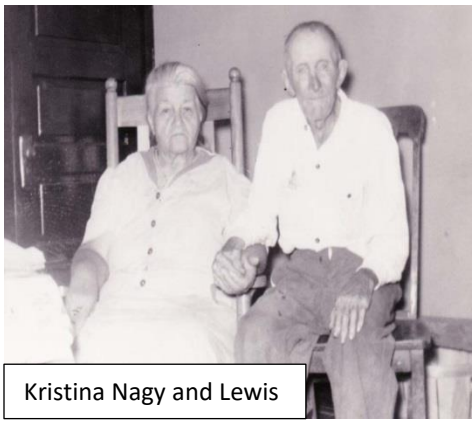
JOHN DETCH INTERVIEW 1969 TAPE 1

**Charlotte Detch**: (singing) … Last night I lay ….

**Lewis Detch**: OK. There we go. Let's hear a big Ho Ho ho Merry Christmas.

**John Detch**: Ho Ho Ho Christmas. This device was given to me by my children for Christmas of 1968 with the request that I again recite to them some of the matters and things which they found interesting incident to my childhood and growing up. I frankly regarded my experiences as being not worth that much or even that I devote a great deal of time repeating the stories I told; but in as much as my family had gone to special troubles to obtain this device and now at times requested that I give them some ideas of my background and incidents pertaining to my childhood I feel that I should comply with their requests.

At first I want to say something about my forbearers. All I know about them is they were Hungarians. I know nothing about my antecedents other than what my parents told me about their families. First I want to say that father had very little to say about his family. I want to tell you first though about our ancestral name. The name in Hungarian was Decseji, spelt D E C S E J I. Father's first name was Lojos,(1865-1954) spelled L O J O S. Mother's name, the family name was Nagy, N A G Y. Her given name was Kristinia, (1878-1965) K R I S T I N I A was the way she spelled it. I know very little about my grandparents or antecedents on my paternal side. My father would say little about himself, his mother or anyone else. I gathered from what my mother said from time to time that he may have had a sister. I just gathered from the meager information that I had, that Father and his mother probably became estranged from each other; he left the neighborhood in which he lived, and at no time thereafter communicated or corresponded with her or with his sister, if he had a sister.


Kristina Nagy and Lewis

As for my mother, her parents were living when she came to this country. Her father's first name was Elek and his last name was Nagy. I don't have any recollection as to my grandmother's name. There were 8 children of which my mother was the oldest, at one time I knew the names of the other 7 of my aunts and uncles. I have since forgotten them. One of them had an eye put out and my parents felt obligated to help look after him and his family. Father had a farm in Hungary. I could never guess as to the size of the farm because I had my father from time to time point out the boundaries by comparison but I gather the entire size of the farm consisted of 60 acres. The house on it had a thatched roof--this I know because my parents sent money from time to time to Hungary before the Second World War for the purpose of repairing the roof. They had a team of horses. The horses were replaced from time to time and my parents sent money to Hungary to this particular uncle for the purpose of buying cattle. The understanding was that he was to keep the farm in good condition because Father and Mother at all times, even until the time of their death, had planned to make their

fortune in the United States and then return to Hungary and live on their farm. Father was inclined to drink alcoholic drinks and it was Mother who persuaded him to come to the United States. The reason given was the local citizenry had undertaken to elect Father a justice of the peace. Mother's explanation of the manner in which a justice of the peace keeps his records was that he would take a knife and notch a broom club or stick while sitting on the bench as a means of keeping track of the number of persons fined or the amount of money he might collect from the fines. Anyway, mother took a dim view of father becoming a justice of the peace in Hungary for which reason she persuaded him to come to the United States. He did come to the United States and stayed in the vicinity of Canton, Ohio for approximately a year and a half. He made enough money to go back to Hungary and then bring mother back with him. At that time, your Uncle Lewis, (1905-1975) my oldest brother, was born. I understand my sister, Mary, (1909-1997) was born, either in route back to the United States, or soon after their arrival here. I was born in Canton, Ohio, sometime in the fore part of August in 1911. My arrival was of so little consequence that no one made a decent record of the date of my birth, for which reason for some time I celebrated on August 3, August 4, and August 19, as my birthday. Even today I am not certain as to which of the three days may have been my birthday.

Father worked about the steel mills in Canton, Ohio, and when I say steel mills I don't think the mills at that time were used to create steel; they were making mostly steel products. If I correctly understand it, the plant that dad worked in made sheet metal buckets and they galvanized them or painted them in some particular manner. Times were exceedingly difficult, and one of his friends persuaded him to work in the mines, and he came to Berryberg, West Virginia in Barbour County and obtained employment at that place. I may have been fairly small but have a recollection of my father meeting my mother at the railroad station at Philippi and she was placed on a hand car which was used by the railroad workmen. She sat on a box with her few belongings she brought with her, namely a suitcase or two, and by this means she was transported to Berryberg. I recall living at Berryberg upon a hill; recall seeing my first circus animals. A small circus came to town, and the lion or tiger, whichever it may have been, was confined under a cart between the wheels and I recall being considerably impressed with these animals. Father's employment consisted mostly as a common laborer about the mines, he engaged mostly in loading coal, he was seldom out of employment because he was an exceptionally good hard worker who applied himself diligently. Some foreman must have given our name DETCH because in 1918 your Aunt Esther was born near Philippi in Barbour County and at that time her name appears on the books in Barbour County with the last name Detch spelled D E T C H. After that, that was the name by which the family went by, though my father never accepted it. Throughout his entire life when he was asked what his name was my father always responded that his full name was Decseji Lojos with the emphasis on the Decseji, though he found very few people in this country that could pronounce it or cared to do so. Your Uncle Lewis took the trouble to look at the records at Ellis Island pertaining to the ship your grandparents came to this country aboard. He had that information. It was a common ship which was used considerably in bringing immigrants from the European countries to the United States, (Editor's note: The ship was the *Pennsylvania*) They were apparently known as steerage passengers. Steerage, spelled S T E E R A G E, passengers were those who paid the least sums to ride the ships and had the least desirable accommodations. It is my recollection

that they came & the passengers occupied large rooms. The only divisions they had in their rooms were curtains that were pulled around their beds. Neither of my parents could speak the English language when they came, and thereafter never really took the trouble to learn to speak English. Father could scarcely be understood, he could repeat only a few words in English until the time of his death. Mother did a slightly better job. She could converse, in a manner, in the English language with her neighbors or those who might call upon her until she became ill, about the time I was a freshman at the Law School. After that she too proceeded to forget about the English language.

Sometime before the First World War my father worked at a mine called Meridian (?) just about a mile and a half down the Tygart Valley River from Philippi and at Berryberg. Thereafter he moved to Wendel, and Wendel was the first place I recall with any measure of tenure or security. He employed a merchant who operated a store at Berryberg to transport his family in a Model T pickup truck to Wendel. In leaving Berryberg I recall that we went over the roads through Galloway to Philippi to Simpson and from Simpson north over dirt roads to Wendel. My boyhood experiences for the most part, particularly the early years were those I experienced in Wendel. Wendel is in Taylor County, its located 3 miles north of Simpson though there is scarcely even part of the community now left. The only way you had access to it was by horse and buggy, a means by which my family seldom employed. We walked from the railroad station at Simpson over the roads to Wendel, which meant also we walked to the station. It was approximately 12 miles to Grafton and probably 16 miles to Clarksburg. My parents took turns on the train going from or to Grafton or Clarksburg depending on which at the time was the most convenient to them. My parents always took one of the children with them to Clarksburg or Grafton for the reason they could not speak the English language and needed the children along for the purpose of interpreting and to help them buy the various things they needed for the reason they had gone to the city. After one left Wendel, one came to Sand Lick, which was a mining community, and at Sand Lick I became acquainted with abject poverty there was at this place, right aside the railroad a cabin of two rooms and a family with anywhere from 20 to 25 people lived in the two rooms. Most of the time the windows were out, the doors were open and what space was not taken up on the porches and rooms by people was taken up by hungry dogs of various kinds that were hanging around the place. The people were named Workman. They were the poorest people in health, in spirit, and ambition that I believe I have noticed and were the poorest my relatives had ever seen. Anyway, after you left Sand Lick then you walked another mile and a half to Wendel. As you approached the community from the lower side uptown on the immediate right there were two rows of houses. This area was occupied by people of Scots-Irish and English ancestry for which this area was known as Scotch Hill. After we passed Scotch Hill we came to the large boarding house, large in the sense that it had about 20 rooms and could shelter about 40 – 50 people, mostly traveling salesmen, foremen in the mines, and like people. Then immediately beyond that was the area of several houses--I would say probably 20 – 25 built in an “L” shape around the side of the hill, each house sheltered two families. This was the area occupied by the Italians, and they had an area or country of their own. The children soon called this area Tally Row, that being our abbreviation for Italian. Then immediately above that, on the right hand side, was what was known as “the bungalows.” In this area lived a few Hungarians, a few Slavs, some Polish people

and some of Anglo-Saxon heritage. Immediately above that on the right-hand side was the opening to the Number 2 tipple. The number 2 tipple was a large tipple. The mine was a large mine that employed I would say about 300 employees. There were two openings to it. Then on the immediate side of the tipple was a row of houses, three room units, probably about 18-20 in number, and we occupied the one which was the third from the left in the "L". It just happened that this house was immediately above, I'd say about 200 feet above, the tracks and at an area where you could look right down on the mine entry. We could see the motors with the workmen go in (the mines) in the morning. They took their mine horses and equipment into the mines and we could see everything that came out. When a man was killed or injured at work we were amongst the first to learn of it because we could look out the windows and see the excitement down below us. If a fight occurred in town, we could always see that because our house was at the end of what was Main Street, and all the fights and excitement took place on Main Street and we generally had a ringside seat.

We lived on what was known as Cow Row, the reason being that almost everyone who lived in this row had a cow or two for use of the families, in addition to having the distinction of owning and caring for cattle. Of course each house had with it shelter of some kind for the cattle. Some miners kept their cattle in the basement underneath the house because the house was built on the side of a hill, built up on high pilasters so the underneath area was sometimes fenced in and cattle sheltered in it. Others, including my father, built shelters above the house and a barn-like structure, generally very crude, so when we were referred to as living on Cow Row, it was not necessarily complimentary. Then immediately north from where we lived and away from Cow Row there was a row of houses which housed the foreman, the bookkeepers and people of like caliber about the mines. As you came up the valley again from the lower end, the first large building you came to was the public school which consisted of two buildings, one of four rooms, one of two rooms, and it was here that I first enrolled in the primer grade. Then immediately north of that the next building was the only public building in the town, the meeting hall. Here moving pictures were shown, Charlie Chaplin being the earliest I can remember, and the United Mine Workers held its meetings at this particular place. Then immediately north of that and in the valley was the large company store, it sold everything that the miners needed, clothing, food, meats and so on. Immediately between the company store and the road was located the company office and here was located the only phone in town and around this particular building the guidance and activities of the executive officers took place. Immediately north of the store I recall was a grave yard. I will always remember it because I played somewhat in the graveyard, all of the Yeats who know the property before the coal company came there were buried in this particular place, and I always felt blue and glum because they built the coal tipple not far from the grave yard and the coal dust settled on the grave yard, and I thought that was a poor place for one to rest eternally. Immediately north of the tipple, Mine #2 there was a damned up pond. The coal slate was brought out of tipple #2, dumped across the valley and a pond formed. This was where I learned to swim. This is where the horses were brought out of the mine, often times muddy and plastered with clay up to your bellies and the drivers would ride the horses into the pond to get the clay washed off. Immediately to the left were the large barns and large field. This area housed the barn keeper, the veterinarian, such as he was, and the large field where the horses recuperated from their various injuries. Immediately north of

that was the baseball diamond and back in those days baseball was the chief means of entertainment in the community. Up to the left was mine #1 which was also a large mine and the power plant. The power plant provided all the electrical power for the houses in the valley, including the electrical power for the motors, cutting machines and so on that were used about the mines. The entry was to the left and the main entry extended a long way under the mountain and with some regularity and some intervals there were openings into the main entry, and the openings were numbered. For instance you had openings 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. My father worked for the most part in Mine #1 and there was access to his working area from the outside quickly through these various openings I was telling you about. They had the opening especially built as a quicker way to get the slate out. When they had an opening they would bring the slate out and dump it along the side of the mountain without having to pull the cars great distances.

