

MC: Happiness and goodness comes to a person, you know; it's just like finding a field of clover. This all came at once, you know. And ah, by George, before he'd been, first, just sort of an outcast. He, all he did was sit around town play in a little penny poker ante...penny ante poker games and drink a little. They'd made homebrew. Two friends an'. But when he got that money all of a sudden. Why, he was a man of means. Of course, it was a fairly large amount that been left to 'im by a brother in Ireland. He engaged legal counsel, left his two friends and moved to the Samuel's Hotel in Wallace. Had a suite of rooms there. And, of course, then he was, considered to be a little above everybody else. He no longer was that drunken bum, you know. And ah, the local priest, he came up to 'im, he came up to Wallace. To try to get 'im to come to church. But he wasn't going to church. But, he wasn't going to church. See, the priest, he wouldn't even give him the time of day when he was broke. So, by Gosh, but...still again, he wanted to get back in favor with the church. Basically he was a religious person. Been praying that way, all during his life. Still again, he didn't want to concede anything to that parish priest. Well, about that same time, about 1931, ahm...they had the, one of those type of catastrophies. Well, there was a collapse of the Sistene Chapel, in the Vatican. Housed one of the best libraries in the world. The loss was very great. And there is people sending in money from all over the world for that. So, he talked it over with his friends how he was going to circumvent this here, local priest. He didn't know how to get around him. They said, why don't you send some money to the Vatican, see. So, he sent \$500 to the Vatican. Well he got a telegram back from the Pope blessing 'im. Thanking 'im for his money. And, I think that was Pope Pius XI, at that time. And ah, man he, really happy. He got a blessing right from the headquarters. As far as the local priest, why he could...nothing to do with him. He got this blessing from the Pope. He let the priest know about it too. He showed him the telegram. He didn't need his blessing. And ah, he was doing very well. And ah, each day he got more haughty. He got so, that he didn't even want to talk to old Busby, and his other friend. And pretty soon he found himself a lonesome man, too. Yes, he didn't want nobody. Nobody wanted 'im. So, he was talking it over again with his friends, what could he do. You know. They ah, they said, "Well ah'...wanted to still stand in favor with the

church. They said, "Why, you sent some money to the Pope once before, and got a blessing. Why don't you send him some money again?" Well, that was a good idea. So, he wanted to know if they'd take care of it for 'em. They said, "Yea," they'd take care of it. So, he gave 'em the \$500. By George, they took the \$500 and they went down to the depot, and they asked the telegraph man if he could send a fake telegram. You know, to their friend Rupert. He said, "Oh, yes." And so, then they went down...they kept \$20 themselves, and gave him \$10. Now that took care of 50. And then they went and gave the local parish priest \$450. Cause, they was also Catholic. Just the same as their friend was. All Irish. By George, then they invited the parish priest to come with them, they would all go to visit their friend Rupert. Well, they were all up there at the Samuels Hotel, in the room. And, by George, Rupert, he was sort of not too happy because the priest was there, you know. But, about that time, here comes the fellow from the depot. The Western Union with the fake telegram. And all a big smile come on his face. He was going to show that fellow up again, that time. And so, never'd get an opportunity like this. The telegram was coming just at the right time. So, he opened up the telegram. He handed it to Busby, said, "You got glasses. You read this for me," see. And, he opened up the telegram, the telegram read: "Who in the hell is Rupert?"

DB: He, he, he.

XF: He, he, he.

MC: ..."Returning money to the local parish church." Ha, ha, ha. It was signed with the Pope's name on the bottom of it.

DB: Can you...?

MC: Stories like that, you find a lot of 'em like that in a mining camp.

DB: Can you remember any stories about some of the mine disasters?

MC: What?

DB: About some mine disasters, can you remember any stories?

MC: Yes. Yes. I've seen some of 'em myself.

DB: What were some of the main disasters over the last 50 years?

MC: Well, the greatest disasters here was that last a few years ago...here when they had a big fire up at the Sunshine Mine. We talked about that a little. It...91 men got killed in that fire. Another great disasters was too, the Morning Mine. The cage--a cable broke. And ah, 12 men were killed. They fell to the bottom.

DB: When was that?

MC: Well, that was back in the early '30s.

DB: Were there many in the '20s?

MC: What?

DB: Were there many in the '20s?

MC: What?

DB: Were there many in the '20s?

