

Gordon and Sharon Swartz: *Unemployment in Coal Industry*

Michael Nobel Kline: Maybe you can start out by saying 'my name is.'

Gordon Swartz: My name is Gordon Swartz.

MNK: One more time.

GS: My name is Gordon Swartz.

MNK: And we're at -- What's the address here?

GS: Route Three, Box 55, Cameron, West Virginia.

MNK: And -- Well, why don't we just back up and get you to talk a little bit about your home place and your people that you were raised with. Where you're from.

(006) GS: Well, okay. I was raised in West Virginia. That's about the best way to put it because I lived all over West Virginia. My father was a state policeman. And during that time they transferred him about every two years. And my dad's people's from Pink Creek, West Virginia, where they had a lot of labor, UMW. That's where the ... from Logan started in that area. The whole works.

MNK: In 1920?

GS: That would have been 1921, I believe.

MNK: Twenty-one?

(013) GS: Yeah. Of course 1912 and 1913 is when they had the big mine war there. When Mother Jones showed up and everything. Holly Grove.

MNK: And that was your -- That's where you were from?

GS: That's where my dad's people from.

MNK: ...

GS: Yeah.

MNK: So, you've gone back there a lot to visit?

GS: Yeah. They had a reunion there four or five years ago was the last time I was there.

MNK: So, you, you grew up in lots of different places. Where did you get most of your schooling?

(019) GS: Well, last three or four years, I was at Dunbar High School, which is in Kanawha County. Of course Dunbar's one of those that's been consolidated. Now it's not there anymore.

MNK: Did you know Sam Hickman at all? You're a little older than Sam Hickman.

GS: I don't recall.

MNK: So, the story starts when you came up to Cameron then?

(025) GS: When I got -- Yeah, I came up to Cameron to work at Shoemaker Mine. I graduated from college, had a B.S. in agricultural economics. My wife's from the Cameron area. I was looking for a job. Well, coal mining pays good. So it worked out for a couple years. Twenty years later I was still working it, so that's the way it goes. Of course now they closed the mine up after the last strike. They didn't call -- We went back to work, and they said there's no work here. So -- But we lost our job because it's high sulfur coal. And ... of that act, Clean Air Act, that they will pay for two years of schooling to retrain you if you lose your job because of the Clean Air Act. Well, it took some, quite a bit of work to prove that we lost our job, and I helped do that. And we did prove it. And so we get the training. So I'm working on a master's degree with it. They're paying my way to school.

MNK: Master's degree from?

(037) GS: West Virginia University. Recreation and parks. Now of course they opened the mine back up later, and they called quite a few back. And they're working now, but I don't know how for long, for how long.

MNK: Well, what did 20 years in the mines teach you?

(042) GS: It taught me how to be a coal miner, I guess! It taught me that there's some mighty good people in there in the coal mines. It's not the stereotype, it's -- It takes some brains to mine coal now. And it's a competitive, very competitive now. That's why -- It's push, push, push right now for production. They streamlined. They cut back. But what I hear, that's everywhere. Every industry. Everybody's out of work, seems to be.

MNK: Yeah.

Carrie Nobel Kline: Tell us about your first day going into the mines.

(050) GS: I'll -- Okay. The first day was kind of interesting. The very actual first day that I was

going to go get on the elevator, an ambulance pulls up to the side. They said, "Stand back. Wait a minute." And they, they're carrying some guy on a stretcher, some bearded guy with his face all black. And I heard people talking about how, how he got hurt, how he got pinned here. They load him on the ambulance and took him away. And then the foreman comes out and says, you know, he starts cursing, said, "Get the hell in the mine." It gives you an eerie feeling your very first day, you know. But that's just the way it is. There's lots of injuries.

MNK: What happened to that guy?

(060) GS: He somehow got pinned between the miner and the rib. But he, he recovered. And the tubing came down on top of him after he got pinned. You have this fiberglass tubing to ventilate that runs through a fan. He probably had some crushed ribs or something like that, I believe.

MNK: Did you ever get injured?

GS: Yes. Got a scar here. I don't know if you can see it, the mustache covers it up sometimes. Through a, a canopy. It's a piece of steel about two or three inches thick. Hit against the top and broke off and it come back and just smacked me in the face. That was the worst injury I had. Knocked out a bunch of teeth.

MNK: How long ago was that?

(071) GS: Early '80s probably.

MNK: About the time you and I met.

GS: Yeah.

MNK: Can you -- Talk a little bit more about this, these, this guy that wrote songs back in the '20s that you had -- Was it in Peach Creek?

(075) GS: No, it's Pink Creek, Holly Grove. Walter Seacrist was his name. He was -- The West Virginia Mine Workers Union, it was a -- It broke off from the UMW. And they -- The Pioneer Youth ... a little socialist group they say. I imagine they were. And he went to the Brickwood Labor College up in New York for a while. And he was vice president of that union. He had no use for John L. Lewis or any of that bunch. He -- In his writings you can see it. But he wrote some pretty good -- Well, he wrote a song and poetry about Siskel

Estep, the man who was killed by the Bull Moose Special that ran through Holly Grove. I've got, oh, maybe 50 or 100 pages of poetry he wrote. He's ended up his life down working as a custodian at Cape Canaveral. He left, he left the mine at a fairly young age.

CNK: Seacrist?

(090) GS: Yeah.

CNK: How do you spell that?

GS: S-E-A-C-R-I-S-T. But they -- During that period they spelled it a different way. Some -- There was -- His parents spelled it with an H, so C-H-R-I-S-T.

MNK: And, and he witnessed that Bull Moose Special ...?

(095) GS: Well, yeah, the way I understand it. But he wasn't very old. He was just like four years old or something, you know. He said he carried Mother Jones' satchel when she come there. He'd walk around behind her carrying the satchel. And he, he give a eulogy at one of the memorials up in Illinois where she's buried. He went up there with one of the senators, Holt, I believe it was. Russ Holt. He was a preacher too, Walter was. Baptist preacher.

MNK: Could you explain what the Bull Moose Special was?

(102) GS: It was an armored train. It was made in Huntington, West Virginia, by union people as a matter of fact, I understand. But they -- To bring in scabs, replacement workers, supplies during the strike. The railroad went right up through the tent colonies where the -- There's only one piece of property on Pink Creek that wasn't owned by the companies. So of course all the striking miners had to gather there. They weren't even allowed to walk on the roads. And he -- The train come through there one night. It's armored, but they had probably machine guns, whatever kind of guns they had, and just shot up the town. The sheriff was even on the train. The sheriff of Kanawha County. Bonner Hill, I believe his name was. And that was a sad -- Of course those things happened in Colorado. They happened all over West Virginia.

