

Interview with Fred Wenchhoff by Elizabeth Balanoff

November 22, 1970

Total time -- 1 hour

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Oral History Project

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Respondent? Fred Wenchhoff  
Interviewer: Elizabeth Balanoff  
Date: November 22, 1970

I. How long have you lived in Mount Olive?

R. We were always living in Mount Olive except for short times when, of course, we went on visits for a year or so someplace. But otherwise we've lived here. I was interested in things happening in connection with the cemetery, I mean, the men that are buried there and what caused the cemetery to be there. And I'm glad to help with anything that will keep that cemetery.

I. All right. This should help. Where did you come from?

R. I came from Germany.

I. And how old were you when you came?

R. About eight.

I. A little boy,

R. Yeah.

I. Then you really finished growing up in Mount Olive.

R. That's right.

I. Was your father a miner?

R. Yes, and I was also.

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I. What's the first thing that you can remember about unions in Mount Olive?  
How far back can you recall?

R. There was a union one time in 1894. And it went on strike, and it didn't last so long. It didn't do what the people expected it to do. That is, it was a failure, that union at that time.

I. It failed completely?

R. Yeah, So the next one was in 1897. And that one -- that strike lasted from July 4th, if I remember right, 'til just before Christmas.

I. That's a long strike!

R. Right. But that was successful. And the ten-hour day -- it used to be a ten-hour work day before that. The eight-hour work day came to be on April 1st, 1898, as far as I remember. We didn't get the eight-hour day at the end of the strike, but they got it afterwards by negotiations, after the strike, you know.

I. How did people survive that six months or so on strike? That must have been very difficult.

R. It was.

I. How did you live?

R. Well, everybody had to go on credit, you might as well say. The stores were

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up against it; the storekeepers, because people couldn't pay. If they had any of the supplies on hand, they couldn't hardly say no. And the people were not asking for too much either. They were doing with as little as they possibly could.

I. Were you working in the mines yet, by the time this strike occurred?

R. No, I wasn't working.

I. Still too young?

R. No.

I. Was this a bloody kind of strike?

R. The bloodiest part came in 1898.

I. After the strike, then?

R. After the agreement had been reached.

I. Can you tell me about that?

R. Yes, most of the coal companies lived up to the agreement, coal companies and the union. At that time we had a union, the United Mine Workers, and Dad Hunter was the president of the union in Springfield. There was a mine in Virden. It was a Virden Coal Company mine, Chicago Virden Coal Company

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mine. All the other coal companies lived up to the agreement that had been reached, although the Chicago and Virden hadn't signed it. But they refused to sign it and made arrangements to have strikebreakers brought into Virden from down south. Some were colored people that didn't know what they were getting into, you know.

**I. Yes.**

R. And then, of course, word came around that that was the intention. And the recruiting men --I mean, you call it recruiting because they chose some and others they wouldn't, of the different coal cities. They chose whatever they thought was the best fitted for the purpose and sent them up to Virden. Of course, at that time it was horse and buggy or walk, no automobile or nothing, But, anyway, they got them there. And there were men there from, oh, probably five or six coal-producing little towns around here, congregated at Virden to take care of anything that happened there, you know, as far as strikebreakers being brought in. Well, strikebreakers were brought. They tried to bring them in, and that was on October 12, 1898. And our men had maybe little .22 rifles and shotguns with pellets, you know. And, of course, then, at that time the Pinkertons had the bad reputation of helping strikebreaking, you know, and guarding strikebreakers. They were in the boxcars; the train was pulling in, and the boxcars hidden, and little chance for our men to do any damage to them, you know. But our

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men, of course, weren't expecting what they got. They were standing outside; and quite a few of them got killed and wounded.

I. They just shot them from the boxcars?

R. Yes, but they never got to the mine.

I. They stopped them before they got to the mine?

R. Yes. They backed away before they got to the mine. I'm pretty sure they had a stockade built around the mine, although I didn't see the stockade, but I'm pretty sure that they did have. But they never got in there. And that's when, as far as Mount Olive was concerned, there were four of our men killed, and I forget how many were wounded. But there were quite a number. I'd say six or eight of the Mount Olive contingent were wounded also, and also some from other parts of the mining territory around here. There's four men got killed from here, and three of them are buried in the Mount Olive Cemetery.