Lajos Decsei

Most of the land was owned by the coal company and actually, though the miners were abused by the coal companies, I think that as a whole, the Maryland Coal Company and its officers were most kind and considerate of its employees, particularly its good employees, and I always felt that my father was regarded as one of the better employees in the valley. All of the land on the sides of the mountains was owned by the coal companies and the miners could fence off any portion of it they wanted for gardening purposes and the balance they could use for grazing their cattle free of charge.

My father and mother fenced off, I would say, not less than an acre and a half of the better land on the side of the hill. They tilled it and it produced our corn, onions, cabbage, tomatoes, carrots and like vegetables. We always had not less than 2 and as many as 4 cows, we always kept 3 or 4 hogs, and probably 50 to 100 chickens. Actually, though my father worked about the mines, we were in no small way in the farming business.

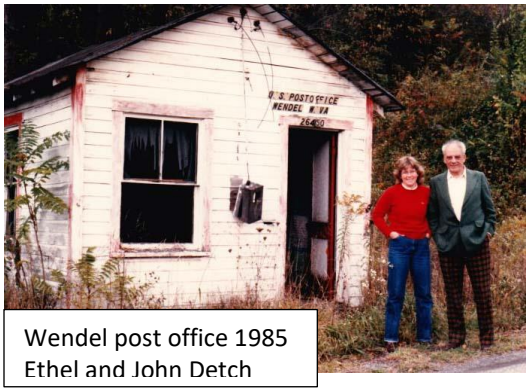
The coal company bought the mine props and piled them up and the workmen felt free to go to the pile, select their best posts to be used as fence posts and to build their barns. Rough lumber was bought by the coal company for the purposes of making bradishes (?) and sealing off ways into the mines, and when the trucks and coal cars brought in lumber by the carload the miners took the liberty, though I don't know if they were supposed to, they took the liberty of taking their boards, pulling them up by their houses, then in the evening time building barns. Obviously the coal company superintendent knew what happened to the boards because the boards were appearing on the barns. Many of the miners built, at the company expense, barns sheltering their cattle, pigs, and chickens. The Italians had the distinction of each family having goats, so it was in many ways a reproduction of European living.

There was a row of houses on the same side as Mine #1, occupied by people of various nationalities, including some guinea niggers. (Editor's note: He is referring to a tri-racial group

made up of blacks, Native Americans and whites, now known as Mulungeons). The row was known by the children in the town as Monkey Row. The name was not intended to be complimentary to the people who lived in this area. I mention this because there was much division in the town. The boys from Cow Row would form a ball club and challenge the boys from Monkey Row to a ball game, and likewise the challenges were extended from Scotch Hill to Tally Row and these other places and there were times when there was much excitement with the ball game but oftentimes the teams were not evenly divided or evenly matched in which case we would loan players from each side to the other side to even up the score, and then oftentimes we would make up our own rules as we went along so there were times when there was much more arguments than ball playing.

The coal company owned the lands back to the top of the hills and beyond that the surface lands were owned by the farmers. The reason why I mention this is that from time to time I make mention to you of the excitement we have going onto the farmer's land for the purposes of obtaining cherries, apples, chestnuts, or whatever the land may have afforded at the time, always without the knowledge or permission of the owners of the land.

Tipple #2 produced most of the coal. There were over two main entries; one where the miners, the empty cars and supplies were taken in and, on the other side, were the loaded cars and the others who were on the way out came out of the mine. It was a deep mine extended for several miles. The entrance extended clear across to the other side and in some places close enough to the surface there were falls, one could come through the falls and with crude ladders could climb out of the mines on either side of the far reaches of the mountain.



Wendel post office 1985
Ethel and John Detch

The mails were brought daily by horse and wagon from Simpson and it was for the people who lived in the community for the most part. It was the only means of communication in my early days, that being before radio. The post office had boxes. Everybody's mail was put into a separate box, and the children generally stopped by in the evening time on their way home from school and lunch time, if they were going home for lunch, and ask for the mail and take the mail home. At the same time, the children generally stopped in to buy groceries or to run errands about the store that the parents had wanted them to run. From our home, the school house was at the lower end of town, so it was necessary that we walked about three quarters of a mile to school, then home. We generally did it twice a day because we walked home for our lunches.

The school had 8 grades. Most of the teachers taught two or more grades and until my older brother, Lewis, attended high school, no one from Wendel attended high school with the exception of the son of the company doctor. A man by the name of Chenewoth, C H E N E W O T H, whose son attended school elsewhere and did not attend school in the local public school at all.

Just behind the mine entrance of Mine #2 that would be looking down from our house over to the left, there was a small valley and the coal company built a powder house in this valley. I would say this powder house was about 500 feet from where we lived, but in a reasonably sheltered cove. This was an interesting place because it was here the boys snitched their powder, had some juvenile delinquency experiences with it, and sometimes in the future I may tell you about some of these things.

Immediately near the entrance to the mine there was also the mine shop, a blacksmith's shop, an electric shop, and this was a very interesting place. Generally kids were tolerated and I spent a good bit of time in the shop watching the workmen, particularly the mechanics and electricians work about the motors. Just out from that was the sand house. The company bought sand by the car loads and they had a large bin they put the sand into and next to the bin was built a shelter with a heater in it. The heater was kept hot with coal, then the sand was piled around it, around the stove. The purpose of this was to get the moisture out of the sand so the sand could flow. Then they took the sand in buckets and put it in the sand bins on the motors. Then they had levers to drop the sand down on the tracks; it was for the purpose of getting traction to the motors so they could pull bigger loads. This was a wonderful place for a boy to play. We could climb up on top of the sheds that were say 15 feet high. We could pile up sand and jump into the sand piles. Sometimes when the sand was almost empty that jump was pretty high and sometimes some of the boys would get badly shaken as they fell off. It was a good place to dare each other to jump. Of course it was real fun to dare them to jump near the bottom of the pile instead of the top of the pile and this, of course, was exciting.

In the sand house was where the oil lamps were kept. The mine in which open lamps were used, the loaded cars from the inside were pushed out so the head car has a warning signal on it. It had an oil lamp that looked very much like an ordinary oil lamp with a wick on it that burnt a dirty coal black, a dirt smoky smoke and fire and when the motors pulled the cars in, of course, the motor with its light led the way and when they got inside they got behind the loaded cars and put the lamp that I was telling about on the front end so you could always look down inside the entrance to the mine. The first thing you would see was this oily burning light at the head of the motor and it was kind of a spooky thing for kids to watch. We always stood at the pit mouth and waited for the cars to come out.

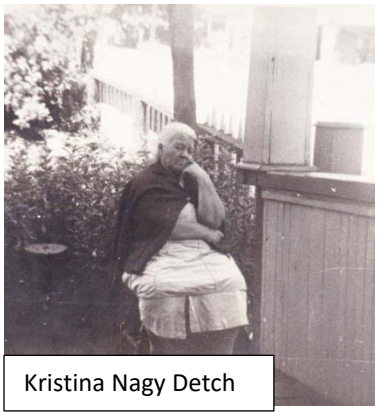
This was where a good bit of our living was done. The boys were expected to, particularly in some families and mine did, we were expected to go down to where the cars came out of the mine and when they were jostled coal would fall off the cars. Then we were at liberty to put it into our wheelbarrows or burlap sacks and carry it home for fuel. Not until I was passed high school did we ever buy a pound of coal for our own domestic use. I provided all the coal by going to the tipple I was telling you about and there bringing coal home either by wagon or by wheel borrow or on my back. In bad weather it was always on my back because the roads were too muddy to do otherwise. We never took coal off the cars ourselves because miners who loaded the coal were paid by the weight and we never thought of snitching any coal off cars because it just meant that some miner had just loaded these cars, possibly our own parents,

and they would not get paid for it if we took the coal from the car. So when the coal fell on the ground it became company coal and that was something we could have. When the check was taken off the car and the miner properly credited with his coal then it was dumped into the bin, the coal was not completely dumped into the large hopper. This was coal also that we were free to get, so in the evening after work hours we would put on our work clothes and go to the bin and retrieve whatever coal might be on the tipple.

It was my job and responsibility to keep the household properly supplied with kindling wood. This I would do by going to the pile of props the company bought, selecting good chestnut, straight grained posts, taking them home for splitting. Chestnut was easy to split and made good kindling. It was easy to rive and it was my responsibility to see to it there was always a supple of dry kindling wood in the box in the kitchen so that mother could get up in the early morning and get a fire going without trouble. One of the real reasons for getting a whipping was providing kindling that was either green or wet and would not start a fire.

In the summer time I spent a good bit of my time just gathering coal and taking it home and piling it because I knew there would be the cold days at hand and it would be difficult to get an adequate supply of coal, but even in the winter time if the weather was reasonably good I spent my evening times taking coal to the house. Now my recollection was that I was one of a few kids in the community who did that. Most of the parents bought their coal from the company, the coal was taken to them by horse and wagon for a fixed price, but my parents were always too tight or too economical and one of the jobs that was assigned to me was the supplying of coal and wood for the kitchen stove.

In addition to the coal my job was to see to it that the cows were gotten from the pasture field and taken to the barn by about 6 o'clock in the evening. Then it was my job to obtain the grain to feed the chickens and to take whatever feed that may be at hand for the pigs. This was delicate because we used the house waste and slops--by slop I mean table waste--for the purpose of feeding the pigs. When we had spare time we went out on the hills and gathered acorns by the sack full and we fed them (pigs) acorns and when we did not have table scraps we fed them acorns and sometimes we fed them coal. I don't know why but the pigs had a taste for certain kinds of coal. They would chew it and eat it but when we ran out of those things we always fed them corn from the market.



Kristina Nagy Detch

Mother had acquired over a few years, I would say 300 to 400 Ball jars, quart size, half gallon, some even a gallon size. The farmers in the surrounding neighborhood, by that I mean within a radius of 2 miles, did not bother to pick the black berries. There were many cherry trees and chestnut trees in the neighborhood. We spent our summer gathering apples in season. We spent our time gathering wild strawberries. I never knew what a tame strawberry tasted like until I was in high school. Up until that time all the strawberries which we used in the family were wild strawberries which we gathered within a radius of 3 miles of

Wendel. We would get out buckets and baskets, walk over the various fields. We knew where the strawberries grew, and in season we picked whatever we needed of them and brought them home. Then we had to cap them, and after they were capped, Mother would make wild strawberry preserves, put them in the quart and half gallon containers. Then they became our sweetening during the wintertime. In season we would get apples, I don't recall we bought very many, but occasionally we bought apples. The farmers had the apples in orchards that were neglected. Some of the apples weren't the best, but Father and the children would go with burlap sacks and bring the apples home. Of course a 10-12 year old child carrying a bushel of apples would have his load, but the others would help him get his bushel of apples, put on his back, carry them anywhere from a mile or two until we got them home. Then we assembled around the large containers, peeled them, cored them, then started the making of apple butter. We generally started the fall with, oh I guess 50 to 60 gallons of apple butter and apple jellies of various kinds. Blackberries were something we gathered in great abundance. We would walk for miles, pick 10 to 15 gallons of blackberries, bring them home, make blackberry jelly and blackberry preserves of various kinds. In the winter time our basement was actually our social security. In the fall when the frost came, our basement was generally loaded with canned corn, tomatoes from the garden, green beans canned or otherwise preserved, cabbages would be put away, father would have carrots and parsley, I forget what all, other vegetables he would have in a deep trench, put in the ground below frost level, and then from time to time, although the rotting rate was high, we generally had enough to last throughout the winter. We would find a place in the basement that would not freeze and there we would store away our potatoes. Actually we had social security. Our social security consisted of these things for which we worked hard during the summer, put them away for the winter. I don't recall we were ever hungry. There were times when our diet wasn't what we would have liked or we would want, but as far as staples were concerned, it was my recollection that we had an abundance of it.

