GEORGE BANICEVICH

G: Did you ever work at a mine?

B: Not in the county. I worked at the Argonaut. I didn't work in the mine. Is this on?

G: Yes.

B: Okay.

G: Let me turn it up a little bit, so it can pick you up. There you go. So, what did you do?

B: I was the top man.

G: Top man?

B: Top man, they called it. And they sent supplies down, and lunches, and tools, and timbers, and stuff like that. We put in the skip and it was recovered down in the mine by the skip tenders, and the workers down there. We just load the skip and send it down. I also counted the men. You had to count the men as they went down, and then do it on the same shift when they come up. You count them to make sure that it stayed equal, the number that came up and then went down. Otherwise when someone was short they would probably think there was an accident, or something down there. Something happened to it.

G: Did you ever go down in the mine at all?

B: I went down the Argonaut, but not the Kennedy.

G: How was it? Was it really...

B: Well it was quite an experience. I was pretty young at the time. And I think if I was the age that I am now, I wouldn't go down, but I didn't have the fear that I have now. (laughter) But, I went down on a tour. I worked on top, and at the end of my shift, I asked permission to go down. And I was, it was

granted. And I went down, got in the skip, and went down. They was waitin' for me down there at the 4800 level. And then they took me all through the mine. They had a man down there, that was kind of a guide for me. And of course they all knew me. 'Cause I sent them down, they all knew me and everything. They took me on a good tour, an' I went all through the mine. I asked questions, and went through the place where the 47 men were found. 46, and then they found the other one a year later, after they pumped the water out. So it was quite an experience. Hot down there. I wouldn't wanna go down and work down there, I'll tell you that. Not for any price. (laughter)

G: So, how old were you when you went down?

A: I was about 18, something like that. 18 or 19, I can't remember exactly what year. I think it was, I knew the fire and the disaster was in '22. And in '22 I was a sophomore in high school, so I graduated in '24. So, either be '25 or '26, 1925 or '26.

G: So when you worked as a top man, how many hours did you work?

B: Eight.

G: Eight hours? A day or..?

B: Eight hours a day, and it was three shifts. We worked, what they called a graveyard shift from eleven to seven at night. And then we'd change in two weeks, and work from seven to three, and then we'd two weeks later work three to seven, three to eleven rather. Excuse me. And that's when it went around the clock. You see there'd be short changes and long changes. And they would take place in between there. And there's no days off. We gained little on the long change. I can't remember how it went, but the day

shift went got up at three, and we didn't go back 'til the next day at eleven. So we got three o'clock today, 'til eleven o'clock tomorrow night. So that would be the long change. And the short change we would almost get home and get a little sleep and have to go back, it was a tie in there.

G: How was it working in the mine, on top?

B: Oh, very pleasant. Fresh air, you're out in the open all the time. In fact, we had signals when we sent the men down, so many bells it would mean so much and everything and they had the same signal inside, down the mine too. Then they'd ring the bell. The hoistman was across the highway, across highway 49. And he was down below and he couldn't see anything so he worked by bells and signals, and stuff like that. They seemed to work out fine, with the system they had there. It wasn't as fancy as it would be today, but it worked out all right. They did a good job on it.

G: You told me something about riding on the skip?

B: Oh, on the skip?

G: Yes. And the little buckets that are going down?

B: Yes, that was in the Kennedy they tell me, this is hearsay. They tell me that the skip went so fast that it would go up and down for quite a little while, until it settled down. It was when they stop, it was like putting breaks on a car, it would rock. The skip would rock quite a bit. It was kinda scary to even experienced miners. After a while, they got used to it. They knew what was coming, so they prepared for it.

G: How long did it take to get down there in the skip?

B: Pardon?

G: How long did the skip take to get down to the bottom?

