

TRANSCRIPT

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY OFFICE

copy of...

SUMMARY

T A P E L O G

418-236-2

TAPE NUMBER

NAME JOHN CONNORS BIRTHDATE 1916

ADDRESS 2946 Argyle, Butte, MT

SPECIAL INTEREST Miner, ACM 1935-82. Butte.

OTHERS PRESENT (Note full name and relationship) Last hour of interview, Joe.

INTERVIEWED BY Laurie Mercier DATE December 9, 1982

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW 2 hours NUMBER OF TAPES 2

RECORDER USED Superscope BRAND OF TAPE Innovator

CASSETTE REEL-TO-REEL QUALITY OF RECORDING good

DESCRIBE ANY INTERFERENCE phone rings, people in next room gathering for union meeting, greetings by others.

RELEASE OBTAINED RESTRICTIONS FOR USE

TRANSCRIBED OR SUMMARIZED BY Patti Borneman DATE Aug 1983

SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR USE OF TAPE

BRIEF SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW CONTEXT AND TAPE CONTENTS (accession card) Discusses work as miner in Anaconda Company mines in Butte, 1930s-1950s.

INDEX ENTRIES: miners; mines and mining--copper; mines and mining--Silver Bow County; industrial safety; Butte--industry; Anaconda Copper Mining Company--Butte; Irish.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

JOHN CONNERS -- Tape I - Side A

- 0-55 Grew up Virginia St., Butte. Schooling in Butte. Left school, anxious to work. Explains how got job in mines, 1935. Working with a partner, Mountain Con mine. Worked as motorman. Rustling, moving from job to job.
- 56-73 Went to work at St. Regis on CCC camp. Returned to Butte mines, worked 30 years. Describes areas of mine where worked.
- 74-91 Tells why went into mining, why young men wanted work in mines. Working with fathers and older brothers in mine.
- 92-103 Tells why father didn't want sons to work in mines. Encouraged education.
- 104-112 Father was Patrick Connors; mother, Mary. Father died of silicosis.
- 113-129 Company has never compensated silicosis victims for industry-related illness. Father lost lung, worked in mine after this.
- 130-194 Tells what miners did to receive benefits for silicosis (from State of Montana). Legislation to provide benefits to widows of silicosis victims. Autopsy of George (brother)--lungs fell apart. Was miner, never told family members that had lung problem.
- 195-225 Family of 12, five alive. Talks about Irish name--should be Connor, without the "s". Three John Connors in mine. Problems with this. Talks about other John Connors.
- 226-275 Parents from Ireland. Father worked on railroad in New York. Came to Butte to "get rich quick." Life in Butte, Finntown.
- 276-292 Talks about Irish background. Mother's Irish brogue; others said she had it, John couldn't hear it.
- 293-359 Describes ethnic mixture of Butte. Many Irish communities. Dublin Gulch. Wakes attended. Wakes of other ethnics. Describes wake. Describes activities of children, tricks. Discipline.
- 360-405 Talks about working, gave mother majority of paycheck.
- 406-452 Got NYA job during Depression. Describes. Dug ditches while on WPA.

Tape I - Side B

- 2-49 Worked at Hanson Packing plant. Drought years. Slaughter of cattle. Distribution of meat. FERA job at packing plant. Lack of hospitalization benefits.
- 50-127 Talks about Depression years. Government help. Compares with economic problems of today. Lack of government concern for poor and unemployed (1980s). Describes wasteful and inefficient use of tax money.

Connors -- Tape I - Side B

- 128-173 Early 1930s, tells how people made it during Hoover's administration. Food and army surplus clothes given out. Liked Roosevelt. Blames Congress and Senate for Reagan's policies. Nuclear weapons, missiles.
- 174-255 Requirements for FERA job. Family members all worked. Strike of 1934. Violence. Scabs. Origin of violence against scabs. Company recruited scabs. Got board and room and better pay than union members.
- 256-286 Father and son teams in mines. Fathers that discouraged sons from mine work, wanted them to do better. Severe working conditions, lack of air conditioning.
- 287-365 Rustling jobs. Favoritism in mines. Tolerance for drinking miners. Downfall of ACM. Arco takeover. Copper and oil extraction differences. "They don't give a damn about anybody else." (ARCO) Difficulty in receiving pensions.
- 366-402 Shifts worked. Smoke from blasting, breathing smoke and dust.
- 403-450 1935, job availability picked up. Competition for job, big turnover. Job stability. Company "getting rid" of employees after they've "burned you out."

Tape II - Side A

- 1-20 Rustling for jobs. Partners. Many rustled as a team, stayed together for many years. (phone rings)
- 21-45 First day on job. Working under ground. Describes going down on cages. Myths and jokes in mine; ie, left-handed monkey wrench. (Greet fellow in hall)
- 46-212 Describes first days working between the Belmont and Colorado shaft. (phone rings) Smoking cigarettes in mine. Danger of fire. Some men smoked anywhere. Danger of dynamite. Use of dynamite. Splitting sticks. Bunching. "Spitters." Lighting dynamite.
- 213-258 Describes blasting, "round out and round in." Tells why the worker might have trouble blasting. No mucking machines, used a #2 shovel instead.
- 259-320 Strenuous nature of early mine work. Shift bosses vulnerable to silicosis also. Dusty conditions. Remembers when management didn't shut down mine when danger existed.
- 321-356 Grievances not heeded. Blames miners that didn't demand contract rights upheld. Contracting miners.

Conners -- Tape II - Side A

- 357-406 Blasting. (Joe enters interview) All miners on contract.
Some mine workers on daily wage. "Gyposos."
- 407-452 In early days describes underground mine work. (phone rings)
Use of electric motors.

Tape II - Side B

- 2-18 Tells how miners tried to get off daily wage. Ability to earn
more money.
- 19-54 Joe talks about incentives to be on contract, more money. Kinds of
jobs that were contract positions. Daily wage earners had no
incentive to produce more rock, explains differences.
- 55-119 Describes favoritism existing in mine. Joe talks about favoritism
management placing workers in positions not suited to them.
Joe describes situation where outside analyzers are surveying
excess water in mines; fears they will side with company and
not consider safety of workers.
- 120-166 Describes best mine; the Badger. Hot mines. Talks about the
Chinese Laundry, hottest mine. Boiling eggs in water in this
mine. Hot and steamy.
- 167-238 Tells what liked about the Badger mine. Garments furnished by
company. Boots. Smelter and mine managed separately.
Difficulty in getting safety garments to wear in mine; gloves
and slickers. (phone rings)
- 239-264 Describes accident in mine. Broke back in Kelly Mine. Was
working as swamper, tells what did.
- 265-317 Remembers accident in mine. Hospitalization. Remembers lack of
help from nurse in hospital. Doctor "raised hell" with her.
She made him climb onto X-ray table with broken back. 1954.
- 318-451 Medical insurance coverage. Monthly deduction. Taking precautions
in mine. Responsibility of workers for own safety. Carelessness
of people.

END OF INTERVIEW 2 hours