MC: Yes. Every since the beginning of time there's been disasters in the mines. I can remember one, when I was a boy, in Wardner, Idaho. There was John Vokovich, he was the Kingpin of the Bohunks. Why, in those days they were mining on a different system, than they are today. They would mine in under the ore body. The ore body would be hanging there. And ah, guys'd blast the foot wall off, they would. For filling. They'd fill it back, underneath the ore body. Then they'd come around and put a few holes back in the ore body. Which would knock it down. Then these fellows would muck it up. There was three of 'em working underneath this here hanging ore body, see. And ah, it caved in on 'em. 'Twas quite a big cave. John Vokovich, he ran up to the mine office, an'...his cousin was buried there, see. He said, "Well," that he didn't have any money, he said to bury his cousin with. John, said. And they said, "Never mind Mr. Vokovich, we'll see that he is buried." So, those three guys are still in there, underneath that there wall that caved in on 'em. Never did get 'em out of there. So, stories like that. But of course, like I say, I lived right there at the bottom of the hill, there, at the bottom of the Last Chance Mine.

DB: Why was it called Last Chance?

MC: What?

DB: Why was it called Last Chance?

MC: Well, that was just a name that was given to it. It's a mining property; they are just like anything else. You select any name that comes to your mind; name the mine location by any name that you want. You can call your mining claims number one, two, three, four or A, B, C, D, or you can start calling then the Lost Girl, the Pretty Boy, or anything you want to call 'em, see. And ah, it was called the last Chance Mine. And ah, I don't know why the locator ever give it that name. But ah, it's quite a company. You look around about you, around here and you see some of these mines around here, and you see some of these mines; the Sunshine, Hecla, and Callahan, the Coeur d'Alene, mines like that. Bunker Hill, Page, McAndres, Constitution, Nabob. And, wonder where they get the names but there they are. And ah,...

DB: So, you were living at the bottom of the pile you say?

XF: Last Chance.

MC: What?

DB: You were living at the bottom...?

MC: Yea. At the bottom of the Last Chance Mine. And ah, there was about, oh, probably about 300 men employed there. And ah, the hospital was down the street. Oh, probably about two blocks from where we lived. And, you, see if miners get hurt, Wintertime and Summertime. Here come four men

packing a stretcher. And they'd have a person on this here canvas. Like this stretcher's two poles, a piece of canvas that you roll it up, you know. They'll put the guy in there and come back with 'em down the hill. An', maybe the blood would just be running out of the guy. Right on the ground. You just follow the blood all the way to the hospital. And ah, there used to be a very bad deal there. Even up till the...even up to the '30s in the state of Idaho. Well, they got ambulances and things like that, but we are talking about industrial compensations. Paid very, very small amounts, you know, see. You take, oh, a single fellow. Say like he was in town here, and paid his board and room, you know. Laundry, and things like that. An', if he got a broken foot or something like that, why, his paycheck would stop and he'd be dependent on state industrial compensation. Well, they'd put a cast on his foot and tell 'im to get out of there, you know. But he wouldn't have enough money to pay his board and room even. He was right on charity if he was broke. He hadn't enough money because State Industrial Compensation wouldn't pay him enough so he could eat. And here he had a broken leg.

DB: Did they have a poor house in the county here?

MC: They called it an infirmary up here.

XF: It was in Osborn.

DB: Where?

XF: It was in Osborn.

MC: ...and then...they'd take these aged people there. And the building is still standing up there. It was always up there. It's, the Forest Department is using it now. And ah, it was a good building. And ah, but, oft times these buildings up there were run on a contract. That people would bid so much to operate, you know. Couldn't tell about the care of the patients. But I'll never forget, like in Wardner, there was an old Russian that lived up on the side hill. He came here as an immigrant. He couldn't talk, ah, very good English. He had a hard time trying to express himself. And ah, he was a stone mason. Well, as the town deteriorated there was no work for 'im. An', so, he tried raising little garden, on the side o' the hill. And he had a cabin, and one room in it. Boy, we used to go up there, talk with 'im. And ah, he appreciated the company very much. He liked to have people come and try to talk to him. Because he was rather lonesome by himself. We'd have conversation. It'd be very difficult. But, we asked him why he had two beds in his cabin, you know, see. The rabbits he had there, they ran under his house and through the house. And there were rabbits all over, you know. And ah, that's how he sustained himself on these rabbits, and the garden he had. Every once in a while, he'd take a little cart he made. He'd go around town and try to sell some of these vegetables. Or, he'd go to these