B: In the Kennedy, about three minutes from the top to the bottom in the old days when they had steam. I think it was a little longer when they converted to electric. In the Argonaut was longer, it was maybe five, ten minutes before you got down to the very bottom. In the Argonaut they'd stop on the way down too. The Kennedy, they never stopped unless they prepared you and it was supposed to stop. But if they went they was told to send a load down to the bottom and that was it, that's where they went. But if they went half way down the hoistman on the hoist had his cables marked and he knew just exactly where the level, each level was. He would stop on the level he was assigned to. There wasn't too many accidents in those days. There were some, it was like anything else, but the accidents weren't too common. Once in a while somebody would get killed down there, maybe a blast, something like that. Delayed blast or something. I believe there wasn't too many. Most of those fellas died from the silicosis. Breathing that dust and everything down there and it got into their lungs. I think that dust was doing what they claim smoking is doing today.

G: I heard a lot of stories about the Kennedy and how people would have accidents with the machinery.

B: Had what?

G: There would be accidents with the machinery. Did you hear any of that at all over at the Argonaut?

B: Accidents?

G: Yes.

B: You was told there was a lot of accidents?

G: A few.

B: Not too many.

G: Not too many, but some really gruesome ones though.

B: Yes, I knew there was a bad accident in the Argonaut. One of the skip tenders, I think the skip ran over him, and killed him instantly of course.

G: The skip ran over him?

B: One skip tender, yes. He was the one who rides the bails in the Argonaut. In the Kennedy nothing like that happened as far as riding the skip. They stayed on it, they didn't jump on and off like they did in the Argonaut.

G: Did you ever ride the skip at all?

B: Me?

G: Yes.

B: Oh my God, the skip was maybe eight feet, a bucket, a big bucket. It was about this wide (motions with hands), about three or four feet wide, maybe eight feet long. It was iron, steel as I call it. And they had ladders in the skip. I think about twelve men at a time go down in the skip, and when I stood on top of the ladder I wanted to look around. By the time we got about fifty feet down I was down at the bottom, (laughter) scared to death. Scared me quite a bit. Of course it was a new experience and I never had that happen before. But they'd send twelve men down in the skip. They had a thing when they hoisted men. They called it the go da ho and they hooked it on the bottom of the skip and then twelve more men ride in there and then they'd use the same skip to hoist the ore out of the mine and dump it up in the shoot, where it'd go up to the mill. But there'd be about 24 men in a load. There's two shafts. There's twin shafts in there and one skip could operate this way and up and down without interfering with the other side. They could both come up together at the same time or one could go up and one could be down. So it was a great convenience while one was down the other was up, one was loading and one was unloading.

G: That's pretty convenient.

B: I may be talking, you can't seem to make sense of what I'm saying.

G: Tell me some more stories about the mines.

B: I can tell you what we just worked, four dollars a day, eight hours. Miners got four. Of course the skip tenders got a little more then. Superintendent, the boss, it varied. What else did they have? Oh, the top man. I also had charge of the change house, to keep it heated and load it with hot water. So when they come out of the mine they were really gray from the rock and the dust and everything. They'd always have to take a shower, then they change into their street clothes. So I had to make sure that the big furnace was burning out heat at this big tank of water so that those guys could take their showers and clean up. Then they'd either walk home or someone had a car. A lot of men in those days walked from the Argonaut and the Kennedy down to Jackson. And they did a lot of walking 'cause they didn't have transportation that they got today. I've known them to get out of a job and walk from here to Plymouth to try to get a job in that mine. Angels Camp. They'd walked to Angels Camp. That's quite a ways. You can think nothing of it with today, you'd jump in a car and away you'd go. But, I'm trying to think of what else we did up there. Like I said, I ran the rock crusher one night a week.

G: What nights were those?

B: What night? Wednesday.

G: Wednesdays?

B: It was always on a Wednesday night for some reason. The fella, they called it a tool nipper. He was a guy that took care of the tools and gathered them up and sent them up to be sharpened and drilled and stuff like that. And it seemed like he had to work down in the mine for some reason for that Wednesday

night. I would run the rock crushers for him, that was my job. All I had to do was press a button, the crusher was the one who did the work.

