

A summary of the Gus Jaderlund interview written by Cheri Schafer, Spring 2016.

***The following is a mixture of verbatim and paraphrased dictation and is in no way meant as an exact or complete written transcription.**

Interviewer Steve Addington conducted on October 21st, 1975 in Jaderlunds home in Roslyn, Washington. In this interview series Gus Jaderlund explains how he began working in the coal mines at 17 years of age and describes a typical days work, health hazards, system of payment, and mining technology and practices of the day. He talks about the Western Miners' Strike, circa 1933, actions by women on the picket line, and the closing of the mines in 1963.

Begin Audio Interview, part 2:

Gus Jaderlund emigrated from Mexico to Roslyn, Washington in 1902. The Jaderlund family moved to Roslyn, Washington from Mexico so his father could work at the mines. His father had also worked in Colorado doing the same work but it was not clear if that was before they came to Roslyn or after. Jaderlund says his father worked in the mines his entire life, at least 35, maybe 40 years which was a long time for such physically demanding work. Jaderlund was 17 when he started in the mines in 1916. At the time mules were used to move the coal cars. They used a pulley system to pull the loaded cars up to the surface and also to send the empty ones back down. The cars were hooked to a cable that was tied to the mules above ground. The grade was too steep to have expected a mule to be able to pull a loaded car back up. The mules were also used to move the loaded cars from the entry of the mine to wherever the coal was stored until it was sold, and of course the mules brought the empty cars back to the workers after they were emptied out... one after another...all day long. Jaderlund said that they used mules for a long time, but at some point, they modernized the process and started using motors instead. Jaderlund described the drills they used were manual drills and had to be cranked by hand. At one point he told the interviewer, "It was hard work, you know," but said it with a good humored laugh that makes one think that while that was true, he didn't consider hard work necessarily a bad thing. "Men worked hard back then and it was normal." He said no one took lunch when they were working the machines. "They wanted to keep 'em running the whole time so they took turns grabbing something to eat."

Multiple times throughout the interview, Addington would abruptly change the topic and attempt to redirect the conversation, usually after Jaderlund had ventured off topic.

Jaderlund remembered how dangerous the mines could be.

"There were a lot of fires you know. I remember one time up on #8, it was around quittin time and a fire started. I don't know what happened. Maybe somebody was shooting or something. Anyways a couple of fellows...2 of 'em, well they couldn't get out and they died in there. Back before the machines and conveyors came in we used to work in teams. Or pairs I guess, just two men...but after that we worked in teams of 5 or 6 men. I thought it was more dangerous that way, with 5 or 6 men working together. When someone got hurt, they'd you know, pick him up and put him on the stretcher... take him out and call the ambulance. We had safety inspections...mine inspections. They'd come and look around at least

twice a year, sometimes more. One of the bosses would walk around with him and then if he had any complaints you know, they'd write 'em down and fix' em."

The interviewer asked Jaderlund if the men working in the mine were diverse or all the same. Jaderlund replied, "Well, there were quite a few English guys working there in the mines, but most were foreigners... immigrants... not many colored people. There was a few but not too many. There were quite a bit of colored people in town...I don't know what they were all doing, cause they weren't workin with us, there was only a few of em that worked there in the mines."

Jaderlund continues, "When I first started workin' in the mines I was on a contract. It was pay for however much a ton they were payin'. I think I started at \$1.31 a ton, but we had to buy our own powder, our own tools, everything we needed to carry out a day's work. I think it was average to earn about 2.00 a day for company men workin' for wages, but that first year in the 1920's that they opened it up for contracts someone could make \$8.00 but that didn't last too long. I remember when my dad worked, if you could mine 8 cars a day that was doing real good. That was very impressive. They switched from tonnage to paying by the hour in the mid 1930's. It was harder work after the machines came in. It was wage labor, very hard work. It was better back when you could work contract. They had a man who would hang your check number on the car before it was weighed and then they recorded it under your name and then the next morning you could check your number on the board and see how much you made the day before."

End: Audio Interview, part 2

Begin Audio Interview, part 4:

The interview starts with Jaderlund already explaining how coal was delivered to homes by truck back in those days. "Well, at least H.W.I. did it that way, and it was \$2.88 a ton." He laughs and then says, "I think its \$50 a ton or something outrageous like that now." Prompted by the interviewer Jaderlund discusses unions. "All mines, even the small mines were union back then. They wouldn't let ya work if you weren't union. Roslyn was a pretty happening place back then. There were more people than there are now. The houses were nice, everyone owned their own homes. There were maybe 2 dozen down on Main St. that the coal company owned to rent out to miners."

