is,

see we use to, my dad, my dad never did eat his lunch under ground. Being the shaft foreman, he had a chance to come up a 12 o'clock. He always ate his lunch on top, in the change house. We had to usually take him a warm lunch. Us kids. Sometimes I'd have to do it. You know, we'd walk over from Martell, we lived in Martell. I'd walk over the hill, come through the saw mill, and either Dad was up or he was on his way up and he always had his lunch on top. I had a brother that worked at the Argonaut as the top man. We use to go up there. That's why we can see as much as we did. We could see the top of the thing, the lumber, the saw mill and where they crushed the ore before it went up to the mill.

C: Tell them about when you saw that box of gold.

B: Now, getting back, getting back to taking this, taking Dad's lunch. This one particular day, I got there, and just as I got there, Dad came up with the shaft foreman. They had a powder box. A powder box consisted of a, oh, maybe something like this here (indicating a 16 in. by 9 in. by 8 in.) box. It was made out of wood and was about yea tall. That's where they kept the powder. It came up and it (the box) was solid gold. That box had nothing but chunks of solid gold. I got to see that. That's something that a lot of people never (get to). I'll never forget when Dad put a piece of it in my hand. It sat there in my hand, just beautiful. So, a lot of gold came out of the Argonaut. I remember my dad saying there was a lot of bypassed ore in the Argonaut. They went on to other stuff. There was a little more. There was a lot of gold bypassed in the Argonaut.

Dad had a lot of close calls. Thank God he never did get caved on. No rock ever

hit him, but he, like I say, he had some close calls. He saved a man's life which was a county surveyor here by the name of Walter Ralph. Dad was having, I just don't know what the problem was in one of the shafts. You see right here, where Dad is standing. There is a shaft there. If you look over here, you see the rail. There's another shaft. In other words there was two shafts side by side going down. So I don't know which shaft it was that Dad and this Walter Ralph were working in and surveying the shaft. Dad, being the shaft foreman was working with Walter Ralph. Walter Ralph was above my father. I don't know just how high he was above him but Dad was holding a chalk line for Walter Ralph and I guess Mr. Ralph didn't realize what he had done. They were standing over an open shaft. You see this is the shaft (pointing to the picture). Way down there, there was a board across. Dad was standing on a board and so was Walter Ralph. The poor fellow didn't realize that he had one of the boards that was sticking out into the other shaft where the skip was operating. They were operating the skip on that side. The skip wasn't operating (in the other shaft) because they were working on the shaft. Now, the skip came down and it hit one of these planks that Walter (stood on), and the skip came down and it hit the plank, and it flipped him up in the air. Dad was standing on the plank also in the open shaft holding the chalk line. I guess Walter Ralph had a hard hat on him. That went past my dad. My dad looked up and here comes Walter Ralph, coming down from the air. I just got to thinking it was just something that just happened just absolutely right. Walter Ralph being a little man and seeing as that Dad was a pretty big man he Walter Ralph just kind of fell in his arms. He didn't get him over here, and he didn't get him over

there. He fell right there with him as he did. Walter Ralph was out. When he came to.

He too had a close call himself, just before they closed the mine down for good. He, like I say, he was tending the pump on 3900' where they kept the water level. Off of 39 station, there was a vent shaft. They called it the muldoon. I don't know if you've ever seen it but when you're going up the highway just down from the Argonaut and across the road there is another little gallice frame. The trees have kind of covered it up, you can't really see it. That was a vent shaft. That's where they used to let the free air come through. Dad was sitting there tending to his pump. This is the very same hat he had on (referring to the hat in the photo of his dad discussed earlier). He had his lamp burning but he never had his hat on. He had his hat sitting next to him on the bench. His lamp went out on his hard hat so he tried to light it, or strike it. There's a flint in there and it strikes the gas. He couldn't light it. In the mean time he felt himself getting a little bit dizzy. He started for the skip. Down inside the shaft all the way down, right along side, within reach they had what you call a bell line. In other words, you could come over to the skip and if something happened you could reach up there and grab that bell line and pull that bell line and that stops the skip. Dad went over to the skip. On the way over he fell, but he got up, he got to the skip and he pulled the bell line. They pulled him out of there. He got up to the next station which was above him. I wish I knew how far the stations were apart. Anyhow he got to the next station. He said there's something wrong, he said the gas is getting, there is getting gas down there. They thought that maybe Dad was kind of hallucinating or thinking. A bunch of them got together and started to come

back down to the 39. Before they got down to 39, their lights went out. So they came back out of there and I guess they turned the blowers on. Where the free air was coming through, there was a canvass roller, kind of a curtain. What ever was holding that curtain up was open. What ever was holding that curtain up gave way. It must have been the canvas came down and closed that air off. That's when the gas started to form. There was so many different kinds of ore and chemicals under ground. There is all kinds of chemicals and it creates a gas which is poisonous. If dad didn't have his lamp lit, he would have sat right there breathed the gas and never know what happened. Anyway, they found out what had happened, the curtain had come down.