G: How about the Argonaut mine disaster?

B: 1922 in August or 1926 or '28, somewhere in there. It was quite a thing for the town. There was so many, 46 men, 47 men and they all had families and children and wives and so forth. And it was a pretty sad situation there for quite a while. It was a couple of months almost before they got the bodies out. They had a mass funeral, they had a great big truck and they had all the caskets on there. They had services, all the ones that were Catholic. They identified as many as they could and I think they did a pretty good job on that. They had a mass, Catholic, for the Catholics. Then they go to the Methodist church and have services for them there. Then the remaining ones would be the Slavs, the Slovenians, whatever you call them, they bring them up to their church and bury them there. So you can see it was a sad situation. The women were crying and the little tiny kids. You know, that they left behind and everything. It was really bad, it was an awful, awful shock to the community. The news and it was on the radio and everything, I think that all across the nation. I think that it was a disaster like that. Of course, since then there's been disasters even as bad or worse, like airplanes and things like that, but coal mines have some disasters too. It was a real shock for this community. But they out lived it.

G: Did they live here? (In George's house) Some of the miners?

B: Three of them, we had about ten or twelve that lived here, but three of them were on shift that particular night. And three of them were in the disaster. I think the other ones were working on day shift. These fellas went to work at four o'clock. Three or four o'clock they went down to the mine.

G: In the morning?

B: No one seemed to know what started the fire. But there was a big draft in that. I don't see how it could have caught so fast because there was a lot of water dripping down there. It was like digging a well. You dig down so far and you hit water. They went down all that and there was water dripping all the time. Especially in that shaft. Just caught and burned, and it burned, and it burned and the skip tender and his helper and the foreman were the only survivors. They were down there at the time and they took off for help. They was supposed to send the skip back down, but the track, it was on tracks, now the Kennedy is on four guiders just like this, like a cage, sliding down. Like an elevator. Argonaut was on tracks, like railroad tracks. The ties burnt out and spread the tracks so it loosened, the skip couldn't go down, it wouldn't go down the track because it was the rails burnt and the ties under the rails burnt out, spread the rails and spread the tie and naturally the skip was useless. They came out, I guess they barely made it. They came out, they were coughing and were smoking, they went through smoke. They notified us right away and there was nothing they could do. They couldn't send it down, there was no way, I mean it was helpless as far as helping those men out. Their shaft was out of commission. That meant you couldn't send the skip back down to load them up. So they both kept themselves in these, one in that --- and one that drifts. They both hit is twice. And they tore their clothes off, and stuffed them in the cracks so the gas wouldn't come in. It still came in evidently, it was a gas like carbon monoxide, something like what comes out of an automobile. I guess they died peacefully, I don't think there was too much suffering. I think they go into sleep, get sleepy, and you just go to sleep, just like an anesthetic in a hospital.

G: Were there families, like sons and fathers down there?

B: Yes, there was a father and son down there. Then there were relations. Oldburg, I remember their family, Oldburg father and son. There were cousins. There was no insurance. Mines didn't have any insurance like they do today, and the families were destitute. They took up a collection and they had different donations. They had a deal down in Hollywood, they sent some miners down in miner's clothes and did something down there. I think there was three or four that went down there. They collected quite a bit. Then Bill Rogers the movie... you don't know him, he was a movie star and he made a movie up here about that time. He was he was here about '22 or '23. Anyhow, he sent a sizable check to the families and everything, so they got a lot of contributions. They gave a benefit dance and the proceeds would go to the families. Somebody took care of it, was the head of it, they distributed to the families. Then the grocery stores kinda chipped in and everybody did a little bit to help, and they made it, they survived. It was a bad deal. No insurance of any kind. Even when one of them would get killed in a mine, had an accident or something, they had to pass the hat around among his friends to bury him. The mines didn't have no compensation or insurance. In those days I'm talking about. If it happened today it would be a different story. The union, see they didn't have no union here at the time, and they tried to unionize, but it didn't work. They went on strike. I think they went on strike for about, I can't remember what year that was, that was in the thirties, early thirties. The miners went on strike for fifty cents more a day, and they never got it. They were off about two or three months or maybe more. They all got in debt with rent and lights, everything piled up because nothing was coming in. I don't know how they recovered from that, I don't recall, but they must have.

