

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ORAL HISTORY OFFICE  
TAPE LOG

OH 225

225-043-2

TAPE NUMBER

NAME Herbert A. Mickelson SPECIAL INTEREST Mining, Butte.

OTHERS PRESENT (Note Relationship) wife

LOCATION 507 Hillside, Helena, MT DATE 1-12-82

INTERVIEWED BY Laurie Mercier

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW 1 hour, 30 min. NUMBER OF TAPES 2

RECORDER USED Superscope TYPE OF TAPE Denon

CASSETTE OR REEL-TO-REEL Cassette

QUALITY OF RECORDING good DESCRIBE ANY INTERFERENCE \_\_\_\_\_

RELEASE OBTAINED X INDEXED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
TRANSCRIBED BY P. Borneman DATE 3-19-82

SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR USE OF TAPE \_\_\_\_\_

BRIEF SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW CONTEXT AND TAPE CONTENTS Discusses work for the ACM, conditions in the mine, mine accident and aftermath: obtaining compensation, doing light work afterwards.

INDEX NUMBER	DESCRIPTION/SUMMARY
	--see summary attached--

Herb Mickelson -- 1

Tape I - Side A

- 0-5 Talks about father and mother; both from Finland. They lived in Finntown (Butte). Father worked in the mines. Herb got his job at the mines on his own. Describes work day of average miner. Boarding houses in which miners lived had good food. "Clabbered" milk.
- 5-10 Mother had rooming house, sometimes took in miners. Went to Grant School and Washington School in Butte. Then moved with family to Seattle, San Francisco. Went to Chicago to study electronics but job situation was not good. So, he returned to Butte to work in the mines. Tells how he got his job in Butte. Worked in mine shaft. Remembers feelings about working there. Describes duties.
- 10-15 Remembers big fire in a mine. Names mines he worked. Tunnels connecting underground mines. Remembers deaths of miners. Worked as muleskinner in Emma mine. Still had mules in mines in the 1930s, but they were soon phased out.
- 15-20 Remembers how smart mules were. Remembers how they could tell how many cars you hooked them up to; many mules became blind after years underground. Describes muleskinner duties. Remembers a mule that developed a taste for snuff. Mules were treated very well.
- 20-25 Worked in Meihart mine in 1938. Running hoists, compressors. Handled pumps that removed water from mines. Describes this job. Also worked in Niarada mine near Kalispell. Herb was an only child, his mother didn't like him working in mines. Father had silicosis. Remembers friends lost in the caves of mines. Stope, drip workers.
- 25-30 Partner work. Friend who was in accident came out of it with only a broken hat. Describes machines and tools the company supplied the workers. Furnished everything except clothing. Describes boots they wore. Mine company furnished batteries for the hats they wore. Turned them in at the end of the shift so they could be recharged.

Tape I - Side B

- 0-5 Workers had to have rustling card to work; how they obtained cards. Turnover of miners. Job security. Remembers danger of "timber gas."
- 5-10 Remembers having to yell "fire" when blasting to warn workers to get out in case of a cave-in. Getting fired for taking days off. Alternate shifts they had; worked one week, had two weeks off or the other way around. Wouldn't recommend mining to anyone; Herb was a miner because it was the only available work.

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Tape I - Side B

- 15-20 Describes injuries suffered from cave-in. ACM didn't want to pay compensation which was \$68 month. Remembers somebody siphoning the gas out of his car. Tried to fight having to pay him compensation. Company doctor lied; said that Herb could go back to work anytime. Herb had to be on crutches a long time. "Yeah, there were a lot of them [that] got robbed out at that ACM."
- 20-25 Went to Portland doctor who told him he was permanently disabled. He testified for Herb in Butte. Had a lawyer defend his case against the ACM. Settlement could have been more. Lawyer got 30 percent of settlement. Belonged to union. Union wasn't able to help. Went to work in shipyard. Did light work. Ran compressors. Went to school to learn about compressors and it came in handy when he was no longer able to do strenuous work. Hoist work in Miarada and Neihart. Small mines. Remembers strike of 1934. Mines shut down because no one allowed beyond lines.
- 25-30 Remembers during wartime the placement of National Guards. 1917; lynching of Frank Little in Butte. Florence Hotel flooded with soldiers. Soldiers assumed authority in Butte and questioned people. Herb did not participate in union activity; was just a member. Remembers fellow workers involved in union. Had to go along with strikes or would be in "big trouble." Changes in conditions and wages after strikes. Improvements. Safety conditions protected by union. Relationship with foreman, shiftboss. Didn't like it when workers got hurt. Shift boss got bonus if workers avoided injuries.

Tape II - Side A

- 0-5 Had job as firebug. Describes this job. Had job as nipper; took care of shovels and picks, and other tools used by miners. Powder monkey: maintained blasting powder supply. Routine day at mine. Reported at 8 a.m. Bottom level goes first down shaft. Reported to timekeeper. Half-hour lunch. Afternoon blasting in mine. Wait for the cage to carry miners to the top. Bottom level came up first. Some night workers. Remembers there were 900 men working around the clock.
- 5-10 1936, 1937--900 men working. Shift boss would stay on top. Took lunch and clothing into mine. Washed clothes in the "dry"--had to wash them right away or the copper would eat into worker's skin. Seasonal work. Turnover of miners. Rest periods. Because of heat in mines it was popular winter work. It was so hot in the mines the workers would

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Tape II - Side A

- 15-20 Cooperation with workers. Different kinds of shift bosses. Sometimes "cranky." Remembers getting mad at one shift boss. Remembers man who avoided him after a fight. Talks about attitudes toward the ACM by the workers. Remembers woman who worked in the Tramway mine. She dressed like a man to get away with it. Didn't last very long in mine. She was sneaking in and they found out because she never took a shower with the other men.
- 20-25 Stores raised prices when miners got a raise. Business was good. Mother helped people at rooming house (had 19 rooms) during Depression years. Many people never paid her for credit extended to roomers. Herb worked on WPA project in slaughterhouse. Made better money in mines. Hanson Packing Plant in Butte. Air was bad due to slaughterhouses. Describes packing plant work. Remembers that the hogs knew they were going to be killed and would scream. Sheep didn't seem to know what was happening. Remembers meat was provided as relief for those in need.

END OF INTERVIEW

1 hour, 25 minutes

Herb Mickelson moved to Helena, worked for Telephone Company for 25 years and retired in 1975.