They use to have kegs of water that they used to send down to the miners. They use to take and they'd hang them on the inside. They had a hook on them (the kegs) and they'd be filled with real cold water that would come out of refrigeration. They were good at compressing in the compressor room there. It furnished all the steam and stuff. That water would be so cold that when you wanted a drink, it would be hard to drink. By the time it got down to the miners, it would be lukewarm. That was their water supply. They'd take water down. Of course they had air down there. They had air and they had electricity. They had electricity of course to fuel their carbine lamps.

I never did go down in the mine. I was gonna go with Dad when he was tending his pump at 39. I don't know what happened. I'll be sorry until my dying day that I didn't go down there so he could show me as much as he could. Two of my other brothers went down

Well they started this tunnel between the Argonaut and the Kennedy long before the fire. (mumbles). They stopped. When the fire occurred then they started digging that tunnel into the Argonaut. That article tells you there (referring to the booklet). You know about the mules, how they had the mules in the Kennedy. They took the mules down there, worked them. They pulled the ore cars to various places. Those mules stayed down there for so long that when they use to bring them up they'd have to blind fold them. They bring them up in the light so that they get use to it. Did you ever see the book, the little book that Cybil Arata wrote on the mule?

A: Yes.

B: Have you read it?

A: Yes we have.

B: It's a cute little story. She kind of embellished it, fictionalized it. A lot of it was truth. There's something about the Slavs and she had something about the Italians. It was a cute book, she sold quite a few copies.

C: We knew Cybil Arata. She was a very eccentric lady.

B: I want to give you an idea here. Here's the Argonaut mine (referring to his map) when my dad was here. Here is the, this picture I am going to give you. This picture is of the Kennedy Mine. I am trying to give you an idea, there is a 100 here (indicating a photo of the miners who were working on a day shift). I am trying to figure out what the employment was. I don't think that your night shift was as much as your day shift. Your day shift had everybody. It had your guys that worked in the saw mill and the

mills and the steel. They had quite a bit where as the night shift. Then I had a picture of the Central and the Eureka over Sutter Creek. The Central had a day shift and a night shift. So there's a hundred there. I think you can see there was pretty close to maybe 100, 180, or something like that. Pretty close to about 200 between the two shifts.

A: That's in the Argonaut Mine?

B: Yes. All of them. All of them. The Kennedy too. You see, if you notice the date here. These pictures are all dated at about the same time. What is that, 38, 36?

A: 36. So you figure there was about 180 at the Argonaut and 180 at the Kennedy?

B: About all of them. They were pretty close to. Then you had the Eureka, you had the Central Eureka, you had the Kennedy. Now here's a mine that you don't even ^{now} was here. This mine sets. This is the Onieda. The Onieda Mine.

C: Where does it set?

B: That there mine sat, you know as you are coming through Jackson Gate, you come around by Daneries. You come around that bend. You go up the road a ways and they're making 'A' frames back in there. Do you remember some outfit making 'A' frames for the houses? Back off the road, back. It would be when you're coming up the road towards Martell from Jackson Gate. It would have been off to your right. That mine sat off to the right there, it was the Onieda. It was a gold mine also. They shut down because of the water. There was an awful lot of water and they were fighting. Of course then they didn't have the equipment that they have now. So that's the Onieda Mine. If you didn't

know it was there, you wouldn't see where it was. You had the mines over in Amador City. You had the bunker mines over in Bunker Hill. You have mines in Plymouth. You can see there was quite a bit of employment, just in the mines alone here at one time. What do they say, 3 or 4 hundred, at the saw mill up here; employees. There was an awful lot more employment in the mines when they were all operating.

C: My father came in 1909. He went into the Central Eureka.

B: Just out of this picture here (referring to the photo with the Lions Club) I think you have one kind of everything living. I knew practically all these guys. I don't know if you have met George Osman.....he's still living. The rest of these are all gone. Like I say, this comes off of the shafts, like a big room or something, off the main shaft. This is the bottom. Off the main shaft they had what they called wings that went off. The wings went off in the different directions from the main shaft. Now, just for the heck of it, let me count these. You see in that picture there, I counted that. There is about 100.

A: You said that once the war started, the people started losing there jobs because they shut it down.

B: Yes, because there was no use for gold and they couldn't get supplies and stuff. So they closed them down.

A: So everybody lost their jobs?