G: So, what did the mine do while they were on strike, with the workers gone?

B: Some of the men worked, and they called them scabs, the ones that went to work. Then the different unions from the Bay Area came up here, they had quite a time here. I know there was a bunch of them in

Jackson, on a Sunday. They were all gathered on top of the hill, by the junction the one that goes to Ione and Sutter Creek, up by the hotel up there. They come over the hill from the Argonaut, and the mill man worked and they had the sheriff out there and the deputy sheriff. He told them there'd be no trouble, they was looking for trouble, but they settled it, they broke the strike that Sunday afternoon, down at the Moose Hall in Jackson on Main Street. They went back to work at the same pay. Some of them didn't go back, some of them went some place else and worked. And then the war come along, and they close the mines, they shut the mines down. On account of the gold --- I don't know what it was all about. Then I guess by good luck, the saw mill came in just at the same time, just when the war broke, during the war. The lumber company come in here and build that saw mill up there and most of those miners when to work up there as laborers. Some of them advanced to better jobs. So that was a God sent. Now the mill just closed again, and about two or three hundred of them are off work, so I don't know what's gonna happen. That's kinda of another shock that they got here. Something might happen so that they'll all get jobs again.

G: Where did they get their lumber to support the tunnels?

B: Up here, the Onetto family I know was one of the ones who furnished them. They come down here, I'm going back to when I was a little kid, they come down here with about a eight, ten mule team, loaded with logs. This road right here was a highway. The two head mules had bells on them, you could hear them coming from a long way off. That guy sat on the saddle horse, he didn't have no seat in that log truck, he sat on the saddle horse in the back. He had a jerk line. That's how he delivered the logs up there, they'd deliver them and they'd roll them down. They had a saw mill there, on the job, they had two men there that did the sawing. The miners, somebody would take measurements down in the mine for a certain size timber, and maybe have a notch in it, framing it. They would send it down. That was part of my job. That was in the day shift, they never sent no timbers down at night. It was always on the

days, and there was always an extra man on the day shift. So they put them in the skip and sent them down and they would take care of them down there. There was a lot of timbers that went down, they had to do a lot of timbering and framing down there, because some place the ground was apt to cave. They had a surveyor on the job, he'd survey every now and then. Make sure they'd be going the right direction. They didn't wanna get over in the Kennedy, because there'd be a lawsuit, they had to know just where their line was. So he was on the job quite a bit.

G: Did they use the mules down there, in the mine?

B: Not in the Argonaut, no. The Kennedy used mules to pull cars and haul the ore to the shoots in the shaft and the skips would be loaded there. The Argonaut didn't have any mules.

G: How come? Why didn't they have any?

B: I don't know, I have no idea. Maybe they were set up that they had a hard time to get a mule in their skips or something. They took good care of those mules, they were valuable to them because it meant work. The mines took better care of the mules than they did the men. I shouldn't say this, but that's a fact. They'd bring the mules up and take good care of them. Send another two or three or four down to wherever, I don't remember how many they used. They'd let them rest a while up on top and send the ones down, they'd keep rotating them.

G: How long would they keep them down there?

B: I have no idea. I wasn't too familiar with the Kennedy. I'd say, maybe a month. They had stalls down there for them, they had hay, just like on top only it was underground. Down there it was almost a

mile down there working, they didn't know the different. They were good mules, nice looking. I saw them one time when we would go over to the Kennedy. They had that building that they got there now, that they're trying to restore, that was a show place. They had one of the most beautiful flower gardens you'd ever wanna see around there. They had a little fella who was a gardener there, kind of a caretaker of the yard, we'd call him Jonny Bouquet. He'd bring a bouquet of flowers into the different, like the waitresses in town, he kind of liked the women. He'd just bring them in flowers, and of course they'd thank him for it, roses and everything that was in season or in bloom. He took wonderful care of that place, like I said it was a show place. I think the lower part was an office, and I don't know if they had living quarters upstairs, but I think they had sleeping quarters. Some of the heads of the mine would come up, probably stay there. Maybe they didn't, maybe they stayed in the hotel in Jackson. I know that it was a two story. Beautiful building. It still stands so it must of been well built. Made out of brick or concrete.

