

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Bruno Gentil

Interviewer: Dave Werlin

Dates: November 10, 2005

Location: Coleman, AB

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Q: Were you ever a coalminer?

BG: No, I worked on the outside. I started in 1932 driving a team of horses for \$2.75 a day. They had rented horses from Laura Tross's father, old Smoky Anthrop. That's how I got the job. The miners only worked about one shift every two weeks, or a shift a week. They got the contract for coke coming from Cominco in Trail, and they had to repair the ovens. We had 200 coke ovens here, and they opened up 100. That's when I got a job driving that team of horses. They put some miners on to drive, and one fell off and broke his leg. That was only temporary that they hired. But when they laid the kids off again and brought the miners back out, they came to me and said, you stay on and drive horses. That's how I got the job. The boss had to come and tell me, now if anybody asks you who you're working for, you tell them you're working for Harry Antel, not for the mine. Because that's how close it was. The men were kicking about they wanted the work. You couldn't get a job in them days. But they kept me, and I stayed on there 50 years. I drove

truck for years until 1937 after the horses were done. I drove truck outside all this valley up here where the mine stands now. Then the doctor took me off the truck because my back went haywire. Then old Joe McIntyre, he was from Bellevue, come up to be the manager. He called me one day and said, I want you to go in the machine shop and try and learn to sharpen steel. We can't hold these blacksmiths from Nelson. That's what I done from day one. I was a blacksmith. First I drove horses, then I drove truck, then I blacksmithed, then I went stable boss. After stable boss the horses were done, then I had to go in the warehouse. I was in the warehouse running the warehouse for 10 years. After that, in '74 I had this problem, and I got a job as timekeeper in the report center. That's where I ended up.

Q: It must've been an interesting period when they used horses.

BG: Horses, you can say what you want, was the lifeline of the work. Not only the mines. In them days there was no caterpillars, there was no trucks. All your grading, most of that road around the lake was done with horses and wagons. The horses developed the mine. Before they got the powerhouse going with compressors to push air down and put the stations for them locomotives you see, the horses were kept on. Because they developed the mine where there was no air yet. They brought the coal out where the locomotives would bring it to the bottom slope and out, and the horses kept going with the miners. Once the mines didn't develop anymore, then the horses were done. The era was all over. That rock tunnel was built, they stripped iron stone and took all the coal off the top first. It's all coal, that. They put that rock tunnel and had everything ready. The raises were up into the places where the coal was, and they were going to haul the coal out underground here from all under that mountain, and then they were even going to put a belt or whatever. And you know what happened, it's in one of them stories. When the first diesel went through here I see it and I mentioned it, that's the end of the coalmine. This was all steam coal, Coleman, Blairmore, Bellevue. Michelle too, but Michelle has the coal for Japan, which we didn't here. In fact, Vickery had that little seam before Michelle even got the contract. Frank Hartwell, our president, he was in pretty good with the Japanese. They wanted a sample of coal to try for their furnaces. We had a little seam

of coal in Vickery. They sent me with one of the boys that was a shovel operator and he drove cat, Jack Funacary. Took him up with a caterpillar, opened a road. You know when you go to Kananaskas and you make the turn at Vickery there, and the road to the mine is in there? We had to open the road in them days, it was all muskeg timber road, for the truck to get in and get the first samples of coal for Japan come out of Vickery.

Q: When they still had horses, you trained the horses?

BG: I broke them for harness and fixed them up. I doctored them, I shod them. But I broke them to put their harnesses on. Then they had to harness for underground. Every level, it's right there. B level was a barn for the horses. They worked a level. Then 400 feet of rock another level, C level, there was a barn there for them horses. Another 400 feet of rock D level, another level of coal, there was a barn there. They had barns just as good as outside. They were made nice, they had their mangers, their bedding. The fire bosses and pit bosses, whether they were working or idle, them horses only come out on the weekend cuz it was too hard for them to come up and out the slope. The horses outside the top slope come out every day from the rock tunnel to my barn. They had the feed, the water, everything was there. But anything that happened, I had to get down there in a hurry. But they were underground, and taken care of underground. But they never, like you read that story in there about that horse that was eating wood. I don't believe anything like that. That's just a story, that one. Hell, I know they'll eat trees in the wintertime and they'll survive. But underground for all those weeks, a horse won't live three days.