B: Well about 99 percent of them went to work in the ship yards. The Central and the North Eureka operated. Some guys went over there for a while. Then they finally closed. A lot of your guys left here and went down to the ship yard. Of course you

thought grass is going to be growing on the main streets of Jackson, the mines are closed, what? Along in the 40's, here comes your saw mill. The saw mill picked it up. Now the saw mill is closing, so here goes another deal. I can remember, I'm glad I can remember when the Kennedy was operating, and the Argonaut, and those mines over in Sutter Creek. Of course we lived up in Martell. I can remember night time, you could hear the stamp mills. If you were really quiet you could hear when the skip would come up and dump the ore. Then they had the skip that had good ore in it, would dump on one side and then the skip that just had waste that was no good would dump on another compartment. Then this ore that was good would come down to a stamp mill. They had a deal, it was metal to metal. They would crush. They would dump that all down in there, they would crush all that down to a real fine. Then they went to two little skips. Where's that picture? You see right back in here was the mill. The skip would come up out of the Argonaut and it would dump and right about here is where they crushed it. They mashed it all up. (mumbles) send it up to the mill. This is how they got all the gold out of there. They weren't as big of a skip as they were in the mines, they were smaller skips. These guys that worked in here, usually the dust, they were required to wear a mask. The dust would get in you lungs. It was all quartz dust. (mumbles). Dad, like I said he was shaft foreman. He was making 4 maybe 4.5. The muckers were making 2 to 2.5. What they would do a lot of times is they would put out a contract. Guys would bid on these contracts as to who could dig so much of the shaft in so much time. They would be given extra money. You could get a team, a bunch of guys together and drill and blast and

muck and drill and blast and muck. You do it in a certain amount of time and you would get extra pay.

It wasn't the Argonaut so much as it was the Kennedy. You see the Kennedy Mine, this is the mill for the Kennedy Mine down here (referring to a photo he had). This was the mill and all. They were letting all the tailings come down the creek and (mumbles) was, I don't know. I guess some of Argonauts (tailings) was coming down the creek. All this silt, all this stuff was coming down the valley into Ione. They were farming in Ione in the old days. Watermelons, they use to raise quite a few watermelons down in Ione. Any ways, all this silt and stuff was coming down into the valley. The farmers complained about all this stuff that would come down the creek and into the land. So that's when they made them build a retaining dam like the Kennedy over there, the cement dam over there (pointing to the mine from the view through his window). The Argonaut had a pool that came down from the mill over this way here. That's when that sand (got) up there by the school. Anyway the Kennedy they pumped it. The only way they could get over those hills was somebody invented the wheels that had the buckets on them. The way it would happen, they'd have the (mumbles) come down to the bottom of the wheel and of course the wheel had all square buckets in it like troughs and it would come down and pick that up and it would dump it into a another trough and that trough would carry it to another wheel. In other word what they had to do is they had to get up over those hills with the cyanide. So one wheel would pick it up and dump it in the other wheel and the other wheel would pick it up and dump it out. They would all land it into the Kennedy Mine. If

you look back there you can see those (referring to the view through the window). You see where that big tall cedar tree is. You can see the tops. Delta Tailings came in and reworked all that sand over there and got a lot of gold out of it. All that, behind our church there, all that, at night time it was like another town. They had all the big tanks up there and they reprocessed that cyanide. Now they tell me that they got machinery that could still go through that cyanide and get more gold. They dumped all that sand and in a wind storm that sand would blow all around and all those houses even our church had some of that sand up in the attic. All those homes would get sand. They complained. That's when they made them get in there and cover it. They covered it. The tailings quit. They pulled everything out and covered it all. They'll never be able to build there. They have to remove all that sand out of there. It has cyanide in it.

C: It's too bad they let those wheels go.

B: And we had, we had a lot of single people working in the mines. Single people would come over from the Old Country. We had boarding houses, we had Italian boarding houses, we had (mumbles) boarding houses, we had Mexican boarding houses and we had Chinamen here all out from Butte City. That was all Chinese. You know as you go down past the Butte Store? That was all Chinamen. We had a Chinamen that lived right down here behind Spenettis where the road goes down here. It was China town down in there. Of course we had the Chinese cemetery. You know where the China Cemetery Road is?

A: China Grave Yard Road.

B: Yeah China Grave Yard, supposively they dug them all up and took them back to China. Anyhow getting back to these boarding houses, like I said we had a lot of these single fellas and I can remember many, not only Italian boarding houses, but also a lot of Slavic boarding houses. In fact my uncle, when my dad came from the old country in 1904, he came to my dad who had a boarding house right there at the end of Muchette, where that old motel, you know where Water Street goes off and makes a turn and there is that old motel and they want to tear it down. My uncle had a big boarding house. That's where Dad came to when he came from the old country.

A: How many did you count on that picture?

C: Sixty-five sir.

