

**AN INTERVEIW WITH
MERRILL BARNUM**

**An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken**

**LINCOLN COUNTY TOWN HISTORY PROJECT
LINCOLN COUNTY, NEVADA**

CONTENTS

Preface Error! Bookmark not defined.	
Introduction.....	6
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
Merrill's parents' backgrounds; his school days in Mesquite and Bunkerville; highway construction work, then a move to a dairy; marriage to school teacher Iva Reber; the Barnums move to Pioche in the 1930s and Merrill finds work at the Number One Mine; a description of the Number One Mine's workings, and a steam-powered operation.	
CHAPTER TWO.....	8
Further description of the ore beds in the Number One Mine; on the method of drilling there; working in a 3-foot drift; the slushers and hoists used in the Number One; the work shifts at the Number One; further description of the ore beds in the Number One.	
CHAPTER THREE.....	15
Warning signs of potential mine cave-ins; details of a miner's clothing, and the shovels the muckers used; on timbering in a mine; recalling an experienced miner; memories of mining accidents; remarks on the connecting raise between the Caselton and Number One mines.	
CHAPTER FOUR.....	21
A description of the Caselton mining operation; on working for Combined Metals, and for Charlie Steen; on leases at the Number One during the early 1940s; the fan in the Caselton; the definition of a square set in timbering; the Barnums move to Utah, then return to Pioche, and Merrill takes a job at the Bristol Silver Mine.	
CHAPTER FIVE.....	27
On mining while hanging from the side of the face; the closing of the Bristol Silver Mine; Merrill's work at the iron sulphur plant at Caselton in the 1970s; on Merrill's children; a discussion of "10-day miners."	

CHAPTER SIX 32
Memories of running a drift and of working with an old-timer; on drilling in quartzite; memories of Ed Snyder, the Gemmill brothers and Phil Hulse; recalling cave-ins.

ADDENDUM..... 37
Recalling a fallen slab and trapped miners; the cable ladders in the Bristol Silver, and using safety harnesses there; on being trapped overnight in the Caselton, and on climbing out of that mine from a depth of 1400 feet.

PREFACE

The Lincoln County Town History Project (LCTHP) engages in interviewing people who can provide firsthand descriptions of the individuals, events and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interview are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the LCTHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the LCTHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the LCTHP will, in preparing a text:

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;
- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;
- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;
- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and
- e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

INTRODUCTION

Historians generally consider the year 1890 as the close of the American frontier. By then, most of the western United States had been settled, ranches and farms developed, communities established, and roads and railroads constructed. The mining boomtowns, based on the lure of overnight riches from newly developed lodes, and the settlement of most of the suitable farmland, were but a memory.

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that most of it south of the 38th parallel remained largely unsettled, even unmapped. In 1890 most of southern Nevada - including Lincoln County - remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be so for at least another 20 years.

Even in the 1990s, the frontier can still be found in Lincoln County in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area is also visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, much of it essentially untouched by humans.

A survey of written sources on Lincoln County's history reveals variability from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Pioche from its first newspaper, beginning in the fall of 1870, to the present. Newspapers from Delamar are available from 1892 to 1906 and Caliente from 1904 to 1868. In contrast, Panaca and Alamo never had newspapers of record. Throughout their histories, all Lincoln County communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities. Most of the history of Lincoln County after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Lincoln County's close ties to our nation's frontier past and the scarcity of written sources on local history (especially after 1920), the Lincoln County Commissioners initiated the Lincoln County Town History Project (LCTHP). The LCTHP is an effort to systematically collect and preserve the history of Lincoln County Nevada. The centerpiece of the LCTHP is a set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Lincoln County libraries, Special Collections in the James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada.

The interviews vary in length and detail, but together they form a never-before-available composite of each community's life and development. The collection of interviews for each community can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is unique--some are large, others are small--yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a view of community and county history that reveals the flow of life and events for a part of Nevada that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Lincoln County residents. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories. The oral interviews and written sources served as the basis for histories of the major communities in Lincoln County. These histories have also been archived.

The LCTHP is one component of the Lincoln County program to determine the socioeconomic impact of a federal proposal to build a high-level nuclear waste repository in southern Nye County, Nevada. The repository, which would be inside Yucca Mountain, would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Lincoln County Board of County Commissioners initiated the LCTHP in 1990 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions and quality of life of Lincoln County communities that may be impacted by the repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided in the area. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nevada, material compiled by the LCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--RDM

This is Robert McCracken talking to Merrill Barnum at his home in Pioche, Nevada, March 31 and July 4, 1992.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Merrill, why don't you tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate.
MB: Actually I never did have a birth certificate. I got my social security through my church records.
RM: Well, what is your name?
MB: My first name is Asahal. Nearly everybody spells it differently, but I spell it A-s-a-h-a-l. My name is Asahal Merrill Barnum.
RM: And when and where were you born?
MB: Mesquite, Nevada.
RM: What was your birth date?
MB: February the 20th, 1911.
RM: And what was your father's name?
MB: His name was Asahal James Barnum.
RM: And when and where was he born?
MB: He was born in the little town of Hebron, over in Utah. The town doesn't exist any longer.
RM: And do you know about when he was born?
MB: He was born September 28, 1881.
RM: Where did he grow up?
MB: In Enterprise, and later he moved down to Mesquite.
RM: What was your mother's name?
MB: Elmira Leavitt. She was born in Bunkerville, Nevada.
RM: Do you know her birth date?
MB: It was April 24, 1883.
RM: Were your parents LDS?
MB: Yes.
RM: Where did your mother grow up?
MB: Right there in Bunkerville.
RM: Were her family farmers there?
MB: Yes, they were all farmers.
RM: Where did you spend your first years?
MB: In Mesquite.
RM: Did you go to school there?
MB: We had school in Mesquite up to the 6th grade, and we went over to Bunkerville for the rest of it through high school.
RM: How big was your school at Mesquite? How many children were in it?
MB: Well, there were quite a few.
RM: Was it a one-room schoolhouse, or . . . ?
MB: Well, no. I don't know whether you've been through Mesquite . . .
RM: Yes, I have.

MB: The schoolhouse used to sit where the Texaco station is. There's where I started school. Later they built one up where the schoolyards are now, and there's where I finished the 6th grade. From there I went to Bunkerville.

RM: How big was Mesquite then?

MB: There was just a wagon track down through the sand, down Main Street.

RM: Were there many families living there?

MB: Oh, there were quite a few; it was quite a little place. I wouldn't dare say how many families there were, but there must have been 40 or 50.

RM: Was Bunkerville bigger than Mesquite?

MB: No, not necessarily. There's where the valley started, though Å in Bunkerville.

RM: Bunkerville was started by the United Order, wasn't it?

MB: Yes.

RM: Were there any remnants of that or anything when you were growing up?

MB: No, that was all gone.

RM: What did your father do?

MB: Well, he had a farm. And he spent a lot of time out on the freight road with wagons and horses. He freighted ore from some mine into St. Thomas around '08 and '10.

RM: Do you remember what mine it was?

MB: No.

RM: It wasn't a salt mine, was it?

MB: No, but there was a salt mine down below St. Thomas there.

RM: St. Thomas is underwater now, isn't it?

MB: Yes. It's been underwater for years.

RM: Did you finish high school at Bunkerville?

MB: What school I went through I finished there.

RM: How far did you go in school?

MB: About the third year in high school.

RM: What did you do then?

MB: I dropped out and went to work.

RM: Where did you go to work?

MB: I started working for a road construction outfit driving horses, and working on a Fresno. I worked some out of Vegas. I started in right up on top of Apex.

RM: When they were building the highway there?

MB: Yes. The outfit started down under the underpass on the other side. Then they came over to a place that used to be a service station out between Dry Lake and the next place.

RM: Were they paving the road or just building it?

MB: They were rebuilding it to be paved. It was paved shortly after that.

RM: When was this?

MB: I believe it was '27 Å '27 or '28.

RM: What other jobs did you work on after you got out of school?

MB: That's about all I did. I went from that job right with the same outfit up in Beaver, Utah.

RM: Working on the highway up there?

MB: Yes.

RM: How far did you build the road from Apex? Where did you go with it?
MB: As I said, there used to be a little service station, partway between Apex and Glendale.
RM: Oh, so you went up about that far?
MB: Yes.
RM: Was the road paved when you guys were done with it?
MB: No, it was just gravel.
RM: It was a gravel road into Las Vegas?
MB: Yes.
RM: I'll be darned.
MB: The road had been built years ago, but they were constructing it to be paved.
RM: What did you do after you worked at Beaver on the highway?
MB: I went down to Logandale, Nevada, and I worked at a dairy there.
RM: Which dairy did you work at?
MB: It was Whittwer. They shipped to Vegas.
RM: How many cows were there?
MB: They had up to 110 cows. They shipped [the milk] in 10-gallon cans. I milked right on 40 head.
RM: They didn't have milking machines then, did they?
MB: Yes, they were run by a little 1-cylinder engine Ä pup, pup, pup. Pup, pup, pup, pup, pup.
[Laughs]
RM: And that's how they got the suction Ä from that 1-cylinder engine?
MB: Yes. Then they had another one that ran a cooler to cool the milk. There was a larger one, then, to make ice with. In the summertime they'd ice the milk to be shipped to Vegas.
RM: Did each milking machine have its own engine?
MB: No, this little machine ran a vacuum.
RM: Oh Ä did it come down pipes to each cow?
MB: Yes.
RM: I'll be darned. But there was just one engine?
MB: Just one engine, and it ran 2 milkers.
RM: That was a big job, milking 40 cows that way, wasn't it?
MB: Yes. And the [machines] weren't too strong, so you had to go over the cows by hand to finish them.
RM: What kind of cows were they using?
MB: They were Holsteins.
RM: And the milk was going to Vegas?
MB: Yes. I believe it went to Anderson Dairy.
RM: What did you do after you worked there?
MB: [Laughs] I don't recall just what I did do. I did go on a road construction job from Vegas out towards Indian Springs. I worked out there for several months.
RM: Were they paving that road?
MB: Well, they were upgrading it for that purpose.
RM: It followed the old railroad grade, didn't it Ä that one out to Indian Springs?
MB: It could have, but I don't remember.