Q: But once they got down to the mine, they had drivers down there?

BG: Oh they had drivers. They had a driver boss for every shift. He took care of every driver, whether he was driving a locomotive or whether the rope rider who was taking the cars up and down that slope, or driving them horses. But it was the pit boss, Jack Marconi. Gordon Marconi come a little later. Jack worked for me before he was trapping. I got a job and worked with his dad driving horses. Then his dad was my helper

blacksmith after. But Jack was a pit boss, and he had to make sure that them horses were looked after by his bosses, the fire bosses or driver bosses or the men working with them. Them horses were fed, watered, and taken care of. They were the life. That was the only power they had. Before they took the horses, it was all back work. The men were pushing the cars with their backs, shoveling the coal, digging the coal, making the entry, pushing an empty in and pushing a load back. Then they got the horses working, that's how the horses come in. Drumheller, only Drumheller was flat seam. They had the Shetland ponies. The men digging coal in Drumheller had to dig on their knees mostly. But these mines, the coal is the high side about 18 feet to 3 feet, that's the way the coal runs here. But the flat seam from Burmis out, it's straight down. They had a hoist go straight down and pull it straight up.

Q: Who taught the horses what to do?

BG: Them drivers. The driver boss knew who to put on to start the horse with. And not every horse, maybe about one out of every 10 or 15 horses would not do it. You couldn't make him do it. The rest, they didn't need no lights, cuz animals can see in the dark just as good as we can in the day. But they had head lamps, and in the end we had helmets put on. We had horses a rock come down and hit them. I had one busted his head open, Blackie. I had to destroy him, he couldn't walk anymore. Once they knew their job, leave them alone. Don't try and teach them anything, you'd kill them like the killed Jerry. Put a green driver on, didn't pull the pin. Jerry didn't know, the cars were coming too fast, he didn't know like Sandy. Sandy just kept going right ahead of the cars right up the slope. But Jerry they run right over him. They called me, I had to go down. You know how we destroyed them? The fire boss with a shot.

Q: But Sandy, he did a little trick of his own.

BG: And Barney. Barney would get out. They told me Barney one time was caught, he wasn't hitched to anything, but he was caught in between the tracks by the face where he was working. You know what he done, they said? He jumped and fell over sideways onto

the loads of the cars, and got out of the way of them. Sandy went straight up and back and fell into the car. But Barney, he got out of the way, he jumped out of the way on top of one of the loads sideways. He was laying on the loads. Ah, that's the horse I was telling you. On the level where he was working this Barney, the miners they all thought the world of him. The only thing he wouldn't touch of theirs was their snuff boxes or chewing tobacco. But their buckets, if they hung them up on a post and Barney was around, that bucket was on the ground and he was eating their sandwiches. Oh ya, oh ya. And that same Barney he worked outside before we retired him. I sold him to somebody used him on the farm. Who the hell did I sell him to? Had to get rid of him, he was done here. But he was working in the timber yard pulling the timber trucks. They never used no reins no nothing on that horse. Hitch him to that bunch of cars was the timber trucks, and the skid ways of the timber were, c'mon Barney, next. He'd take so many steps and stop. The car would be in place, they'd load the timber. C'mon Barney, next. And a few times he would pull only about 8 cars. Once in a while Pepe and them would leave 9 on or 10. Boy he'd pull up the slack, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and he wouldn't pull one foot until you uncoupled that car, and then he'd go.

Q: You told me a story about a horse you sold, and whenever the whistle blew...