I. Can you tell me how the union happened to own that cemetery?

R. Yes, I will. The men were first these three that I'm speaking of that are buried here buried in the Prange Cemetery. That was a privately owned cemetery. And they were buried there, and they were not wanted, as far as that's concerned, because the people that owned it were very devout

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church members. Their church was against anything that smacked of liberty or freedom for the working man, you might as well say. They were farmers, big farmers, come here early and had only what they brought from Gemany, as far as what you would call what was due a working man. And that was very little, because up there they owned farms and here they owned farms again, And they had hired hands and hired girls; and they were the big boss and the other ones had nothing to say. And they thought the coal miners ought to be the same way, you know. When it came the 12th of October, 1999, when naturally they wanted a celebration, I mean something to show that they still sided with men that got killed at Virden, they had a little procession on that cemetery. And that, of course, was against ,the rules of their religion, you know. They had their speechmaking there without a preacher. You might as well say that was the only ones that was supposed to speak on there. That was hallowed ground. And nobody could be buried there that didn't conform to their views of Christian life, you know.

I. Was this a Catholic cemetery?

R. No. It was a Lutheran, but it was the old Lutheran that came from the old country; and they were sure stubborn and set in their ways.

I. So you offended them, then, by having this little celebration there?

R. Yes. And, of course, they wouldn't have that anymore and said they couldn't

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have any celebration like that anymore in that cemetery, Well, there was nothing you could do. It was a private one. They couldn't stay here. The men that were in charge at that time thought that was it. So they went to the other cemetery. There was just one more, the Immanuel Cemetery. That's just north of the Range Cemetery. And they couldn't have them there because those men that they wanted to bury there were "murderers," you know, They'd shot at the other people. Of course, they got killed themselves, but they were "murderers," and they wouldn't have them there. Well, what was there to do except to go to work and have a cemetery of their own, you know? And that's how it came to be that there was a miner's cemetery.

- I. So the miners bought their own land and built their own cemetery?
- R. Yeah. The men that were in charge at the other cemeteries were acting according to their best beliefs, but we couldn't agree that that was our beliefs also. And I say "ours" because at that time I could think for myself and could help along a little bit already. So that's how that cemetery came to be. Then, of course, the cemetery got too small on the one side of the road. And then a piece of ground was bought on the other side of the road. All the cemeteries at one time belonged to the United Mine Workers Local Union Number 125 and 728. Now, I don't know who they belong to. There's been a change in ownership; I don't know how it came about. I don't

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know what methods were used to bring it about. But it doesn't belong to the United Mine Workers anymore now by law,

I. How old were you when you went to work in the mines?

R. Oh, I was fourteen years and about six months, I guess.

I. And when you first started to work, did they have the eight-hour day then?

R. Yes. They got that in 1898.

I. Can you describe what it was like to work in the mine at that age at that time?

R. Oh, well, you didn't have to work much. They called us "trappers." They had doors in the mine to keep air circulating a certain way, you know. And you had to have doors. And when they pulled the coal, with mules at that time, you had to have somebody to open the door because the driver couldn't do it himself. So you had to be there to open the door; and that was a boy's job, you know, when they first started, most of them.

I, And that's what you did when you first started?

R. When I first started. And then after you're down there awhile, then you can load half-turn, they call it, you know. The older men load the full turn, and you got half turn. But they still had to use the same kind of

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shovel that the older people used, you know. And it was hard work.

I. Must've been pretty hard work; dangerous, too, I suppose.

R. Well, the mine that I worked in, old number 8, south of Mount Olive, particularly in the territory where I worked, was very good top. That was the big trouble, the top we called it, you know, slate top or rock top. It was very good.

I. So you were lucky, then.

R. It was varying, because some parts of the mine would be good top and then there'd be another part of the mine not too far from there, there'd be bad top, you know.

I. Can you recall any accidents in the mine when you were working there?

R. Oh, yes. Yes. My brother got killed in a mine. Yeah.

I. Was it an explosion?

R. No, he got in between cars. He was squeezed, oh, yeah.

I. Did you know John Mitchell?

R. We had him here on the 12th of October, He was from Spring Valley. There was quite a few people from Spring Valley that worked here at one time or

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another. And we could talk with them. Yes, I heard him and saw him several times.