RM: When did you come to Pioche, Merrill?
MB: In 1934.
RM: What brought you up here?
MB: I was just looking for work. There was nothing going on down that way, so . . .
RM: Were you married?
MB: I was married at that time.
RM: Who did you marry?
MB: A girl by the name of Iva Reber.
RM: Was she from the Mesquite area?
MB: She was born in [the] Littlefield, Beaver Dam [area]. That's where she went to all of her school, too.
RM: You knew her from school?
MB: I knew her at school. She taught school for 2 years after she got out of high school just on her high school credits.
RM: Is that right? Where did she teach?
MB: Right there in Mesquite.
RM: I wonder what they paid in those days. Do you recall?
MB: I think main teacher got about \$3 and I think they paid her \$1.
RM: One dollar a day? Is that all? Plus room and board?
MB: [Laughs] No.
RM: She didn't get room and board?
MB: No, because she lived right there at home.
RM: Had you ever done any mining before you came to Pioche?
MB: No, I never even saw one. [Chuckles]
RM: Did you go to work right away when you came here?
MB: I got out here in August and I went to work the Wednesday after Labor Day in September.
RM: What mine did you go to work in?
MB: Number One, up on the hill south of town. The Number One was where all the work was going on in the '30s. They had another one up from it that they called the Number Three. That was more or less a gold property. The one I went to work in was lead and zinc and silver. It all carried some gold, but lead and zinc and silver were the main values.
RM: Where exactly is the Number One located?
MB: Right straight up Main Street and right on up the hill.
RM: How deep was it when you started?
MB: Twelve hundred feet. That's where most of us went. We had quite a little ways to walk back to get into the stopes there.
RM: How far back would you have to walk?
MB: Oh, maybe 3000 feet.
RM: How big were those drifts that you had to walk back in?
MB: Approximately 5-by-7.
RM: Five wide and 7 high?
MB: Yes.
RM: How big was the station on the 1200 where the skip was?

MB: Oh, I don't know Ä 12 feet high, probably. And it was big enough that when tracks came out it went on both sides of the shaft. They had the pocket there that they dumped. . .

RM: Oh, you dumped into a pocket and then that dumped into the skip?

MB: Yes. Then from down below they pulled it out of this pocket and it would go into the skip.

RM: Was a man down below pulling it out?

MB: Yes.

RM: Were there big ore bins that you dumped into there?

MB: Well, yes. I don't remember now just how many cars they would hold Ä probably 40 or 50 2-ton cars.

RM: How much could they hoist at a time?

MB: About 2 tons.

RM: Was there a skip and then a cage above it?

MB: Yes. The cage above it at the Number One was taken off when hoisting ore and put on to hoist men.

RM: Was it a 1-compartment shaft or a 2-compartment?

MB: It was a 2, but they just had a counterbalance on the side.

RM: It wasn't another skip?

MB: No, it wasn't another skip. It was a counterbalance.

RM: So they'd have to pull up and dump and then lower it back down. And there must have been a manway.

MB: Oh, yes. I've had to climb it a time or two. [Laughs]

RM: You've had to climb out of the 1200 feet Ä that must have been something! [Laughs]

MB: Yes.

RM: A guy would have to be in pretty good shape, wouldn't he?

MB: Well, [laughs] he'd get by if he didn't hurry too fast, you know.

RM: [Laughs] They had landings, didn't they?

MB: Oh yes. Like one fellow said, "When I got home that night, why, I walked around the table the other direction to unwind!" [Laughter] You'd climb one ladder, go down, get off and . . .

RM: Oh, you had to go to the other side and come up. Is that how it was?

MB: Well, you'd get off on a platform and ride around and take the ladder right over to the other one.

RM: Oh, I see. What were the occasions when you had to climb out of there?

MB: Well, if something'd go wrong with the skip or the power. For years, though, we never had [electric] power; it was run by steam.

RM: Was it steam when you got there?

MB: Yes. It was a steam hoist. They didn't get the power here until '37.

RM: What did they burn?

MB: Coal.

RM: How many shifts were they working at the Number One when you got there?

MB: Two mining shifts. But down on the main level the motor crew and one trammer up on another level generally worked 3 shifts, plus the hoist.

RM: So they hoisted 3 shifts?

MB: Yes.

RM: How did they tram the ore down in the mine? Did they use a motor?

MB: Yes.

RM: Was it an electric motor?

MB: It was battery charged.

RM: And they produced the power right there at the mine to charge the battery?

MB: Yes, right through the steam that operated everything. They had an outfit that fit right on the skip, and when the battery got low down here, they'd take the cage off and where the man sat to drive this, he'd just cut the bolts and drop that and drive that motor with the battery and up it'd go, and they'd put another one on.

RM: Oh, so they charged the battery on the surface?

MB: Yes, they charged the battery on the surface with a little electric outfit that was run by the steam.

RM: How many cars could that motor pull?

MB: I think it'd hold about 6 2-ton cars.

RM: How often did they have to change the battery?

MB: I don't know, but probably every shift.

RM: They didn't have electric lights in the mine or anything, did they?

MB: No, it was a carbide light.

RM: Did the steam engine on top generate electricity for the hoist?

MB: No, it ran the hoist directly.

RM: So if there was ever a loss of steam, you were screwed, weren't you? [Laughs]

MB: Yes. [Laughs] And once in a great while, the indicator on the hoist tells the operator where the skip was that would break. He'd run it into the shiv on top. So you'd have to crawl out before somebody hit that.

RM: Wow! Describe what a stope down there looked like, Merrill. They were flat beds, weren't they?

MB: Pretty much. Some of them rolled a little, but they were considered flat beds.

RM: How thick would a stope be?

MB: That depends on where you worked. You see, there were 3 different beds. The footwall bed was only about a foot thick, and then there was maybe 2-1/2 feet of waste. Then there was another bed that they called a low bed that was around 3 feet thick. When I first worked there, for a long time they'd mine that low bed all by itself. Like one fellow said, "I worked 9 years one summer in one of them low beds!" [Laughter]

RM: Hey, that's great! It was that hard?

MB: Yes. He said he wore out 3 sets of 6-ply tires on his knees. [Laughter]

RM: Was there another bed above the low bed?

MB: Yes, and that would run anywhere from 6, 7, 8 feet to maybe 35.

CHAPTER TWO

- RM: How far was it between the low bed and the next upper bed? How much waste?
- MB: Well, that usually ran around 5 or 6 feet. That way, you could mine that without . . . when I first went to work there, I worked in a stope that was only about 6, 7, or 8 feet high. They timbered it with what they called stulls and headboards. And when I was in there, if you got off the beaten path your light didn't shine enough to see the walls – you might even get lost. [Laughs]
- RM: Boy! The stope was that wide?
- MB: Oh yes – maybe 60, 70 feet across, and just stulls and headboards. I worked there for quite a little while. One morning I got up there and the fellow who usually got there first (I worked where he was working) was sitting back out of the way. I said, "What's the matter? You don't feel good today?" He says, "No. I've kind of lost my nerve. And if you sit down here and listen a little while, you'll lose yours, too." [Laughs]
- RM: What was happening?
- MB: That stope up there was taking weight and if you'd listen, you'd hear a crack and creak and that timber was starting to break. It was a-pressing it down.
- RM: Oh!
- MB: And it came in quite a ways right while we were there.
- RM: How far did it come in?
- MB: Oh, I don't know. It was quite a space back there and it was all mined out. There was quite a bit on down there that we never bothered with. You know, if [the stopes] get too big, they'll eventually come in.
- RM: What did you do that day when the fellow lost his nerve?
- MB: [Laughs] Well, all we could do was kind of clean up and get the equipment back a little further, where it wouldn't get buried.
- RM: It was caving in, then?
- MB: Yes, but it didn't all come in. There was quite a ways there that was . . . but we did work on it.
- RM: Did you leave pillars?
- MB: Well, especially up where the higher beds were they'd leave pillars [to be safe].
- RM: Would the pillars hold it?
- MB: To some extent, some of them. When they would get a pretty good-sized one all mined out there they'd go right out in the middle of it and take 8-by-8 foot timbers and just stack them one on top of the other to make what they called a "crib" from the floor right to the ceiling to help hold it.
- RM: Would they hold it?
- MB: Well, it'd help, sure.
- RM: Did you ever see those get crushed?
- MB: Yes, I have. They eventually fall around them and cave in.

RM: Were there just the 3 mineralized beds Ä the footwall bed, the low bed and then this higher one?

MB: Yes.

RM: Was there another ore bed above the higher one?

MB: No, that was it.

RM: When they went in to mine it, did they take the top bed first or the bottom bed first or what?

MB: Well, actually, they were a-working them all at the same time.

RM: I mean, say you've got a face in front of you. How would you go in . . . were they taking all 3 beds?

MB: No, they'd usually go up and work the high beds first, all right. But as I said, I worked in those 3-foot low beds.

RM: It was only 3 feet high?

MB: That was high-grade ore.

RM: What did it run?

MB: You know, I wasn't too interested in that. But it usually ran pretty high in all 3 Ä lead, zinc and silver.

RM: Would they go in and take the footwall bed first?

MB: Yes, but later, instead of just mining the footwall bed by itself, they mined this lower bed plus the waste between and the 3-foot low bed, all at once. That'd give you a 6- or 7-foot stope. The miners would try to break the waste between there quite coarse, and they could stack it off to the side.

RM: Did they hoist the waste out of there?

MB: Well, yes. Whenever they would run a waste drift it would be hoisted.

RM: But when you had the beds of waste in between the ore beds, did they hoist that waste?

MB: No. As I said, they would set it aside.

RM: What was the waste? Was it shale?

MB: Yes.

RM: It wasn't limestone?

MB: Well, it was really limestone. Like one fellow said, "If you're in doubt, just call it shale."
[Laughter]

RM: What kind of equipment were you using to mine it?

MB: At that time it was all handwork.

RM: How were you drilling your holes?

MB: They drilled with a crank machine.

RM: How did that work? It was pinned to the top and the bottom of the drift, wasn't it?

MB: Well, it sat on a bar that sat from the bottom to the top. There was an arm clamped onto that, out to the side, and there's where the machine sat. And they would move it around on this bar. And you'd be over . . . you see, that steam plant on top ran a compressor, and it put air down there. And they had the water to drill to keep down the dust.

RM: You had a water line down Ä you drilled with water?

MB: Oh, yes.

RM: And then you would crank it in? As it drilled the hole, you would crank it in to keep it going? The ground wasn't hard to break, was it?

MB: After you once got a hole in it, it'd break right easy.

RM: What kind of a cut did you use? A burn or what?

MB: Most of them, I think, used what they called the "hammer cut" to run a drift.

RM: Would you describe that a bit?

MB: Well, it looked down in the face . . .

RM: You'd drill some holes kind of going down to the floor?

MB: Yes. That would start it breaking, and then the higher-up ones would break. And then of course they had holes right along the bottom that would be your lifters.

RM: On a 5-by-7 drift, how many holes would you have to drill?