B: You see right over there where those cars are parked (pointing out the window)? Right over there on that street there was a big Mexican boarding house. Up by the grammar school Teresa had an Italian boarding house and there was Italian boarding houses down over (there). A lot of boarding houses you know the single fellas had to live some place. They would fix them a lunch and they would go work in the mine. They didn't live a very high life, they'd get their money and enjoy themselves and drink. That's why when you go through our cemetery you see so many twenty year, twenty-one year old guys that passed on, that got miner's consumption. There was no way to take care of them so they died at a young age. We used to call it "rock in the box" it was really Silicosis.

C: My father died of Silicosis.

B: It is from breathing all that fine dust. You see that was when they had the dry machines, the drilling machines were all dry machines and then I don't know, one year the wet machines came in, you know where they have water when they were drilling into the rocks. You had water you know something to cut the dust down. The dry machines when you were drilling with them the dust would cover everything. Beringer's Boarding House sat over here on Broadway and they had a bus. They had a bus that they would bus the miners to the mines. Leave them off at the Argonaut. They had a bus. You could take the bus to the Kennedy and some would get off at the Argonaut. Guys would walk, guys would walk to work. I can remember guys in bunches. A bunch of people you'd see walking up the road: lucky they had a job. I can remember guys coming to my dad's house and asking if he could get them a job. They used to do what they called, they used to do quite a bit of wrestling. They use to wrestle for the job. Go up to the office every day and try to get on up there. They went to the Argonaut. The office was pretty close to the road there. They would ask Dad for a job. He said well, I can't fire anybody, but if something happens, I'll try to get you a job. It was rough. Another thing is the little community here, when they talk about the Depression. This whole town here never really did feel the Depression like they did in other places where they had the bread lines, the soup lines, and all. The mines were operating, all the mines were operating, we had quite a bit of PG & E. PG & E was growing in here pretty strong at that time, building tunnels and stuff. That had a pretty good field going through it and of course the (mumbles). It was really, really hard times. I guess we did, we all did in a way. I was quite small then.

We were up there in Martell. We had cows, chickens, we got along pretty good. The Depression did hit some of the bigger places. It was the Depression you were feeling.

A: Where did you guys get food from? I mean fruit and vegetables and that kind of stuff.

B: Here comes another story. All your Italian people came in here up on the hill. Onetos, Prevatelli raised big gardens. They didn't have the water, but they put the ditches in the ground and brought water to it. They went through hell and high water to get water, but they did it. They put in beautiful vineyards, some lovely olive groves. When the ground was hilly, they turned. They terraced it, terraced it, terraced it. You can go up here to old, Prevatelli's up here and O'Netos, they all produced big wagons and vineyards in Sutter Creek. They use to call them the upper O'Netos and the lower O'Netos. They had beautiful gardens. The valley down there in Ione. They had watermelons. (mumbles)

C: They make do. The women know how to handle a chicken or a rabbit.

B: Like with this gold deal here. All your gold, we're talking about these bricks of gold coming out of the mine they were all usually sent down on the train, the train coming from Ione, from Jackson to Ione. Then the after the train, then the stage. Oh, no, the horse and buggy took it, after the horse and buggy then the train came. I guess the bus took gold down too. A lot of it went out on train. The train brought everything in. The train brought all the supplies in. That's why I'm kind of sorry they didn't do anything in Martell, at the train station. A lot of people came in there from the Old Country. Everyone that came into the town. That was a hub. That was really the hub of Amador

County, the railroad up there. PG & E was a railroad. They brought in big pipes and stuff. It all came in on the rails. Amador Central, the hub of Amador County then. It's too bad they let it deteriorate like it did. Too many places like that have been let go.

C: There was a talk that they were going to refurbish it and create an out for Jackson, Sacramento but I don't know.

B: Let's get back to this deal with my dad. They use to have an expression here a long time ago. The timbers were more expensive than the miners. The miners passed on. They just said the hell with it. The timber is more expensive than the miner. A lot of miners died horrible deaths. They never had a hospital here. We had a county hospital, you know, county hospital, there wasn't much there. For operations and other serious cases, they went down to Preston School. Where they had some doctors down at Preston School who could work on them. Finally, it's hard to believe what we have now. You know, I can remember the old county hospital. Now, how times have changed. I can't believe I've seen the changes I have. I've seen a lot in Jackson. Up there where the saw mill is now, I use to go hunting in there, I had a little 410 shotgun. I use to go around right where the saw mill is and I use to shoot rabbits and stuff. If somebody told me someday, hey Evo one of these days there is going to be a saw mill there, I'd tell him he was crazy. We use to go to school, the old grammar school. Some kid'd come to school and we'd ask him where he was living and he'd say South Jackson. Jesus, South Jackson to us was the boundocks. There was nothing out there. Now take a look. There was Raley's. There is going to be a Raley's out there.