BG: Oh, that's Barney. The whistle would blow for work or not work, in the morning at 8 o'clock the men started work. I harnessed Barney outside the barn way down there by Bushtown. Alright Barney, go. He'd come up and go right into his little barn here at work where he had to pull the cars. And he had his little stall here, they'd go throw him his hay. When he was done, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon it would be, and the men were all getting ready to go on shift, getting their lamps and going up the yard, walking up towards the lamp house. Barney was sent home to go, he was done. Oh geez, you could hear them miners, look out, here's Barney. He'd come and chase them miners around, just playing, galloping full speed. They'd get out of the way. The wife used to take my youngest son Gary, he was only about 5 or 6. Take him over to the crossing there, and I was waiting on a Friday afternoon for all the horses and Barney. The wife would have Gary with her. Gary would come over and stand with me at the corner of the warehouse,

out of sight. And you'd hear the miners, here he comes, here's Barney, get the hell out of the way. And he'd be at full speed coming down the yard right by where we were standing. I was out of sight, I'd just step out. Where are you going? He'd stop dead. I'd get Gary, put him on his back, and he'd take Gary down to the barn. Just walk. I'll tell you, dogs and everything, but they can't talk, but by geez they couldn't fool me. Anybody ask me, brought horses to me, what do you think of this horse? They're talking to me, are you listening? I'd say, ya I'm listening, but I'm looking at your horse. All you have to do is look in their eyes. A dog too, you can tell if they're good or not good to start with. You can tell. And boy when I had that barn full of horses there, at 5 o'clock every morning walk from here. I had a little house down there to stay in when I had them hurt and had to stay there. Go down, open the barn door, turn the lights on. They were all in their stalls with their arses to me. I walk down, everything's alright here. Then all of a sudden, what's the matter with you, Doc? He wasn't standing right. Right away I knew something was the matter. He turned his head, and overnight his eye was like that. He was an outside horse on a team. Bill Bennet was driving him. I guess in the corral the weekend before, maybe he scratched himself or a nail pricked him. That's one thing boy, I doctored a lot of bad ones. They got to heal from the inside out. But they heal fast on the outside, and if you don't keep them open, boy. His eye was like that, he was in trouble. So I told Bill Bennet and said, you got no team today, Bill. What's the matter? Well look at Doc? Geez, what the hell happened to him? I says, I'll bet you he scratched himself in the corral a few days ago and it festered and closed up. Well what are you going to do, are you going to send him out? I don't know, you wait here, I'm going to do it. What the hell you going to do? I said, never mind, we'll tie him in the runway, tie his head both sides. He says, he's not interested, that's too sore for him to be bothering him right now. We'll have him in a minute. So I had a good knife and I sharpened it really good. What are you going to do? I said, we're going to just fix him up, he won't even know what the hell happened to him, and in a day or two he'll be fine. So I just monkeyed with him. He was one of Sartoris's purebred stallions at that time, then they castrated him and sold him. So I got the knife ready and told Bill, Bill you stay on the other side just in case he throws his head. But he doesn't even know what I'm going to do to him, he's too sore. Ya but you can't do that. I said, I'm going to do it. I just went up and got the point of my knife right in where it was

and pushed it in and got out of the way. What come out of there was something. Two days later he was back to work. Right away he was in his stall eating, I kept cleaning him. He was alright right now.

Q: You said you mined for 50 years less two months. You were born and raised here in Coleman. What year were you born?