MB: That would depend on the ground. In some of that ore, they might have got by with maybe a dozen.

RM: How deep was your round?

MB: I don't know. Some of them drilled 4-foot rounds, some of them 5. It depended on the circumstances.

RM: What kind of powder did you use?

MB: Regular Hercules.

RM: What was it, 40 percent or something?

MB: A lot of it was 40, some of it 30. In the Number One for years you moved a lot of that ore with a shovel into a wheelbarrow. You'd wheel it down to a place where you dumped it. It went down and a fellow down below with a car would tram it out to another raise.

RM: How far down below would he be?

MB: That would depend. Some of them were only 7 or 8 feet, and sometimes they were 30 to 40.

RM: And you were dumping it into a bin?

MB: He'd dump it into another chute out there that went down to the 1200 where this train was.

RM: So you'd be working above the 1200?

MB: Oh, yes.

RM: When you broke the ore, you tried to break the waste and the ore separately, didn't you?

MB: Well, as I said, when they were mining that waste between, they'd try to break it big so they could stack it off to the side.

RM: How does a man work in a 3-foot drift?

MB: [Laughs] You know, that's quite a deal.

RM: I'll bet it is. [Laughs]

MB: You'd lie on your side a lot of times to do your shoveling out, and they had what they called a "slusher." You'd move the muck around to where this slusher could float it out.

RM: What ran the slusher?

MB: It was air.

RM: So you'd be down there at the face on your side mucking this stuff along so you could get it with the slusher?

MB: Yes. On your side or on your knees. [Laughs]

RM: Oh, my god. And you wore pads on your knees?

MB: Yes. A lot of times you wore pads. You'd cut so much off an old tire and wrap it right around your knees.

RM: Would you hold it with elastic, or what?

MB: Elastic or string.

RM: How long was the strip that you cut out of a tire?

MB: Oh, about 8 inches.

RM: Didn't your knees get sore anyway?

MB: Shoveling back and forth, yes.

RM: How far back in one of these 3-foot-high drifts would you be?

MB: Some of them would get back there 100 or so feet.

RM: Really? And how wide would the stope be?

MB: Sometimes it'd be 40 or 50 feet wide. They'd hold it up with stulls that high, with headboards on them. [Laughs]

RM: Oh, my god. How did you drill back in there?

MB: I never did drill a round in one myself. But they had those little short bars. They'd put a machine on a short bar and drill that. [Laughs]

RM: Did they have carbide bits back then?

MB: No.

RM: It was regular steel you sharpened? Did you have a blacksmith who sharpened it?

MB: Oh, yes. It was all done on the surface. They had some good blacksmiths.

RM: Did 2 men always work together? Was that the rule?

MB: Yes. You always had a partner wherever you worked. You at least had one partner, sometimes more.

RM: In the taller drifts -- the 7-foot drifts and the stopes -- when they mined that footwall bed, how high would the stope be going back into that?

MB: They never did mine that separately.

RM: When did they take it -- with the low bed?

MB: Yes.

RM: Oh, I see. When would they take the upper bed? What was it called -- the "high bed?"

MB: Yes, "high bed" or "upper bed."

RM: Did they take that before or after they took the low bed?

MB: Lots of times they took it before. Of course, a lot of times they were working both at the same time.

RM: Would they bench off -- take a bench and then drill in, make a bench, and keep taking the benches?

MB: No, they'd get back in there and start sideswiping it from one side or both sides.

RM: Oh -- and they'd take it out of there with the slusher? And what would they do, slush it back to where a guy could muck it?

MB: Well, most generally they'd pull it out right into a car.

RM: How would they get it into the car?

MB: They'd bring it up and they had a ramp. It would go right out onto a hole in this ramp, and they'd just put it right in the car.

RM: Was there a lot of hand mucking to load those cars?

MB: Oh, yes. When you'd run a drift or anything, it was all hand mucked.

RM: And the stope wasn't so much hand mucking, was it?

MB: The biggest part of it was. They never had a great lot of double drum slushers at that time, so a lot of it was hand work.

RM: Oh, the biggest part of it was getting on the old muckstick?

MB: Yes, a muckstick and a wheelbarrow. And the wheelbarrows had iron wheels . . . [chuckles]

RM: Oh, my god! How many tons could a guy muck out of there a day that way?

MB: Under good circumstances, 2 men could muck 15 to 18 tons.

RM: Would that include drilling and blasting it or just mucking it?

MB: Well, the miner did the drilling and the muckers did the mucking.

RM: Did a miner and a mucker always work together?

MB: Most every miner had 2 muckers.

RM: What was the pay for a mucker when you started there?

MB: Three dollars a day.

RM: Would the miner make more?

MB: I think 2 bits more.

RM: Did you start off as a mucker?

MB: Oh, yes. That's all I was for quite a long time.

RM: I still don't see how a guy would muck . . . you couldn't run a wheelbarrow back into one of those 3-foot drifts, could you?

MB: No.

RM: How would you get it out of there without a slusher?

MB: Well, in one place there was one guy back in there with a rope tied onto a powder box. He'd pull that empty powder box back there, fill it up, and this guy outside would pull it out. [Laughs]

RM: Was that a common thing to see down there?

MB: No, you didn't see that too often.

RM: How did they get it out of there ordinarily without a slusher?

MB: Well, they didn't.

RM: So they didn't have the 3-foot drifts before they got the slushers in there?

MB: No. They couldn't get that out very far. They'd have to keep moving it by hand. But a lot of times, instead of having a double-drum slusher, they'd have 2 little hoists (the regular little hoists, air hoists) that sat side by side. One would pull it back and one would pull it up.

RM: How big of a bucket would they use on their slusher?

MB: It wasn't too big, because back inside, one man would grab a hold of it and pull it.

RM: Oh, he could move it by hand?

MB: Well, from side to side, to help . . .

RM: Would it pull a wheelbarrowful or less?

MB: Just about.

RM: How many wheelbarrows of the size you were using there do you think it would take to make a ton?

MB: Five and 6.
RM: Was it wet down there?
MB: No.
RM: Did you have a problem with dust?
MB: Not too much. You did have a little smoke, especially on the night shift. There would be dust in the air, too, for that matter.
RM: Did you have to wet the muck pile down or anything?
MB: They never did too much because they didn't have any excess of water at that time. They didn't use any more than they had to.
RM: So it was gassy from powder smoke?
MB: Yes, at times.
RM: It was poorly ventilated, wasn't it?
MB: Number One was very poor.
RM: How in the world did you make it with all that smoke in there? Didn't it make you sick and give you terrible headaches?
MB: Well, sometimes you would have one, yes.
RM: What was your standard treatment for a headache?
MB: Just maybe an aspirin.
RM: Did you use ammonia?
MB: Yes. We had those little ammonia bombs in a little capsule.
RM: Did any of the fellows ever wear wet sponges over their face?
MB: I never saw them too much during the '30s up here at Number One.
RM: You did see them, though?
MB: Oh, yes. After we moved to Caselton we had them quite a bit.
RM: When you started at the Number One, how many men do you think they were working there?
MB: They must have had 100 or better. I don't remember how many they did have. In fact, I don't ever remember really counting them up. On the 2 shifts they had quite a crew of men.
RM: Did you change shifts? How long did you work one shift?
MB: Two weeks.
RM: Two weeks on one shift and then two on the other. How did you like that?
MB: Some liked it pretty well and some didn't.
RM: Did you like it?
MB: Well, it gave you a change of atmosphere outside.
RM: What time did you go on shift on the day shift?
MB: I think they started right about 8:00. The other shift didn't go down for maybe an hour after they'd gone out. It might even have been 2:00 in the morning when they came out.
RM: Oh, OK. Maybe it was 8:00 to 4:00 and 6:00 to 2:00 or something. It'd give it a chance to air out, wouldn't it, after they blasted? But you didn't have a problem with water down there in the Number One?
MB: No. There was a little stream of water just along the side of the track going up this main drift.

RM: Did they call that the "piss ditch?" I heard my dad call it that.

MB: That's just about what they called it, all right. [Laughs]

RM: [Laughs] Did the drifts have to be timbered there?

MB: Now, this particular drift never had any timber in it. And a lot of the drifts there at Number One didn't have any.

RM: Were they working a lot of different levels in the Number One or was it just down around the 1200 that they were working when you started there?

MB: Well, some men got off on the 600 and went back and down an incline and worked some stopes down in there.

RM: Were they the same beds or different beds than the one you were working on?

MB: It was all the same bed.

RM: Were the beds faulted a lot and everything?

MB: Yes. Actually, when they first hit that ore bed it wasn't more than 300 feet down, but it just kept a-dropping.

RM: Oh. Did it go down steadily or did it step off?

MB: No, it just faults down.

RM: It faulted till pretty soon it was clear down on the 1200.

MB: Yes. And eventually it was plumb down on the 1400. They mined right on the 1400 level, plus the raises up to different levels.

RM: But it was always the same 3 beds?

MB: Well, it seemed to me that after it got over that way farther, you didn't see that low bed too much.

RM: You mean as you got over toward Caselton?

CHAPTER THREE

- RM: How long did you work at the Number One, Merrill?
- MB: Up until '39.
- RM: I understand that it was pretty dangerous down there Ä that there were a lot of accidents and everything.
- MB: Well, there were a few. One or two got killed there. But a lot of it depended on the man himself Ä how he looked at things and listened at things.
- RM: What did you have to pay attention to, to keep from getting hurt?
- MB: You could hear little rocks a-falling over there someplace, and you wanted to be awful careful, because something over there was going to fall in. The shift boss told me one time, "You watch Jessie Fish. If he'll move his bed from someplace to another place, why, don't you go back in there for anything. It don't matter what there is back there. That's no place for man or beast."
- RM: Is that right? Who was Jessie Fish?
- MB: He was an old miner there. One day I was working in the same vicinity he was working. We had to climb the raise, and there were 3 different crews working up there, all coming into the same place, dumping and mucking the same chute. Everybody parked their lunch buckets at a certain spot every morning, including Jessie Fish. This particular morning he set his bucket down, started to walk off, looked around again, picked his bucket up and took it someplace else. [Chuckles] I took my bucket around to the same place as Jessie Fish. By lunchtime some of those lunch buckets were kind of mashed up a little bit. There had been some stuff slough off and come down right where all of us sat to eat lunch.
- RM: Wow. How did he know?
- MB: I don't know. It was just one of those feelings, you know.
- RM: Do you know much about Jessie Fish other than that? What kind of a fellow was he and where did he come from?
- MB: He came from over in Utah someplace. He was a good LDS man.
- RM: How old a man was he?
- MB: I don't know what his age would be, but he'd been at the business quite a little while, I guess.
- RM: Do you know any other stories about working conditions down there?
- MB: I never really had too many close calls at the Number One. I mashed a finger and one thing or another of course, but I never did have a lost-time accident. I got by pretty good. You watch things, and you listen. Lots of times you can hear things working.
- RM: And that's the sign to get out?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: What kind of work clothes did you wear in the mine?
- MB: I always wore bib overalls and a regular pair of shoes.
- RM: Did you wear steel-toed boots?
- MB: We didn't have them much at Number One. Later, it got so they required them.
- RM: So you just wore rather light, high-top leather shoes down in the mine?