You must know about chestnuts. Up until the time I was a freshman in high school we had an abundance of chestnuts. The chestnut tree was one of the most prevalent, most valuable trees we could have. After the first frost, the chestnuts would fall, we would go to the various chestnut trees and kick the burrs apart and pick up the chestnuts. After a frost or two the burrs would fall open and the chestnuts would fall on the ground. We had bags that slipped over our shoulders, mostly gas bags that the Army found to be surplus after the First World War. We would take two of those bags, crisscross them over our shoulders so there was a bag under each arm. Each bag would hold about a gallon or five quarts of chestnuts, and when you went out on the hills gathering 10 quarts of chestnuts you had done a pretty good job. Even in those days in Wendel you could come home and sell chestnuts for 20 cents a quart, and when you had 10 quarts of chestnuts that meant 2 dollars. That was a good bit of income for people living in the mining community, particularly for the boys that were ambitious. Another one of our sources of income was walnuts. Very few of the farmers took the trouble to gather up their walnuts. We boys would go to the walnut trees and kick the hulls off them, take the black walnuts and sell from for about a dollar a bushel. Of course we spent our entire afternoon cleaning the walnuts and finally hauling them down to the company bookkeeper and executives and their families and offering the walnuts for sale. They generally bought them and generally the price was a dollar a bushel.

When we gathered our blackberries and had a surplus, we would carry the blackberries, usually 8 or 10 gallons and carry them to Simpson. We carried them by hand 3 miles to the railroad station and, I being the one best suited to take them to Clarksburg or Grafton, they would help me put the blackberries by buckets onto the train. I paid a fare of 37 cents to Clarksburg and then I would generally depend on someone to help me unload the blackberries when I got to Clarksburg. I would leave a bucket or two at the railroad station while I went off and peddled the berries. After a while I established a regular route that I knew I could sell them to various restaurants. The cooks would buy them to make blackberry pie. Generally we brought good clean berries and did not have any trouble selling them. My recollection is that we received about 50 cents a gallon for the berries and it was my job to not only sell the berries within a fixed time, but also buy whatever mother needed from Clarksburg at the time. I don't recall selling blackberries in Grafton because Clarksburg was the larger better area for that purpose. There were hotels and restaurants in Clarksburg in bigger numbers than in Grafton and so we found it was easier to sell our blackberries in Clarksburg than elsewhere. There was a fixed time when the train that went to Clarksburg arrived and then within about an hour and a half the next train came back towards Simpson and it was necessary that I be on that train because if I didn't, it would be late at night before I could catch the next train, and so I had a limited time to sell the berries, make the purchases, and get on back home. We bought our bicycle that cost about twenty dollars exclusively from the berries we picked and sold in Clarksburg. I don't recall that any of the others of the people in Wendel did that. My people were hard working, felt they needed the money, had to make their fortune in order to get back to Europe and so they resorted to the picking of berries and selling them, black walnuts and others things I mentioned. We were always rewarded in part from our earnings, but all of the earnings were turned over to mother, and she in her wisdom decided what portion of it would come back to the children. Generally enough to buy some candy.

Generally we had an abundance of chickens, often times had a surplus of milk, and Mother would make butter. It was my job to deliver the milk to our regular customers. There were times when we had a surplus of milk and did not have enough customers, in that case mother would give away milk to some of her friends. This was kind of a sour spot with me because I had to not only tend the cows, feed them, and then deliver the milk free of charge while generally the persons who were the recipients of the milk had children my age loafing and doing nothing so it was a source of irritation with me.

teacher and was enrolled in the same grade. It is my recollection that I either attended a good portion of the year in the same grade before the teacher found out that I should have been promoted or that I stayed in the same grade throughout the year, however, it was also my recollection that after that I got along very well in school. I had no In the summer time and early spring dad always planted lettuce and onions, sometimes about the first of February or middle of February in hot beds he made himself, so we would have early plants, early radishes, and early onions. My job was to pull, pick, and clean these items and sell them to people who might be interested in buying them, generally at an inadequate price throughout the town. So I was at that respect not more than

10 or 12 years old by which time I had considerable experience in being a salesman and learning enough about it to know I did not like doing it any more than I had to.

It was at Wendel that I started in the primer grade. It is my recollection I completed my primer work or first grade work satisfactorily, but the next year I was bashful and was frightened and not knowing where to go, I went back to the same classroom that I had attended the year before. They had a new help at home because Mother and Dad could not speak English and knew very little about the matters in which I was being instructed in, but nevertheless I generally had fairly decent grades and got along very well in school.

We lived in Wendel until I was in the 6th grade. I say this so you can have some idea of how old I was when we moved away from this community. It was my recollection I was about 12 or 13 years old when we moved from Wendel. You will be interested to know that there were no colored people in Wendel. I don't know if there was a policy to not employ them or for what reason, but I do recall one occasion two colored men walked through the community and they created such a sensation that the boys, including me, followed them from one end of the town to the other. We had seen colored people before, but only in Grafton and Clarksburg. There were some colored people who were employed about the railroad station. I recall once that mother rode the train from Clarksburg and a colored conductor offered to assist her in getting off the train and because mother was inexperienced with colored people she dreaded having the colored man touch her, sometime later she denied this was true, but I recall being present and that is my recollection of her reaction to the kindly assistance of the colored conductor.

There was 3 families, one our neighbors, known as the guinea niggers. These were families who came from Barbour County, descendants of Negroes, Indians, and whites (Editor's note: This tri-racial group is now known as the Mulungeon). These people were named Mayles M A Y L E S, spelt with variations of that name. One of the forebearers of these people was named Reed. Anyway, the people I am speaking of were well known in and about Barbour County. I grew up with 2 of my friends being from this group. The parents of these boys were different from the others because they spent a good bit of time hunting. As long as the mines were working, they worked reasonably well. When the mines were not working the parents took off and spent a good bit of time in the woods hunting groundhogs, possums, and various …..

END OF TAPE 1

JOHN DETCH TAPE 2

The other of the boys and girls I grew up with were children usually of Americans. Some were children of Italians, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Polish, and the usual Anglo-Saxons. I have recited to you these matters related to Wendel in order to give you some general idea of the background and nature of the community in which I grew up.

I became well acquainted with the mines and the methods of mining coal at a fairly early age. I mentioned to you that in Mine #1 there was various openings along the side of the mountain

that were numbered. Father worked at Mine #1 and generally made his way to his place of work through these openings. Dad was a hardworking man, weighed about 145 pounds, short of stature, by that I mean about 5 feet 6 inches tall. However, he had exceptional endurance and an unusual willingness to work. When he got to cleaning up his cut of coal in the daytime, a machine would come to his place of work and undermine the coal, this was done by an electric machine. The vein of coal was undercut by about 4 inches to a depth of about 5.5 to 6 feet and the face of the coal was generally about 10 feet wide. At an early age he took me into the mines with him, often times in the evening time, at his leisure, he would use his tools to drill holes and blast the coal in preparation for his work the next day. By going with him to the mines I soon learned how the work was done. The mining of coal at that time I would say was in the second stage of development. Prior to that time, the miners would undermine the coal by physical exertion with a pick, then they would drill a hole in the coal that was undermined above, then blast it down. The undermining of the coal by an electric machine was a considerable advancement in relieving the miners of strong physical exertion. You can imagine the face of the coal that was being operated by, it would look like the wall in a room. The tools were used to drill a hole down through the middle of the vein of coal generally about 3 or 4 feet from the bottom and a like distance from the top or ceiling. This was started by the taking of a small bore brace and bit and drilling a hole about the thickness of one's thumb about 8 inches deep into solid coal into the face. Then there was mounted in this hole because the tool was sharply pointed and by pounding it into the hole there was a bar with a hole out on the end of it. This sloped gently up and was about 3 feet long. A lock was then placed into the hole. In the face of the coal the miner took a pick and made a small indentation o it would hold a 3 foot drill. The 3 foot drill bit--it was actually approximately 2 ½ feet--was then put into the side of the coal ready for drilling, the lock was put into place, and the lock held a finely threaded drill that looked very much like a finely threaded screw. The miner then turned this particular piece of equipment, held in place by the bar I was telling you about, until he drilled the full length of the bar which was about 2 feet, then he would take that out and insert a 4 foot drill and repeat the process and when it was inserted and the hole drilled as far as it would go, then pulled it back out, then put the longer and last bit in place. So that actually to drill one complete hole it was necessary to break it down into 3 stages, each of the bits being used to advance the hole. Then there was a piece of equipment that had a small claw on the end of it. It was inserted into the hole, much like a small hoe, and all of the dust and small pieces of coal that might have been in the hole were very carefully pulled out. The next stage of the blasting consisted of the wrapping of newspaper around a pick handle pulling it off very carefully, sealing up the one end of it to make a cylinder out of newspapers. This was then filled with black powder approximately 14 to 16 inches. A cylinder of this kind was filled with black powder, the miner himself being the judge about how much black powder he should put in. The miner himself decided how badly or how much he wanted to break up the coal he was shooting. If you wanted lump coal, large chucks then he did not put as much powder in it, whereas if you wanted to get your coal blasted down so you could get the coal loaded easier with less physical effort by shovel then you put in a little more powder. My father was always inclined to put in more powder because he didn't like to dig the coal by pick; it took too much of this energy. In any event, this cylinder containing the black powder was pushed down into the hole and tamped gently. There was a long pin about 6 feet long and it was called a pin, it was probably a

quarter inch in thickness made of brass material and the pin was pushed down into the hole and intended and designed to go through the paper curtain into the black powder. Then the miner, very carefully, threw mud over the pin, while the pin was carefully kept in place, and a tapping rod was designed to run over the pin. There was a small groove at the end of the rod so it would stay on the pin much like using the pin as a track. With one hand the miner would throw the mud or clay into the hole and with the other hand he would tamp it down into the black powder and paper cylinder. This process was continued until the entire hole was filled up with clay. The miner had to use particular care that the clay was solidly tamped, in other words, the hole had to be filled solidly. Then after the hole was filled, the pin had a handle on it, and you turned it, you rotated it in a circular manner. The reason for this was the pin made a glossy finish inside the little hole that was left when the pin was pulled out. Then when the pin was carefully pulled out an instrument called a squib was then used. The squib was nothing more than a small rocket. It was approximately 4 inches long and it had a fuse on it about an inch and a half inches long. It was necessary that the fuse be lit on the very end of it because you had about a minute or minute and a half to get to safety before the fuse lit the rocket part. The rocket would fire and go into the hole left by the pin and ignite the black powder. That was the manner in which, in the early days, the black powder was ignited for the blasting of coal.

It was my practice, because my father was willing to take me, I was proud to go with him, I had my own carbide lamp, my own cap, small boots. I felt like I was grownup, at the age of 8 or 9 years of age, when I walked with him into the mines and watched him drill his holes and blast his coal. Every once in a while, in evening time if there was a car in the vicinity of his work, then he pushed the car into place and I would help him load the one car of coal. The black powder when it exploded would create an awful lot of smoke. That was one of the disadvantages of black powder and one of the reasons they finally did away with it, although for the blasting of coal it was a little milder than dynamite, a little gentler, and I think it produced better coal. The disadvantage of the black smoke and having to wait for the smoke to clear out was one of the reasons black powder was not used. It was also one of the reasons Dad went back into the mines in the evening time to do his shooting because after he shot his coal he could leave and by morning the smoke had cleared out and he could continue working. It was necessary that 3 holes be drilled, the kind that I described, the first one was drilled in the middle of the room or the middle of the working space and then the other two were drilled about a foot from the top and a foot from the sides near the top of the coal near the top of the vein. When the middle shot went off, it generally knocked the coal down in a “V” shape from the middle of the working space, then the 2 holes of the top would knock down the balance of it, and then with a pick it would be trimmed up or cleaned up. This process was called “cleaning up the cut,” the meaning being that the machine had cut out a certain slab and the coal was shot down and loaded out of place. When the cut was cleaned up, it became the responsibility of the miner to attach additional rails to the track that extended into his room so that the machine could come in and again go through the cutting process.