Prompted again by the interviewer Jaderlund discusses women working in the mines and if he believed it was bad luck or if he was superstitious. "No, I don't care. It isn't bad luck for a woman to be in the mine, them not being there, well it wasn't about superstition. It was just that a woman couldn't hold up the same amount of work a man could do. There was a woman that worked in the mine for a couple years though. The men didn't know for quite a while she was a woman, she would go to the tavern with em, and then after a while they started catching on."

In response to how the mine workers would spend their free time, Jaderlund replies, "The miners did do things for fun...I mean for the most part they went home and ate and went to bed, but sometimes they'd...I don't know... go to football games. In the summer time they started a baseball league to play around with themselves."

Jaderlund describes the different places to shop and do things in town. "There were 21 taverns I think. 21 here at one time. There were lots of dress shops and a JC Penny's. There were 3 theaters here. There was a hospital, you paid so much a month in dues and that way all your medical bills were free. I mean you paid a \$1.25 a month but you were taken care of."

Jaderlund recalls, "There were a couple of strikes I remember, one lasted 6 months I think. But back then there wasn't social security to fall back on so strikes didn't last as long as they do or can today. I mean people worked in their garden to make ends meet and the local stores tried to give the miners a bit of credit but it was only good for so much and then they'd cut ya off. There was one time in 1933 when the union broke in two and the Western Miners were fighting about some machines comin' in and taking jobs. When you went to work in the morning you didn't know if you'd be coming home or you'd be stopped by a picket line. There was once when Jaderlund's wife's dad and brother went to work, they took off through the alley and the neighbor women cornered them and threw eggs at 'em and yelled all sorts of names. Once I was with my dad in the family Sedan and some picketers started rockin' the car and had us up on two wheels! Damn near tipped the car all the way over! It was kind of scary, especially at night, those Western Union Miners made it so you didn't know if you'd make it home or not. It was dark and you couldn't see what they were up to. In the end the Western Union Miners lost out. They would never have been recognized and offered any work anyways. I'm not sure why they thought it was a good idea in the first place. I don't remember anybody ever being arrested for all the violence, but I don't remember for sure. After the strike the ringleaders left town and everybody just went back to work. They were on the picket line the day before and then there they were showin' up and ready for work the next day."

When asked about wages, Jaderlund explained, "During the depression, the wages stayed the same, if not started going up, inflatin'. It started at \$5.25, went to \$5.60, then \$7 and all the way up to \$8 and just kept going up. The wages got all the way up to \$18, I think even \$25. Not bad, except I think that's what did the mines in. The company had to raise the price of coal for the consumers, till finally they had to just close the mines. Once they closed, well people adjusted for the most part. People took up lumbering and whatnot. The unions left of course. There was no need for them after the mines closed. But with social security and government programs there wouldn't have been as much of a need for them really. The pension plan for miners was good for some people. You had to put in at least 15-20 years to get anything back out of it. Many of the men were turned down when they applied for black lung disability, they were sent down to Yakima and a lot of them were turned down. A lot of us didn't know what it was called in the beginning. We all just coughed a lot. A lot of people thought it was emphysema cause we all smoked too ya know. We couldn't smoke in the mines, but as soon as we got a break or got off...boy we grabbed that pack of cigarettes and started smoking!

End audio part 4.

Begin Audio part 6:

Jaderlund begins by describing the prohibition era. "In 1928, a bootleg still exploded in Ronald. It was a big operation. They hauled truckload after truckload of bootleg whiskey all around the Seattle area, and

it was all underground. (It is not clear if he meant the still itself was underground or if the operation was underground.) The guy that was runnin' it well, he got burned all up and died in the explosion. There were tunnels all over under storefronts and things in Ronald. Yeah everybody was drunk in those days. If you wanted to buy a pint you had to know somebody who had it, but we all had it so it wasn't that hard. It was pretty expensive though. \$20.00 for a gallon I think."

During WWII if you worked in the coal mines you could get a draft deferment. Jaderlund acknowledged that he was drafted in the First World War, although he didn't mention if the deferment was possible during that war, but the fact he got drafted makes you think that maybe it wasn't.

Jaderlund reminisced about the mules that were used in the mines. "Those mules were stubborn but smart. They were good workers too. I think they knew more than the guys who were running them sometimes. Sometimes a new driver would come on and the mules, well they knew how many cars they could pull, and if that driver tried to attach one too many cars on, boy those mules would stop! They could hear how many he was putting on and if there was one too many than they wanted to pull they wouldn't budge...but take that extra car off and there they went, without even being told!" He laughs, "Very smart but stubborn animals."