G: I think it's concrete, I'm not sure.

B: Then they had the change house, and they had the horse house and they had the machine shop. I think those buildings are all gone. Cybil Arata, who I knew personally, had bought the place. Then she turned around, and she passed away, and she left it to some college. As a gift.

G: Who was she? What was her name?

B: Cybil Arata. She would be about my age now. But she passed away about four or five years ago, and she left it to this college. She was a teacher down in San Francisco, art, and she taught art and everything. She was really pretty clever. She wrote a little book about the mules. Have you ever run across that book?

G: I've seen it.

B: Something about the mules. I've got an autographed one, she autographed it. Some place around here. This college, kind of turned it down. I think they figured with insurance and the upkeep, I think they just put it up for sale. I don't know what ever happened to it after that. Who owns it now? I have no idea, but they're trying to restore it. Torterich, Mrs. Torterich and her husband are very active in it. In fact, young Frank I call him, his father's named Frank too, I know him real well. I knew Frank as a kid. They're trying to bring it back, which is a good thing, I think great to have an attraction like that in town. Someone said they're gonna have tours there, take people down in the mine. I can't believe that because the insurance would be prohibited, it would be an awful lot of insurance to cover people going down in the mine, because that mine has been vacant, abandoned for quite a few years now. Since the late forties or middle forties. Or early forties, when World War II started, that would be over fifty years. I could just image that the timbers would be gone and rotted, so I don't see how they could possibly take people down that mine.

G: I don't think they're taking them in the mine, just around.

B: Someone said they were, and I said I don't believe it, I can't believe it.

G: Who owned the Argonaut originally?

B: I have no idea who the original owners were. I think it was a company, stock company, I know they sold stock, their stock was on the stock market. So was the Kennedy. In the Kennedy I think it was people named Hutchinson. That was this fella and his sister. I can't remember his first name.

G: Whose sister?

B: Hutchinson. Mr. Hutchinson and his sister. I don't know if she was married or not, so I don't know if she was a Hutchinson or if she had a married name. He'd come up here periodically and look the mine over. They stayed at the hotel down here. The Kennedy mine, the Argonaut mine, a fella named Stent, he'd come up here, I don't know if he was the owner, he might have been a majority stock holder. He came up and checked on the office, and the production and how much gold they were getting out, how much ore. I think he wanted, he came up for a report, I think they had to report to someone what they were doing. They got this gold and they'd ship it by express, down at the mint, I don't know where they sent their gold. It was turning into cash I suppose. But this fella Stent would come up every now and then, in fact he'd come up and stay a little while around here.

G: Oh, did he stay here in the house?

B: No, no, I mean in Jackson. He'd stay at the hotel, National. No, he didn't stay at the house here. I wouldn't be working on top of the mine if he stayed here, I would have had a better job. (laughter) They had a big mill that they milled for at the Kennedy, and at the Argonaut both had a big mill. They had the crush rock that would come in there, and end up as sand. And then they be on tables, and it would move, just like panning for gold. And it would separate the gold from the sand, and everything like that. And they had a certain amount of quick silver or mercury, and that would catch all the gold to get it away from the sand and everything. And then they'd send it to a smolder down below, and it would go through this smolder, and put it in extreme heat and everything, and it would burn the mercury off. And there was the solid gold in a bar. A nice bar of gold. In those days gold was worth thirty-two dollars an ounce. Today it's worth three or four hundred. It was something like thirty-two. Maybe it

was twenty something, I can't remember. But I know it was really low like everything else. Everything was low then. The wages were low, the groceries were cheaper, bread was cheaper, so I think it was about the same proportion as it is today. You get more money today, your rent's higher, your groceries are higher, so of course everything gets a little bit ahead of your wages for some reason, I figure. Everything raised more than your wages raise.