I. What was your impression?

R. Well, he was just not able to come to agreement with the coal operators, with what they felt at that time about working men, you know, and how he felt about his buddies that he worked with in the mines in Spring Valley, you know, and how he felt about the buddies that he'd been working with in the other ones that was around. But he made a good president. And I was glad when he got a job in New York, you know, to take care of labor matters there, because I knew he'd be fair and honest about them. And we had Mother Jones, of course, here.

I. Tell me about her.

R. She was a lady that would tell you exactly what she thought. There was no meanness about her; but I mean if she liked you, why, you could tell by her talk and actions, and if she didn't, why, she didn't pretend to show it. And she could talk pretty definite.

I. She could?

R. Yeah. But she was very nice, I liked her, and I thought she was a very nice lady.

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I. What kind of things did she do with the miners?

R. Well, she was mostly in the East, in West Virginia and Pennsylvania at first. And that must've been in the early 1900's, and that's when they had the company house and company stores and company towns in some of those places, you know. It was when the coal operators were boss of the whole state. Not only the little towns, but the whole state was subject to their wishes most of the time. And she went around and told the people what rights they had and would sometimes stand up to militia, when they threatened to do certain things, you know, unless they did what they told them to. I mean they sometimes were obstinate, but that's when she liked to be with them, you know. And she helped them to be that way.

I. Helped?

R. Showing that was the right way to 'be, and not to knuckle down to them because the company owned the store and the company town. You were like a slave, you know, worked the way black slaves were sometimes. She was here on several occasions, and we had meals together. We generally saw that they were well taken care of, you know. We had a hotel at that time; we don't have now; there's no need for it anymore. With a car, you know, they can go outside of town. But that's when we used to get together; and also in our homes we used to accomodate them. And the women used to cook them a nice meal so that they would have a good impression of Mount Olive. Then, after

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a while, the big trouble was in Colorado. I don't know whether you've heard of that.

1. Is that the Ludlow Strike?

R. Ludlow, and then that period, yeah. Then she was involved with the Colorado miners' affairs, and it was generally strike and lockout where they'd put the men and the women out of the camp, you know; and the tents were, Lord knows, how long. And they had her in jail, what they call incommunicado, you know, so nobody could speak to her, and kept her for quite a little time; and with all the things that the miners union couldn't do, they couldn't get her out until a certain length of time. And it was several weeks that she was incommunicado, you know.

I. When she came here, was it usually during a period of a strike, or would she come at other times, too?

R. No, on the Twelfth of October celebration.

I. The celebration of the massacre, or the Virden riot, I think you call it?

R. It was a celebration that was kept going. Every year, on the twelfth of October, there was a big march out to the cemetery, and stands were built in town for the afternoon services. Or, if it was bad weather, we had enough room in several halls, you know, to accomodate a lot of people.

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And that was kept up.

I. They still do that, right?

R. No, no.

I. What do they do? They have something on October 12th, don't they? Is it just a little meeting in the cemetery?

R. I don't see anything this year at all.

I. Nothing at all?

R. No.

I. I know the Illinois Labor History Association had planned to come down on October 12th and then they changed their meeting date. When did this stop?

R. Oh, it's been several years. It's been a different feeling of the thing altogether since the younger generation grew up, for one thing. And another thing, when the Progressive Miners took over from the United Mine Workers -- they didn't take over from the United Mine Workers; they eliminated the United Mine Workers in this part of the coal mining territory for a while. Now they're coming back again, the United Mine Workers, with the new mines that are being developed,

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I. Tell me about that period when the Progressive Mine Workers started. What was the cause of their starting a separate union?

R. I wish I knew. I had an idea.

I. Tell me what you think.

R. Well, there were quite a lot of people came over from England and Scotland and other countries where they did have unions of one kind or another, that didn't think that the United Mine Workers was the kind of a union that it ought to be.

I. What was wrong with it, in their view?

R. Well, they wasn't getting enough money, I guess, for them, or conditions for them, as far as that's concerned. They ware opposed to everything. And, of course, that was in order to make their ideas look better to the people, and get their way of eliminating the United Mine Workers. And what afterwards came to be the Progressive was then formed, you know.