MNK: That was in, around 1912?

(115) GS: Yes.

MNK: Yeah that was a bad year from 1912 to 1913.

GS: Yes.

MNK: The Ludlow, the Ludlow Massacre.

GS: Right.

MNK: The Rockefellers out in Colorado.

GS: And Mother Jones was out there too. Yeah.

MNK: And --

GS: I guess she, she could get people stirred up.

MNK: And the -- Calumet, Michigan, there was a lot of children killed. Some thugs set fire to a union hall when they were having their Christmas party. Seventy children got stampeded.

(123) GS: That -- See that -- ... went through there in Colorado too. I guess it was the same thing. They killed more people out there though. They burned some of the tents that had children in them. Of course you've been a historian, you probably know all this.

MNK: Well, it's interesting to hear the details. It's hard to keep everything in your mind.

GS: Walter was a strong union man. That's who you're asking about. Well, I think he was a union down at Cape Canaveral when he was a custodian.

MNK: Has, have there been other expressions of music in the, the coal industry? You mentioned --

(134) GS: A friend of mine, Roger Bryant, I went to grade school with. Some of his songs I really liked. *Going to the Kentucky to Stop the Flow of Coal* was one of his songs that I really enjoy. Of course strikes are run differently now, but there's still -- The selective strike and the whole things. It's a whole different ball game now.

MNK: What do you mean?

GS: You don't pull -- Richard Trumpka doesn't pull everybody out, it just pulls a select few out. And to my way of thinking, that makes it awful rough to win. But of course we're not part -- Even if we pulled them all out, we'd not make a difference. So that's probably his rationale. We're weak. We don't have the percentage of the coal market we had. Not near the percentage. I mean we had 80, 90 percent, but now it's 30, 20.

MNK: Here in West Virginia?

(145) GS: Probably everywhere. West Virginia --

MNK: You mean -- You mean union?

GS: Yeah. Yeah. West Virginia probably more unionized than most of the other states. It

always has been, but I'm talking about the whole United States. But even West Virginia's not near as unionized as it was.

MNK: What's been the attitude or the role of the union in this part of West Virginia? Let's see, we're in District --

(152) GS: District Six, which is really separate from -- Ohio and the Northern Panhandle is District Six of the UMW. But let's see, when I started in the coal mine, 1974, there was 16 to 20 thousand or more than that probably coal miners in this area. Now there's probably less than three thousand. Automation. They're producing as much coal. But that makes it hard on unions when they're -- You lose a lot of your members. They pay a royalty on man hours worked instead of tonnage and that -- I don't know who made that mistake, but -- So not as much money coming into the union, you know.

MNK: On hours worked instead of tonnage? I didn't realize they had done that.

GS: Yeah.

CNK: When did that switch over?

(166) GS: Well, start talking politics here now I guess. But people blame it on Richard Trumpka. I don't know for sure. Which is not that long ago.

MNK: He's been in now for eight or ten years?

GS: Yeah, probably about 10. Right after Sam Church was there for just a little while. Of course ... Miller retired and Sam Church took over and then he -- Rich Trumpka come out of nowhere and ran against him and beat him. So -- Of course he's a lawyer. And he, he's done some good things, but -- Right now the people that I work with, you know, they just turn up their hands. They're -- It doesn't look good.

MNK: Because of, of the shrinking industries?

GS: Yeah. Yeah. And of course in this area it's high sulfur coal too, which is even, makes it even worse. The Clean Air Act is -- They have to install the scrubbers, which costs millions of dollars, or they bring in low sulfur coal from somewhere else out west. Now there used to be mines Wheeling area down to Moundsville, there's probably 30, 40 mines just in that little stretch. Of course they were little mines, that's true. Now, now everything's huge. It's longwalls and multi-million dollar mines, you know. You can't just have -- To even

meet all the federal standards, a little operation couldn't do it.

MNK: The dog hole days are --

(192) GS: In this area. I hear there's some dog holes still down in southern West Virginia.

MNK: Kentucky.

GS: Yeah. Of course even the inspectors talk about them. It's like family operated or something. And they'll chase the inspectors off. They don't want any -- Try to keep them out. Of course to many union men, those inspectors are just all that stands between us and the serious accidents sometimes, you know.

MNK: Inspecting for ... gas levels and everything else?

GS: Yeah. Ventilation, gas levels, equipment. Anything to do with safety. Well, just unsafe acts. If they see you doing something unsafe, they can fine you.

MNK: Smoking in the mines.

(205) GS: Yes. I don't think I ever saw anybody smoking in the mine up here. But I heard tell of a lot of mines that do.

MNK: Crazy.

GS: Yeah. I found a pack of cigarettes one time, but that's possible that someone brought it in by mistake or something. You're not allowed to even take them into the mine, you know.

MNK: Yeah, well, what -- How's it changed just in the 20 years you've been --

(213) GS: Okay. When I went in, they already had continuous miners. They weren't doing the conventional mining. Conventional mining is where you use powder and blow it out and then load it. But the continuous miners just rips it out by the seams. It's a huge thing with bits on it. And then piles it back behind, and you bolt the top up. The bolts in the top hold the top up. But then -- About the time I started, within a year the first longwall in this area was installed at the mine I worked at. It's the Shoemaker Mine. And it takes everything. It -- You have to use continuous miners to drive two side of the thing, which could be 10 thousand feet between. Or no, it's not 10 thousand. You drive 10 thousand feet in and then come back out. It's a, oh about, I forget how -- A thousand feet between, something like that.

MNK: They, they open up a corridor about that big?

(227) GS: Yeah. This way. I mean they're cross end. Then they start back and just take everything in between there. Everything. Of course that causes some big problems up on the surface eventually. It causes water problems. People are losing their water in this county. This -- We're in Marshall County now, but Ohio County too. And subsidence, foundations crack. But the -- If you talk about -- The other, you had to leave an awful lot of coal. You had to leave more than half to support. This way you don't support it. You just let it fall. You just come on out of there and it all falls. But I can foresee some terrible problems with it in the future. ... they're already having them. People are losing their water, but the companies are making enough money that they supply the water. They'll haul it. They'll, they'll build the water lines into them. And they'll -- Where they're going to mine, they go contact the property owners and say, "This foundation's going to crack." And they tell them what to do about it. So that they have the technology, but it's still happening. The property owners can't do anything about it. They say, "Well, I don't want my foundation to crack." Well, that's tough. You don't own the minerals under there.