boarding houses, try to bum for food that he could get. That they didn't throw away, in the garbage cans, you know. Things like that. That's how he made a living. And ah, I'll never forget. I grew up a little bit, an' I was working in the mine. There was about four or five of us young fellows. Every night we would come off this mountain. Why, we'd run down the mountain and come to town. We didn't have any dry house or place to change your clothes. We worked real hard during the day. Why, in the winter time the clothes would froze on you before you'd get home. When you'd get home, everything be froze. Even your hair froze. And ah, anyway, we were running down the street. But, I'm getting away from the story. Well, old John here, he got infirm and feeble and they took him up there to the infirmary. They cleaned him up. Give him a bath, and put clean clothes on 'im. But he didn't want to be up there. So, he left the infirmary and he walked from Osborn. He did, back to Wardner, and back up to his old cabin up there. Now like, us young fellows were running down there. And there was the deputy sheriff there and the undertaker. They deputized us young fellows. We had to go up to this here cabin up there, and help this undertaker. Pick up John. Old John, he'd been dead for quite a while, and he was pretty ripe. Boy, I tell you, after that, when I come running down the street in the evenings, I saw the deputy sheriff and an undertaker, I'd put a lot of speed on me. Boy, Then, after I didn't get stuck....

DB: Why did he have two beds?

MC: What?

DB: Why did he have two beds?

MC: Ah?

DB: You said that he had two beds?

MC: Why did he have 'em?

MC: Well, he said. He had these two beds, he said, "If the bugs would find me in this bed," he said, "I'd go over to the other." See.

DB: I see.

MC: He had bedbugs. And ah, bedbugs were common in a mining camp. They were everywhere in the world, they were. They weren't just in the mining camps. They were all over.

DB: Were there ever any stories about Chinese workers?

MC: There were no Chinese in the Coeur d'Alenes.

DB: Why was that?

MC: Except...Well, ah, this here Chinese, they came into Shoshone County in the early days, in the '60s. The placer mining that was done down around on the Clearwater. In Pierce, Idaho, in Orofino. That area. Ah, of course, Shoshone County, as you might know, was a very large county. Is, is it was first set up as a territory. And Idaho was a very large area, too. Idaho was started from

the Salmon River, where it comes into the Snake. The southern boundry of Shoshone County did. It went eastward to the Rocky Mountains. It went westward to the Columbia River. Then it came all the way north to the Canadian border. And so, Shoshone country was, originally contained a great portion of Montana, Washington, and all of the northern Idaho counties. And ah, the Chinese, they came in with the gold rush. But ah, the massacre in Pierce, Idaho, then was the capital of Shoshone county. And the Chinese there were supposed to have killed the store-keeper down there. And then they killed a bunch of, a large number of Chinese. There was from that time on it was sort of an unwritten law, that there should be no Chinese in Shoshone County. But ah, then the capital was moved from Pierce, Idaho, to Murray, Idaho, in 1884, I think it was. And ah, there was amongst the miners. They brought up a conclusion amongst themselves, they organized the mining district here, that there would be no Chinese, or any Oriental people, in this here placer mining district.

DB: Were there any blacks?

MC: What?

DB: Were there ever any blacks?

MC: No, a black person was never welcome either into this area. There was a few that came in here, but, ahh...Even until this here, just a few recent years ago. A black person wasn't allowed to stay overnight in town. I remember when the Harlem Globetrotters, ...not the Harlem Globetrotter, the Kansas City Monarchs came here. Satchel Paige, playing ball for them. They couldn't stay in town overnight. I know when a black person come around, he'd be met by a law officer. He'd tell 'em, "You got 20 minutes to get out of town." And ah,...

DB: Is that in Wardner, or Kellogg?

MC: Oh yes. Wardner, Kellogg, any place in Shoshone County. And the same way with Orientals. They weren't welcome here at all. They just had no place for 'em. And ah,...

XF: There was a Negro cook at the hospital.

MC: Yes there was a Negro cook at the hospital. She stayed here...

XF: And there was a shoeshine boy.

MC: ...kept pretty much to herself. But she cooked. And there was a Negro that came in here one time, he was a shoeshiner.

XF: And they let him stay.

MC: And ah, he shined shoes for a while. Then there was another Negro. He was half Negro, that was what he was. More of a mulatto. But ah, his wife, she was colored and she was the first colored woman to graduate from the University of Idaho. He name was Smith. And her husband, he also studied law. He was half white. And ah, Nigger Smith, they called him. He's still alive. A very intelligent man. And he...

DB: Where does he live?
MC: But ah, Orientals were never welcome in this area here. But ah, of course, you might realize the fact that all up and down the Pacific coast that Orientals weren't welcome, especially in the '20s. Even California. Some states passed laws that Orientals could not own property. And ah, things like that. And ah, the matter of it is, the Negro, he never did take much to metal mining. Ah, I don't really think the Negro cared for the feeling of being underground and not...being in the dark. And ah, I don't really know any reason why he couldn't have followed the mining industry. But ah, I never did know very many of them. I guess there were Negro coalminers. But ah, there was never.....

(END OF TAPE 22; Side 2)