I. Who were the leaders in this?

R. The leaders mostly came from Gillespie, Illinois, and they were mostly Scotch and Irish, then, not Scotch and Irish, but Scotch and English.

I. Scotch and English?

R. Yeah.

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I. What were these people in the United Mine Workers, as far as national origins were concerned?

R. Their national origins? They were people from all over the old country, every country in Europe almost, you might as well say.

I. All mixed.

R. Yeah.

I. All mixed. But this group was more English and Scotch?

R. They had come more recently. The other group was older, and this group was more recent. They had a couple of good talkers and a lot of people that weren't so good at talking listened to them and believed what they told them. And then, of course, they had to go to work and use force to get their way, you know.

I. Describe some of the bitterness, or whatever occurred between the two factions?

R. If you didn't agree with them, then, of course, you were an enemy. And if you were an enemy, why, then they had a right to deal with you in any way they wanted to. That was their view of it. They had riots in Springfield where men were in a hall, and they were debating what to do. They were trying to eliminate the United Mine Workers and bring in the Progressive Mining. One man, I think a detective, was killed there, even, in a hotel,

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not in the hall, but downstairs where there was a rumpus-like riot. Over here, they would come in a big bunch, say thousands of them at the east end of town, around the west end of town. And anything that you intended to do, unless they agreed with it, of course couldn't be done; and you were mobbed if you didn't do what they wanted you to. Now, I'm not saying that they would have killed you, but that's the way it looked.

I. They at least frightened people then. Did they ever beat people?

R. Yes. Oh, yes. Sure. They tarred and feathered people even, yes.

I. Really?

R. Yes. So, it was an awful upset in our thinking if we had agreed with them. And, of course, that was hard. We didn't do it, but you had to conform, because if you didn't you lost your home. You had to get away, and sometimes they'd blow up a car, a car that was brought home, you know, standing in the garage. They marched up to Springfield and, I don't know how many thousands were there. I didn't go along. I didn't know about it. I wouldn't have went along anyhow, but I mean in order to force those people up there to join the Progressive Miners, they were willing to use all the force that they could muster. And they didn't succeed.

I. They didn't?

R. No.

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I. What happened?

R. Well, the men wouldn't change their union.

I. Did they have two unions?

R. Yes, the United Mine Workers and the Progressives, they call themselves, yeah.

I. Did they get contracts as good as the United Mine Workers, or did it weaken all of you by having two unions?

R. Why naturally, sure. But they wouldn't get a contract until after the United Mine Workers got one. And then they'd have a little item that was different from the United Mine Workers; and then they'd be better than the United Mine Workers. They would. They was about the same, both contracts,

I. I want to ask you if you could recall General Bradley?(1)

R. He lived just three blocks north of the union, straight up the road. I knew his father, a white-bearded, pretty old gentleman already then. He was pretty devout. And his mother was a very stout, not stout, but a strong looking woman; and she wasn't backward in saying what she thought if she thought she wasn't being treated right. And you could hear it whenever she said it. But the general himself, yes, he was -- oh, at that time I guess we'd call him hobo or tramp, what would you call it. For several years after

(1) "General" Bradley received his title by leading a contingent in Coxey's Army's March on Washington.

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he started in the mine he didn't like it, and he wandered around the country quite a bit and did as men did at that time. You had a lot of them, you know, at that time that didn't have a regular home, and they had to lay out -- have their places where they would associate, There was a certain system to it, But, he came back then when he was pretty well grown up. I saw him several times before that, but then he stayed here. At that time, that's when the '97 strike started. I guess that was the beginning. Men had been around here in 1894 and done no good. And, of course, all the older ones, they thought it wouldn't do no good in '97 either. That's when some of the younger ones didn't agree with them. And the old General, he was the one that they kind of liked to be around. He got to like them, and he organized a march to Belleville -- that's down south. On the way, of course, there's Glencarbon and other coal mining towns. But they stopped there and they had pretty good luck; I mean, the people were disgusted with things the way they were. They got to Belleville, and Belleville had quite a few mines at that time, quite a few. And they had good luck there, too, I mean with getting people interested. But, of course, they didn't have any money, and it was walking all the way, you might as well say. So, finally they came back. But the old General, he went on, I believe, all the way to Arkansas, if I remember right.