Though I was about 12 years old when we moved away from Wedel, I had gone into the mines quite frequently with dad, assisted him in the drilling of the holes and the loading of the cars. It was unlawful for dad to take me into the mines, but that was either one of the things he didn’t

know about or didn't care about. Some of the other miners on occasion took their children into the mines with him, it was kind of a pastime and gave them some idea about some of the work done it the mines, but it wasn't with any great measure of frequency. I don't want to leave the impression that my father took me in regularly, but I would say that in 4 or 5 years I had been in the mines with him a dozen times.

He taught me what signs to look out for and if I got lost in the mines how to get out. Really the method was rather simple. If you watched the tracks or if the tracks were removed, the place where the mine ties were, you could tell which way led to the outside. In going into the mines, the branch to the various sections branched off like the branches of a tree. You could tell that if you were walking into an entry the branch was breaking off to the right or to the left, then you knew you were going into the mine. If you were coming the other way, you could see that entries were approaching from the left or the right, then you knew that you were on your way to the outside of the mine.

Because there were other boys in the community, not great numbers, had likewise experiences about the mines. The mines never really frightened me or them. On occasion we would take lamps of our own, with or without the knowledge of our parents, we would go exploring in the mines. We had been taught by our parents to look out for signs of falls. Falls do not generally occur suddenly. Falls in the roof generally occur after much working of the roof, dropping of small pieces of slate, much like the size of your fingernail. When you sees small pieces of slate falling from the ceiling , under those circumstances it was a good time to run, but nevertheless the ceiling that was about to fall for the most part worked in this manner for some time, particularly if it was held up by posts, before there was an actual fall. Pressure from the ceiling onto the mine posts would cause the mine posts to tighten, often times to snap and crack, sometimes this went on for 2 or 3 days. One also knew that eventually it was going to result in a fall, so one took off.

The sand house at the mine for the most part was our playhouse. The workmen were considerate of us, they didn't like to have us around in the daytime or in times the mines were in operation, but once the operations ceased they had no objection to us playing in the sand pile. On the outside of the building the sand was generally wet. We could pile it up, our toys consisted of sardine cans. We would clean up the sardine cans, pound the sharp edges down so we wouldn't get cut, put holes in the end of them, tie string, sometimes we even had fancy connections on them. We would run our sardine cans with various kinds of loads through the sand pile and sometimes holes through the sand pile. When we got tired of that we could always go inside the sand house and find the dry sand which was ready for use in the motors and play with it in various ways. Next to the sand house was the oil house. In this building was kept 3 or 4 drums of oil that I mentioned for the lights that went onto the front end of the motors. We would oftentimes borrow the lamps, fill them with oil, and take trips into the mines themselves. I would say to ages 10, 11, 12 and with one of the boys who was a couple years older, that we would go into the mines and explore them to a depth of 2 miles.

The coal was pulled from the mines by electric motors, however the electric motors were not used for the purpose of gathering the coal from the working place of the miners themselves. They had what was designed as a side-track. The larger motors would pull anywhere from 5 to 25 cars onto the side-track and then the drivers would come with their horses and would onto 2 or 3 cars and the horses would then pull the empty cars into the working place of the miners. A horse could generally pull anywhere from 1 to 5 or 6 mining cars, depending on the kind of grade the horse had to pull over and depending on the horse itself. The driver would distribute the cars by his horse to the various places, there was always enough room left so the horse could turn into the working space. They always stopped the car back from the working place, the horse would turn and they would lead the horse by the car, they always had to leave enough room for the horse to walk by the empty car. Then the driver and the miner would physically push the coal car into place and then the miner proceeded to load it. The first thing the miner generally did, well he had to do it, was to place his check. Each miner had a number and the number was stamped on a round metal tag and we called that a check and in some mines they had a hook on the outside of the car and in other mines they would have the hook on the inside of the car. The check was put on the hook and the car loaded. Then when the car was pulled out it went over the scales. There was a man called the check weigh man, who took the check from the car, credited the weight of that particular car load to this particular number and then the car was dumped, that is, the coal was dumped into the chute and sent down into the larger hoppers. One of the problems the miners had was that there wasn't anything to keep other miners from sneaking up during the day or any other time , throw off one miner's check or destroying it and putting his own check on it. That was one way of stealing another man's work. This was a very serious matter about the mines and caused enough anger that if one was caught doing it, he was immediately fired and ostracized by the workmen. Sometimes the workmen would take matters into their own hands to punish anyone caught doing it. It wasn't done frequently but every once in a while a miner would say his car of coal had been stolen. They did not mean the car had been physically taken, but the coal had physically been taken, it meant his check had been removed from the coal car and somebody else's check had been put on it so the other fellow got credit for loading the coal. In some of the other mines later, particularly the Bethlehem mines where I worked, to prevent this, the hook was placed on the inside of the car, on the inside wall, then the coal put into the car just covered it up. So they weighed the coal car first, dumped it, then they checked to see who had loaded it.

Generally a cut of coal left for loading some from 5 to 7 cars. A miner could get a decent day's work if he could shot down and load the entire cut of coal and load the 5 to seven cars. The drivers generally distributed cars for 5 to possibly 15 miners. In many respects the drivers controlled the livelihood of the individual miners because if they did not bring enough cars for each miner so the miner could clean up his cut of coal, it meant the next day the miner would have to clean up the cut which had not been cleaned up the day before, that he would load a

car or not more than 2 cars of coal and then he would have to go home. Even in this there was a good bit of skullduggery. Some of the drivers would expect the coal loaders to tip them with a pint of whiskey or some other gratuity. This was a sore point with many of the miners; my father always refused to do it. When he did not get enough cars during the day to clean up his place, he would report it to his boss first, and if that got no response from his boss he would report it to his superintendent. As a result my father generally never had the trouble that other miners had with reference to cleaning up.

The motors that pulled the car received their power electrically from large heavy exposed cable which was suspended from the roof. This was always a source of danger to all miners, and was a source of danger to the horses. These cables of course were not extended into the working faces of the miners because horses were used in that day for the purpose of pulling the coal from the working face down to the side track. I understood the work the miner did pretty much from the beginning because of my exposure to it. I knew a good bit of the risks that went with it. We generally would sit at our front door or front windows along the bench of the house and we would learn if a horse got its leg broken or a car had crippled it and we knew then that one of the horses was going to be destroyed. They always kept a high-powered rifle in the foreman's shanty and when they went into the mines with the rifle we knew that some horse was crippled and going to be destroyed. They had a special cart on which they loaded the dead horse and it would be brought out and of course the boys in the neighborhood were generally there to see the horse brought out. They found suitable places out on the slate piles for the digging of the holes, generally very deep holes, for the burying of the horses. We were sorry to see this because we knew that the horses used in that mine were the finest that could be obtained. There was a constant search throughout the state for good sound horses that could be taken into the mines. I believe that the best care the drivers themselves was taken of the horses , but once in a while a car would get away or a horse would get in the way of the electric wires and so on and would get crippled.

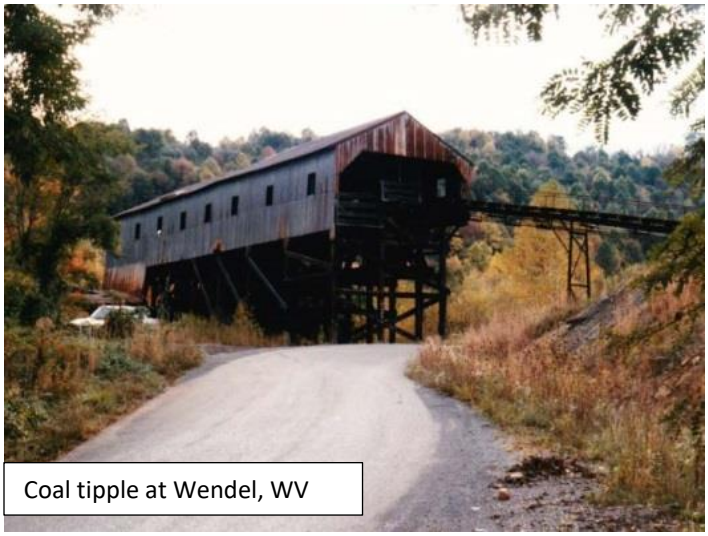
We also knew that every once in a while somebody would get hurt and occasionally some of the men would get killed and this information was also generally brought out under tense excitement. We generally knew when this happened because there were stretchers that were kept in the foreman's shanty and when the motor came out without a load and the men were in a hurry, they generally loaded up an extra car with stretchers, sometimes with first aid equipment and went dashing back into the mine. And then, of course, we wanted to find out who it was that was injured. There was much wailing and sorrow when we found out, often times the injured or killed was the father of one of our playmates.

While we lived at Wendel, I dare say that at least a dozen miners were killed in the work. On one occasion I recall that 2 miners were killed at the same time. Their bodies were brought out

in the mine cars, generally covered with blankets or canvass. Oftentimes they used blankets or canvass that was previously used to bring out other bodies. The bodies were immediately loaded onto a wagon or sometimes a truck and immediately taken to a funeral home in Simpson. There were no funeral homes or undertakers about Wendel. It was always the miner's practice, when a miner got killed, they did not work the next day or on the day of the funeral. The nearest cemetery that I can recall that was used at all by the miners was at Simpson, mostly because that was where the undertaker was, and I think he had his own cemetery. When the weather was exceedingly bad, the roads were bad, the miners would form a parade and carry the caskets from Wendel to Simpson, and I recall that when the 2 men were killed, such a parade was formed, and the men took turns carrying the caskets down from Wendel to Simpson. I think they could have taken these bodies down by a hearse, because they had hearses pulled by horses, but for some reason they, at least on this particular occasion, it may have been because of the popularity of the 2 men themselves, the miners elected to just carry the caskets. On other occasions the hearse was pulled by horses. On those occasions they generally had a eulogy or service of some kind at the public meeting house which was down in the valley and after that the service was over, the bodies were taken for burial.

Those of us who went into the mines, even at an early age who went in there to play were taught to take certain precautions. We were taught to take twice as much carbide as we were expected to use, we were taught to take plenty of water with us generally in a Coca-Cola bottle or a bottle of that size. We had attached to that, a small wire or drill because the tubes in the carbide light oftentimes were clogged. We were taught that you carried extra matches with you even though you had a flint that would work because sometimes your flint would wear out or may not fire properly. We were told and by practice to take the carbide light apart in the dark, hold onto the various parts of it, refill the carbide lamp and light it. That being one of the things a miner would have to do to be able to carry on with his work, or if he were by himself to be able to get out of the mine.

The mine was our source of livelihood and the source of our entertainment. Carbide was expensive. When the miners came out in the evening time they cleaned their lamps, and many of them had good carbide that spilled out, they all had special poles or posts that they tapped their carbide lamps against to get the carbide out. We would then come along and sort out the good carbide that was left, put it into bottles or tin cans, throw water on it, then run. The gas would build up inside the bottle and either break the bottle or pop a cork out of it. Sometimes the more foolhardy of the boys would put the cork into the bottle, put the water onto the carbide, push the cork into the bottle then point the bottle at another fellow knowing the gas would build up, and the cork would pop out much as a missile would. Other times the carbide would be put into a tin can, the can quickly sealed, then the pressure would build up to cause an explosion. Some parents, including mine, when they found out that children were doing this would raise holy cane because of the danger to eyes and limbs but there were children who persisted in that fun anyway and engaged in this. Birds built nests in the tipple.



Coal tipple at Wendel, WV

The tipple was always a fascinating place, and it was here the miners came to retrieve their checks. It was here the results of their handy work were made known. The boys generally knew by looking at the check board how much work was being done by the various parents. The manner and standard of living was reflected by the check board. It was almost public knowledge because at the end of the day, the checks were hung out on hooks and they were there to be seen by anyone who understood the meaning of it and everybody understood the meaning.