BG: 1915. My dad come here the end of 1909. He had one of the first shops in town. My mother come over from Italy with my brother and sister. My brother was 10, my sister was 5. They come in 1913, then I was born here in '15. But my brother and sister come from Italy. Same country as Picerello and all them. You couldn't say a bad word about Picerello anywhere. He was a rum runner. He was the leader, but half the businessmen in Coleman were rum runners, that's how they got their money. But he was out in the front. In them days, old Henry Zack, he kept Blairmore kids with baloney and jam in them hard days, at school. The wife could tell you. And Picerello, in Blairmore he was good to everybody. But he was the leader of that, and he got in that trouble, and paid for it. He shot that Lawson, Alberta provincial police. Right up there where the union hall is, the next place, that's where Lawson, the barracks was, and he lived there. Picerello's son was running booze with a few more from Fernie that I knew as working for Picerello. Tony Servello and all that bunch. They said, stop Picerello's son, he's coming through Coleman with booze. So they told Lawson to stop him. He come through in an open car, he had an open Buick car. He come by the Grand Union Hotel there, my father's place, and he wouldn't stop so he shot. He just hit Steve Picerello in the finger. Fred Zuconi was running the Coleman Hotel, and he was from the same, his father and mother come from the same town as my father and mother, in Italy. He run the Coleman Hotel with big George Garwis, the Greek. There was lots of booze, but all the bar room that you see was all green tables. They gambled and the booze was bootlegged. Fred Zuconi went to Picerello, he heard about it. He just told Picerello, Lawson shot your son. He didn't say that he wasn't hurt. Picerello, this story Filomeno, her name was Cassandra, that's her first name, Filomeno. Cassandra, she done all his bookwork and they say was a girlfriend. But her husband worked for Picerello laying the old Alberta Hotel and the tunnel under the

tracks there. Anyway, this Picerello, Fred Zuconi told, hey, Lawson shot your son. Picerello never asked how, where, when. Him and the woman Cassandra went up to the barracks, knocked on the door. Mrs. Lawson, she used to be with my mother, needlecraft. The boy played with me, the girl played with my sister. Old Lawson, every morning he had to have his coffee with my father in the shoe shop. So they knocked on his door, Mrs. Lawson come to the door. Is Constable Lawson in? Ya. We'd like to see him. He come to the door, and he shot him right in the doorway, killed him right there. They took off and they caught them in the slide. That's the first hanging that ever was done in Lethbridge, was them two, Picerello and his helper Filomeno.

Q: So this used to be a mining village in the beginning.

BG: Strictly, that's all. Oh no, you know where the old hospital is? That was McLaren's sawmill. There was 8 or 10 big camps in all this, it was McLaren's sawmill. There was over 100 East Indian immigrants working there. All these camps they were logging. There was a flume up that creek we call Parish Creek, which is Allison Creek. There was a flume up Peburn's Creek up here. They flumed that, there was a dam, they held the water back. Then they got all the timber ready from the camps on the skid ways by the flume. They opened the dam and let the water down the flume, throw all the logs in, and they'd end up at the sawmill. All this come down, you know where the cable plant is up here? That flume come right across the railroad and the highway there. They opened what they called Parish Lake or Allison Lake, that was Parish's Dam. I'll tell you how it got the name Parish Dam. But that was the dam that they'd open up, let the water down the flume, and all that timber from all that country, the lumberjacks would put it in the flume. You know where you cross the lake, the lake was a dam there. They held the lake back. When all this was coming down the flume they opened the dam at the lake, and all the lumberjacks, maybe 20, 30, 40, would get on the logs here in the river and take them to Blairmore to the mill. Open the dam at the lake, the river would raise right up, and all the logs and the lumberjacks were going down through east Coleman and right through.

Q: What years would that be?

BG: The late '20s, the '30s, and the '40s yet. There were still camps here. Then Sartoris bought out, McLaren Lumber quit, and Charlie Sartoris bought out that mill.

Q: Where did they get the poles that were used in the mine? Did they come down the flume too?

BG: No, that was green timber. The timber for the mine was all where the forest fires went through. You daren't put a green timber in the mine, they did in the entries. But where the men were digging coal, the timber they had to put up there had to be burnt, fire killed. If the roof got heavy or squeezed, the timber would break, the men knew, get the hell out of there. You couldn't have green timber. They had dry props, that's where they got them, when the fires went through Star Creek in the old days, back up here in the old days. That's where Salvador, Rogani, Sartoris, Anderson and Blairmore, they logged out all the Blairmore country. These guys, Seacock and all them fellows, they all had camps here, Star Creek. That's where they got it. Old Adam Hammer. The green timber, we had our own sawmill up at McGillivray there where the old tipple was, and we cut our own lumber for the mine chutes.