I. By himself, then?

R. No, with a man by the name of Rentby, I think. And that, of course, brought

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on his reputation here. Nobody knew very much about him before that. When he came back, then, of course, he was a general; he led the march, and he had lots to say about what was going to happen with miners marching and doing things in 1897 and '98,

I. What became of him after that?

R. Well, he ran for office; he wasn't a man that stayed with one job very long. He was a roamer, like, and not only in walking and drifting, but also in thinking. So he didn't stay around here for quite a few years. He was elected to miners' union president and the sub-districts' vice president. Most of the times we knew where he was at. And the last few years, I guess maybe the last ten or more years before he died, he stayed in Mount Olive steady enough.

I. He wasn't here? He spent most of his active life away from Mount Olive then?

R. Well, active years, yes. But the ones when he wasn't any more active, then he stayed home.

I. Do you think he made a big contribution in that 1897 strike?

R. Yes.

I. Would it have come out different if he hadn't been around, perhaps?

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R. Well, I'm afraid it would, maybe. He did make a big contribution. He at least showed that if you didn't work, you could live anyway. And that's what we needed at that time, because if you did work, you didn't have any money. And that's the way he showed them that you could live, and the men stuck out better.

I. What did he look like?

R. Well, he was, I guess, about six feet tall. He was dark complected, awful dark complected, and never put on any flesh, just a pretty skinny kind of a looking person. Yeah. But strong looking, yeah.

I. Were there Negro miners around here? You mentioned bringing in colored strike-breakers.

R. There were never any black people that worked in the mines.

I. I haven't asked you about your memories of John L. Lewis.

R. Well, at one time I thought John L. Lewis wasn't a good man for the working man. But I changed my mind after he quit what I thought was fooling with -- made a fool of by the politicians, you know, and stood on his own feet, with miners' backing. At one time I didn't like him much. But afterwards, when Roosevelt -- you know, when that change came with Roosevelt in the union affairs and the companies affairs you know, with the miners; he said

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they had certain rights that the other ones said they didn't have.

- I. You mean when John Lewis went in to organizing the C.I.O? Is this the period when you changed your mind?
- R. Yes. And then he broke away from the politicians that promised him things, and then whenever he delivered, why, then they wouldn't deliver -- wouldn't do what they promised. Then he got to be a real labor leader. Yeah, he didn't have to look for what the politicians wanted. He had only to look for what the working man was needing, and that's what made the big difference. And I think he was wonderful then.
- I. You think, then, from that point up until his death you would have called him a good labor leader?
- R. You betcha, yes I would.
- I. Now, what about this earlier period? What was your feeling? You didn't think he was doing very much for the miners?
- R. He was letting the politicians fool him into believing that they would do certain things, that he didn't have to have the miners' organization to do. And then they would renege on their promise and the coal miner would still be in the same place that he'd been before. And he was still there until the time that John L. Lewis and Roosevelt brought about the big change.

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I. Well, what else can you remember?

R. Oh, well -- what can you say?

I. Why don't you tell me what you think about the present situation as compared to the past. What has happened to the miners in the last twenty years?

R. Well, the things in and around the coal mine have changed so much that although I worked as a coal miner for more than fifty years and studied a little to be a mine examiner for the last, oh, maybe eight or ten years that I worked, and that way know something about the general character of the coal mine, and took an interest in mining, I'd be a greenhorn to go into a coal mine today and probably wouldn't even know which was the machinery that did the work or if it was just there to show if there was any for show. They've changed that so much with what they call coal mold and all the different machinery they'd bring in there that I'd be just as green as the greenest.

I. All your old skills would be no use anymore.

R. No.

I. I guess that's true in almost every industry though, if you go back for fifty years; they've changed the technology so much.

R. Yeah.

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I. How do you feel about the pensions that you have and the kind of provisions that the miners have made for you in retirement?

R. Well, I don't know much about it, because when the Progressive Miners took over, that naturally meant that we were cut off from anything that we would have been entitled to in the United Mine Workers.