My father excelled as a workman and excelled in the keeping and maintaining of his farm animals for his family. He spent his spare time gathering fruits and berries of various kinds for winter use. As a whole, he excelled in every respect in taking care of his family. One thing he did not care about was learning the English language, that to him seemed to be a manner of indifference.

I mentioned to you the tipple was an interesting place for boys. The sparrows built their nests in various places, some of them being high places, some of them being out on the ends of beams and the more foolhardy of the boys would take clubs and sticks and go out to poke the birds' nests out. This got me into trouble one time. Mother had 2 of her cows, being pastured together with cows owned by others in a privately owned field in the lower end of town. The other boys would go for the purposes of getting their cows and bring them home. The trouble was, the other parents wanted their cows home at 5:00 o'clock whereas my mother did not want the cows home until 6:00 o'clock. That meant if I didn't go with the other boys I would have to go alone and I didn't like to do that, so I would go with the other boys, get our cows, bring them up under the tipple, and stop them there. I would have an hour's time to fritter away waiting for 6: o'clock so I could drive the cows out around the slate dump so mother could milk them. One day I was frittering away my hours' time, the cows were down under the tipple in the shade resting. Then a boy somewhat smaller than I was, knowing what the situation was, came up with the purpose of driving the cows around the slate dump so that mother could see that I had driven them home too early. The boy knew that I would be punished for that. So I asked him to refrain from doing that. I asked him to leave and leave my cows alone, but he didn't, so I climbed back off a heavy beam, picked up some pieces of coal and threw at him. He leaned down and was picking up rocks and coal to throw back at me. We exchanged a few chunks of coal in that manner until finally I decided there wasn't any point in throwing at him while he was looking, so I would wait until he had thrown his coal, missed, then reached down to pick some more, and that's what happened. He threw his coal and missed me and while he was bending down to pick up more I threw at him from above and as he raised up it caught him on the head and I thought it killed him. He laid there on the ground a little bit. Finally his parents came there, and others came and took him down to the doctor's office. Of course I became highly frightened. I left the end of the tipple, went up to the head of the valley,

through the woods and came back above our house where I could look down and see what was going on. I came out at the edge of the hill which was also above the doctor's house and I saw a large crowd, some 25 -30 people on the outside talking and seemed to be excited. Of course I was excited too. At that time I was hoping the boy would recover. I certainly did not want to do him any serious harm and I was relieved after a while to see the boy's parents, each holding him up under each arm, bringing him out of the doctor's office and starting towards home. The boy was able to walk, he had a big bandage on his head. I knew then the boy wasn't killed and he would recover. Needless to say when I got home the news had arrived that I had conked the boy on the head with a chunk of coal. I was of course duly punished. I mention this because these things happened around the tipple. The tipple was also a place where the boys gathered with their BB guns for reasons that there was always targets, always sparrows flying and flittering about at various distances and if one were skilled at all with their BB gun they could exercise their skill at the tipple.

You will be interested to know there were no police officers in the community. I do not recall that police officers even came to the community except on two occasions, and that being the purpose of enforcing the prohibition laws. They would search people's homes trying to find wine or whiskey that might be sold or consumed. On occasion they might find such beverages in the home of some of the miners. They were taken off to Flemington or Grafton and fined, but there were no police officers in Wendel and all the disciplining that was done of the children was done by the parents. If any of the parents thought his child was abused by the others the parents discussed it and generally solved it by being taken to the wood shed and not too gently paddled. As a result there were some who were rough and disobedient. For the most part the children were well behaved. The citizenry themselves for the most part were well behaved, but there were times when there was violence in the community. Most of it, everybody could see because it generally took place on holidays or in public gatherings. I will undertake to tell us some of that.

I will always remember the celebration that they had in the community right after the First World War. The soldiers came back, some number of them. They had a public celebration. They had a band. I don't know where the band came from, but I recall seeing the large bass drum. I will never forget some mischievous boy took a knife and jabbed it into the bass drum, making it useless. It's matters of this kind that will probably live with me until I die. I will always remember the ending of World War I and the ending of the bass drum.

It was about this time I saw my first airplane. I was standing on the porch of the house. I heard this whirling noise, looked down through the valley and saw this airplane flying up the valley. Airplanes of course were common during the Second World War but they were not common in that particular area so I was, of course, surprised to see the plane. It was while I lived at Wendel that I first head radio. The mine electrician purchased a radio with earphones. He was the father of one of my friends that I played with, and when I was in his home he let me use the earphones. I heard a radio message for the first time. I heard WLW in Cincinnati and the radio station from Atlanta, Georgia. Of course it was a real exciting phenomenon of that day. This same man was also a member of the Klu Klux Klan and I also saw his uniform in his home. His

son showed it to me. The Klu Klux Klan members would assemble and have parades in town. They seemed harmless, though, I would say about a third or a half of ….. END OF TAPE 2

JOHN DETCH INTERVIEW 1969 TAPE 3

I forget just what I said about our living at Wendel, but I think I have already given to you a general idea as to the community. There were a number of incidents that stood out in my mind that I will not forget. Down below the house where we lived was the machine shop. Pipes of various diameters and sizes could be found in the junk heap. One day, 3 or 4 of us decided that we would put off an explosion, so we went down to the junk heap and got a pipe about 4 or 5 inches in diameter and about 3 feet long. We plugged one end of it with a piece of wood, tamped paper around it from the inside. We went up to the powder house where workmen kept powder. Generally the door was unlocked because there were so many workmen going in and out that it was impractical for the door to be kept locked. We took a keg of powder, and a fuse. The fuse was full-length, normally about 50 feet, and it burns about a foot a minute, so it would burn 50 minutes. We took the powder up to the highest point, poured the powder into the pipe, then put paper on the outside of it, put the fuse down into the black powder, poured dirt and clay onto it, then tamped it. This was not new to us, we knew how coal was blasted, and all we were doing was using the pipe as a hole to which to put the explosion. We lit it and of course in 50 minutes we were clear on the far side of town. It went off, created quite an explosion, quite a jar. The metal pipe was hurled approximately a quarter of a mile. The black powder made a terrific amount of smoke and, needless to say, there was quite a bit of excitement in the town. Strangely enough it wasn't long before they found who was involved with it. I don't know how they found out but they did, perhaps someone saw us running from one mountain to another.

Another instance that stands out in my mind was an instance that occurred at the school house. Your Grandfather Detch wanted to go to Simpson about 3 miles away for the purposes of buying grain and feed for the animals, as well as sugar and matters of that kind for the family, and he needed somebody to do his interpreting. I was the one generally available for that purpose. It was understood, Dad having told me, he would appear at the school house at the last recess in the afternoon and that I with him would go to the teacher and ask that I be excused so I could go with him to Simpson. Father appeared at recess. The kids were out on the grounds playing, the teacher was out on the grounds, and the two of us went to the teacher. I introduced my father to the teacher. Dad could not speak English, but he took off his hat, clicked his heels in typical Hungarian Hussar fashion, bowed from the waist, and then he proceeded to tell me what he wanted me to convey by way of a message to the teacher. This probably would not have been unusual except that the entire student body, the kids being out on the grounds, thought that this was most unusual to have somebody to click his heels and bow in the manner in which dad did, whereupon all the boys took it upon themselves to click their heels, swing their right arms under their tummys, and bow to the waist. They spent several recesses after that, mostly for my benefit and to tease me in exemplification of the manner which dad address the teacher.

We moved away from Wendel during the fall of 1924. I believe I could have been no more than 13 years of age at that time. At that time I had already spent one summer working for wages. It was about that time from 1923 through 1924 that the contract was let for the grading of the road, US Route 50 which extends from Grafton to Clarksburg to Parkersburg. This road is one that is antiquated and obsolete. Dad worked as a common laborer on this particular job. His job was to get there before the other workmen, fire up the steam shovel--and it was really a steam shovel--in the sense that it made steam. You had to fire it with coal. My job was to get water and carry water for 25 to 30 men. Even in this respect I was fortunate; 2 or 3 other boys had grading jobs of this nature. They were paid $1.50 per day. The particular contractor that I worked for was a man by the name of Lynch who paid me 30 cents per hour for nine hours of work, which comes to $2.70. Actually I was very well paid; sometimes I was better paid than some of the grown workmen. The work was begun at a place not too far from Wendel, but as it progressed during the summer, the site of the work kept extending towards Bridgeport, West Virginia. I mention this because we walked to our work. It was about three miles from the nearest place where the work began from Wendel. It soon became 3.5 miles until finally sometime during the summer, I was required to walk within sight of Bridgeport, and it is my recollection that was about 12 miles. So we walked 12 miles to work, 12 miles back from work, and I spent the day walking back and forth over the roads taking water to and providing water for the workmen. On hot summer days I could not provide them with enough water.

For a while during this time we would take food with us and camp out at night. That is to say if we left on a Monday morning, we would take enough food with us in a bag to last until noon on Tuesday. Instead of walking in Monday night we would walk in on Tuesday night. Of course, that meant we stayed in some barn or hay loft, generally without covers or sufficient covers and even in the summertime, got cold. It is my recollection that Father's wages were about $4 per day. When the mines worked it was often necessary for him to work on these construction projects, because the mines did not work with any regularity, In fact there were times when the mines did not work for several months. When they did work the union scale was about $7.26 per day and he would generally work 3 or 4 days a week, most of the time not over that. I say it was $7.26 per day. That was the wage that was paid by the 8 hour day. If Dad was loading coal by the ton which he did most of the time, he was paid by the number of tons at a particular price per ton. I do not recall what that price might have been other than 7 to 8 to 9 dollars was an unusually good day's earnings.

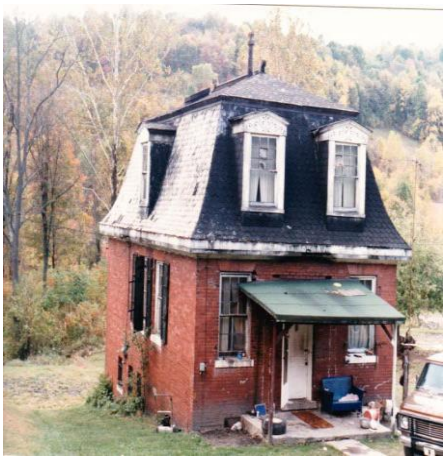
rvey

You will want to know about the bathroom facilities that we had in that day. The children were given their baths in a galvanized tub in the kitchen. The water was heated in kettles or smaller galvanized tubs on the stove. Water was obtained from a spigot from hydrants; there was a water system in the town. Water was

piped to such a distance that one hydrant would furnish the water for 3 or 4 families. That would have meant we would have to go 200 to 300 feet to get what water was needed. We carried it, not only for the house use, but carried the water to the barns and to the pigs for the use of our animals. In the winter time it was necessary that the hydrant be covered with (gauze?), a raw wool. Insulation as we now know it was not known. We often times got sawdust and built a box around the hydrant and filled it with sawdust. Notwithstanding our very best efforts often times the hydrants froze. When it did freeze it was necessary to get hot water or warm water and we would come out on cold and frosty mornings and pour water slowly over the frozen hydrant until the hydrant thawed out.

The lights in the houses were electrically furnished. Each room was furnished with one drop cord and the drop cord was 2 to 2 ½ feet long. It dropped down into the middle of the room and from it was suspended the one light bulb. That was the extent of our lighting in the house. If other lighting was needed, and sometimes it was, mother had an oil lamp fueled with kerosene and a wick and we had that for extra use. We often times used this (oil lamp) on the kitchen table for getting our lessons. We would gather around the kitchen table with the oil lamp and do whatever work or writing we had to do. There were wooden toilets on the outside about 200 feet from the house, unfortunately lined up and, in the instance of our house, the toilet facilities were higher in elevation than was the house. The toilets were 2 holers, the feces and paper was dropped into a box. The box was 5 feet long and approximately 18 inches wide and 1 ½ feet deep. It had handles on it and the toilets were cleaned by a man who had a team of horses and a sled and he, together with his helper came at regular intervals, used metal hooks to pull out the boxes, dump the waste into his sled and replace the box into the toilets. That was the manner in which the sanitary requirements of the community were taken care of. For sewerage, there wasn't any such thing. On the other hand, we did not have much sewerage either. The table scraps and waste were fed to the pigs. There was no waste from that. We did not have much paper in the abundance that is used now. For instance, if you went to the store and bought dried fruit, and dried fruit was quite common, prunes, dried peaches, apples, raisins, they came in boxes or barrels and were ladled out by the pound and generally put into a paper sack, so there wasn't any great amount of paper that was wasted. Bread came in great big boxes, by great big boxes I mean they were a light blue color, made of light lumber, wood, I would say about 3 feet square, cube-shaped about 3 feet deep. I don't know where they shipped the bread from but I think it was possibly Grafton. The bread was placed fresh into the box unwrapped and the box was literally placed on the counter or near the counter and when the people bought bread, the man just reached into the box and took out a loaf or two, put it right on the counter and sometimes put into a paper sack but oftentimes wasn't.