Q: What's the mine that you can see from your window here.

BG: That's all fill. I started that fill a rock tunnel. That's a valley. If you see the trees up on top there and trees on the bottom, that was all trees. But when they started rock tunnel, they didn't have no place to put. They cut all the trees out. Come, I'll show you something now, what's coming back, after one year how much they've grown. All the trees are coming back on that hill, they're all 4 feet high already.

Q: Coleman Collieries.

BG: That's the mine. That's the last plant, in '68 that plant was put. But the first one was an old dry plant here in the yard. There was no wet washers, all the dust flying in the air,

coke ovens. All them people down in Bushtown, half their meals were ashes and coal dust. My dad, I remember right on main street, he used to sweep the sidewalks every morning, and sometimes he'd have a quarter of a coal pail full of dust that would blow from the tipple. Then they put in the first wet washer. It was the first one, that was in the early '50s. Then it comes to all the water and screens, and the coal had to be all done through the water separated, instead of the air. Then this is the last plant that went in. But this was some town in them days, I'll tell you. I can remember when I first started. Coleman was all boardwalk and gravel roads. All the sidewalks was boardwalk, I can remember that.

Q: They tell the story, they started out to make this a dry town.

BG: I'll tell you, there's more history in the Crows Nest Pass, if it ever come to life, that you can't imagine. You read about Sudbury and all them big places. But this corner of the world here, if some of these buildings around here could only speak, they could tell you some stories. That dance hall at the lake, they're talking about this deal now. Wait till they see the wind. They should've been here yesterday. They'd think twice about spending their millions there. I'm going to get in trouble here. I'll tell you, that just shows you, before I see them spending any money, I told her, where the hell they going to put 200 boats on that lake? We got room for 50, and then what are you going to do with them? The wind will take them and put them on the shore for you. Oh no. This woman that come that day it was one of them days, we have them here maybe 3 or 4 weeks in the whole year. You could take Banff, you could take Lake Louise, you could take Waterton, and throw them in the ditch compared to this. And that dance hall, the Moransi boys here, their father Harold Moransi, his father built that dance hall, old Harold. Like me, but maybe a little older than me yet. He built it. Well he was just starting, but then Harold, Mark's and Scott's father, he built it. He had a sister, Harold, Helen. She married Cornet from here, no she married George Incas. He used to help at the dance hall. We used to go to the lake dance starting out, and I always got a job taking tickets, because I knew Moransis good there too. We'd all help out. But what dances there. I got a bear if you want to take him home. Mark Kenny, he'd come in the spring, he'd have the dance at the

lake. He'd winter in Calgary and go to Toronto and play, come back in the fall, play here, go back to the coast. Mark Kenny. I've got all his things up there on top of that, no right here. I got a bunch of his, if you want to take them home and play them. Oh gee. Greg, Donna's boy in Lethbridge, he picks them up for me all the time. Any time I play them I think of the wife.

Q: So you've lived most of the history of this town.

BG: I've seen it all. Like I told you, from wooden sidewalks to cement to bootleggers. I had a horse when I was 10 years old, before that. I rode on the Waldron Ranch when I was 14.

Q: People talk about the struggles of the miners.

BG: Hard times. You'd maybe hear the whistle blow once, that would be work for the mine that next day. Maybe once in 2 weeks or once a week. No unemployment, no welfare, nothing in them days. Like I say, old Henry's act made sure the kids had their baloney and jam. Up here was old Steve Liosky. See this picture here? Coleman Collieries, that's a plane wreck up here by the airport. Coleman Collieries and Square M got together. They were Square M Coleman, built the \$2 million miles through the Trans Canada. They done all the drilling of the mountain in 2 miles. It's Square M Coleman. There was 4 Square M big shots – the manager, the president – they were coming into Coleman to have a meeting with our company here. The plane come in, we were just coming off shift at 4 o'clock. We didn't even come home, we went up and looked at it. It come over town and come over Flemings, and hit the top of a little tree and crashed into the bank of the river. Killed all 4 of them. That's the plane crash right there. This is when they were making the Roger's Pass, in the '50s. That's when our company and Square M had our shovels and all our men drilling and blasting the 200 miles. It was Coleman and Square M made that. Shot lighters and worked with powder in the mine. They had all the drillers that knew how to drill. We were doing work around for other people with the

bigger machines. And all the miners, they done all that work. They all went up there, and their whole life was made up there.