C: So, going back to the Kennedy. What else can you tell us?

B: Well, I can't tell you too much on the Kennedy Mine. They had the mules. Oh, that time, when they had the fire, after the fire at the Argonaut, which was underground. They had (a fire), in 1928, I remember that. In 1928 they had a fire at the Kennedy. It happened on top. Something started the fire. They never was able to find out how the fire started. It started in such a way that the log pile caught on fire. You see the log pile (referring to a photo) those are all logs. Something caught on fire. That log pile caught on fire. That was when they were changing. If we could get a picture of the old Kennedy Mine, it was a wood structure. They were putting steel along side the wood. When that fire occurred all that wood burned and the thing collapsed. It just all burnt down. That was in 1928. The miners, they were in the mine. They came out because that tunnel was finished between the two mines. They came out of the Argonaut. My dad came home early. When they came out of the Argonaut, they came out. That was in 1928. My dad came home in the afternoon kind of early. Cars were burnt. It was a pretty good fire. That office, I know about the office. I know that in that office, that's where they use to do quite a bit of entertaining. They'd have people come in from other places. They were pretty lavish. Did you see the pictures of it when it was first built?

A: Yes

B: That was pretty lavish things; where the office is. You know where the office is?

A: Yes

C: There was a beautiful view from there.

B: They were in pretty good shape then. At one time, General Motors had part of the Argonaut Mine.

A: They owned part of it, you mean?

B: They had some shares in it. I don't think they'll ever open them up. I get a kick out of saying, Oh, you could pump that water out of the Argonaut or the Kennedy. Certainly you can pump that water out, but what do you think is going to happen up here? As the water recedes and goes down, what will happen to the timber. They'll all collapse. They'll maybe do it some time. Another thing to. The Argonaut Mine is right in the vicinity of the hospital out there, but down under ground.

A: That's how far out it goes?

B: Yes, but down under ground. That's how far out it goes. The Kennedy Mine went right straight up. The Argonaut was on an incline. The Kennedy was vertical.

C: I always thought that the Kennedy Mine went all the way down to where the wheels is.

B: Oh, yeah, that's not too far. A lot of these wings took off of the main shaft. Like I say, this is the main shaft. They dug a little out of place. Like a maze. Maybe they'd pick up a vein and they'd follow it. All these mines were hooked off of what they called the Mother Lode. The Mother Lode started in Mariposa County and went through what we call Jackson Valley. The Mother Lode, how wide it was, or how thick it was, I don't know, but that was supposed to be what it was: a big vein of gold. It transferred

from Mariposa County all the way to Grass Valley. Angels Camp had a lot of gold mines. All these places. We called them Glory Holes.

A: How many hours a day did they work?

B: Eight. Dad was shaft foreman. A lot of times they'd have problems during the night. They'd get my dad. We didn't have a telephone. They use to have to come over in a car and holler and get my dad. I remember that as a kid, and remember it still. Finally the mine bought us a telephone. When my dad was needed, they'd use the telephone. Like I say, they'd blow the whistle at 12 o'clock. They'd blow the whistle at 4.

A: So if your dad worked an eight hour shift, then the night shift worked the rest of the time?

B: Yes, the night shift started work at 4:00.

A: The night shift was longer?

B: Yes.

A: Did they get paid more?

B: No, hell no. It was just the wages, that's all. (mumbles). Like I said, there was a lot of places in the Argonaut where there was some pretty good ore. A pretty good bunch of gold. There was places that were off limits. You weren't supposed to be in that area. Lots of time we'd sneak in there. You know, five years old. If my dad could see some of those guys in there he'd ball the hell out of them.

C: They didn't consider it stealing. It was called high grading.

B: High grading. If you ever got caught high grading, you were black balled.

You could never get a job in any mine. You'd have to go on to something else. The black ball followed you. (mumbles). A lot of guys would say, why'd you fire me. A lot of guys. I boastfully say that my dad never touched a bit of it. I wish to God now, the way things ended up that he had. (laughter). But he didn't. I think he was scared. Big family, nine kids. God, he'd be out of a job. He had opportunities. I had a friend. The guy that built my home here. He worked for my dad. His name was Henry. He worked down in the Argonaut. He said he was putting a blast off one time. I think it was in the Argonaut. He says hey.

There's something about gold that's fascinating. I don't know. You take a gold coin. I don't know. Have you ever been to Carson City.

A: Yes.

B: Have you ever seen that display of gold there?

A: Yes.

B: Every type of gold that you can (imagine), every type of gold there was. There was; ribbon, quartz, nuggets, leaf. They had leaf gold in there. In those days they use to pay the miners off in gold coins. One dollar gold pieces.

A: Was there a lot of gambling?