At the store the use of script was common place. Back at that time the script consisted of a tab of papers perforated that were torn off and some of the papers were good for a penny, nickel, dime and quarter. I do not recall that any of them went as high as a dollar because generally the script tab was for $5. The purpose of this was to enable the company to advance



credit to workmen who had earned money but did not have money to buy their food. For instance, if the workmen had already earned $20 to $25 but did not have the money to wait until payday he would send his wife or child to the office to draw script.
They would issue these papers worth about $5, of course his account would be charged with the $5 and the tabs were treated as cash at the store. You will read from time to time how mean the coal companies were and that their prices were higher than elsewhere and they charged a high price for script. In many places I suppose this is true, but I do not recall that the price was any different at the coal company store or the Maryland Coal Company in Wendel. The price was the same whether you bought with script or you paid with cash.

In fact, the store man generally did not know whether you were going to pay in script or in cash. Now the evil of the script system was the workman w[illegible] of script, not for the purpose of buying groceries but buying something e[illegible] cash for. They would take $4 in cash for $5 in script and there were many [illegible] were perfectly willing to give a workman $4 in cash for $5 in script. The script was pretty much negotiable much as money was so the evil of it developed or the reputation of it developed in this way. The truth of the matter was the person who got his script and received it in advance of his payday probably thought that the service rendered to him was worth the discount.

Coal company office
Wendel, WV

You will want to know something about the games we played. One of the games we played quite often was “hide and seek”, and you would probably know what that was. Another game was called “prisoner’s base.” Prisoner’s base was a delightful game to play because all of the children, no matter how large or small, girls or boys, could join in the fun. The game was played in this manner. They had just two posts set up at an agreed distance apart, say 100 feet apart, then the team was divided up, that is the whole group was divided up so you could play any number of people. If you had 25 to 30 people you could divide them up 15 to a side. Those who could run the fastest were the most desirable ones to have on the team, it was a game that was quite interesting because the slow people could run out as if to challenge ones from the other side, then one of the faster runners would come out and try to tag the slower runners from the first base. When the faster runner left his base, then another runner who thought himself equally as fast or faster, would leave the first base. In any event, the person who was tagged by the opposite side became a prisoner, and he was taken to the base and he had to stay there on the base until all the team on one side were taken prisoners. That could get to be complicated because often times you could get all the team from the one base as a prisoner except one or two, then it became more difficult to entice them off of their base because as long as they were on their base they were safe. So it would become necessary to send out the very slow one to use them as bait to maybe get the other one who was equally as slow off his base. Generally after a while someone would get brave and run out to try to take a prisoner. If we played a long time we could get all of the players from one side or the other.

Another game we played was with sticks, much like hockey. The milk can, especially the Pet milk can was a common can in the community. The boys would take their shoes and stamp them down into the middle of the cans so that the weight of their body would push the can

down, the cylinder or round part would then clamp back onto the shoe, so then the boys would be walking around with one on each foot. They had to have a can on each foot really for the purpose of slowing them down, that was one of the rules that was made so that they could play. Then they would take another can and use it much like a hockey puck. They would bang it back and forth until one of them would get it over his base or the base of the adversary. We spent many an evening playing in this fashion. Another one of the summer sports or games the boys played was the rolling of hoops. There were many wagon wheels of various kinds, many of them small ones, some of them a foot or 18 inches in diameter and we would take a hook made of wire and start the hoop rolling and then take the wire hook to continue pushing the wheel. We would run the wheels all over town. As a matter of fact, most of us got to school on time by hurrying up with these hoops. On the school grounds, tag was a favorite game. At recess we played tag. The whole town was the playground and many times we ran up and down the top of the hill evading somebody who wanted to tag us.

In the evening time, particularly on summer days, the boys met back of the company store. There was a large platform back there with the railroad track that extended alongside of it, but the platform was as high as the door inside of the box car. The reason being they could unload the wares from the boxcar over the ramp and move it down into the store. They always had bread boxes or other boxes of various kinds stored on the ramp or platform and we assembled there in the evening time mostly to tell stories. It was amazing how many stories the boys could tell, and it was amazing how many times they would repeat it, and listened to with awe with each repetition. The boys were introduced to a grown up world on this back porch for the reason that there assembled people of all ages, the young and the old, and the young listened to what the older ones had to say, and the older boys listened to what the adults had to say. There were many who told interesting stories and interesting experiences.

Our only swimming place was the pond I mentioned to you sometime back. The pond was not large, I would say about an acre, possibly 1 ½ acres. There was a deep spot down on the lower end. By deep I mean about 10 feet deep, the upper side was shallow and extended gradually down to the deep place, so that one could start out on the shallow end where the water was 6 inches deep, go down to where it was 3 or 4 feet deep, and from there start to learn to swim. I had a log which was an ordinary piece of waste timber that floated around in the pond, and using it, learned to kick, and then learning to crawl in an area where my hands could reach the bottom of the pond, I was able to learn to swim. I don't recall anyone taught me to swim. I recall there were other boys who could swim and by watching them I tried to emulate them. The pond was where the horses were washed off and there was a good bit of clay and mud in the bottom of it, and we were swimming in water that people these days would not think of entering. It was not only dirty, but somewhat soupy from the clay that could be stirred up in it. Now the other boys, who could swim, swam in the area where the water was 10 feet deep and in this area there was less of the clay and musk stirred up so they had a better place to swim. After a while when I learned to swim and use the log for floating around, I could get to the area that was deeper too. This was the manner in which to swim, this was the kind of water I swam in. We didn't have bathing suits, we would take old trousers that were worn out anyway and cut the legs off of them. We generally had a rope that we passed through the belt loops and we

used these for swimming. Generally our parents did not know when we were swimming; generally we were swimming when we were not permitted to swim. In fact, there were times we were swimming against expressed orders that we should not swim. For this reason our bathing suits were generally hidden somewhere about the tipple or about the post pile. Often times our swimming trunks became public property because boys who came along and didn't have swimming trunks merely looked around in the places they knew where trunks were usually hidden and used any swim trunks they could find, and of course there were times when they went swimming with no trunks at all. At that time it was accepted. When girls were coming from a distance, the boys yelled at them and told them to wait until they could get their trunks on or hide down in the water themselves until the girls passed by.

(Gap in tape) … fell through, I got wet about to my waist, somebody pulled me out, they got a coal fire going near the tipple so we could dry out and at least hide some of the evidence that we had been on the pond when we were not supposed to be.

Transportation at that time was by motor vehicle, the most common and prevalent automobile was the Model T; this all happened before the Model A . The other automobiles I recall were the Studebaker, Essex, Loon, and the Star. There may have been others but I specifically recall the ones I just mentioned. One of the neighbors had a Dodge truck, so I recall the Dodge was also known at that time.

A large number of the people in the community were Catholics. My brother, Lewis, your Uncle Lewis, said my parents were Catholic. I have no recollection they ever belonged to a Catholic Church or participated in Catholic service. There were no churches in the community. Upon occasion a Catholic priest would come and hold a Catholic service in the homes of various people. I do not recall that my parents ever participated in that. The Anglo-Saxon part of the family or community, on occasion held a Sunday school in the community meeting hall. We did not attend these meetings very often, but I do recall Mother required that we go to Sunday school, and she required we go to Sunday school at Simpson. Simpson was about 3 miles away and the church was about a half mile beyond that, so we walked 3 ½ miles to get to Sunday school. Back in that day if we carried a nickel with us that we dropped into the collection plate, we were given a small card with a Bible lesson written on it and a religious picture on the reverse side of it. This was our proof that we had been to the Sunday school when we dropped in our nickel and got our card, and each of us brought our card home to Mother to demonstrate to her that we had, in fact, attended the Sunday school.

The chief entertainment in the mining community was the baseball team. Almost every community had a baseball team. It was on the occasion of one of these games that I first saw violence in it rawest form. There was a man in the community by the name of, well I really did not know what his name was. He had come back from the war or acted as if he had come back from the First World War, and called himself Jack Johnson. This was a white man. Jack Johnson was, in fact, a colored man who was a prize fighter, and I think perhaps the heavy-weight champion of the world. Anyway, this man called himself Jack Johnson and you could tell by him having done that that he was a bully in the community. He was attending the ball game, a man

from Grafton had come into play. The manager for one of the hangers-on for the Grafton team, was whooping it up on the sidelines. He wasn't a particularly big man, but he was wiry. He was coaching and telling his pitcher what to do against the Wendel team. The pitcher did it, and was doing an excellent job because the Grafton team was winning the ball game. This irritated our bully, Jack Johnson. So Jack Johnson sidled up to the man from Grafton and told him he had better shut up. The man told him he didn't think he had to, whereupon Jack Johnson told him he had better get down the road. The man again responded he didn't think he had to and what's more he wasn't going to. Whereupon Jack Johnson, using this as a provocation, actually he assaulted the man from Grafton. But the man from Grafton pulled out his knife and did a yeomen's job in carving up Jack Johnson. I was there at the time and people gathered around. All I could tell was that Jack Johnson was pretty badly cut up. They tried to get Jack Johnson off to the hospital at Grafton, which was an almost impossible job because he would have to go 3 miles to Grafton, or by wagon to Simpson, or by train to Grafton. Anyway the man died before they got him down out of the hollow. It was then that I learned for the first time that the man's name was not Jack Johnson but Sandy Combs. He was buried at the cemetery at Webster. As you go from Philippi north towards ? town, one comes to a road that bears off to the left towards Simpson and Flemington, immediately to the right is the cemetery, and visible from the road is the tombstone of Sandy Combs, and every time I have gone by there I am reminded that no matter how large or how strong a bully may be, he may eventually meet somebody who will take him down to size by knives or other implements, if that is necessary. In this case that is how Sandy Combs met his death.

Although murder occurred, I won't say it was commonplace. It occurred quite frequently in the community; I saw it occur on only one other occasion. A bunch of us boys were playing down in the bungalow section. It was our practice to play hide and seek, and to hide under the houses. At this particular time we were under one of the houses and we heard a terrific racket upstairs. People became frightened, ran outside and ran to the front of the house to see what had occurred. One of the miners had used a knife on another one and the people in the house were trying to stop the flow of blood of the man who was cut. He was lying on the table with the others trying to wrap clothes, towels and so on, trying to keep him from bleeding, but their efforts were in vain. We ended up watching the dead man on the table. For a child of 12 or 13 years old, or possibly younger because at that time I didn't recall how old I actually was, it was a matter which would leave lasting impressions. I don't want to leave the impression that it was commonplace to see violence of that kind, but the boys of my age in that community were exposed to matters of that kind. There were times when we could and did see violence resulting in death in the manner I just described.