MNK: So do they -- Are they liable for that too?

GS: Yeah.

MNK: They don't care.

(249) GS: No! I think there's -- Maybe I shouldn't say, I don't know all the facts exactly, but there's one property owner that owned several acres right in the middle of where they were wanting to mine. And he still had the mineral rights, which was unheard of because they bought all those up back in the early 1900s. Somehow his family had held on to it. He said, "No, you're not mining under my property." Well, they did anyway. He sued them for millions and millions of dollars. And he won. But that's a drop in the bucket to them, you know. So that's the way they work. They, they plead poverty to us, but I can see that they're making lots of money.

MNK: So when you came in there, there was the continuous miner and --

(262) GS: Yes, I worked on the continuous miner as a roof bolter the biggest part of my career there. The longwalls were -- The old timers were -- It was something new, they didn't want it. They were scared of it. But it is -- It's proven to be safe. It's a lot safer than the other

mining drill because you're underneath shields all the time. Of course --

MNK: Shields?

GS: Yes shields is what holds the -- There are huge pieces of metal that hold the roof up right where you're working. And then they move up as you go. So -- But tons and tons are falling back behind you, but those shields -- Of course they have accidents. If a shield malfunctions or something, you can have problems.

MNK: Those work hydraulically?

(276) GS: Yeah. It's amazing. When I first started you'd see a little bit of coal come through the conveyor belts, dump that 20 ton buggy of coal. Then five minutes later, they might dump another 20 ton buggy of coal. This is on the main belt. Now, you go along that belt line, it's -
- They have belts twice the size as they had then. And it is stacked to the top, and it never, sometimes it never stops all day long. You know, 10 thousand tons a shift or more.

MNK: Can you describe those belts? They have rollers under them or --

(287) GS: Yeah. They're cradled in rollers. It's like a giant rubber band is what it is. It goes this way and then comes back on the bottom. And they have miles and miles of those belts in there. And of course then they come out to a what we call spotter. That's where they dump off the belt into coal cars, and then they haul -- They have a 50 ton motors that haul them out of the mine to the river. Then they load it on the barges at the river.

MNK: Do you ride in on those belts?

GS: No.

MNK: ... trip?

(297) GS: Yeah. We have a porta buses or jeeps. Trolley wire like an old trolley car. And that's what people travel around on. Now in years -- Years and years ago the people rode belts, but those belts, now they go fast. I mean they're, you know, faster and faster and faster to get that production. It'd be very dangerous to ride a belt. I'm not saying nobody ever did, but -- Politician or a doctor or lawyer and you get in a group. They'll, they'll give you the training and if they think it's going to do them some good, you know. And you can go look at the longwall and see how things work. They do take tours once in a while. But I couldn't take like my -- Like my wife's never been in the mine. They used to do that years ago. But you -

- There is an awful lot of training involved. And I think it's good.

CNK: What's the training?

(313) GS: Well, just to go in for a day, the first thing you need to know is how to operate the self-contained self rescuer in case something happens. It's the breathing apparatus in case you get in smoke or -- And then they tell you the escape ways, where you go if all the power's gone. You need to know which entry to get into. I, I don't -- I guess that's the main things that they -- A little bit of first aid, I don't know.

MNK: So the belts have gotten bigger in 20 years?

(322) GS: Yeah, they're -- The latest ones they put in on the mother belt is 60 inches wide, I believe. That's pretty good size compared to the little ones we used to have. They were 42, then they went to 48, then 50 some. Now the ones up on the section that come from the longwall down to the mother belt are a little smaller. Now if you're going to work say on the section or on the longwall, you might travel five, seven miles after you go down the elevator to get to your place of work. All underground.

CNK: In this trolley?

GS: Yeah.

MNK: Is that what they call a lizard?

(334) GS: That's what they used to call it, but I've never heard it called that at our mine, no. They're porta buses, jeeps. But yeah, they used to call it a lizard.

CNK: What was that from, do you know?

GS: No.

MNK: Just a little low thing that could get around in all the holes.

GS: Spread a little rock dust on the miner's floor, you know, that's where you got that lizard, yeah! They still -- Rock dust is still a big thing. They go through a lot of lime to keep the coal dust down. Now it's -- Of course this is probably bad for you to breath as the coal dust is as far as your lungs. There's a lot, still lots of dust. They do -- I'm not saying they haven't tried to do anything about it, but the amount of coal is so much anymore that they can use all the water sprays in the world and all the -- Still, you got dust.

CNK: Have you wearing masks?

(352) GS: They, they will supply us with respirators. And if you're in a dusty area, you wear them. But if you're in a, doing a hard job, which there are still lots of labor intensive jobs, that's one of the few industries there is, it's hard to breath with that thing on, you know.

MNK: Hard to breath with it at all.

GS: Yeah, but that's, that's up to you. They say, "Well, you had the opportunity to wear it," you know.

CNK: What are some of the labor intensive jobs that are left then?

(360) GS: Shoveling. Plain old -- Those belt lines take a lot of shoveling. There's a lot of spillage. They never keep up. That's what -- That's probably where they get a lot of their violations. They need a lot more people to take care of the belts than they have. I know that. And carrying the supplies. They bring in a car to the end of the track to the section. Then these bolts, they can be anywhere from six feet is an average. I know they got them 10 feet, 12 feet long. And they're, they're heavy. You got to carry them up to where you're -- They got planks that take two men to carry for each plank. And you put one of those up every three to four feet average. So in a day's time, you put up 30 or 40 of those off of the miner if you're bolting them up to the top. And you're -- They glue it. You got -- All the stuff you got to carry. Used to be they had mechanical bolts that, with an expander on the ends that just, it'd go up in the top. And it would expand and just tighten up, and tighten it like this. Now they, they have glue, and it's like rosin like you'd patch a car with. It glues the top together.

MNK: Imagine that.

(382) GS: The theory is -- Well, it works, it's not a theory. That if you got layers of stone like, like my fingers here, well, this layer's going to fall and this layer's going to fall. What you do is get them all together. It's harder for all of them to fall. So that's --

MNK: So they glue those --

GS: They just glue them together.

MNK: Layers?

(388) GS: Yeah. Of course when it falls, then it really falls! Of course an experienced miner can generally tell when it's -- It's just something you learn. The cracking and the sloughing.