B: Oh yeah. There was gambling. In the house of the (mumbles)

C: How many barbers were there in those days?

B: At one time they said there was eight barbers. Eight barber shops in Jackson. I don't know how many saloons. Probably 30 plus. Guys use to go to my dad and ask for

a job. Dad use to say, what the hell do you want to go and work in a mine for. That's no good for you. Go to school, get an education. They start working in a mine and start high grading.

A: You're dad probably realized that.

B: I was told in about 1923, some time in the early 20's is when they paved Main Street. Now that was Main Street before it was paved. See the old cars there (referring to a photo). There's Jackson in the good old days. That's when the door swung in and the door swung out. Wide open. (mumbles). I came through town. The Wells Fargo Saloon, the Pioneer Rex.

A: Is this taken from the National Hotel?

B: Yes. This town, as I under stand, burnt twice. Jackson burnt twice. If I remember. Every town in the Mother Lode had fires. They never had no fire protection.

A: You said you didn't have a telephone, but did you guys own a car or any thing like that?

B: Yeah, we owned a car. We had an old Chrysler. We were lucky to have one too. Dad was working. Like I say, there was eight of us. You couldn't go ask Dad for money. I get a kick of people letting their kids do it. Allowance, I didn't know what the hell that was. I couldn't go up and say, hey dad, give me some money. There was no money to be had. You was lucky you ate and was clothed. So, the way it was with my sisters, as soon as they got pretty, you know, they went on to work for people. They took care of houses and that's when they learned to do cooking and us kids also. You know,

where ever we could go. We get to high school and summer time we'd work. Get a job somewhere. I worked on the railroad and I worked on the saw mill in the summer time. I'd make enough money to buy my school clothes

C: They had no allowances then.

B: You ate what was on the table. We had a big long table. I'd sit between my mom and dad.

Oak Manor, not Oak Manor, but the sub division up there. Up there where they're putting in the exercise place. What do you call it? Excel?

A: Excel. Yeah.

B: Right there, there was a big huge slaughter house. They called it Thomas' Slaughter House. There, they did all the slaughtering. Down there, right where Garibaldi's Studio is, that's where Thomas' Butcher Shop was. They had a nice looking Butcher Shop. It was all kind of white tile, sawdust on the (floor). That was when the butchers do it, you got to eat it. Any how, like I say, that was a slaughter house, and all these places in town worked from the slaughter house. In Sutter Creek they had slaughter houses. They use to. They had slaughter houses. At one time you had, lets see one, these are family grocery stores. Family stores, you had one, you had two, you had three, you had four, five. Five grocery stores on Main Street, that you could go buy, besides the butcher shop. You had the butcher shop too. You had Lowe, you had Casanelli, you had Sponetti's. Piggly Wiggly was over here on the other side. Over there, there was a grocery store there. You had Raggio Meat Market. That was a grocery store and also a

butcher shop. Finally Trudi's store was here, oh Safeway. Safeway was here all the time. Safeway was here since 1929. Safeway was here, where Sammy's, right where Sammy's is. Sammy's Retaraunt, Safeway was there. Safeway was there. Then they moved, they moved from there. Safeway moved down to that real-estate building. The blue one.

A: Coldwell Banker?

B: Then they left from there and they went to where Coast to Coast is. Then they moved from Coast to Coast.....

A: To where they are now? I remember when they were at Coast to Coast. That wasn't too long ago.

B: Safeway was here since 1929. Brodie was here. Brodie was here where Mike's Bike Shop was, where it use to be down here. Mike Sponetti. He had the bike shop right down here on Main Street. He was there for quite a few years. Then the One Stop kind of came in and now I understand Raley's is going to go in definitely. There was some talk of them no going in, but they are. There's some guy putting a bid on them. The old theater, they had the old theater there.

We didn't get to go into town too much, we lived out in Martell. See, I was born, I was born right out there by the hospital. They tore the building down. It was a brick building. It use to be called the Union Building. A friend of my dad's bought this place up in Martell. Really, Martell is home to me. I went to school here. So Martell is home to me. I saw Martell go from what is was then to what it is now. I didn't get to go to town much. We went to school in a Model T bus. The Model T bus use to come up where

Mike's Mexican, do you know where Mike's Mexican is?

A: Yes.

B: The Model T bus use to come there and pick us up and take us to school. We use to go to school and come home on the bus. We use to come, well, you know, we didn't have a car, things were pretty rough. Like I say, Dad was working, my brother was working, we were all working, everybody. Then we had cows. We had three cows. We had chicken, and we had hogs and stuff like that. We had to take care of all of that. There was always meat on the table. I'm the son of a miner (laughter). Dad was a good man. He worked hard, he worked real hard. My mom passed away when I was about seven years old. She died. Dad passed away in 53. You know, I look at this picture here and I doubt that very many guys. Charlie Willis, he's still living. Here he is right here (referring to the photo). You can see we had an awful lot of Mexicans. A lot of Mexicans. This is my dad here and this is another shaft foreman. There's another one back here and another one over here. These guys worked in the mill. These guys were top men. I knew a lot of them. Babe Martin, do you remember Babe Martin who was the sheriff. Old Babe Martin, he was the sheriff here. That's Babe right there. That's Babe Martin right here. He was the sheriff here.