MB: Yes. You could buy rubber boots.

RM: Did your leather shoes get wet?

MB: In some places, yes, there's enough moisture that they would get wet. But actually it didn't have a lot of running water anyplace outside of down that main drift that came from way back in the tail end of that main drift. I worked in a drift on the 1200 that Y-ed off from the main drift. We'd muck right into those 2-ton cars that they had down there. We were mucking anywhere from 8 to 10 of those every day.

RM: Two of you?

MB: Two muckers and then the miner was there, too. But you never saw a miner do too much mucking. [Laughs]

RM: Yes. [Laughs] Were you mucking off of a flat sheet or anything like that?

MB: Yes.

RM: What kind of shovel were you using?

MB: It was what they called a "scoop shovel." And of course they had the regular square shovel.

RM: Did you use a round point much?

MB: Well, yes, to get right into the face and muck out you used a round point.

RM: When you were mucking, did you always muck with the same hand or did you switch hands?

MB: I usually always mucked with the same hand.

RM: What kind of shirt did you wear down there?

MB: Just a regular chambray shirt or whatever.

RM: Long-sleeved?

MB: Yes.

RM: It wasn't cold down there or anything?

MB: No, it was warm. After you put in a shift back there and got down on the main level, if you had to sit around very long you'd get cold. But ordinarily the country was quite warm.

RM: There were no vent pipes coming down, were there? Did you used to blow an air hose to get some air down there?

MB: Yes, only the last few months. I got to helping the timberman one time. We'd go around and measure for the stulls and go out and get timbers and cut them, and stand them up there and put a headboard on them and wedge them in so the miner wouldn't knock them out. [Laughs]

RM: You mean blast them out? How close to where you were blasting could you put timbers back in those stopes?

MB: Actually a lot of them didn't have to be too close. An old timberman could go in there and look the place over and say, "Well, we'll put one right over there when they get it mucked out." [Laughs]

RM: There were no such things as roof bolts and things like that in those days, were there?

MB: No.

RM: Who was your shift boss when you first started there?

MB: My shift boss all the time I worked Number One was Harvey Sprague.

RM: Was he a local man?

MB: He'd been here for a long time; I don't know just how long he had been here. He lived in Panaca, and he was an old hand here. He was the guy who was telling 2 or 3 of us (he called us kids), "When Jessie Fish moves his bed out of someplace, why, you kids stay out of there."

RM: What did he mean by "bed?"

MB: The place he'd go lie down and take five after he got his round in.

RM: Oh Å he did a dry lagging.

MB: Yes Å stretch out.

RM: [Laughs] "Stretch out." That's what he meant by it? That's funny. Who was the superintendent then?

MB: Henry Coleman.

RM: Was he a local fellow?

MB: No, I think he came from Utah. I imagine the Snyders sent him in here, although I don't know too much about that.

RM: Did he have a family and everything here?

MB: Yes.

RM: Did Ed Snyder come around much?

MB: I don't ever remember seeing him when I was working the Number One. I might have done so, but I don't recall it.

RM: Where were they treating the ore?

MB: It was shipped to Bower, Utah.

RM: Was that AS&R?

MB: I don't remember what that was. It was way up in the '40s when they finally got the mill here. The ore was transferred from Number One down to the railroad here on cars with an engine just like that one.

RM: Oh, OK. (We're talking about the engine by the courthouse in Pioche.)

MB: I think that's the original one that ran back and forth to Jackrabbit. They had one that hauled it from up here and dumped it into the cars. This was a narrow gauge, but it dumped into the regular gauge cars down at the mill below town.

RM: The regular gauge train took it down to Caliente, didn't it?

MB: Yes.

RM: Merrill, what did you think? You'd been working on roads and everything and you came up here and found yourself mucking in a mine. It must have been a big shock, wasn't it?

MB: [Laughs] Well, in a way, yes. But it was a job. It didn't pay a lot of money, but we got by.

RM: Did you ever feel claustrophobia or anything like that down in the mine?

MB: No, I don't ever remember that.

RM: It seems you didn't have any problems adjusting to working underground.

MB: When I saw them take the first dead man out up here at Number One, it kind of got me a little bit. But in later years I even helped transfer them and everything.

RM: Were there quite a few people killed there?

MB: We didn't have a lot of them, no. I helped transfer more who had just been hurt.

RM: Were a lot of guys hurt?

MB: Actually with the crew that worked here at one time, there weren't.

RM: What kind of accidents usually took place?
MB: Oh, some rocks would fall and catch them before they could get out of the way. Things like that.
RM: Did you ever have any running fuses?
MB: I don't remember ever having any, and we used a lot of [fuses]. After we moved to Caselton, I did a lot of mining myself. We used a lot of it.
RM: You didn't mine at Number One, though? You were just mucker?
MB: Just mucker and timber helper.
RM: Were the timbermen permanent timbermen? They had guys who only did timbermen jobs?
MB: That's about all they did.
RM: And were the trammers motormen? That was their permanent job?
MB: Yes.
RM: They had the muckers and the miners. What other jobs did they have there? Hoistman?
MB: Yes, they had hoistmen. And what they called "slushermen."
RM: OK, that was a permanent job?
MB: Well, he probably had other jobs, too, especially at Number One.
RM: Did the Number One connect into Caselton?
MB: It does, yes.
RM: It didn't when you were working there, or did it?
MB: No. It was '39 when they connected the 2 together.
RM: Why did you transfer over to Caselton?
MB: They pretty well shut this side down.
RM: Why did they shut it down over here?
MB: I don't know for sure.
RM: Were they out of ore?
MB: There were 2 or 3 sets of leasers that stayed there and leased for quite a few years. I don't know just what the big reason was that they kind of left it.
RM: I've been told they started a union up here at Number One. Tell me about that.
MB: Well, I don't think it amounted to . . . it wasn't a very strong union.
RM: Why did they start a union?
MB: They were after some more money and Snyder wouldn't talk to them unless they appointed certain ones to come and do the talking.
RM: What were they asking for?
MB: I think they were only asking for around 4 bits a day more. But, you know, at that time that was a lot.
RM: Did the start of the union have anything to do with safety conditions?
MB: Not too much as long as they worked here at the Number One. But later . . .
RM: What were they doing at the Number Three during this period?
MB: They were mining and they had a tramway across. And where that layout's sitting beside the road they dumped right across there with a little battery motor, with cars. It was sent to the mill down here on the tram.
RM: Oh, they milled the ore out of the Number Three, but they didn't out of the Number One?
MB: No, because Number Three was gold.

RM: Oh, I see. Was the Number Three Combined Metals?
MB: No, it was a different outfit altogether – the Raymond Ely Amalgamated.
RM: Was Number Three going in the '30s?
MB: Yes.
RM: How many men do you think there were working over there?
MB: I really don't know – they had quite a little crew there.
RM: So in '39 they moved you over to Caselton?
MB: Well, I really got laid off at Number One when they were curtailing everything. And when I was hired back, Caselton is where I was hired.
RM: Did you live over there?
MB: No.
RM: How did you get over there?
MB: We drove over.
RM: The shaft was already sunk at Caselton?
MB: Yes. In fact, at the time I went over there, the 2 mines were connected.
RM: How were they connected?
MB: They ran a raise from the 1400 up to the 1200 and connected the drift that came from the 1200 on the Number One to this raise.
RM: So the 1200 on Number One and the 1400 on Caselton are connected?
MB: Yes, but it's through a raise – the connection.
RM: Was there a hoist on the raise?
MB: Oh, yes.
RM: Did they move ore back and forth between them at all?
MB: No.
RM: How deep was the Caselton?
MB: Fourteen hundred feet.
RM: Was there water in the bottom at the Caselton?
MB: Oh, lots of water at the Caselton.
RM: But not in the Number One?
MB: No. They never pumped water from Number One. This little stream coming out of there ran all the time [and it just disappeared in the mine]. Fish would lie out there and disappear.
RM: They'd disappear inside the mine? I'll be darned. What levels were they working at the Caselton?
MB: Well, let's see. How high was the raise? About 100 feet. They ran a raise from the 1400 up to the 1300 to get in the ore up there.
RM: Where, from the 1400?
MB: The 1400 up.
RM: They had to go that deep to get under it? Is that what they did – they got under the ore?
MB: Yes. When I first went to work over at Caselton, I was working in a stope about 10 feet above the 1400 level. Later I went up higher. I got to help a timberman there. We were to maintain this big raise that went up to the 1200. And lots of times the ore or whatever they were dumping in there would get stopped and we'd have to be on that raise and one

thing or another to get it to run. Because this raise had 2 other offsets in. They'd dump it in the top and then you could draw it from there into another section. You'd go down and you could draw it from that section down to the one that goes on down to the 1400. It wasn't one full chute going through, because it wouldn't have stood, I don't think, all that.

RM: Yes. It'd be too far, wouldn't it? It would tear it up.

MB: Yes.

CHAPTER FOUR

- RM: How many men were they working over at the Caselton when they got it going?
- MB: At one time they had as many as 300 men working over there.
- RM: When was that?
- MB: The late '40s.
- RM: It really went during the war, didn't it?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: But the Number One didn't operate during the war. Was all the ore gone?
- MB: No, it wasn't gone. I don't know why they curtailed it; I guess they wanted to get over in that other country.
- RM: Does the ore step off over at the Caselton like it does at the Number One?
- MB: Yes. From Number One over there, it dropped right down to where this mine is from the Caselton, from the 1400 and up. I don't know whether they ever checked whether it goes on below or not.
- RM: How were they hoisting the ore over at Caselton?
- MB: They had a big double drum, double shaft and everything. It was a big hoist.
- RM: Was it electric?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: And how were they moving the ore underground? Did they have electric motors there?
- MB: Battery, just like in that picture.
- RM: Were they charged underground?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: Did you have electric lights in the Caselton?
- MB: Yes, we had lights. And in one raise they had a regular elevator. You'd get on it at the bottom and run it yourself. You'd get off up top and the guy down below could punch the button and it would go back down.
- RM: I'll be darned! How far did it go?
- MB: Oh, 100 feet or a little more.
- RM: What beds were you working on over there? Were they the same beds as the Number One, only over at Caselton?
- MB: Yes, they were the same. As I said, actually I never saw the lower beds, the footwalls. I don't remember seeing them. But some of the stopes were quite high. They had to timber them all as they went. They had the square sets and some of them were 3- or 7-foot sets on top of one another.
- RM: You mean they were digging in 21 feet of ore? The ore seam was 21 feet thick?
- MB: Well, in places. In places it wasn't.
- RM: What was the thinnest it got over there?
- MB: Oh, around 6 or 7 feet.
- RM: How do you mine an ore bed that's 20 feet thick? Do you start at the top and keep benching it off?