G: How much was the gasoline?

B: Nineteen cents.

G: I still can't get over that. (laughter)

B: I worked down at the service station after, they had three types of gas. They had standard station standard oil, their colors are red, white and blue. So they had a blue gas, it was invisible pumps. It was a ten gallon glass bowl up here, and you'd pump it up and fill it and then you'd have a hole and put it in there. The cheapest gas was flight, they'd call it, and it was blue. The red gas was ethyl, that was the premium gas. White was regular. They had red, white and blue gas, but they had different prices. Of course the state tax for gas was very low, about four cents a gallon. Cheap, very cheap. I quoted the flight price, I think. The regular was twenty cents. I worked there for about five, six years.

G: You worked at the gas station?

B: Yes. The gas station down here where the park is, Petkovich park.

G: Oh, that's where the gas station was?

B: Yes. Nice gas station. I worked there for about six years. I worked all over the country. Jobs here and there. I worked for the PG&E, and in construction. They had construction up here at Salt Springs, and Tiger Creek and all that country with the powerhouses. Three powerhouses. Small one between Salt Springs and Tiger Creek. I worked for the PG&E for one summer. Down at Colinga, down the gas line, gas department, natural gas. I worked with a welder down there, as a welder. Too hot. Twelve o'clock at night you could walk out with your bare feet in the sand, and you couldn't walk on it 'cause it was so hot. It was in the Kettlemen hills area, that's where we worked, it's close to Colinga. We'd go in there, in the evenings after work.

G: What town was it?

B: Colinga. It was actually... they had something happen there recently, at this place. It was actually a coaling station in the old days. Ships would come in there and put coal out for their fire, for their steam boats. It was an oil town. That didn't last long. Then I came up here and worked at Tiger Creek. From there I went to the service station. Where did I go from there? I put in one year in San Francisco. Worked at a wholesale hardware store. Bicker Hamilton was the name of it. I finally ended up, working for the county. I was a deputy treasurer and tax collector. That's where I retired from. Put twenty year there. Sounds like all the jobs I had, sounds like I'm 200 years old. I just worked some of them just one summer, one of them I worked on a railroad too, I told you. I worked on Amador Central.

G: Tell me about that again, the railroad.

B: That was nice, I liked that job. We'd get to work, they ran a bus from the National Hotel for passengers, and they also ran a baggage truck, it took the express stuff. Open truck, with side curtains on it, now windows. We'd catch that. At night time if the train came in early, we didn't get that ride. We didn't get through 'til 4:30 and we'd stay there and work around the roundhouse, and we had to walk home. We'd have to walk from Martell to down here. We tried to hitchhike, but I had a partner named Nick Banger, he and I worked together. We were poor hitchhikers, we never got a ride. Not one whole summer. (laughter) That was nice... we had this little, I'd say it was about the size of this table, maybe a little longer, four wheels on it and it fit the track. This thing had hoes and shovels and things like that. Our job was to build a fire trail along each side of the track , so far out to the engines threw a spark so that they wouldn't catch the country on fire. And we'd go down, on this thing, it had a break on it, we'd stop and work, then somebody would move it, and we went along. Coming home, it was all downhill on that track. From Martell to Ione, it's all downhill. We couldn't push it back up because we didn't have no power or nothing. So we waited 'til the train come by, 'til we heard the whistle, we'd pick up the thing and put it off to the side and it had a coupling on there, and we'd hook it on the back of the train and we'd climb in train and ride in there like passengers, all the way home. (laughter) That was great. Dollar seventy-five a day. A day. I think of those things, and I don't know how we ever lived. With today's prices, I get all mixed up in that and I say nobody got any big money in those days. When I was real young, grammar school maybe high school, at the time if you made a check or survey, I don't think there was over ten or fifteen millionaires in the whole United States. A million dollars was the greatest... now there's a millionaire on television every Saturday night. Look at those athletes. Some of them go fifty, sixty million dollars. I don't think no man is worth that, myself. That's more than the President of the United States gets, and look at the responsibility he gets.