MNK: Sloughing?

GS: Sloughing's when something falls. That's what -- Like the ribs start peeling down and coming in. That's sloughage. That's what we call it. That probably not in the dictionary. I think I looked it up one time. Of course there's lots of words we use that -- They call hydraulic fluid, they call that mouse milk as a matter of fact. I don't know why.

MNK: What are some other ones?

(400) GS: There's a difference between southern West Virginia and here. I -- Like I say, I was a roof bolter, and we called them bolts. Well, down in southern West Virginia, talked to people that do the same thing I do, they call them pins. They're roof pinner, not roof bolters, they say. As far as others, I can't think of any right off the top of my head. Just, just the technology, something to describe the different things, you wouldn't know what they were talking about. The shields. On the longwall the panel line that's a big chain that brings it down, that's a pan line they call that.

MNK: It drags the coal?

GS: Yeah. And they got a shear that cuts it. And then -- Cuts it this way, then turns over and goes back the other way. Just continuously back and forth. Of course I don't know if this is history or not, that's what they're still doing.

MNK: What other things have changed though in the time that you've been there?

(424) GS: I think the attitude of the company has changed. It's more of a push, push, push. I think there was a period there in, in the '80s -- Well, when I first started, they put on company picnics and things like that. And there was an attempt to get along with the workers. But as time passed, I think it was conscious decision. They sent their foremen to school in Pittsburgh, and they learned some new management techniques. They come back, and one real low-key foreman I had, he come back from that meeting and he says, "Well, thank you's out and blank you's in." That -- They promoted dissension. They felt that was the way to keep production up and keep you mad. Maybe it worked. They set records every year. I think the last four or five years I worked, we set a new record every year in production. Four million tons, almost four million tons the last year I worked. And every year it would increase.

MNK: The last year you worked?

(449) GS: Yeah, which was -- I've been off about a year now. Of course the mine was -- This year the mine was closed for six months, so they won't set any record this year. But they're, they're just now getting started back up.

MNK: This was the mine that wasn't, they said wasn't going to open any more?

GS: Right. And they just put five million dollars into a new spotter. I was telling you about that. But, but it doesn't matter. I've seen them do that, and they close it and seal it, you know. It's money -- They think different about money than I do.

CNK: But this dissension was supposed to help production?

(460) GS: Well, that's, that's an opinion of mine. And it did. I don't know if that's what helped it, but -- They kept you scared, you know. They -- If you don't do this, we're closing the mine. Of course that's happened in the steel mills, that's happened everywhere. And the men, they believed it. They come through, they did it. No matter what you did, you're still laid off though. They worked hard. They worked -- Course they got so that they forced you to work 58 hours a week. That's compulsory, but then they wanted you to work more.

MNK: Fifty-eight hours a week is compulsory?

(475) GS: Yes. Ten hours a day, eight hours on Saturday.

MNK: If you wanted to work there, that's what you did?

GS: Yeah. If you wanted to work more than that, you could. Some people got rich to be honest with you. Some -- Triple time for holidays. You can work them. They didn't -- Everybody could work them. They didn't care. Money to pay the man that was working was no object. They'd pay you. Still do. But what you're doing when you're doing all that is keeping another man out of a job. And, and their logic is pay one man to do two jobs because benefits cost them more than that overtime. Because we got pretty good health benefits. So if you get one man to do two jobs, even if you got to pay them a bunch of money, you're still better off.

MNK: Now when did you say they had these training sessions for the foremen that they came back with these new attitudes?

(497) GS: It's hard to put a year on it. I have to talk to somebody else. And they --

MNK: Early '80s?

GS: Yeah, early '80s, I believe.

MNK: Interesting.

(505) GS: I had no troubles with -- I enjoyed working there. It was dangerous, but I -- Maybe that's macho image or something. You enjoyed it. You got good at what you were doing. You knew you were good at it. But the last four or five years I worked there, it wasn't fun anymore. As a matter of fact, I wasn't involved in the union at all. Why should I be, I was happy. Never went to union meetings. But it got -- I started getting involved when it started getting bad, which is normal, I guess. But it's -- It got too bad. The union's not keeping up, not making any progress, it doesn't seem to me. There's the Mannington Mine disaster in 1969, now that brought a lot of safety rules around that we -- Inspectors and the union do work on safety. But as far as them working you to death and the whole atmosphere around work, it's not good.

MNK: Is that something that can be negotiated in the contract?

(529) GS: Well, I don't see why not. They could say 40 hours a week and that's it, nothing beyond that. But the company says if you do that, we can't compete with the nonunion. They got a point.

MNK: Why couldn't they just hire more people like you said?

GS: They say it costs too much.

MNK: Oh, with the benefits and that.

(537) GS: Yeah. Yes, that's something that can be negotiated, but it -- It's been tried to be negotiated, I guess. I heard Richard Trumpka saying no more forced overtime in his last campaign, but it just -- He probably tried. Didn't work.

CNK: What does that do to families, that forced overtime?

GS: You can ask my wife. She says that right now I'm dirt poor because I'm not making one fifth of the money I was making then. She says she'd rather I be where I'm at now.

MNK: And your income now, you're drawing unemployment?

(552) GS: That's all I'm drawing, yeah. Which I get -- The Clean Air -- The only reason I'm still drawing it -- Well, it will run out, but then the Clean Air Act's going to take over on, just keep paying me for the two years that I'm going to school. And they're paying my way to

school. So I went for it. I could be back to work now. They, they called down to reach me. I made a decision not to right now. I might have made a mistake, but I'm -- I look to see the same thing happen again within a year. They'll lay everybody off again. Could be. You hear rumors both ways.

MNK: So this Clean, this Clean Air Act provides government funds --

(573) GS: For anybody that loses their job because of the Clean Air Act to retrain them. But that's hard to prove. So lots of mines went through the same thing. Ireland Mine was the first one that got it. So our way was paved a little bit. But they, what they went through -- I was working with them on that too. They say you have 13 weeks to be in school from the time you're laid off. But nobody could tell them what they had to do and how to do it. They went to the state, the state said, "We don't know anything about it." They called in a -- These things take time, and they finally got a guy from the Department of Labor named Columbo was his name. I was at the meeting. And he came to the meeting says, "Well, the 13 weeks is up. You're out of luck." But they'd spent all this time just trying to get somebody to talk to, you know. But eventually they made an exception. And some of them did get some training, but they had to fight like crazy. And us, it's the same situation. We had to get in school. And they lay you off, maybe there's not a semester starting at school, you know. But the state was getting, getting wise to what was going on. They did try to help us out some. They made arrangements with Belmont Tech and West Virginia Northern to start a special semester for us laid off coal, because there's a bunch of us. Or we wouldn't have

(604) gotten any of the benefits. It's, you know, the bureaucracy, the red tape. But it's there -- Nothing was there before. Before we'd have just been on the street, period. But when you even get the laws to protect you, you got to fight for them though.