MB: No, they started at the bottom. If they drove back to where they wanted to go, then they would square set the drift that they drove. Then when they'd get back to maybe the end of the ore at that particular place, they'd start to slab it off on one side or the other. And then they'd go up. They'd square set this out here, then they'd go up the height of . . . whatever it takes.

RM: The height of the ore, that is?

MB: Yes.

RM: How do they pick the ore up?

MB: With the slusher; they had a lot of electric slushers in there. The big ones would carry pretty good loads.

RM: How big a bucket would the big slushers have? Half a yard?

MB: Well, pretty close.

RM: And then would they slush it into a ramp that a car would be under?

MB: A lot of them would slush it right into a chute that would go down . . .

RM: The chute would be under the working level then?

MB: Yes. Part of the time they'd drive a drift underneath. They'd run a raise up to the ore and the ore was all brought into these raises. They might have 3 or 4 different raises that they were slushing ore into all the time. This outfit [points to a picture] ran 2, 3 or 4 cars and they'd pull it out of 2 or 3 different raises.

RM: Oh Å the motor you're showing me. So the motor would haul 2 to 4 cars?

MB: Yes. Actually they'd haul more than that, but there's just a short distance there, because down on the main level, when they were really a-mining a lot of that, it was mined off the 1200.

RM: You hoisted the ore out of what level?

MB: A lot of it was right from the 1400. Later they always drifted from the shaft back and raised up and there's where they had this elevator. And that's where this motor was, on top of the raise where this elevator was.

RM: I see. How many cars would a motor pull at the most?

MB: Down on the main line I think they were pulling 10, if I remember right. Now, it might have only been 8.

RM: Then they would dump the cars into a big ore bin at the station?

MB: Yes.

RM: And then load the ore bin into the skip. How much could they hoist at a time?

MB: I think they figured 3 tons to the skip.

RM: And they were hoisting that to the surface and then were milling it?

MB: Yes. They got the mill going around '43.

RM: What were they doing before that?

MB: They were shipping it.

RM: And they were pumping a lot of water out of there, weren't they?

MB: Oh, lots of water, especially off the 1400. They had a lot of water down there.

RM: Was the shaft already sunk when you got there in '39?

MB: Oh yes. I think it was sunk in '29.

RM: Had they done much work over there between '29 and '39?

MB: No, about all they'd done was run the shaft. In the latter part of '30 they started to run a drift in, and that's where they hit so cussed much water back in the drift.

RM: They had a big camp there for the men, didn't they?

MB: Yes they had 40 to 50 single men housed over there at Caselton during that time period, and Mrs. Wah cooked for them.

RM: Did you get down to the Prince Mine much?

MB: No, I never did go down it.

RM: They weren't connected, were they, the Caselton and the Prince?

MB: No. And I never did work at the Pan-American [either].

RM: How long did you work at the Caselton?

MB: I went over there in '39 and they pretty well shut the place down in '57.

RM: So you worked there for 18 years?

MB: The same company was [headed by] the fellow who headed the uranium operation over in Moab, Utah, and I went over there.

RM: Was it Charlie Steen's operation?

MB: Well, we worked for the same outfit.

RM: Oh, it was Combined?

MB: Well, Snyder and all were mixed into the mine over there. Milt Hansen and I went over there. I went over in August and came back from Moab in that same year, in November.

RM: So they were digging ore out of Caselton from '39 to '57. There must be some big underground workings there.

MB: Yes, there are. But in the last 2 or 3 years they were back over in those old Number One stopes again.

RM: Oh. Not working them out of Caselton?

MB: Yes. Where they connected the 2 drifts in on the 1200 on Caselton, right on the drift that came from Number One, they connected them. But the track from Number One over was on an 18-inch gauge and the other one was on a 24. So they had to widen the track out over to this one big raise at the Number One.

RM: They were trammig that ore a long ways, weren't they?

MB: Yes, it was quite a ways there.

RM: And they did that about 2 years?

MB: Yes; maybe a little more.

RM: Was the hoist at the Number One working?

MB: Well, yes. It could operate, you know.

RM: Was it still a steam hoist?

MB: No, after they got the electricity here they converted that over to electricity, too.

RM: Yes, but the Number One didn't really operate that long after they got the electricity, did it? I mean, it only went another 2 years, didn't it?

MB: That's about all, but they ran some out of that way for quite a little while at different times. As I said, there were some leasers, and their ore went out Number One.

RM: Were the leasers there all during the war at Number One?

MB: Yes, there were some there.

RM: But most of the activity was coming out of the Caselton?

MB: Yes, that's where the big operation was all during the war.

RM: Were working conditions at the Caselton better than at the Number One?

MB: Yes. They put in a big fan that sucked air at Caselton, right out Number One. Where this big fan sat they had a power door, and it was all one man could do just to open that door!
[Laughs]

RM: Is that right? Did they have a ventilation shaft on the Caselton? I mean, the fan was coming out of the shaft?

MB: No, it sat way back of the drift and it was sucking it from one and blowing it the other way.

RM: Oh, it was sucking the air down the shaft and into the mine?

MB: Yes, down the Caselton shaft Ä right on out the drift and out Number One.

RM: Wow, what a fan!

MB: Oh, it was a pretty good-sized one. As I say, it took all of what one man wanted to do just to open that door.

RM: When did they put that fan in?

MB: As quick as they had the 2 places connected. I don't remember whether they put that fan in before they connected up on the 1200 or not Ä but it seemed like they did have one in there. But it sucked it in from the 1400 (if they did) and out. But later when they connected with the 1200 drift to Number One, why, it sucked it right through. And of course, it could suck some from the 1400, too.

RM: And where was the fan located?

MB: In back of the drift, just towards the Number One from where the big raise came up from the 1400 and connected.

RM: Oh, OK. So it would pull some out of the 1400. It sounds like you didn't have problems with cave-ins and everything over at the Caselton, either, did you?

MB: They had a few, yes.

RM: Did you lose many men over there?

MB: They lost one or two.

RM: Did they? From cave-ins?

MB: Yes.

RM: So the Caselton was just as dangerous as the Number One?

MB: Well, they timbered Caselton a little different than they did Number One. They didn't do any square-setting or anything in Number One and that's the way they timbered everything in Caselton.

RM: I thought they put in posts in Number One. It was just posts and cap Ä would you call it a board across the top?

MB: Yes, a "headboard," they'd call it.

RM: What's a square set, then?

MB: To make a post square, you'd have a post here and a post over there and caps that connect them all the way around.

RM: Four posts coming up with cap all the way around? Oh.

MB: Yes. And they were framed, so that when you wanted to go up another set, they'd fit right in.

RM: Oh. But it formed a square, didn't it? And then the legs of the square were hooked together at the top, right? I mean, you had 4 on top?

MB: Yes. It was had 4 different caps, you see.

RM: And that'll hold a lot better?

MB: Yes. You can work underneath a lot of it.

RM: Whereas a post and a cap, you can't?

MB: Well, they were just holding up that particular section.

RM: I see. Where was the timber coming in from, do you know?

MB: I don't know exactly where it was all coming in from, but they sure used a lot of it there in Caselton.

RM: It probably came in on the railroad, didn't it?

MB: Oh, yes.

RM: You say you worked at the Caselton until 1957. Is that when they shut it down?

MB: That's when they curtailed it plumb entirely. All they left were 3 men who were there for quite some time getting equipment out or one thing or another.

RM: Did they strip the mine of its equipment underground?

MB: I don't know exactly how much they ever did take out, but I imagine they took a lot of it.

RM: And then you went to Utah. What mine were you working in over there?

MB: I don't even remember the name of it; it was a uranium mine.

RM: Was it a big mine?

MB: They had quite a crew there.

RM: It wasn't Charlie Steen's mine, was it?

MB: No.

RM: Was he in on the deal?

MB: Not on this particular one. He had one there, you know.

RM: Yes, and he came into Pioche later, didn't he?

MB: Yes.

RM: Why didn't you stay in Utah?

MB: I just didn't like the place and the family didn't like it at all, so we came back here.

RM: You were working in sandstone over there, weren't you?

MB: Yes. In some ways the mining was altogether different and in other ways it was all the same thing.

RM: What did you do when you got back here, then?

MB: I sat around drawing unemployment for a while, then I got a job out the Bristol.

RM: Tell me what was happening out at Bristol.

MB: At the time I went out there, they had quite a crew.

RM: Would that have been in '59?

MB: I think I went to work out there in March in '58.

RM: What were you doing out there?

MB: Well, a little mining. That was altogether a different type of mining out there.

RM: How was it different?

MB: The stopes out there ran vertical for maybe 300 feet.

RM: Is that right? How wide were they?

MB: Some of them got to be a pretty good size – maybe 40 or 50 feet.

RM: Is that right? Was it the same formation as over here?

MB: Oh, no. It was a different country altogether. You had to learn to mine all over again.

RM: Is that right? What was the country rock? Was it shale, too?

MB: It was old hard limestone. Some of those ore beds maybe came up 200 or 300 feet and offset a little ways and then went up another 200 or 300 feet.

RM: And it wasn't the same ore beds here that had been turned on end?

MB: Oh, no. It was copper. Of course some places carried lead and usually they all carried silver. But the main product was copper. That was quite a deal out there. [Chuckles] They would hit that and then go up on it. They'd try to go right up on the hanging wall – take the hanging wall right out. And lots of times there would be a lens flat enough that you could work around on the footwall, to come down on it. You could blast out some trails around, you know. I worked in lots of places where if there wasn't already a hole handy that you could drive a peg in that you could anchor yourself to, that's the first thing you did. You would anchor yourself to keep from falling down the stope for 200 or 300 feet. [Laughs]

RM: Wow!