G: With the money that you earned, for the day, where did you go to get your food and your clothes?

B: Here in Jackson, we had no transportation to get out of here. My sister was about three or four years old , and she developed a cross-eye. And there was nobody in town who was a doctor for it. So we found a guy for it, named doctor...I can't think of the name right now. But anyhow, we took her down there, and he put her in Dameron Hospital. And they nipped that cord there in the eye, they wouldn't completely sever it, they'd just nip it. So they would pull it, and they would loosen it like a rubber band weakening it. It took her two operations to get that done. And in the winter time...this is if you believe this or not, but in the winter time you could hardly get to Ione, it was almost impossible. Because there was no pavement, and the mud was about that thick. And the dust in the summer was like that. And it was just effort to get through. I think big trucks and teams could get through, but they only had Model T's when that happened. We had a neighbor across the street, and they had a Model T touring car, and they'd take my family to Stockton, and I went with them.

G: You went to Stockton?

B: Stockton, that's where we went. We went to have this operation, and we stayed there one night, and then come back the next day. My sister had to stay in the hospital just overnight. We come home, and after six months or so they'd have her come back and give her another nip, and they finally got it straight. That was a big experience for me too, that was the first time I ever went to Stockton. First time I was ever out of Jackson. I remember when Main Street in Jackson, there was only three places to cross during the wintertime. You had stepping stones. They never had a paved street when I was a kid. All dirt. In the summertime there used to have this water wagon that would come and water all the streets down. Can't keep the dust down, had a big tank on the back, somewhere he could control it from the driver's side. You seen water wagons in the movies and stuff like that. This was all my time. That's why I can't keep up with all this computer stuff, it's too fast for me, at my age, I can't keep up. But it's

great. It's for the best I hope. What else could we say about the mines? You got anymore questions on that list?

G: They used candles down in the mines, didn't they?

B: They used candles early, then they went to carbines, carbine lamps. They had a hard-hats, softcap with a visor on it. And right over here there was a metal thing that you hook a carbine lamp on it. They had a little barrel about this round, about this high with carbine up on top. The mine furnished the carbine. They'd fill up their, the whole lamp wasn't about as big as this, and they'd unscrew the bottom and put carbine in it. Then in the top they'd put water in it. They'd adjust that and it dripped in there and it formed a gas. They had a flint, and it made a nice little flame. They have good light. With candles at first, they had a candlestick and they didn't have nothing on the hat. They had a candlestick with a big point on it like an ice pick, and they work and they drive that right into the timber. They would move, and they'd stab it some place else. It was like you would take a lamp and put it where you'd want to see.

G: Did they have something on the end of the candle?

B: No. Candle was about that long. It went through a little thing about this big, and it went in there tight. As it burned down they'd push it up, and the mine would furnish those too.

G: How many did they use a day?

B: Maybe one or two a shift, I think they took one and a spare. That was twelve hours though, maybe they took more than that. Take enough to last them though, they didn't want to work in the dark, it was dark enough without no candle. Twelve hours, what my dad and those fellas worked. They had a deal

there, where they took a dollar a month out of your check and that went to a local doctor, and he got a dollar from every guy that participated. And you'd get to go to the doctor and it wouldn't cost you anything.

G: Was that one dollar a day for the doctor?

B: No. One dollar a month. If there was 200 guys working there and they all put in a dollar a month, that doctor got 200 dollars. If you had one little scratch or some little thing wrong you'd go to him and he'd try you, because you worked at the mine. He'd ask you where you worked. The dentist, course they didn't have no dental deal there, but you go to dentist and have a tooth pulled I think it was two or three dollars. I heard on television the other night it was a hundred and twenty, hundred and thirty dollars for an extraction. My God. That's what's getting me all mixed up, I can't believe it. I was born either too soon or too late, I don't know which.