Pruntytown was the location of the state reform school. Pruntytown was about 5 or 6 miles from Wendel by the way the crow flew. Actually it was only about 5 or 6 miles by walking across country from where we were. The boys were always threatened and frightened by being sent to reform school if they did something bad. I have no recollection that a boy in the community was ever arrested with an offense or tried for any offense, much less sent to the reform school. We, however, would walk back to the state farm and often times talk to the foreman who was in charge of the boys, or the boys themselves for permission to get cherries

or apples. Actually the boys were more than willing to let us pick the cherries and apples because they would have that many less to pick themselves. We often times got our supply of fruits, berries, and cherries from the state farm. Just over the hill from where we lived there was a row of cherry trees, I would say possibly 25 trees in number, planted domestically by the farmer. The trees were pretty well grown and one day I was walking by and saw some of the trees had ripe cherries on them and I asked the farmer, a Mr. Teasling? if I might pick a few to take home and he said I could pick a few cherries from the end tree. I limited my picking of cherries to the end tree. I don't pick very many, I didn't have a container. I would say I picked about a pint or so in my cap for the purpose of taking them home to the other members of my family. As I was going down home, I noticed however two other boys coming up the hill with branches that had been broken off the trees, and in as much as I was the one who asked the farmer for permission to pick cherries, he concluded that I was actually the one who had broken the branches off the trees. He had passed the word on that he was going to have me arrested and sent to the reform school. I was frightened about that and then it was said he was going to go to the Justice of the Peace who was at Flemington, WV to have me arrested and would go there the next day the mine didn't work. You can understand I prayed for a long time that the mines worked every day, and strangely enough, the mines did work a number of days until finely I concluded that maybe Mr. Teasling had forgotten about the broken branches of his cherry trees. In any event it was I who had not broken the branches but it was I who was blamed for it.

These days I watch with interest the boys who are brought into the court and charged with various things, including the disturbing of religious worship and various misdemeanors and watching them, I am not at all unmindful of the fact that I had committed the same offenses those boys are charged with. I mentioned to you already I dropped a good size chunk of coal between the eyes of a boy who was trying to move out my cows. That would have been called malicious wounding today. When one of the neighbors had moved away, he had left some toys in the house. I had lifted the window and gone inside to get them and distributed them among my sisters, thinking they had been abandoned. I found out later, they had merely been left there to be picked up at a later time. These days that would have been turned into a felony case called breaking and entering. We roamed the hills picking chestnuts, apples, berries, fruits, often times corn or corn silk without permission. These days that would be called either grand larceny or petty larceny.

Punishment in those days was administered by the matter being called to the attention of the parents. The parents would take the boys to the wood shed and not too gently use the kindling in the neighborhood on the back end of boy, and that was the only punishment that I can remember. There was no punishment by arresting by officers or taking the boys into court for a formal hearings. The complaint by a parent was all that was generally necessary to have a session in the wood house.

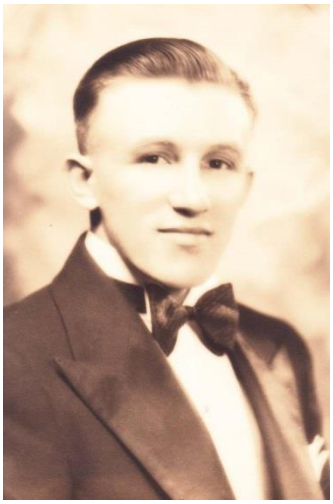
END OF TAPE 3

JOHN DETCH INTERVIEW 1969 TAPE 4

I recall telling you sometime back, it was not the custom or practice of the young people from Wendel to go to high school. The highest grade taught at Wendel was the 8th grade, and up until the time we moved to Wendel, and my brother Lewis attended there, none of the young people had ever gone to high school. I don't know why my mother and father were as interested in education as they were, except they were, particularly Mother. For this reason mother insisted that Lewis go to high school when he finished the 8th grade. The high school at that time was at Simpson, 3 ½ miles away. They taught only 2 years of high school at Simpson, but Lewis enrolled, and when Lewis did enroll, then two other boys, a boy by the name of Johnny Gwaldo G-W-A-L-D-O, and a Johnny Seveek, S-E-V-E-E-K, I believe that was the way it was spelled, enrolled in high school with Lewis, and they walked back and forth to the Simpson High School from Wendel every day. In addition to that they played some basketball. The basketball court was on the outside and if the weather was real bad they could neither play nor practice. In addition to walking to school when they had a chance to practice, they would then practice, and I think on one or two occasions they went to other schools and played basketball games. There was a high school at that time in Flemington and a high school at Grafton. That was about as far as the boys from Simpson went for the purposes of playing basketball.


I recall that at the time Lewis was attending high school he received letters from the West Virginia Business College and the letters were written in the fanciest Spenserian script. They encouraged Lewis to enroll in business school. About once a week literature was forwarded to him through the mail through Clarksburg encouraging him to enroll in high school. Now as it happened at that time, I don't recall how much money Mother had, but I don't believe it was over $200 to $300 saved up, and it took all the money that Mother had saved up and which was the family's security, and gave it to Lewis. Lewis went to Clarksburg for the purpose of enrolling in school. Again, the other two boys did likewise, I don't believe they would have done it if it hadn't been for Lewis, but when Lewis went, the Gwaldo and Seveek boy also went. This I mention to you because of an occurrence I want to relate to you even if it is of interest to you or not. After Lewis attended the business school about nine months, he obtained a job in Morgantown with the state road commission and I take it was a job that was somewhat politically tinged. He had the job for 2 or 3 months. The sacrifice the family made, of course, was quite terrific because it took the family savings. Lewis would be the first one, not only in the family, but in the community that would have a white collar job. This elevation was something we not only hoped for, but various members of the family discussed. I recall Mother and Dad spent a good bit of their time discussing the ambition and hope that Lewis would be able to stay with his job with the state road commission. You can imagine the terrific disappointment which occurred after a while when Lewis came home and said he had lost his job. Now Lewis was only about 16 years old at that time. I think that two years of high school and nine months of business school would have made him about 16 or 17 years old. Father, at that time was working on the road that I was telling you about, US Route 50 and walking back and forth daily to do his work then get home.

In addition, Father would not only walk home he would sometimes try to make a garden, try to look after the animals, and if he didn't get a chance to, mother or I did. The work he expended was right considerable. When Lewis came home and announced that he was without his job, it looked like all the sacrifice, all the family funds had been wasted, whereupon mother announced immediately that he (Lewis) was going to have to go to work with Dad. I recall as a child that Mother had awakened Lewis in the early morning because Dad had generally gotten up about 4 o'clock and eaten breakfast and walked the distance that had to be walked to work. Lewis was completely dressed with work clothes, including a pair of boots and finally Mother handed him his lunch so he could accompany Dad to work. Lewis took off the boots and told mother he was not going and he disappeared. We were frightened. Lewis was young, we didn't know where he had gone, we hadn't heard from him, and later we got a card from him from Pittsburgh. He had gotten a job in Pittsburgh. Years later I asked him how he had gotten to Pittsburgh, and he said he rode the train from Simpson to Clarksburg, then caught the street car from Clarksburg to Fairmont. He was going to Pittsburgh, he didn't know why, but Pittsburgh was a city and he wanted to go to the city and seek his fortune. He was leaving home. In any event, he told me later he walked from Fairmont to Morgantown and finally to Pittsburgh. When he got to Pittsburgh he was walking down the street, being hungry, and saw a sign out. Somebody wanted a dish washer, so Lewis made application as a dish washer. They paid him enough, together with his meals that he was soon able to pay for a room and while washing dishes and catching up on his food he bought a paper and in the want ads, the Great Western Fuse Company was looking for a secretary, Lewis made application for the job and got the job.



As it happened, the Great Western Fuse Company was composed of two men. I forget their names; I did know their names. One of them had been a gambler, the other one had been an inventor and invented some sort of electric fuses. The two of them had gotten together for the purposes of producing them (fuses) and they had just started their business when Lewis made application for the job as secretary. Of course, as secretary it soon became his duty to learn all about fuses, the making, testing and sale of them. That is how your uncle Lewis got into the manufacture and sale of fuses. After a while we received mail from him after a week or ten days had elapsed. We were highly pleased that he wrote to us and told us where he was, and he was well. I don't believe he earned very much, but you will be interested to know that Lewis sent home to Mother and Dad a good portion of his pay. I don't recall how much he sent, but I do recall that it was as much as $7 or $8 per week and at that time it was an awful big help. Dad and Mother, although they worked hard, Dad's work was fairly menial, his pay was low, his family was large, and from that point on they learned to depend on the contributions which Lewis made. Even so, Lewis would bring home fruit for canning, bring home the necessary Ball jars that were used for the canning of the fruit and you must remember your Uncle Lewis was actually part of the family mainstay when he was yet a boy.

About this time the United Mine Workers were quite active. The miners had been for the most part organized. The economy of the day did not permit the selling of coal at a very high price.

The miners were paid little enough and John L. Lewis and his union was becoming quite active and violent in their strikes and demands for pay. I recall the local union that was located at Wendel was number 2999. They had frequent meetings, the union had a bugler and when they had a meeting the bugler would start on one end of town and walk down the tracks blowing his horn toward the houses and blow the Army tune to assemble the men. Father belonged to the union but wasn't very active in it. In fact he thought that the pay they were paying was fairly adequate and would gladly have worked for what the coal company was offering. In any event violence was developing within the community. The coal company was evicting from their houses the leaders of the union. The union either bought or rented some land on the south end of town and built what were known as barracks on the land. Now the name barracks was actually a misnomer. The only thing the United Mine Workers built was a shed that looked like a rectangular sheep shed. Each miner and his family had two rooms. The sheds had a black-topped roof with a slight slope for the draining off of water, two by fours and on the two by fours were placed tongue and grooved pine. Now this was poor shelter because in the summer time it would get unduly hot. In the winter time there was very little protection against the cold. Dad refused to have his family moved into the United Mine Workers barracks, although many of the families we knew moved into the barracks. In fact, many of my playmates subsequently moved into the barracks. We moved away. That was how dad solved his problem. He walked to Rosemont; that was about 2 ½ miles beyond Flemington on the B&O railroad and there obtained employment and came back and made arrangements to move his family to Rosemont.

My part of the moving consisted of driving the cows, two of them, from Wendel to Flemington to Rosemont over the highway. This was not a hard job particularly, but you can imagine what it would be like to start a boy of 13 with two cows on a hike of about 7 miles. The balance of dad's furniture was loaded on some trucks and the trucks, 2 in number, took the furniture to Rosemont. When I left the school in Wendel I was in the 7th grade. When I went to Rosemont I enrolled in the 8th grade. It was about the middle of the year. I thought that I was bright enough that I could do the work and I ended up just about able to do that. We went to Rosemont about October, had occasion to be in class until the next spring. At that time there was a practice that the 8th graders had to pass, a test before they could go to high school. They had to pass with a mark of 70 on the various courses. I was very poor at spelling and missed out on spelling and ended up with a grade about one tenth below the passing grade. I concluded that could not keep me from going to high school, although I had not really passed the test, where upon I walked to Flemington and talked to the principal of the high school and told him what my situation was and asked him if then I could enroll in high school. I was informed that I could, but that I after attending high school I would have to go back and repeat the 8th grade examination to make certain I passed it. I would tell you about some of my experiences