CHAPTER FIVE

- RM: So you were working in these big stopes with 200 to 300 feet of open air below you?
- MB: Oh, yes. [Laughs]
- RM: Weren't you scared?
- MB: Well, sometimes I was just a little bit nervous, but after a while you get to where it doesn't necessarily bother you as long as you've got a foothold underneath you.
- RM: Yes.
- MB: You know, coming down that footwall, you have your trails and benches to work on.
- RM: Yes. So you're doing everything in the air just like you used to do it in the flatbeds here in Pioche?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: How many men were working at Bristol when you went out there?
- MB: They must have had at least 20 men on a shift, and 2 shifts. On the day shift, I think they had more working on the surface and all that.
- RM: How deep were the workings? Did they have a shaft?
- MB: Oh yes, but it was on an incline. It went down to the 1700.
- RM: And did they have workings all the way up?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: And it was basically these vertical beds?
- MB: Yes. Sometimes they got quite flat and other times they were pretty steep. The way they found a lot of them was by having these drifts run. And then they would longhole them. They had one big outfit that [made] 200-foot holes.
- RM: Wow.
- MB: Regular machines drilled 60-to-70-foot holes. That's the way they'd find a lot of those stopes.
- RM: So they'd drift out under them?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: And when they'd blast the ore would come down into a chute and then they'd hoist it out – is that right?
- MB: A lot of times they'd muck it up with a mucking machine.
- RM: Oh, so there was no more hand mucking at the Bristol?
- MB: Oh, in one of those mines you never get plumb away from all of that. [Chuckles]
- RM: Yes, that's right. But they'd muck it up in a mucking machine into a car and then they'd take it out and hoist it up the shaft?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: And then it went over the hill in an aerial tram, didn't it?
- MB: Well, for quite a few years it did. But by the time I was out there they had discontinued that and were trucking it around to Pioche.
- RM: Was the railroad gone by then?
- MB: Yes. They trucked it from Jackrabbit for quite a long time, even when it came over the hill on the tram. Then they discontinued that and the trucker went plumb to Bristol.
- RM: Was there a camp at Bristol?

MB: Oh, yes. For a long time they even had school out there.

RM: Was the school there when you were there?

MB: Yes.

RM: Did you live there or did you live in town?

MB: I lived here [in town].

RM: What was at Jackrabbit at that time?

MB: Nothing. That is, there were no workings. Combined, I think, did some manganese work for a while in some of those places, but that didn't last very long.

RM: They originally had a big power plant at Jackrabbit, didn't they?

MB: Yes; I think they gave a little power over here.

RM: I wonder what they did with those generators there.

MB: I don't know. They had a little generator up here at Number Three, too.

RM: How long did you work out at Bristol?

MB: I went out there in '58, and she went plumb down in '71.

RM: There was a big copper strike then, wasn't there?

MB: Well actually, they kind of ran out of ore; they couldn't find any. From '64 to '71, there were just 2 of us miners out there. One time we spent the biggest part of a year a-going from level to level longholing, trying to find anything. [Laughs] We never did find any. We were running a drift and we finally hit some and we mined that out. And that's the last that we ever found.

RM: When did you ship the last ore out of Bristol?

MB: Oh, some time in '71.

RM: So, basically, that mine shut down because there was just no ore?

MB: Yes. Whoever was putting up the money for it just closed their purse strings and that was it.

RM: Did they pull all the equipment out of the mine and everything?

MB: I don't think it was all taken out. I know the last time I was there there were still a lot of motors and little generators that charge the batteries and all that. But while we were a-working, we pretty well pulled all the small equipment -- our hoses and machines and the slusher and all that.

RM: Who owned it when you were out there?

MB: Some outfit from Salt Lake. All I ever knew it by was Bristol Silver.

RM: What did you do when you left there?

MB: I went over to the iron sulphur plant that they had at Caselton.

RM: Oh, really? I haven't heard about that.

MB: It ran there for years and years. Then they got in a squabble about who owned the tailings down there [chuckles] and they pulled everything out.

RM: Tell me a little more about this iron and sulphur operation at Caselton.

MB: They made it out of the tailings from the mill at Caselton. They went down to those old tailing ponds -- there's good iron there, and they have a lot of zinc and everything. They hauled that up to a little plant they had and put out a fertilizer of iron sulphur. They had to buy a little zinc and a little manganese to mix with what they got, but, boy, they shipped carload after carload of that.

RM: Just from processing those old tailings?
MB: Yes.
RM: Was that when they had that kiln over there?
MB: No, this was just a private outfit that sat close to Prince.
RM: When did they start it?
MB: I really don't remember. But man, it was running for years and years before I went over there and it ran for another year or two after I left it.
RM: When did you go there?
MB: I think I went there just a while before Christmas in '71.
RM: How long did you stay?
MB: Till around July in '75.
RM: And why did they shut down, again?
MB: Some other outfit came in there and claimed they owned those tailings. They squabbled back and forth for 2 or 3 years. I think the outfit that took them over figured they could get the plant and everything, but R. J. Dalton moved that plant right away from there.
RM: What was the name of the company?
MB: R. J. Dalton.
RM: And they made fertilizer? Where were they selling it?
MB: In California.
RM: So he moved the plant out of there when these other people [took over].
MB: [The remains of the plant] are all sitting out here at the side of the road going around to Caselton. They're just sitting out there deteriorating.
RM: Oh, he didn't move it out of the county, he just moved it out of the mine there.
MB: Yes.
RM: I wonder why somebody hasn't opened it back up.
MB: I don't know what the score is there.
RM: How many tons were they shipping out of there a day, do you think?
MB: Actually, they just shipped whenever whoever was buying it ordered it. They'd phone in and want maybe 2 cars, maybe 3 cars all at once, you see. They'd probably have at least one car (maybe more) all ready to go. All we'd have to do would be to sack it up, and it sacked up pretty fast.
RM: How did they make it?
MB: They ran the tailings through an outfit all run by water -- they'd float it out of one place over into another one. A lot of the waste would slush off, take off down the country. And what they called their "concentrates" [contained] iron and sulphur and manganese and zinc.
RM: So it was a mineral supplement for plants?
MB: Yes. It really helped, you know. I brought some of it home, and I gave my son, who lived out in Elko, some. He put it around some trees he had there and he said, boy, that brought those trees up. For quite a few years I grew a garden out there and I used it on that. In fact, after I left there, I bought a lot of it just for that purpose.
RM: How many men were working there when you were there?
MB: On day shift there were 4 guys and on night shift there were only 2. And of course the 2 [extra] that were on day shift were the big boys, the bosses. One of the other 2 did all the

mixing it out there and piling it up. Then we'd run it into the plant and it'd go through a process there that would heat it up to around 900 degrees.

RM: Did Dalton live in town?

MB: No, he was in California.

RM: What did you do after you left there?

MB: I retired. My leg got to where I couldn't stand on it anymore. I had to have it operated on.

RM: Was it an old injury?

MB: I might have done something years ago, but I don't know what . . .

RM: Have you got a bad knee?

MB: Yes, and it's stiff. I had a whole new knee. Later something went wrong in there and they had to go in and kind of do it all over again. And I've never been able to bend it since.

RM: What year did you retire?

MB: In '75.

RM: Meanwhile all these years you and your wife were together?

MB: Yes. She passed away in '82.

RM: And how many children did you have?

MB: Three.

RM: Could you give me their names in birth order with the oldest one first?

MB: Her name is Rosetta; she's married to a Wallace now. The boy is next -- his name is Nolan, and we gave him my name for a middle name, Asahal. He lives in Elko. The youngest girl is Viola Little, and she lives in Tonopah.

RM: When was the oldest one born?

MB: The 16th of October in '34. The boy was born on the 7th of January in '39.

RM: In working in the mines here in Pioche, you've probably seen a lot of tramp miners and have had a lot of experiences with them. Could you talk a little bit about tramp miners?

MB: Well, some places hesitated to hire some of them. We used to always call them "10-day miners." When they're on the job, they know what they're doing and really put out. But they might only be there 10 days or 2 weeks. If they're there a month, they're old-timers. Then they're gone again. Evidently some of the places didn't like to go through all that extra book work for them. We had some of them around here. As I say, when they were on the job, they were good hands.

RM: Did they cycle back through?

MB: Lots of times you'd see the same ones come back again. [Chuckles]

RM: Did they drink a lot?

MB: Some of them, yes.

RM: Why didn't they stay?

MB: That was just their nature. It's just like these hobos on the road. They're headed someplace . . . they don't know where or why, but they're just going. [Laughs]

RM: Did they have cars?

MB: Some of them; some of them didn't.

RM: How would they get from one place to another without a car?

MB: I don't know just how they did make it.

RM: Where did they stay when they were in town?

MB: We used to have another old hotel up here that a lot of them stayed in, and a lot of them stayed over there at Caselton. I believe the hotel was called the Alexander Hotel. It used to sit right there where the telephone parking lot is.

RM: Would they get room and board at the hotels?

MB: Yes. Lots of times they'd stay in that hotel and another gal here had a boardinghouse where she fed quite a few.

RM: During World War II you had a lot of guys that the army put in the mine over at Caselton, didn't you?

MB: Yes.

RM: Did they work out pretty well?

MB: Some of them. Some of them were real good hands.

RM: Did you ever have to get rid of any of them?

MB: I don't remember of any of those that came in here from the army that had to be let go. After they saw that they could go, they just picked up and left.

RM: Did many of them stay here after the war was over?

MB: Yes. There's a fellow right down here who came here in '43 Å Jewell Kelley. I see him once in a while. And Nick Bartello is another one who came here. He worked for a little while, got disgusted and left and went back in the army. I think he went across to Germany. When he got out, he came right back to Pioche. He runs the trash business. He's run that now for years. It's just private, you know. He took it up on his own.