I. Oh. Then, did you join the Progressive Miners?

R. I did.

I. In order to keep working where you were working?

R. I wanted to keep my home. If I hadn't joined them, they would have made it so that I couldn't be in Mount Olive. And that was the way they worked it anyway, you know, with everyone. And I didn't want to leave everything, and for that reason I did have to join, yeah, but I never believed in it. No,

I. They're still in existence, aren't they, the Progressive Miners?

R. They are. Sometimes you hear about them, They're mostly down south, in the southern part of the state as far as I know. All the new mines that are being sunk are United Mine Workers as far as I know.

I. Did the Progressive Miners get pensions for their people?

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R. I don't know. Now, yes, they at one time did. But then when the money that came in from that particular local union was used up, then the pension was stopped, you know.

I. Then you don't get a pension from the miners?

R. Not from the miners. No.

I. What about from the company? Do you get a pension from the company?

R. No.

I. Nothing?

R. Nothing.

I. That's a recent invention, I suppose.

R. Just to give you an idea, there was a death in our family. A brother got killed in Number Eight mine. And shortly after that, I was unlucky enough to have a fractured arm. And the settlement for both the death and the fracture was \$150.00, \$100.00 for the death and \$50.00 for the fracture, That gives you an idea of what was thought to be fair and right.

I. How did families live when the man in the family was killed? Did they have to depend on relatives to support them?

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R. They had to take in wash, the poor women, and a big basket, you know, the kind of basket that you had, you had to have a little wagon to ride it on, you might say, and then get the wash and wash it and bring it back -- probably a whole day's work for a dollar a day. I'm talking about '95, '96 and '97, those years.

I. People didn't retire, I suppose, in those days either. Did they just work until they couldn't work any longer?

R. Well, then there was the poor farm out in Carlinville. And that was something. It was the best that the people could do at that time for their poor elders, but it was awful. I go up there, oh, not very often, but I have been there about two or three times in the last twenty years to what used to be the poor farm. But now it's a great big difference. It's a human way to live now; but before that it was the animal way. Yeah, yeah.

I. Can you think of any other individuals who stand out?

R. Yes. We had Eugene Debs here.

I. How did you like Debs?

R. Why, I didn't get around too much with him. But at one time I belonged to his party, you know. And I got more in touch with him in that way. But here naturally they come and they make their speech. And they had a little

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socialist -- what did they call it at that time? -- branch, at that time. He visited there. And all in all, why, everybody seemed to like him. And on election day, why, of course, they would damn him not. Y e a h . But, yes, we had Seymour Stedman here; I don't know, that was a Chicago lawyer also. And we had Hayes here, the President of the United Mine Workers that was ousted by Lewis. Or, Lewis succeeded him rather, John Lewis. We had quite a few open-minded, what we thought fair-minded people, to make a talk and let people know it wasn't all just one way, you know. But there were lots of things to think about besides what we were thinking.

I. When Lewis took over from Hayes, how did you feel at that point? Did you think Hayes was better than Lewis?

R. No. Well, at that time, you had no opinion, you might as well say. But after a while, I found that Hayes was not serious-minded enough to have a job of that kind. The fact of the matter, Hayes made a poem; I heard him read it here. It was quite a good poem, but that is what brought him lot of votes to be elected as president, and they didn't mean anything.

I. That's not enough.

R. As far as the results were concerned.

I. How did Debs do in the election, here? Did he carry it?

R. No. No, there were a lot of Germans here, and others also. And then

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Americans afterwards came in that saw the Socialist Party.

I. But not many Socialists when Debs was running? In the miners?

R. Oh, yes, sure. There were. Probably in Mount Olive at that time he would have got probably 150 or 200 votes.

I. And how big was Mount Olive?

R. Oh, Mount Olive at that time, I guess, had probably a thousand votes, you know.

I. That's pretty good.

R. That's making a showing. But then that fell off again, you know, after the oldtimers were gone.

I. Did the Socialist Party stay alive in this area or did it die out?

R. It died out,

I. How long did it last?

R. Oh, it lasted a good twenty years.

I. That's pretty long.

R. Yeah. I used to be a delegate to the Socialist convention; and I was a

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Socialist, a member of the Socialist Party for quite a number of years.