Q: There were some strikes that took place in these mines too.

BG: That's how I got the job. In 1930, '31, this was all what you call red. Tim Buck and Harvey Murphy. Tim Buck Blvd in Blairmore. You know Blairmore, the main street? They had a boulevard with trees down that main street. That was Tim Buck Blvd. And Blairmore, Bellevue was on the red side. Up here we were the scabs, we wouldn't join. Later it was the Canadian Mine Workers of Canada. Then it went to America came in. But in them days the reds were strong. May Day was not a holiday in them days, but it was a holiday through here. That day nobody worked. That was Miner's Day, May Day. But Blairmore, Coleman, they're still the same way, even though we're all together. But Blairmore and Bellevue, and Hillcrest was a little on the side. The union down there was strong reds. Up here there was a bunch and they all got black marked. They didn't have their jobs when the strike started in about '31. It ended in '32, that's when I got the job. They started up the mine, the strike was over, and they got the contract to get some coke ovens going. That's how I got the job. It was '31, '32, it was over in '32. That was some strike. I can remember living at home, my father's place. On a Saturday night in the Grand Union Hotel, they'd come out of there. The Rippins and the Ayises down Bushtown way, and the Hills and all them from Coleman. Oh the fights, right out in the gravel road on main street. There were lots of fights. And the old opera house where the post office is now, that was a big opera house there. That's before the fire. Then there was the old Palace Theatre. Then there was that café in Sally's block where the fire started, and burnt all that block out.

Q: The unions played quite a role.

BG: Oh ya. They got to be the Mine Workers of America then. They come in from Pennsylvania was the big shot, New York the big shot, the president. They took over after they got in trouble in Canada. So they took over. Then they got rid of that and went to

their own local union after. But it was tough in them days. You daren't say a word. Us kids we'd go to a dance in Frank, the old Frank Hotel, we used to have dances in there. Geez we'd get down there from Coleman, then Bellevue would come in there and Blairmore. Sergeant Cossie was a Mountie, he knew right away. He'd be down there a little later on with his gang and collect us. Boy there was fights galore, all kinds, fights galore. At the dances, oh you Coleman guys, what are you doing here? Well what the hell you guys doing here? And the fight would start. And the women too. Geez, I'll tell you.

Q: Do you remember the time when there was the OBU, the One Big Union?

BG: Ya, that's what I'm telling you. Then it split up after. They wanted a strike, Coleman didn't want a strike. So we went to work and they didn't. That's why they called us the scabs. But they stuck to their big union, that was a big union. Mine Workers of Canada, what you're talking about right now. That was a big union. Then it started to break up. Coleman broke away, then Bellevue started to fight with Blairmore a little. They wanted this and the others wanted that. These guys wanted to go to work, they didn't want to go to work. That's how it broke up. Then the American union come in and took it over. All our money, all our dues, was going over there. Any strike or any problem here, you didn't see any money, nobody got nothing. But they got paid well over there in the States if they were in trouble. And the new union was in favor, they were well paid. We never seen anything like that here. It took some guys like old Steve Liosky. There's Steve Liosky and old Jack Crushman right there. He was driving a company truck. He quit. Liosky and Ledew. My father was across from the Grand Union. You know Modern Electric on the corner there? That was Charley Oimet's general store in the old days. He went out of business later on, and Liosky and Ledew had a big store there. All that across from the Legion right across the parking lot and right up to Chris's restaurant, that was the Moholsky Block. Teddy Moholsky's father, Joe Moholsky, Moholsky's Trading Company. Out at the ranch he killed all the animals for the butcher around here down there. And he owned all the land from forest reserve through here. What wasn't the town was Joe Moholsky's. The school, young Joe sold that, that was his quarter. The next park was Anna Jones, Harold Jones's wife, that was her part, what was left after they died.