A: He's not very old.

B: No, no he was very young. Yeah, there's a lot of guys here.

A: Do you remember anything about the strikes?

B: Yes, yes I do. That was something else. That really split up the people here in

Amador County. Especially the Slavs. The Slavs were so close together. You knew quite a few Slovenians. They kind of resented my dad. Dad had a job, he had a family to keep. They resented us. Dad was working. It was some pretty hard time then in that strike deal. They never got any thing out of it. They took to striking, and striking and they just lost, like you do on any strike. You don't gain nothing on any strike. It's too bad they couldn't work out a strike deal where you could have a strike and keep working. I don't think a strike does any good. It's just too bad they go through that though. That's what scattered, that's what scattered a lot of out people was that strike deal. That strike deal we had here. It got pretty hot sometimes. I know my dad use to carry his pistol. He got a permit to carry his pistol. We use to have to take him to work. They use to have a picket line. Dad use to go to work with a guy by the name of Bob Shay. They use to go to work together, they worked together. Dad was looking at where his bread and butter was coming from. I don't know whether he did right or did wrong. It wasn't a very good scene. There was some fights. I don't know if anybody ever got hurt, but there was a lot of people. How many did my wife count on that picture?

A: 65.

B: Well, there's about 100 here (referring to the Old Eureka photo), I counted. This would be one shift here too. You only got 65 here when you counted?

C: 65, yes.

A: Is that a night shift?

B: I don't know what shift that was. You can take it. It could have been a day

shift, it must have been a day shift because that picture was taken during the day time. It must have been a day shift. This here was a day shift too (referring to the Argonaut photo).

C: This is Kennedy right?

B: No, that's the Argonaut.

C: Where's Dad? Your dad.

B: He's right here.

C: He looks like such a strong man.

B: Do you see how the cars were parked then (referring to a photo of downtown Jackson).

A: Yes, a lot different then they are now. It's terrible to park down there.

B: Did you ever stop down there and read that little deal on the drilling contest? It's right there in front of the fire house. In the old days they use to drill. Single jack is what they called it, single jack. You had to drill with hammers. They never had no drills, they use to do it all by hand. They would drill with hammer. They use to have drilling contests, these guys. One guy on the hammer, and the other guy on the bit. Then they would change. There was a \$75.00 purse. Dad, George Thomas, his dad and my dad had a contest down here in front of the fire house. How far they could drill in a certain amount of time. They won the contest. The rock, the original rock is down by the fire house. There was a presentation there some years ago. My dad's on there, Thomas' dad, the distance, and the time they went. They won \$75 which was big bucks then. That was

true that they use to do the drilling all by hand. They'd start with a starter drill. One guy would hold it and the other guy would hammer it. George Thomas' dad and my dad worked together. So, they said they'd get on it together and they did. They won. That rock is down there. My dad always use to tell us, this is the rock that we won the drilling contest with. He told us that many times. Anyhow, I wish we had done this before Dad died. Dad passed away in 53. I wish we had done then what we did now. I kind of got together, we got the rock and brought it down (to the fire house). They had quite a ceremony. The city people were down there. We had a luncheon. George Thomas, he was there because that was his dad. If some time you go by there read the sign, read it. That's history too, I believe. There's a hammer sitting up on top. There's a piece of steel on top. This (referring to a photo of downtown Jackson) was Jackson in the good old days, boy. A lot of people use to come from Sacramento and Stockton. 1935.

A: Was there a lot of gas stations too?

B: As you can see there was two pumps there (referring to the photo of downtown Jackson). Can you see them?

A: Yes, I can see them.

B: See those two pumps right here. Two pumps. Now, down around the corner, where Petrivich Park is, there use to be a service station there. There was a service station there. Of course, where those home and gardens are, there use to be a, that was a station there for many, many years. Calvin, Calvin had a station there. It was a Shell. It was a Shell for quite some time. That's a good question. To try and figure out what the first

service station in Jackson was. I bet that was it, Calvins down there. Then, where Mike's is down there, that was a service station there. There was a service station there. There was one there. That was a shell, and that one. I don't know when this one came in, this one down here where Mike's is.

C: Are they making any progress on this part of the restoration of the Kennedy Mine?

A: Yes. They are supposed to open for tours pretty soon. Or maybe they already have.