- I. You never really changed your mind, or did you? Did it just wit her away?
- R. No. Some of those things were overcome by the new way of thinking, and the other ones are unobtainable right now. So what was the use of wasting time with things that you can't get. And lots of things - take the eight-hour day. Why, at one time the ten-hour day was the least, 12-hours, 14 hours, that was easy now. I mean, just things like that, that's what we were against when we joined the Party. The fact of the matter, the name of the Party shouldn't have been Socialist Party at all; it should have been Social Democratic Party. But then people just naturally believed that that was just a branch of the Democratic Party.
1. I see. They didn't want to confuse them.
- R. So then they made it Socialist Party out of it. Socialist looked more like anarchist, so, you know, that hurt.
- I. Just the name hurt?
- R. Yeah.
- I. Did you have children?
- R. No.

I. I was going to ask you how many of them went into the mines. What about your nephews and nieces? Did the family stay with the mines? Did your brothers have children?

R. No. No, I had two brothers. One of them died when he was about twenty years old, and the other one got killed in the mine when he was about seventeen, yeah.

I. Seventeen! That's young to get killed.

R. Yes, yeah. Well, that wasn't all yet. The next week after he was buried, or a couple of weeks after, I came home with a fractured arm, you know, and that brought back all of it again, you know.

I. What do you think is going to become of the miners? I know that there are fewer and fewer people who are in that occupation now

R. Well, they're going to keep on going upward, as far as their work and as far as working conditions are concerned, I think.

I. They keep improving?

R. They've got to be a thinking element now, because their work brings on more thinking than they used to have to do in the old times, you know. And they don't have to contend with the poor people that came from countries where there was no working conditions and that didn't look for any here, but were willing to take what was given to them.

I. That makes it easier?

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R. And without demanding what they had coming to them, yeah. So I think it's a better trade now, or working condition than it was before, with their machinery, as far as I can see, although I don't know. I know they will be more careful about roof conditions and cave-ins than they used to be, because that machinery is more valuable than lives were at that time. And they take better care of their conditions, with the safety conditions.

I. How do the people in Mount Olive feel now about that cemetery? Do the people in general honor it and want it to be made a national memorial, or have they forgotten?

R. Well, they've forgotten. But they haven't all forgotten. And the main thing would be to do something about that cemetery and bring it back up again so they could remember it. Now, they hate to remember it now.

I. Do most of the old miners want to be buried there? Or do they have that feeling of attachment for it?

R. Well, they would know that the monument is there for the 3 of them that got killed at Virden and the Bradley monument and the Mother Jones monument, too. But the Mother Jones monument wouldn't have been there if Mother Jones had been alive afterward, because she wouldn't want it.

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- I. You mean she wouldn't have wanted any kind of monument?
- R. She wouldn't want one like the miners have. That monument that is there, you know, for the miners, the three miners. There's only three miners buried there although there's four names on it. But one miner is buried somewhere else, you know.
- I. Mother Jones is buried in Mt. Olive.
- R. Oh, yes. Where that monument is. And I was in charge at that time. I was a board member, District Board member. Her grave was put out somewhere where it would be in the circle with the monument with the other three. That's where she wanted to be buried. That's how she came to be buried on the cemetery. She wanted to be buried where "her boys" were buried. That's what she called them, but then, afterwards, they exhumed her and put her out where her grave is now, you know, by the big monument. And the intention was, at that time, to create that circle that is around the monument now, you know, and include Mother Jones' grave so that she would be with her boys, but that was never done. That was when I was knocked out, you know, when the Progressives came in and their ideas were altogether different.
- I. How did they feel about that cemetery? Did they honor it, or ignore it?
- R. I don't know. You can't even find out) There's two of them that have charge of it, that is they're put in charge of it, one by the name of Katchamora and the other one, oh, I don't know, remember his

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name right now, oh yes, Smith, Bob Smith. They never did anything about it.

I. Just let it go?

R. That's all.

I. Well, we're about to run out of tape. Any last words you want to get on the tape?

R. No, but if I could be of any help I'm glad of it, and I'm sorry that my use of words might not be just so good anymore, but anyhow whatever I've said I honestly believe to be the thing that people have a right to know and if they want to believe them; if they don't want to believe them, that's alright, too.

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