G: Like stuff like these? Like stuff like we have? Our retainers and stuff, they're so expensive. If we lose them, we have to pay for them.

B: It's unbelievable, unbelievable. Course, I don't know what we'd do without them.

G: Did you have a local store here? For food and clothes?

B: Yes. We had several of them. We had, one on Jackson Gate, Chicazolas, it was a quick store. In those days they handled groceries, they handled dishes, they handles grain, they handled everything. Then Tessinelies, it was down on Main Street. Down there where that real estate office is on Main Street, it's close to Sue's Shoppe, there was a fella there named Charles Oliver he was on the ground floor,

underneath, I loved to go in there because in the summertime it was so nice and cool in there. They had a building, an apartment above them. There was Ginnocios, where the Wells Fargo Bar and Restaurant is, that was all one big store there. They handles furniture, they handled hardware, they handled plumbing, they handled anything you wanted except medicines. That was all on credit, very little cash. You'd pay them once a month, and everyone had a little book and when they'd deliver something like that they'd mark the amount in the book for you, then when you took the book down to the store, they'd add it up and then you'd pay that much. They delivered groceries in those days, you'd call up on the phone, and they'd deliver anything that you order. The baker, everyday he brought bread, and the milkman would bring milk. You didn't have to leave to house. You'd bring milk in a big can like this and measure it out in a quart, and you wanted so many quarts. It wasn't pasteurized in those days. It was just right out of the cow. It was good. They'd have a special pan to put your milk in, and we used to get quite a bit in this county. We had those borders and they had about ten or fifteen, and they drank milk in their coffee or just plain milk. They didn't have cream. They had some kind of a clabbered milk, I never ate it, they called it kieshileza, it's a Slav name for it. It was like buttermilk or sour milk and they put it over cornmeal. Not me, I wouldn't eat it. I was very particular when I was a little guy. I was pretty spoiled. I had good parents, nice parents. Very nice people.

G: Did they work the mine?

B: My dad did for a short while. He was like me, didn't lose nothing down there. Came out, started a boarding house. He board these miners instead of working with them. Twenty-five dollars a month, board and room, three meals a day, and their laundry. Imagine that? Twenty-five dollars a month. Times have change. Most of it's for the good though. I think in the old days people worked real hard, they didn't live as long as they live today. You use to go up to the cemetery and it was forty, fifty years old was the life span. Now it's was up in the 70's. I've cheated the thing twenty years. I'm ninety

something. (laughter) I've told people I've got past my warranty. I like to be happy. I think that people who are happy live longer. When they groan and scream and holler all the time, I hate to hear that. I like to laugh and have a good time and everything. They had gambling here about five or six places. Full gambling, blackjack and poker and anything you wanted.

G: Where were they?

B: One was the National Hotel, the other was the Louver, where the Wells Fargo Bank is now. It was downstairs, called the louver, they had gambling in there. Right underneath the Eldorado Savings on Main Street, bank club, up the street it's still running. It's the Pioneer Club. It's just a bar now. They had Wells Fargo, they'd have gambling in there. We'd make the rounds on Saturday night. It's what we came for, Saturday night. We'd go watch them gamble or gamble yourself a little bit and have a few drinks and enjoy yourself. Meet a lot of people you knew. You'd go in a bar now and you don't know a soul. It's not worth going in because you get one drink and you get picked up for drunk. Scare the lights of a person to take a drink anymore. I don't think I've had a drink in four years, of any kind. I was raised on wine, my dad made his own wine, furnishes some boarders. You could buy that red, clear wine for about 40 cents a gallon. What's it now? Seven, eight dollars. Course it's better wine now, than what they made. They made it just one way, crushed the grapes, let it ferment, draw it and drink it. Sometimes they didn't boil it after it fermented, just drink it out of the tank there.