Teddy got the home place where he's at. Then the other place down in the swamp on the other side was his other sister, Hermina, that was hers. Then over across up by the reserve here, John T. Carol married Irene, and Bobby married Johnny what's his name, fire boss in the mine. But they all got a quarter. Old Joe Moholsky left a quarter. But Teddy got all that home ranch, and he's still on it.

Q: Did you ever meet Tim Buck?

BG: Oh hell, Tim Buck used to get up and talk. Steve Liosky, you know where Zack's store is today, that was the old Peaburns store, that's where Steve was. They used to have a meeting on the weekends, Saturday and Sunday, and they'd be on his horse wagon. Harvey Murphy and Tim Buck talking to the miners here. Al Cossie had his gang, the Mounties. Then it got bad in them days, the late '20s. Right at the start of the '30s when the strike started, hell they were marching up from Blairmore with guns, baseball bats. And the Mounties come in. They had about 20 Mounties in the Blairmore arena with their horses and all. They used to patrol the pass. And they used to get a kick. They'd be sitting on their horses. That's where I used to look after the corporal and the Mounties used to come up from Blairmore with his horse to Harry Andles barn. Where the Legion is was ? Food company. ? used to come up with his horse, he'd tell me to feed him, and I'd look after him, I'd be at the barn. He took me riding with him. They used to come up and sit on their horses at these meetings. You'd see them laugh at old Harvey Murphy. We had a fellow here ? Holy geez, the fights they used to get into, swinging 2 x 4s around and everything in the old opera house. It was comical but it was tough.

Q: Do you know Ben Swankey? He used to visit the Swankey house.

BG: He was quite a goer. But he got in trouble here, he had to leave. I think he went to Kimberley and Trail, and tried to form a union there, Harvey Murphy. Geez they pretty near killed him and he had to get out of there.

Q: They did form a union in Trail?

BG: Ya but later on, after. But he tried to get the red union in there. He was still with Tim Buck. That was strictly a red Bolshevik union.

Q: I wonder why Coleman wouldn't join, if the union improved conditions?

BG: Because all the Scotsmen, the Englishmen. He had all the Italians and the other people. They used to fight, even the home locals. Hill and all them would be fighting with the men who work in the home local union.

Q: The union had a lot of support from the Italians.

BG: Oh sure. But a certain amount of them people didn't want to associate with the other people, whether they were union or not union. That's how it was. To this day, Coleman wanted the hospital in Coleman, no Blairmore wanted it in Blairmore. Blairmore wanted the school in Blairmore, Coleman was getting it in Coleman. If Blairmore would've let it alone in them days, that school would've been built here, swimming pool indoor, everything, like Sparwood. But no, Blairmore wanted it. So that's the way it went. The big argument lately was trying to get the town hall. They wanted it in Blairmore, but they got a good one there and they had to cut it out, because they were talking big money. That's the way it is, it's still the same. Although it's Crows Nest Pass, Coleman is Coleman, Blairmore is Blairmore, Bellevue is Bellevue, Hillcrest is Hillcrest.

Q: That's why they wouldn't join the union then?

BG: That's the way it was.

Q: You were telling me the other day about how you'd bring the horses back from McGillivray?

BG: Ya, tail to tail. I had eight horses working at that mine that I had to take care of too.

Q: You mentioned earlier how you'd bring horses back from McGillivray tied halter to tail?