CHAPTER SIX

- MB: Kelley was a real good hand. In fact, we ran the drift up on the 1200 at Caselton that connects it with the one that came from Number One. For a long ways, that was a hard drift.
- RM: Hard ground, you mean?
- MB: Yes, it was regular old quartzite.
- RM: How big is that drift?
- MB: Well, our contract (we ran it on a contract) only called for 5-by-7, but we ran it a lot bigger than that. And they were sure glad afterwards that it was running that, too.
- RM: Yes, to run those cars through there.
- MB: Yes. It had places where they could drop off a stick of timber here and there and be out of the way.
- RM: How far is it across there from the Caselton to the Number One?
- MB: It's quite a distance there -- a couple of miles, I imagine.
- RM: How far was the drift you ran across there?
- MB: It ran round about 2000 feet.
- RM: How long did it take you to do that?
- MB: I don't recall just when it was started and when it ended, but pretty close to a year. I went down there as just an extra hand when they were running right off from the station on the 1200. It wasn't long until the regular miners that had been there quit and left, so they kind of turned it over to me. I had another younger fellow over there for a partner before Kelley came. Of course when they heard who was coming down to be my partner, a lot of them felt sorry for me -- I was going to have to do all the work. But there were times that he had trouble. If it had been me having the trouble that he did, I would have walked off and left it. (He did walk off a time or two.) Pretty quick he'd be right back a-fighting it some more. He turned out to be a good hand.
- RM: How did you break that quartzite across there? That took a lot of holes, didn't it? Did you use a hammer cut on that, too?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: You never used the 5-hole burn or anything like that?
- MB: No.
- RM: When did the jackleg come in here?
- MB: They came in after we got up in the stopes. We broke that ground with 12, 9, 21 holes.
- RM: You weren't using a jackleg on that, were you?
- MB: No, we had what you call a "jumbo."
- RM: Oh, you used a jumbo? On tracks?
- MB: Yes.
- RM: How many machines on it? Just one?
- MB: Well, we eventually had 3. It was just 2 of us a-doing the mining because I always drilled the bottom. The other fellows preferred the top, so I drilled the bottom. I drilled 9 holes; they had the 12 holes to drill. To start with we just had the 2 machines there. And one day we missed a round and I told the shift boss, "If you'd've had that other machine on there,

why, we wouldn't have missed that round." So the next day that machine was there. [Laughs] We had the 2 machines on top and that way when I got through drilling Å I got one side drilled out Å I'd move around to drill the other one. If he wasn't through here I'd run him off and make him drill the other side so he wouldn't be working right straight over the top of me. When I got through here, I'd just go right on to this other machine and finish out. That way we made lots of rounds that we wouldn't have made [otherwise].

RM: I see. That quartzite was slow drilling, wasn't it?

MB: Yes.

RM: I'll bet it really chewed up the bits.

MB: Yes. They eventually went to the detachable bits.

RM: Were they carbide?

MB: They weren't the carbide bit, because when they first started in on those they just sent the one size down and they'd have to take them then and redo them and size them. They were smaller bits, too, but they would last longer than the regular old "home type," you might call them.

RM: When you got over to the Caselton, were they still blasting with fuse?

MB: Oh yes. We blasted that hole direct with fuse.

RM: You didn't do electric blasting at the Caselton?

MB: We did some down on the 1400 later on when they ran another drift the other direction out towards Prince. We used electric there because it was wetter.

RM: Did you use fuse out at Bristol?

MB: Yes.

RM: Yes. It's something to light those fuses and get out of that stope, isn't it?

MB: [Laughs] Yes. I was going to tell you about this first person I had there on the 1200. When he first come down there I asked him, "Are you a mucking machine man?" He said, "You're damn right." [Laughs] So we got the rounds drilled and we got it loaded and of course I stepped up. I was going to time it, you know Å you have to time them so it'll go [blast] in the right [sequence]. And, boy, he jerked me right back out of there. He said, "Wait a minute, I helped drill that and helped load it. I'm going to time it."

RM: Is that right?

MB: Boy, he wouldn't let me touch it. He timed it and stayed in there and everything.

RM: How do you time it Å by the length of the fuse?

MB: Yes. In there we didn't use long enough fuse to bring them all together so you'd just start with the one you wanted to go off first.

RM: Did you bunch them up?

MB: No. We didn't dare because we didn't use long enough fuse. You'd cut what you wanted off your first one, then you'd time it so that each one would be a little longer. That's the way you'd spit them, then. Now, we had what they call a "wire spitter" that you'd light. It was a lot like these sparklers that you see. You could daub on them and the end of the fuse.

RM: You didn't use the fuse spitter, where you cut those slices to fuse?

MB: I have done that lots of times. But they furnished those, so that was really handier than the fuse lighter. They were hot and one touch on each one of them was good.

RM: How much would you take off for each fuse?
MB: This particular guy I don't think took off much. He cut off the one he wanted to go first, and that's the fuse that he used on every one.
RM: Oh, he'd take off the same amount?
MB: No, he'd just put that on there and take off a little more with each one. And we always had them timed so we could count them pretty well. When his started to go off, it was just like that.
RM: Is that right? You could hardly count them?
MB: They were hard to count because they were so close.
RM: What did you do about missed holes? Did you have many problems with those?
MB: Oh, we had some once in a while.
RM: Did anybody around here ever get blasted by picking into a missed hole?
MB: Yes.
RM: How did you handle a missed hole?
MB: We usually cleaned it out enough to get another stick of powder and fuse in there and blast it.
RM: And that would blast the powder that was in there?
MB: Oh, yes, it would clean it out enough to get to the powder that was in there.
RM: Those missed holes always gave me a lot of anxiety.
MB: There was one fellow here who lost all of his eyesight by drilling into a missed hole.
RM: Oh, boy. Can you think of any mining anecdotes?
MB: Out there in Bristol I was working with a fellow by the name of Henry Harriman. We were working in kind of a small place, and only one of us could get back in there and break it out at a time. I was back in there shoveling out and pretty soon he stuck his head in there and said "Come on out of there. Let me have a little of that glory!" I couldn't see much glory in it. [Laughs]
RM: Really.
MB: He was quite the character.
RM: The tramp miners were single, weren't they?
MB: Yes. We had one fellow who came here to work in Caselton and you'd see him around town walking with a cane. You'd get over there on the job, and there were a lot of fellows who hated to work with him because he worked so cussed hard. He was one of those types, I think, who just was here for a little while and gone. As I say, 90 percent of them were that way. They're hard workers when they do go to work.
RM: You didn't know Ed Snyder, did you?
MB: I didn't know him very well. I saw him a lot of times over in Caselton, but as far as knowing him, I never did.
RM: How about Paul Gemmill?
MB: Oh, yes. I knew Dave Gemmill, too, Paul's brother. I knew Paul better than Dave because he was around Caselton so much more than Dave was.
RM: Did you know Charlie Steen at all when he was here?
MB: No.
RM: How about Phil Hulse? Did you know him?

MB: Oh, yes.

RM: Where was he working?

MB: I don't remember him actually being in the mines over there at Caselton, but there was a long time that he worked out here at Atlanta -- that gold property out there. He was a big shot out there for a while. And he came down and did some survey work in Bristol while I was there.

RM: He's part owner of the Salt Lake Pioche now, isn't he?

MB: He probably is.

RM: But you mainly remember him out at Atlanta?

MB: Oh, I knew Hulse for a good many years. But as I say, I don't remember him over at Caselton or Number One. If he was over there (which he could have been), I actually don't remember too much about him. But I've known him for years on end. His younger brother lives here, Frank Hulse.

RM: Can you think of any more stories that you have?

MB: Lots of times you wonder what really prompts you and what really takes place. There's lots of times that I've walked through some place and I thought, "Well, this is no place to tarry." I'll move on pretty lively and then stuff falls down right after that. It's just sixth sense, you might say. One time over here at Caselton the shift boss came in when we were running that drift there right on the 1200. The other shift hadn't blasted, so we didn't have any muck to muck up. He took one of the muckers away with him and left me there. On the way out, just down the drift a little ways, this fellow was walking behind the shift boss. Pretty quick he reached up and grabbed him and stopped him and there was a bunch of stuff fell right in front of him. [Laughs]

RM: How did he know it was going to fall?

MB: The guy behind must have seen that stuff loosen up and he got over there and kind of pulled him back and stopped him, or he'd have walked right under it.

RM: Was it a pretty big chunk that came down?

MB: Yes. About 3 feet long and 6 inches wide. Enough to break your neck or something.

RM: Were there a lot of things falling all the time in those mines?

MB: Well, actually there could be at different times. After we got over there at Caselton, the union made them get an inspector who drove from one place to the other and [when he saw] anything, he bared it down -- got rid of anything that he thought might fall. That way, he actually eliminated a lot of that stuff from falling on you when you walked in there.

RM: Did the little union that you started at the Number One carry over to Caselton?

MB: Yes.

RM: Did it eventually become a member of an international union or anything, or did the big unions ever come in here in your time?

MB: No.

RM: Can you think of any other incidents?

MB: Well, I told you about maintaining that big raise from the 1400 up to 1200. The muck was hung up in the chute and I was in the skip, a-pounding it to break it loose. When it broke loose, why, boom boom, it knocked the lagging out of the side of that chute, out on top of my skip. It rained muck down on the skips.

RM: Oh! Scary.
MB: Yes. [Laughs] It kind of made a fellow a little nervous for a little while.
RM: I guess. Boy.
MB: But there wasn't too much muck come out. But it knocked that lagging off right on top of the skip. It knocked the guide off and so I could not go up.
RM: I imagine the ground in those mines is still moving down there. Those big stopes are still moving, aren't they?
MB: Oh, yes.
RM: Can you ever hear it on the surface?
MB: No.
RM: Where did you do your shopping here?
MB: We had 2 grocery stores here all the time.
RM: Did you buy on credit or did you pay cash?
MB: The biggest part of the time we just went from one payday to the next.
RM: You'd charge between paydays?
MB: Instead of carrying cash money, when we got our check we'd go there and pay the bill. I don't doubt but what some of them lost a little money that way, but . . .
RM: Yes, I imagine they did. What were you making out at Bristol?
MB: I think when I quit I was making \$3.50 an hour.
RM: You went from \$3 a day to \$3.50 an hour in your career?
MB: Yes. [Laughs]

ADDENDUM

- RM: Merrill would like to make an addendum to his oral history; he's thought of a few things he'd like to include. Tell me the story you just told me, Merrill, about the slabs.
- MB: Well, I was kind of a shift boss in Caselton, and I had a crew working up in the stope, up just a short raise. I got up there one morning, and around the top of the raise the ground was a-working. I went right back and told the fellows, "You're going to get locked in there if we don't do something about that." But it was too late. By the time we got out there it had already fallen in and covered up the manway.
- RM: You were telling about it hanging from the hanging wall.
- MB: When they drilled the raise up there, they left some ore on the hanging wall. And that was what was breaking loose, and it was crushing what little timber was up there; it pushed it right out and covered the chute and manway. We had to get in, break a lot of the rock up and move it out of the way, and open a hole so we could shove it down [chuckles] the chute before anybody could get out down the manway.
- RM: What do you think that slab weighed?
- MB: It was several feet long and maybe 18 inches thick Ä that'd be 2 or 3 ton altogether.
- RM: How far did it fall?
- MB: It just laid over. So that was one experience where I was kind of locked in [chuckles] for a few minutes.
- Down on the 600 level, then, on Caselton, I had a crew working back in a drift there Ä they were retimbering a drift, taking out the old timbers because it was kind of crushed in. And when they started it, they started on the wrong end. I had a couple of fellows working there, and it was the night shift. Right after lunch a motor crew I had down there came up the raise where I was, and wanted to know if so-and-so was up this way. I said, "No, he's down the drift."
- He said, "Well, you're going to have to go dig him out, then." Stuff had come down there and filled that drift plumb up.
- RM: Did it kill him?
- MB: Oh, no. The 2 fellows were just trapped back there. They had plenty of air. I took a gang of men down there and we went to shoveling, digging them out. Of course it wasn't very long till we had a hole big enough that they could come through. [Chuckles]
- RM: Were they scared Ä shook up?
- MB: Well, actually, they had lots of room back there and plenty of air.
- RM: Did it take down the air line?
- MB: Oh, no. In most of the drifts the air lines were right on the floor. That way, if it fell in it would not break the air line.
- RM: Oh Ä it wouldn't tear it out. What about the water line? Was it on the floor, too?
- MB: Oh, yes. This drift eventually went way back in another 200 or 300 feet. But at this spot back there was broken ground, and it was timbered. They said when they found they couldn't get out, why, they just got back there out of the way. [Chuckles]
- RM: Were they digging from the other side to get them?