B: God, I wish I could have a tour down in the mine. I was a little kid when Dad was working at the Kennedy

C: I use to know her. She was very eccentric; Cybil Arata. She was very eccentric.

B: Did you know Cybil at all? Did you ever meet Cybil?

A: No, but I've been to her house and everything. We went in there to clean it out, clean it up and stuff.

B: As a brave women she was, and she was a very brave women, she was.

C: She was very eccentric, but she was also against pollution. I'll never forget we use to go out on the terrace in the front and I'd say, what a beautiful view you have Cybil. What, that's nothing. It's poison. It's all poison, all poison. Don't talk to me about the view. As you could see, it was nothing but smog, looking down into Jackson. She was very much against it, that's why she wants to keep it for animals.

B: You see, this here (referring to a photo of the Argonaut Mine) is all a big cement slab. The railings are all still there. This is all a big cement slab. A big cement slab, all of this. I use to get over here. Do you see where this chain is. It use to be over here. I'd say is Dad up, and they'd say no. You could put your ear on the rail and you could hear the skip coming up. You could hear it coming up on the rail. Now, the Argonaut went down right from here. It went down a little ways like this (vertically), and then it went a little bit steeper. They'd get to that one spot. Then you could see the lights on the carbine lamps. That's where they use to bring the timber in. They had a little track right here along the front. You see the skip would stay just about where Dad is. Then they'd pick up that timber and put it in the skip. There's so many people that would say, well hey, how do you get all that timber out of the mine. They don't realize they had steam. That's the way the miners, you see they would put a couple of ladders down in the skips. Whether you come up or come down, everything would have to pile in. They'd pull the skip up, and the same way coming back up. Dad usually rode the top. Riding the bail. This is what they called the bail, here (referring to the picture of his Dad). Dad would hang on to the cable and come up. Which was, you can see how his feet are fixed on top. Like I tell you, see there was a bell line. My dad was there, and he's going down. If something went wrong he could reach right over and grab that bell line and pull it and it would stop the hoist. Then, below the Argonaut, where the hoist house is, which is still there. You know, the big hoist there. That hoist carried the skip and that went down into the mine and onto another hoist. I don't know how many hoists there was. Then there

was one at the very bottom. A big hoist down on the bottom. Now you see where the mine closed all filled up with water. All that stuff is under water. All those hoists and stuff is under water. All this here that you can see in this picture here (referring to the picture of the Jackson Lions Club Breakfast). That's all under.

A: All the signs and everything?

B: Of course the flag isn't, they brought the flag down with them. They were having there lunch there. They took some stuff out. A lot of it's still down there.

A: Did they have different types of skips and stuff. There was a skip off to the side there. I'd like to have that sucker down there where I put that little mine cart (in his front yard). Those skips, like I say, that skip was big and wide. They use to have a what we called a gold something. One skip was tied onto the other. One skip was here and the other skip was up here. What they would do is they would change the gold devil. They let both skips go all the way up. They let both skips go all the way up there. When my brother was there they had kind of a pipe deal like and they'd take that pipe and set that pipe up here. That pipe would come here and it would be locked here on the bottom. Then they'd come back with those skips. The bottom of the skip would hit that pipe. They would take it off, it would be disconnected. That skip would usually be bringing up waste. They called it the gold devil. You see, they didn't give a damn. My brother jumped all around there (the mouth of the mine). They didn't, they couldn't, to me, I'd think that they would need to put up a screen; a screen across there or something. Usually it would be raining so much it would be raining like a son of a gun. Boy, you didn't want

to slip. Now if they worked around there they would make you put some temporary closure.

C: Did you see that it said, be careful, it's hell to be a cripple (referring to a sign in the mine).

B: Watch what you're doing, watch your step. Look around. Look around. See what you are doing. He use to ball the hell out of them. I don't know how old Dad was in that picture. He rode that skip many, many miles. Up and down, up and down.

C: How many years did he work there?

A: 43. They were not all in the Argonaut. The biggest portion was in the Argonaut. 43 years. That must have been something to look forward to going down a mile; under ground, you don't know whether you are going to come out or not. Dad use to say to us, you know boys, before I ever see you go down in the mines, I'd rather see you with your blankets on you back. I've never gone to any of those deals. You know, the open house. I didn't know what was what. If you were to say to me, Evo, go up to the Argonaut, I'd tell you things you could not believe. I could make a beautiful tour. I'd make a beautiful tour. A tour that you would enjoy and it would be explanatory to you. Stowers, Lester Stowers was a young fella who worked in the mines. Then there is another fella by the name of Mike Bachovich. His dad was in the Argonaut. There's a fella Bob Shays who. Bachovich, he says, maybe you come to work in the mines in the winter. He said you get out while you can.