BG: Ya, and leave the harnesses on. I had to do all the harness work too. I made the harnesses. I had all the leather. I had to go up every Friday afternoon with my saddle horse and get them eight horses. Tie them head to tail and come down. I lived here. The kids would wait for me, and I'd come down the hill down through that opening, all with their harnesses on. Take them all in, take the harnesses off, look them all over good, feel them, see if they had cuts. Some had some cuts, but they weren't bad. ... A good felt pad you had to have on a horse. But if you got the horse broken, a good collar, dry collar, that's all you needed. Cuz a felt pad, you had to keep them clean or they would rub, the same as your clothes. But if they ever got to wearing nice leather on there, that was the best of all. They had their measures, 28 or 30 or 32, or 26 was small. But I had horses had 38 and 40. And I had horseshoes, like horseshoes for saddle horses 0 or 1 or double 1 or 2. When they to go 3, you're getting into the workhorse. I had horses number 5 or 6, like Sandy and them, great big feet. And I'd have to shoe them down there on the weekend when they come out of the mine, as well as look after them. Cuz I was doing that when I was just blacksmithing. I knew every horse, I'd make the shoes in the shop ahead of time. I used do two or three horses in the eight hours down there, big horses. When I was shoeing horses for the town kids, a dollar a foot. Now my boy, I trained him, he gets \$50 and \$80 for a horse. Jesus, what's them shoes made outa – gold? I might be nuts alright. In my days I was getting \$2.75 a day. When I got married in '36 I was getting \$4 a day. In them days a dozen eggs, 20 cents. Milk, 10 quarts for \$1. Sack of spuds, they throw them at you or whatever. I'm getting \$4 a day. Now I'm talking, my grandsons, \$26 an hour, \$250 a day. And you hear, oh geez, we gotta go on strike again, the cost of living. What difference is there between me, \$4 a day and still paying two bits for eggs, I still gotta pay 15 or 20 cents or two bits for a pound of meat. And I'm getting \$4, alright, that's okay. Now you're getting \$200 or so a day, you still get a good pound of meat for \$3.50, \$4.00. You can get a bag of spuds for ten bucks. You get your milk for 10 cents a quart

or \$2 a litre. I say, where do you figure this cost of living. I says, hey, stop right there. That's not the cost of living. The cost of living is my shirt that I gotta wear and grub I gotta eat. But it's the way you're living. You gotta have a car here, a truck there, a TV here and a TV in there, or a boat. It's the way you're living. Christmas time when I was a kid, if you seen a lollypop or you had little pork roast, you never seen all this. Now Jesus, they're in Christmas a month ago. It's not for kids anymore. They want you to buy a limousine or buy your family this whole house of stuff. Isn't that right? In my day, schoolteachers. That's one thing I'd tell any girl, if you want to get a good job, be a schoolteacher. They don't teach anymore. In my day, on Armistice Day, your head went down like that for a minute. That was your holiday. You had a couple of days at Christmas. You had maybe a day at New Year, Easter you had maybe three days. Now they have their two month holiday, they go for two weeks for a meeting in Edmonton, then they have two or three meetings a month in Hope. What they teach in five months of the year? And the kids, half the time they're not in school anymore. In my day, hell I was in grade 6, there were 7 and 8 and 10 in that room, grades that the teacher had to teach. And they squawk now? You know that. I'm in grade 2, and the teacher's got grade 3 there, grade 4 there, grade 5 there. She's gotta teach the whole bunch. Swing that at a teacher now and goodbye, I'm not working for you.

Q. Horses were a big part of your life weren't they?

Did you see some of these pictures? This here, I want to explain this. This is when we first started. That's the first rodeo, this wasn't even completed, '46 or '47. This is after it got going pretty good. Then I got another one here. ... This is when it was all ready. I can tell you who that is right now. Wild Bill Linderman from Redlodge, Montana, riding that horse. I was in the back there. He was a good rider. Him and Casey Tibbs. Herman Linder was our rodeo manager. He was one of the best of all of them. He's dead and gone now. I knew him well. He had about 20 championships. But this Wild Bill Linderman, and there was Winston Bruce from Calgary, and all that bunch. They all rode in Coleman. We held this just two weeks before the Calgary Stampede. They all used to come to our rodeo, all the big riders.

[END]