MNK: Well, it's one thing to have a law, and it's another thing to have it enforced.

GS: Right.

MNK: So what was it like trying to raise a family when you were working 58 hours?

(617) GS: Real tough. I guess you can imagine. The last few years, I always raised a big garden. I enjoy that kind of thing. Just had to give up on that kind of stuff. On Sunday, your one day

off, you lay in front of the TV and watch football games. You didn't feel like doing anything else. So your family life was kind of shot, you know.

MNK: Do you -- Looking around the community here at the guys you worked with, what, what kind of toll did that, did that speed up take on family life overall in the community? Have you seen a lot of --

(633) GS: Well, I'm sure it caused lots of problems. I -- But it seems like when they got laid off, there was even more problems because there was no money coming in. So I saw a lot of divorces then too! I think the wives could stand them being gone as long as they brought the paychecks in! That's an opinion, I don't know. They got used to them being gone, that's all. After so many years, you know --

CNK: Now when they called people back, did, did very many people decide to go back this last time when you didn't?

(649) GS: I think they probably called 200 and some back. There's two people that didn't go back. Me and one other guy. It, it's money. It's big money. I know one fellow made 95, 98 thousand dollars in a year working doubles every day and triples and holidays and Sundays.

CNK: So these people were enrolled in school and quit to go back?

GS: Yup. Of course most of them were in -- I had a B.S. so I was ahead. These, these people are going to technical school, electrical, which is great, you know. But you're taking that, and you don't know that there's a job at the end of it. I don't know that there's a job at the end of mine. You go back to work, even if it's for six months or a year, it's, puts the inevitable off that much longer, you know.

MNK: ... different.

(671) GS: They had a -- Well, one -- That computer class there was a 17 year old girl that come in there with about 30, 40 year coal miners. She didn't last but a day or two with us!

CNK: It'd be a shocker!

GS: They didn't keep anybody else out, they couldn't do that. But this was just all coal miners in the classes I was in.

CNK: What is that like to look around and see your buddies sitting at a desk instead of digging coal?

(692) GS: It was different. And you find out -- I think that the Northern people were kind of surprised that the old dumb coal miners did pretty good up there. They, they made better grades than their fresh, kids fresh out of high school.

MNK: That's surprising.

GS: Of course there's different theories about that, and mine is that we were -- If we flunked out we were going to lose some money! So that makes you study a little harder.

MNK: And most of you had families to --

(705) GS: Right.

CNK: Did you find that the teachers were, were equipped to teach adequately?

GS: Yes, I think so. I was surprised. Some of the math teachers over there are better than the ones at the university, I believe. Seems like those doctors -- All you got is doctors over there. Of course you're a doctor too, but a lot of them -- I don't know if they've ever had education courses, so they don't know how to teach. That's, that's my opinion, I don't know.

CNK: Oh yeah.

MNK: It's one thing to know it, it another thing to be able to teach it!

(side 2) MNK: Could you say that again? You were learning about forest --

GS: Forestry service. I always thought that they were the protectors of our forest and our future and environmental future. It seems like it's politics. They sell the timber for less than it's worth to a big company. A little man can't -- They can sell it for four or five cents a board foot, but they sell so much of it that the only people that gets the business is the gigantic corporation, ... , Georgia Pacific or -- An old man say, "Well man, I can make a lot of money at that price." And he's willing to bid on it, but when they're selling millions of acres, he can't -- Even at four or five cents, you know, a board foot. Let me find this thing here.

'Make no mistake, they are the parasites.' He's talking about people that work for a living!

MNK: People that work for a living are parasites?

(012) GS: Yeah. You might really want to read that. I, I couldn't believe it when I read it.

MNK: Say that again about the coal industry.

GS: The people were real people that I worked with. You didn't have to be a ... or put on an air. You were who you were. Of course, you depended on everybody for your life every day, but

you didn't have to put on a show. Everybody knew who you were. You didn't have to like each other, but you had to, your lives had to depend on each other. I, I enjoyed that rather than putting on the airs that I see in every, practically all the other types of jobs.

MNK: And you, you run into some of these airs at the colleges too?

GS: Yes.

CNK: Does that difference come from, from needing your partner to, for your survival? Is that --

(023) GS: I don't know what -- I think -- I don't know, that's a good question. I'd have to think about that. I don't -- It's all a, it's all a big game. I went to a chamber of commerce meeting over at Morgantown for one of my classes. Those people joke around. They says, "Yeah, I had a cousin once that had a real job," you know. But this is their little clique, and they're the ones appropriating millions of dollars, you know. And they say that they want input from the bottom, from everybody, but no they don't. The empowerment is, is a word I hear a lot anymore, and don't -- Maybe it's happening, I don't know. But not happening where I see it.

MNK: How do you see all of this playing itself out over, over the next 10 years or so?

(036) GS: It -- See what's happening in, in the world is just going to happen here. It's getting -- I know people that are going hungry right now, you know. In the United States. That's -- But it's kind of ignored. You don't hear that much about it. Nobody cares that much unless you're one of the hungry ones. And well, you know, a few years ago they had the, what the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. Look what's happening over there now. It's, it's possible. It's working that way here.

MNK: Yeah, people don't have enough for their kids to eat.

GS: Right.

CNK: Can you bring us up to date a little bit? You were talking about how maybe the first 15 years of working in the mines you didn't even care much about the unions, things were going along okay. And then something happened or started to happen.

(048) GS: Yeah. The main thing that bothered me was the overtime, and the unions didn't seem to be doing anything about it. And that was the only shot, was through the union, I thought. So I decided to get involved. I'm still a member of the coal miner's political action committee.

We tried to get through an eight hour work day through the West Virginia State Legislature. And it went further than I thought it would. But of course they finally killed it and never even let it out of committee. It probably had the votes to pass, but that's politics. Of course the companies said, "Well, we'll just pull out of West Virginia and go --" This is coal, it's here. They can't pull out of West Virginia. I don't know where that argument goes! They can't move the coal. Some, some of the steel mills and stuff, that's a viable argument, you know. And they've done it.