MB: No, they weren't very excited [chuckles] about it; they knew that it wouldn't take long to dig them out.

RM: How much muck came down, do you think?

MB: I wouldn't say for sure, but there must have been 15 to 20 3-ton cars altogether.

RM: So maybe a good 40 tons. Wow. How long did it take you to get them out of there, do you think?

MB: Oh, possibly an hour. In fact, before we brought them out, all the dignitaries were down there. [Chuckles]

RN: Were you using a mucking machine to get them out?

MB: No. It was caved in at the dispose end, so you couldn't use the mucking machine. We were mucking it out by hand, and raking it down. It wasn't too long, maybe an hour, hour-and-a-half, till they could come through.

RM: What are some more instances you recall?

MB: Well, down on the 1400 at Caselton, way back in there, they had some rough ground and it came in with a fellow behind it. I wasn't there at that particular time. But when this fellow found that he couldn't get out, he said, "Well, it's going to be quite a while before they get me out of here. All I've got is a candle. I'll eat a third of that today, the first day I'm down here, locked in, and I'll eat a third of it the second day that I'm locked in. And I'll eat the other the third day I'm locked in." When they got him out, why, he'd been in there 3 hours. [Laughs]

RM: Is that right. He was literally going to eat a candle. Can you do that?

MB: Well, I don't know, but that's what he said. [Laughter]

RM: What was the one you told me about the guy who said, "That's 10 pounds you can't lift."

MB: [Chuckles] I had some high grade ore and he said, "Man, that's high grade stuff. That's so high grade you can't lift 10 pounds of it." [Laughs] They get off quite a few sayings.

RM: Yes, they get some good ones, don't they?

MB: Some of these fellows, you know, have got a sense of humor. [Chuckles] I think I told you about a time when we were maintaining a raise from the 1400 up to the 1200. I was the helper to another fellow Å he was the timberman. That was back in '39. This raise was about 300 feet, and about every 100 feet there was an offset; you'd go 100 foot at a time. It was hung up in there, and I was in the skip pounding the chute to get it broken loose. When it broke loose, why, bang! bang! she just knocked the lagging out over the top and muck and everything rained right down over me.

RM: Wow. In those 100-foot stretches, was that 100 feet of ladder, or what?

MB: You climbed one set of ladders . . .

RM: And then you'd have a little offset and then you'd climb another one? And then they went up 100 feet and then you had another big offset Å was that how it worked?

MB: Yes. The ladders just followed one another. You'd climb here, but you had to come around and climb another one.

RM: So if you fell, you didn't fall the whole way.

MB: There was a landing every 10 foot or so.

RM: You mentioned before that you had a big stope there, and you had paths around the footwall or something,

MB: That was when we were out at the Bristol Mine.

RM: You were saying you felt OK as long as you had a foothold. Was there a lot of air under you even though you had a foothold?

MB: [Chuckles] Oh, yes.

RM: One slip on that foothold and you're down the stope; is that right?

MB: Yes, it could be. There was one big stope I worked in out there at Bristol, and we finally came in to the top of it with a drift, and there was ore left down in there. And we had ladders made out of cable. The cross-pieces were cable, but they had a piece of hose over them to make regular steps. We climbed from this drift down these ladders, down to where we were working.

RM: How far down there were you working?

MB: Oh, maybe 30 feet. The partner I had, when we started to do that, said, "That's out of my line."

RM: He wouldn't do it?

MB: He quit. [Laughs]

RM: I probably would, too. How did they fix the crosspiece on the cable with cable clamps?

MB: Yes. They made several of [those cable ladders] at Bristol. But this particular stope, after you got down in there, sort of flattened off a little bit, and you could go down the slope. As long as the bottom end was open, you could go right down and go out instead of having to go up the ladder. But after a day's work that opening down there might be filled up with muck.

RM: So then you'd have to climb out?

MB: So you'd have to go up.

RM: Weren't you concerned about muck that hung up on the wall coming down on you?

MB: Well, no, that didn't bother us any, because it rolled down there.

RM: And you'd have to take powder and steel and everything down in there, wouldn't you?

MB: Yes. There were times on some of those places that if you didn't have a place to tie yourself onto the wall, that was the first thing you did to fix a place that you could tie yourself on.

RM: Would you tie yourself on with a rope?

MB: We had regular safety belts we'd put on with cable.

RM: So you were working in places with so much exposure that you would have to tie yourself to the wall in case you slipped? [Whistles] Man!

MB: [Laughs] Oh, yes. It was just the same as working in a shaft.

RM: Did you do much shaft work?

MB: Actually not too much. I never did mine a shaft.

RM: Did you sink any shafts?

MB: I never did sink one. I worked in maintenance work. Out at the Bristol, the shaft there lies on an incline of about 70 degrees. I did quite a bit of maintenance work there.

RM: Did you have to tie on in that shaft? Could you fall down a 70-degree shaft?

MB: Oh, you bet. That skip that ran up and down there could really go. When you were working off the skip, doing things, you'd tie yourself right to the skip. One fellow was working there, and had been working without his safety belt on. (That is, tied on; he had it

on him, but he didn't have it tied on.) His partner, I guess, told him, "You'd better tie yourself on there." So he did. It wasn't 30 minutes later that he slipped and fell to the length of the safety rope.

But there was one fellow at Caselton . . . it was just in a raise on the 1200 back there, between the Caselton and Number One. He was working in there, and he didn't have himself tied in, and he fell out of there. In fact, he fell right between my partner and myself; we were a-working along in the drift below. He come down there, bang!

RM: Oh! How far from you was he when he hit the ground?

MB: Maybe 10 feet.

RM: And it killed him?

MB: Oh, yes.

RM: That must've been terrible.

MB: Yes. Just for the sake of not tying yourself to the skip.

RM: Did he scream on the way down, or anything?

MB: You know, I never heard him. All of a sudden you heard stuff rattling, coming down . . . he really made a plop when he hit. He fell right in the middle of the rail. You know, a few of those kinds of experiences made you more safety-minded.

RM: It makes a believer out of you, doesn't it? You hook that safety belt up.

MB: Yes. But one time I spent a couple of months on graveyard, tearing out a chute and rebuilding it in that shaft out at the Bristol. We had to bulkhead it off. Where this chute came out, where they loaded the skip with the ore, they lowered the platform that it sat on when you were hoisting it from that different place. All the time we were working there, that was down. So if we fell, that's as far as we'd go. We tore that old chute out and put a new one in there just on graveyard shift. We had to have it fixed so the other shifts could work right behind us. At the end of every shift of ours it had to be safe enough for the men to run up and down the shaft.

RM: Were there any other things that you thought of that you wished you had included in your oral history interview?

MB: I don't know whether I told you about one time when I had a crew on the 1400 at Caselton. We were down in the afternoon on swing shift, and 2 men came down there to do maintenance work, on graveyard. And right after that graveyard crew got down, the power went off. And of course it was pretty near time for us to come home. If the power went off, we couldn't get out. Of course they had to shut the water doors.

RM: Oh Å the pumps would stop, wouldn't they?

MB: Yes. We never got out of there till around 2:00 the next day.

RM: Wow. Why couldn't you climb out?

MB: Oh, [chuckles] the shaft was all full of pipes Å what space they had had pipes in it for the water lines and everything.

RM: Oh Å you mean you couldn't climb out of the Caselton shaft.

MB: Not from the 1400. [Laughs] Some fellows tried it from the 1200. They said never again. They wouldn't climb it. But anyway, we were down there, and come morning, when we should be having breakfast, I said to the guys, "I don't have any breakfast, but I'm going to have myself a cup of coffee."

Well, they looked at me and, "How the devil are you going to make coffee?" (The pump men down there had a cupboard full of everything you wanted.)

I said, "I'm going to borrow enough of their coffee to have me some coffee for breakfast." [Chuckles] You always had candles and one thing and another. I drove some nails in the lagging there, set the candles in there -- those fellows had coffee and coffee pots and frying pans and everything else. Some of them cooked down there just like they did at home. It wasn't too long till I had a pot of coffee. [Laughs]

RM: That's a good story.

MB: But it was 2:00 the next day before we got out of there. From the 1200 on Caselton, after they connected the 2 places, you could come over and climb out the Number One.

RM: Could you climb out from the 1200 on the Caselton?

MB: Some of them could, and some did, but they said they would never do it again. You had to squeeze around pipes and one thing and another, trying to get out. I never did try it myself.

RM: But it wasn't that hard to climb out of the Number One?

MB: Oh, no. As I said, the ladders in that overlapped one another. You'd climb one ladder and get to a platform and go right around on another one. I was boss man down there one time on the 1400 with just a small crew back in there. They had told a lot of them that if the power went off, not to come out on the 1400 station -- to go up to the 1200 and come out the Number One. This particular day, we were back there, all ready to go home -- I had the man train and the whole outfit back there. And the lights went out. Pretty quick they came back on. Well, nobody said anything about an outage, so out the drift they went. They got out there and they were closing the door out there. But my crew all jumped off and went [chuckles] out on the 1400 station. I sat there with the motor -- I had to take it way back to practically the end of the drift.

I came to the 1200, and evidently the power wasn't off on all the legs. When I got up to the 1200, there was a guy there waiting. He thought the whole crew would be up there. He was waiting there with a man train. We went out the Number One, and the hoist over there took us up to the top. It kind of jumped a little bit, but we didn't have to walk it. I went around and changed clothes and was home and had supper before those guys came out. [Laughs] The only way they got them out was by loading the skip that was sitting on top plumb full of machines and everything and then they had the fellows down below get on the skip. That was the way they got them out.