MNK: That always struck me too. "We'll just pick up our coal mines and go somewhere else!"

(061) GS: Yeah! And then they'd have a severance tax that's real. I pay more on this house and the vehicle I got than some of the biggest coal companies pay on taxes.

MNK: That's right.

GS: Ken Hechler is, seems to be trying to do something about that, but he's -- Looks like he's run into a brick wall, but he's got the nerve to try it.

MNK: We tried to do something like that over in Randolph County years ago and found -- I mean I found that house and car --

GS: Yeah.

MNK: Was a lot higher than companies owning thousands of acres of land.

(071) GS: I forget the man's name that put on a presentation. It was over, over in Morgantown at a coal futures conference that -- He had the whole facts and figures. I've got them stored away some where. And I was amazed at, that people pay more on their houses than these huge coal companies pay for millions of tons of coal. I could get you that man's name, and he could tell you the whole, everything in black and white.

CNK: Well, how many miners know a fact like that? Do most people know that?

GS: I think a good many of them do. But they -- What are you going to do about it.

MNK: Because this company you're working for is just a subsidiary of some even bigger company.

(081) GS: Yeah. Consolidation Coal is owned by Continental Oil. Then Continental Oil is owned by Dupont. Dupont's the owner.

MNK: Yeah. It's hard to even know where their board meetings are conducted.

GS: Yeah. Well, Richard Trumpka -- I might have said some bad things about him earlier, but

he's done some good things too. One of the good things is he's recognized this, who actually owns these places. And I -- He has gone so far as to picket their houses sometimes, which people say, 'oh, he shouldn't do that, that's private.' Well, when he's taking food out of my mouth, that's private too, you know. I don't mind walking in front of somebody's house. I'm not saying I'd break his windows out, but let his neighbors know what he's doing. So I thought that was a pretty good idea he came up with. And going to board meetings. You can buy a share, and then you can attend a board meeting. You can make yourself heard a little bit.

CNK: Was he trying to get several miners to buy shares and to get involved in the picketing then?

(095) GS: Well, he's done that, yeah. Some of the labor leaders from other countries, Germany, that come over here and see what's going on, they can't believe it. They say this is like the Dark Ages, what the system we have here as far as labor goes.

CNK: What's different over there?

GS: Well, in Germany they have an apprenticeship program, that's one difference. They don't seem to lock people out like we do here. Bring in replacement workers at the drop of a hat. There's got to be some other major differences. You asked me too quick. I forget.

CNK: You're getting to it. Sorry. ... first one in the mines. Would you just as easily worked in a nonunion as a union mine 20 years ago?

(109) GS: I didn't know much about coal mining although I came from a coal mining family. My, my dad wasn't a coal miner, so I might have tried it. I wouldn't have known any different. But I'm glad it was a union mine. Well, just job protection. No personality clash and you're fired. That's -- I'm sure I would have been fired!

MNK: In a nonunion mine?

GS: Yeah.

CNK: Why is that?

GS: Well, we had some, some bosses that were just liked to fire people. And they didn't like you because they couldn't sometimes.

CNK: Were you somebody who would speak your mind then?

(119) GS: Yeah. But if you do your job, especially the first 15 years, it wasn't much of a problem. If

you can do the job, there's no problems. But they just started demanding too much after that.

MNK: The unions did?

GS: The companies, yeah.

MNK: This labor council that you're putting on, just, just, what's it about? What, what are --

CNK: Can you start by saying 'my name is?'

(128) Sharon Swartz: Oh, my name is Sharon Swartz.

CNK: Okay. And where are we today?

SS: In my home in Cameron, West Virginia! Is that all right?

CNK: Yeah. Okay. And we were just interviewing Gordon. And how long have you two been together? Have you been with him for --

SS: Oh, a long, long time. We were married in 1973, so -- A good, good 20 years down the road now!

CNK: So the whole time that he was in the mines you were together?

SS: Yes.

CNK: Yes.

(134) SS: We've been -- He went October '74, I think is when he started in the mines. Yeah. So we have had a lifetime of coal mining!

CNK: Was that the beginning of your experience with coal?

SS: Yes. Okay. That's a good thing to mention. When I was a young girl -- I grew up in a farming community, a farming family. Not big time farming, you know, very small, small farmers. I didn't know a coal miner. I didn't even know a thing about the coal mines in my own back door. I remember going to school in New Jersey. I went to a business school in New Jersey. And the fellow that interviewed me to be, you know, to enter the school asked me about 'oh, you know, you're from the coal mining country.' Asked me questions, all of that. I knew nothing. I didn't know a thing to tell him. I said, "I, I really don't." And he just couldn't believe anyone could grow up in West Virginia, you know, not knowing about the coal mines. And years later I thought it was so funny that I wound up being married to a coal miner and did get to know it really well! Coal mining is rough, a very rough,

unappreciated job, but it's like any labor job. Labor is not very much appreciated. They've -
- The coal mines got so horrible in the last few years, working all the extra shifts, all the
extra hours. It destroys families. So many families fell apart. We've watched his coworkers
just divorce after divorce. They just -- Men --

(154) They just wears them down. It's terrible. They don't have time to try to keep a family
together. You have to work at keeping a family together. And there isn't any time for that.
He talk about -- People are always thinking coal miners have it made because they make
big wages compared to anything else in this area. And the big wages, they'll go out maybe
invest in a boat or great fishing equipment or cabins or wherever, you know, to have
vacations, and they never get to use them. They sit in their yards untouched because the,
you know, the hours they spend in the coal mine. There's no time left for pleasure. So I
don't know what, what all you want to hear!

CNK: You're doing great. You're doing great.

(164) SS: I have to tell you I feel really uncomfortable doing this. Golly.

CNK: Well, --

SS: As far as my husband personally, it was making him really hard to live with. You deal with
the tension and the pressure of the stress. And then all the physical ailments that you're
developing. He was developing bad back pain, of course, from injuries. He couldn't breath.
And developing lung problems. It's amazing how much being out of the coal mine for one
year, how that's improved, just his general health. It's going to be rough trying to make a go
of it, starting all over again at this age. But I said anything's got to be better than what was
happening, you know. Being there. We stopped at the mine the other day. We went by, he
had to take care of some insurance business, and I saw one of the fellows he worked with for
all these years going into the mine. And he could have been going to his own funeral. Just,
he was just reporting in for work. And here comes this man with his shoulders sagging and
his face, you know, just -- It just breaks your heart. And that's just the plight of the
working man, I guess, really. It's the same everywhere, not just coal miners, lots of other
laborers as well. I know our, our children -- Our first four were lucky enough, their dad
wasn't working quite the extra hours when they were

(186) young. They put in more normal work shifts. He didn't have all the overtime and the extra days, and, and you weren't treated quite the way they have been recently. So they had their dad around. They were able to enjoy him, have some time with him. But now Connor, our four year old, he didn't even really know his dad. And that's a terrible thing to say. I mean it's not like we were divorced or separated or anything! He -- Just having to spend all those hours in the mine. And when he would come home, he didn't have any strength left to, to want to enjoy the kids or anything. You just couldn't. I, I will commend him in the year that he's been out of the mines, he has been able to develop a relationship again with him. So I'm real, real thankful for that, you know. That's -- If there's anything else, I don't know what else you might want to know.

CNK: Well, if it -- If you don't mind, I'm wondering what it does to a husband and wife to have a man working, is it a minimum of 58 hours a week? Is that what it was?

(200) SS: I've never really added up the hours. It just -- Mostly 16 hour days, I guess, pretty much. Six days a week. And the seventh one was spent just trying to pull yourself back together to head back out again. Well, we just -- Yeah, you don't really have a relationship much anymore because you just pass each other. It's, you know, pack your lunch, get out the door, come back in, you know. He would just be exhausted and just have to get ready to go back out again. No, you -- It, it's really -- It's hard. It's devastating. I'm not really sure why we're still together to be totally honest! It's -- When you don't have time to talk, you don't have time to share the everyday little things of life. It's, it's rough. But we're still hanging in there!

CNK: It's amazing that you are really.

(212) SS: I don't know. What was it, my mother-in-law said it was true love, yeah. That's what, that's what it takes! Or stubbornness maybe, I don't know! Refused to let the bad guys win!

CNK: Did it come pretty clear who the bad guys were?

(217) SS: Well, yeah. You have this overall feeling who the bad guys are! Which is terrible. I, I grew up so naive. I've always been a very naive person, and I'm just a dumb old country girl, I guess. I don't know. I always thought there was good in everybody, you know. It's real hard to believe that -- Maybe they're not what you classify as evil, but just totally uncaring

about humanity! But the world is really full of that. I don't know. It's becoming more and more distinct. We're getting this whole class of -- We're just dividing down the middle. There are those who have and the, and the people with power and money and everything. The line's becoming, you know, even more distinct. We used to have a middle class, but it's just falling apart, isn't it. Asked Gordon the other day, "What do you do to make the world better?" You think about that much?

CNK: Oh, just about every day.

(232) SS: ... think about that. Raising all these kids here. And I'd like to be able to make the world a better place for them. I'm hoping maybe their dad will have a better shot at it now maybe if he has a chance to work at what he should.

CNK: Did you feel kind of like a single mom for a while there?

SS: Yeah, sure you do. Only I'm sure not nearly as difficult as actually being a single mom because, you know, the other parent is still there. You're not completely alone, you know. Oh yeah, you really miss having, having someone.

CNK: So all of a sudden they had this mandate where they had to work extra, or was it always like that?

(245) SS: No, it wasn't always like that. That was something that just gradually came about. It was the union kind of giving in and the company kind of taking advantage of it, you know. Lots of little things along the way created this situation. Basically a matter of people not seeing it coming. But I'm not really good on that. That's where my husband's a real authority to tell you how, how everything came about. He, he would sit and talk years ago about seeing it coming. Saying, "The guys don't realize what they're giving up doing this," you know, or "They don't see how they're being used this way." I always wondered why he could see and the other, other people couldn't. I guess people just get too busy living their lives trying to survive, you know. But it -- Yeah, I would say it was not, it wasn't an overnight thing. It's something that, you know, worked its way up till it got so severe. And now since this last contract it's -- I can't imagine what the men are going through now. It's got to be even worse for them. You know it is.

CNK: Well, he went into the mines the year you married? Is that right?

(267) SS: During that year, yeah. During our first year. Yeah, he finished college and that was where the work was, you know, the mines were -- That's when -- That was like the boon time! Coal mines had good benefits. We knew we wanted to settle down and have a family, and the mines had good benefits and decent wages. Like any young couple starting out, you're wanting to get money to set aside to have a home of your own. And we -- I had a good friend whose husband was working in the mine, and that's more or less how he was introduced to it. And you know what was funny, I always felt guilty when the mines started getting bad, you know. Things -- I could see what was going to happen here. I, I would just feel so guilty because I think, 'If it weren't for my knowing this person being in the mines, he may not have gone to the mines,' you know. I kept thinking, 'I've done this to him!' So I kind of lived, lived with that guilt thinking, 'Wow, if I hadn't introduced him to those people and he might not have gone into the mines.' But, but then maybe he'll take what he's learned and use it to do some good. Maybe he'll make a good change in the world, I don't know.

CNK: Well, what kind of -- What changes did you see? You know, you had just fallen in love and gotten married, and shortly after that --

SS: No, it wasn't --

CNK: He became a miner, right?

(289) SS: Yeah.

CNK: And then over the 20 years --

SS: I would say it was about probably the midway point when the gradual change started. You know, a few more hours here and there and being treated worse at the mines, you know. More tension, more stress. And it wasn't really until those last few years was when it, you know, got really severe.

CNK: And his health started to change --

SS: Yeah.

CNK: Early in --

(297) SS: His health changed. In, over the last few years is when -- Yeah, within the last few years. It went downhill quickly. Especially -- Well, he was always sick, always had some sort of,

you know, bronchitis or something going on all the time. Like I say, the back, he was in constant back pain because of the way they have to work. I would say the last, the last five years are the worst. By the time he actually left there, it, it was really getting frightening, you know. It, it had -- It made him mean, and he would yell all the time. He would, he wouldn't be able to speak in a moderate voice! He was just always so full of, of anger and upset. Even his own mother couldn't really -- She wouldn't come and visit us for more than a day because she just couldn't handle being around him! That's a terrible thing to say! But it is true. And now that he's been out, when we were down there for a visit this summer, she and I were talking. She said there's just the biggest change in him, he's a human being again! So I know it must be like that for the, for other men. You don't really hear about it, you know. Nobody gets out and tells the tale of what these guys are going through. That's really -- I don't know --

CNK: You're doing great. You are.

SS: I'm doing -- I'm babbling.

CNK: ...

SS: You're probably sitting over there going --

CNK: ... in tears.

SS: 'Oh boy, mom!'

CNK: Well, what about -- Did he have one day off a week then?

(323) SS: Yeah, he had one day off a week. And he would have Sunday off unless he missed a day during the week. If he happened to be sick or something during the week, then that took off Sunday. He would be called out to work on Sunday. It was, it was terrible. And when you have the long drive to and from work added on top of it, you know, it's just -- You put in a 16 hour day, that leaves you enough time to sleep, you know, and that's it. There was no -- Sundays back years before, on Sundays you would get out, do something with the family. Go to the park, go visit relatives, whatever. Go see grandma. That stopped, you know, because Sunday was just -- ... just dead tired, you know. He didn't feel like moving or going anywhere, and you couldn't blame him, you know. When you've -- When you're just worked to death, you do, you just want to collapse. You don't have the energy to do anything else.

And he's always been such an outdoors person, always loved hunting and fishing and getting out for walks and all that sort of thing. Good grief, we've walked these kids all over these hillsides, you know. And that stopped. There was no more just getting out for little things like that.

CNK: So the family lost a companion in their activities?

(344) SS: Yes, that, that was the biggest, yeah. Besides worrying so much about his health. I guess as you get -- Well, ... Yeah, that was a big worry, worrying about his physical health. But, yeah, losing the, the friend we had, the person that was there, you know, that we really enjoyed. It was kind of devastating. There's no one to take their place, you know!

CNK: So then he started getting more active in, with the union when things started getting so bad?

SS: Yeah.

CNK: How did you feel about that?

(355) SS: That was -- Well, okay, I had mixed feelings. I had these, yes, I admire him for, you know, wanting to get out there and maybe be a voice to change, maybe to help somehow. And he did. He was able to help, especially, you know, in, on one-to-one basis. He, he helped the men with their insurance problems. He did do a lot of good in the time that he was working with them. And the fellows knew they could count on him to do things, to help them out with their problems. But there was also the, the feeling of futility because, you know, you really can't fight everything that's going on, you know. You can't really make the big changes. Hold on a minute.

CNK: You were talking about you had mixed feelings about, about Gordon being more involved in the union.

(371) SS: That required a lot of time too, you know. Extra time to help the union. Extra meetings. Extra hours on the phone. You know, that's something that took some getting used to too. But it did -- I don't know -- He was able to help, like I say. And just with his local, with his people, you know, which that's important to be able to do that. He had opportunity to go to when they get together and, and try to, you know, decide on what candidates they want to back and all that sort of thing. But that's something that tends to be controlled by the, you

know, the leaders of the -- No matter how strongly you feel about something, you're one person, you know, you can't really do a whole lot. Maybe if you devote a lifetime to getting to know all those people and developing a following, then you can convince them of what needs to be done. I guess he won't be doing that now unless this doesn't work out, going to school, and he goes back to the mines.

CNK: I bet you're dreading the thought of that happening.

(393) SS: Yeah! I sure am. I'm really hoping that something works out for him, either with the schooling, with his writing, with something, so that he doesn't have to do that.

CNK: Well, did you see a change in him once he started getting more involved? Did that seem to make him feel any better from his energy level?

SS: Oh, yeah, maybe to an extent as far as attitude. Yeah, as far as attitude, yeah. I would say it did help, help mentally, yeah.

CNK: Was he a little more fun to be around? More stimulating?

(403) SS: Maybe a little more, a little more understanding, yeah. I didn't really think about that till you mentioned it, yeah. That's true. That, that did help him, I think. Being, being able to do something, I guess, takes a little bit of the stress off, a little bit of the pressure off. Guess that's with all of us! Fight the little battles if you can't fight the big ones! Are you a writer, you --

CNK: I wondered if you would talk about the strike, what, what kind, what that was like for you, for the family?

(415) SS: A strike is, is a rough time, but still -- I don't know, you have this sense of everybody's sticking together, and everyone's pulling for each other, you know. That's a really important thing. It's something you think you'll get through, you know. You really don't -- I don't know. I don't think you despair as much with that as you do with other things. Like a layoff, that's something that's -- I think that's scarier, you know, when you have layoffs because you don't know what's in the company's mind. You don't know what's happening, you know. I think a strike has, or at least the way I see it, it has more a sense of purpose, you know, so it's -- You just hang in there, you know. You budget everything. You watch everything. You do your part the best you can. Everybody pulls together as a family, you

know, so that -- I don't know. You get through it. The worst part about the strike is when it's over, you're back down to square one, you know. You work -- The years in between strikes you work, you try to set aside savings, you try to accomplish things. And then a strike comes and eats up everything. Everything you worked for is gone. And then when a strike's over, it's like you start from day one again and start all over. It's

(438) like just being on this tremendous roller coaster all the time, you know. That's that bad part! You just hope and pray it will be a little one so, you know, it's not quite so bad. There have been short strikes! And then there have been those real bad ones. I don't know. Those are things that you just get through. And I really do think it's because of the sense of family that you have, you know, with the other miners. Everybody's just pulling together, you know. You just -- You keep positive. You just think, you know, 'It's going to work out,' you know. We'll handle what comes up!

CNK: Did it bring you closer to the other wives?

(450) SS: Yeah. You know, especially this one. They -- The wives formed an auxiliary and really got more involved than they ever have in the past, you know. They -- The wives got to know each other that for years we really haven't seen much of either. You know, we're pretty wide spread in all these hills and hollers of West Virginia, you know. And this strike in particular, I think the women got to know each other better. And it was nice, you know. It was a good feeling. Get to put faces to names, you know. And that, that helped the sense of family too. Made you feel like, I don't know, you were more a part of it. You, you were helping get, get through. You were, you know -- I don't know what words to put it in really. But it did help to be a part of things. They did a lot of things for the kids at Christmas time. They worked to have presents for the kids. Just different things through the year. It was really nice.

CNK: Did you ever go to the auxiliary meetings?

(470) SS: I couldn't get -- I, I had my phone lines that kept me in touch. Being out here I had a difficult time getting in there to them because we had to budget all our trips, gasoline and everything else, you know. But I had my network that I kept up with!

CNK: That's neat.

SS: Yeah, it -- I think it was a good thing. Don't feel so useless, that's it.

CNK: And you were --