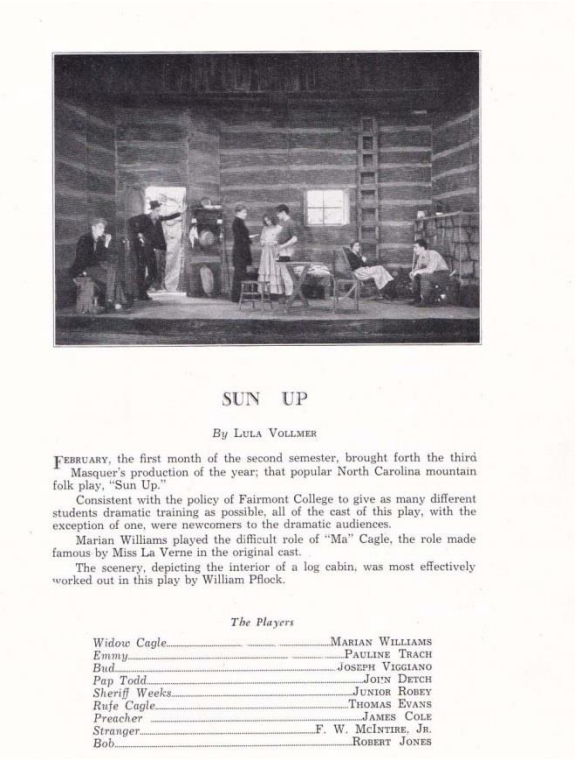
in the graded school at Rosemont and what was then the high school at Flemington. I want to tell you first about the community of Rosemont. Rosemont was a mining community somewhat about the size of Wendel, maybe a little bit smaller. The difference was the coal company had a mine up high on the mountain and the coal was dropped down along a large incline to a tipple below. The incline was geared so that it would drop two loaded cars down held by a wire and cable and a drum and the loaded cars would pull two empty cars back up the hill. Father didn't like the mine because the roof was bad. I don't know what kind of roof it had other than hard sandstone. It must have been a shale or slate that was given to cracking. In any event, quite a number of miners were injured in the mine from slate falling and while we lived there one or two were killed. This was a particularly shocking thing when one is injured or killed because they brought the miner out by car to the top of the incline and then on stretchers, then have 4 miners carrying the injured or dead miner down the hill. When this was done, the whole community could see the miner being brought down the hill and there was particularly greater anguish and greater sorrow when one learned who the particular injured miner was. The whole community was assembled down in the valley around the company store watching them bring the miner down. Unfortunately dad was included in that on one occasion. There was a slate fall and dad was injured in the slate fall. He wasn't injured permanently, but he was injured and brought down the hill. We suffered the anguish of not knowing how serious it was, but after a few days of rest and medical treatment he went back to work, but he didn't like the work and he didn't like the mine and it wasn't long after that until he found an occasion to leave also. At that time, and you can hardly believe this, but it is a fact, there was much trouble between the miners and the coal operators and there was known what was called the mine wars. The coal company had a lookout tower placed up on top of the mountain above the tipple and above the incline that I mentioned. On top of the tower was located a high-powered spotlight and that spotlight was constantly kept on the tipple and on the bridge that went over the West Fork River. Now when any of us left the house, opening the door at night, it would leave a flash of night because there was generally light in the house and immediately the spotlight would pick you up and though we were children and though we may have been on our way to a school function, the spotlight being operated by the police officers or the Baldwin thugs as the miners called them, kept the spotlight on us until we got passed the bridge. When we were returning they spotted us and kept the spotlight on us until we crossed the bridge. It was dangerous for anyone to go near the tipple at night. These Baldwin police in these lookout towers were armed with high-powered rifles and occasionally you could hear shots go off as a way of warning you to keep away from the tipple. We didn't like that of course. There were some miners who were moved out of their homes--those who were adamant about their stand with the United Mine Workers. Some of these boys attended school, they lived in the barracks. There was much ill feeling--ill will from the people who worked about the mines and those who were on strike. Dad was one who was working. He was unpopular with the miners and the family of the miners who were living in the barracks and those who were on strike.

Dad was injured about the mines while he worked at Wendel, and I want to tell you about some idea of the medical treatment . He had injured his hand by cutting the web between his thumb and index finger. The cut was fairly deep but he continued working. This cut was infected, on his left hand, and he finally developed what they call blood poisoning. It was necessary that he

go to the hospital and at that time the state had a hospital for miners. It was located on the east side of Fairmont, and one got to Fairmont by catching the train at Simpson, going to Clarksburg. From Clarksburg walking over to the streetcar station and getting on a streetcar which then traveled from Clarksburg to Fairmont. Then from the west side of Fairmont, one walked or got a cab, and in this instance, I think dad walked from the streetcar stop on the west side across the Monongahela River to the hospital over on the east side. He was in the hospital for 2 or 3 weeks. One day mother got an urgent message that said she should come to the hospital. Mother could not speak English so she took me along for the purposes of interpreting and I did the interpreting. We traveled the route I was telling you about, arrived at the hospital. A couple of the doctors assembled and were telling me what I should tell dad and mother. The information I was given was that dad had blood poisoning, that his middle finger was abscessed badly, in fact they may have said gangrene had set in the way it was completely yellowed in a decayed state. Dad's left arm looked like a heavy round sausage, heavily swollen to a point above the elbow. The doctors said they could not treat his arm, that it was necessary that his arm be amputated at the elbow, and he wanted me to explain that to my dad and mother so that they would know what they had to do. Of course, I was shocked at the information of this kind, tears rolling down my eyes. I was trying to tell dad and mother what the doctors had said. Dad listened very patiently, then finally he said, "Son, you tell the good doctors what I'm telling you". He said "You tell them that I am a working man and I have a large family, that if they cut off my arm I would never be able to provide for my family and for this reason and for this reason alone, they do not have permission under any circumstances to cut off my left arm. You tell them they have permission to do whatever they think is necessary to treat my arm to make it well and I will rely on their good judgment for that, but under no circumstances, whether I'm conscious or unconscious, would they have permission to cut off my left arm". After a while I was able to explain this to the doctors, and of course the doctors exploded and talked about the damn Hunkie who didn't know what he was doing. Anyway I told them that was what my dad said. Thereupon the doctors started to treat the arm. They punctured the swollen places, they scraped the bad place on the index finger I was telling you about, and you will be interested to know that about 3 weeks later Dad was home. The arm had pretty much recovered. He rested at home for about one week. He bound up the end of his finger and at the end of about 4 weeks from the time he had the conversation with the doctors, he was back at work. Father's arm completely recovered except for the finger that was scraped and the only permanent injury he had to this finger was that one joint became fused so that he could not bend the finger at the knuckle.

There were uncomplimentary names that were given to people of foreign birth at that time. I don't hear them anymore. They were quite commonplace in the mining communities when I was a boy. One was sometimes referred to as a greenhorn and newcomers often described each other as greenhorns. The ones that just recently had come, being a bit more greener than the others. The other names were dagos, an uncomplimentary term generally applied to Italians. They often called people of foreign birth and foreign speaking people Hunks or Wops. I don't recall exactly what they mean or what the meaning was, other than the names being generally uncomplimentary, on many occasions the provocation for a fist fight or sometimes violence.

At Rosemont and at the school, there was a principal by the name of Mr. Andrews and at that time it was prevalent, I'm not saying it was customary, for people to engage in debates.



SUN UP

By Lula Vollmer

February, the first month of the second semester, brought forth the third Masquer's production of the year; that popular North Carolina mountain folk play, "Sun Up."

Consistent with the policy of Fairmont College to give as many different students dramatic training as possible, all of the cast of this play, with the exception of one, were newcomers to the dramatic audiences.

Marian Williams played the difficult role of "Ma" Cagle, the role made famous by Miss La Verne in the original cast.

The scenery, depicting the interior of a log cabin, was most effectively worked out in this play by William Pflock.

*The Players*

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| *Widow Cagle* | Marian Williams |
| *Emmy* | Pauline Trach |
| *Bud* | Joseph Viggiano |
| *Pap Todd* | John Detch |
| *Sheriff Weeks* | Junior Robey |
| *Rufe Cagle* | Thomas Evans |
| *Preacher* | James Cole |
| *Stranger* | F. W. McIntire, Jr. |
| *Bob* | Robert Jones |

1930 Fairmont State Teachers College Yearbook, John Detch on left as Pap Todd

Debating was one of the means of entertainment, and the debaters often times waxed oratorical. Mr. Andrews was one of the debaters, and debated quite a number of subjects. He would invite people down from Clarksburg. Rush Holt's grandfather, Matt Holt, was also one of the debaters who went all over the country for the purposes of expounding his views on slight or no invitation or provocation. Anyway, Mr. Andrews debated a good bit, the community was invited. The community people, particularly those who had children in school generally attended because that was one of the few social occasions in the community. One evening the crowd assembled and the debater who was to debate against Mr. Andrews that night failed to appear. I don't know why; he was either ill or his transportation failed, anyway in the crowd there was considerable disappointment. Mr. Andrews asked me if I would like to engage in a debate with him with probably not more than 5 or 10 minutes preparation. Foolishly, or maybe not so foolishly, I agreed I would enter into the debate with him. It is my recollection that after about 10 minutes, I was able to make a 10 to 15 minute talk expounding amateurish views on whatever the subject matter was at the time. That was my introduction to public speaking. It was after that I thought it was quite interesting to engage in public debate and to engage in plays and matters of that kind. I liked it and I dare say it was that that stemmed my desire to practice law.

I enrolled in the high school in Flemington; it was in fact a junior college at one time. The building was built as a college. I'm not sure it was built by private individuals or public entities such as the Board of Education, but in any event, it was a very old building. My recollection was that they had 4 years of high school. The rooms were all they had. They had a place to play basketball but it was out on the grounds and the grounds were improved with cinders with 2 baskets on either side in the usual manner held up by posts. I didn't attend there more than, I believe for 6 weeks, but during that 6 weeks it was necessary that I ride the berm of the railroad track from Rosemont

to Flemington which was about 2 ½ miles. I didn't know how I was able to get to high school in the winter time when it was particularly raining and when there was heavy snow. That problem I didn't have to solve because after I attended school there for 5 or 6 weeks, Dad had made up his mind that he was going to quit the mines at Rosemont and go elsewhere he thought the mines might be safer. It was interesting, I had a bicycle and I wasn't too much concerned about rain. I could put my books under my raincoat. I had a heavy raincoat with a heavy rain cap and it didn't make any difference how much it rained. I was reasonably secure from being wet except for pant legs and my shoes, but in any event getting wet, getting your pant legs and shoes wet was commonplace in that day. Even if you walked you generally got your pant legs and shoes wet, and it wasn't unusual for kids to hover around a stove or heater for an hour or two trying to dry out their clothes while school was going on. Anyway I attended the high school at Flemington for 6 weeks then we moved to Rivesville. There wasn't too much else that occurred that was interesting at Rosemont. I obtained another job there in the summer. There was a man who for some reason was going to build, actually he was putting in some rock across the West Fork River, and I had a job. I had to roll up my pant legs. I believe I was either barefoot or had sneakers on. The waters came up to my knees, and my job was to push and snake various sized rocks into the West Fork River on the edge of where the road extended across the channel of the West Fork. I worked there for probably 2 or 3 weeks. When we finally got the job done I then left. I mention this because at that time I was a freshman in high school and by that time I had already picked berries, carried them to Clarksburg and sold them. I sold vegetables throughout Wendel, sold chicken throughout Wendel, delivered milk throughout Wendel, collected the money for them, whenever we could collect the money for them, and the sale was being made for money. I had the job out on U.S. Route 50, I had already been in the mines and learned how to blast coal, and I spent the 3 weeks working on the road at Rosemont. At that point we moved to Rivesville, chickens , pigs, cattle and all, and when we got there we found the town ordinances prevented and prohibited the keeping of the pigs and the chickens in the town so we had to sell them immediately upon arrival because Dad had not made inquiry about that. In fact he had never lived in a town at that time that had any prohibition against it, so we were able to find pasture for the cows and we drove the cows out to the pasture and sold the pigs and the chickens. When we arrived at Rivesville I enrolled as a freshman in the high school.

I then grew to adulthood at Rivesville. The high school was about 4 rooms built around a gymnasium near the highway and near the street car line. It is my recollection that having spent 6 weeks in Flemington, I missed about 6 weeks at Rivesville. I enrolled, played some basketball on the gym, played some volleyball when that was in order, and during the Christmas vacation the high school building burnt down. Father worked at what was known as the Parker Run Mine. We lived on the side of Rivesville that was known as Greentown. The reason for the name was the coal company had purchased some green paint and painted all the houses an ugly color of green so the whole community was green. From that time on even though the color of the houses had changed the name of the community was still Greentown. Our high school was moved into the auditorium of the graded school. The graded school had an auditorium, well it was just an auditorium room and a stage and our entire high school was moved into this area. I don't want to leave the impression that it was a particularly big high school because it wasn't. They took canvas, they strung some pipe, the pipe was suspended

from the ceiling from wires. They took canvas and hooks, and extended the canvas the full length of the room, from wall to wall. You can imagine what that would be like to have high school for one year under those circumstances. You could hear not only everything that went on in your classroom but you could hear what was being said in all the other classrooms. Back in those days they had slot machines. The slot machines took nickel coins, and with the nickel coin the slot machine would spew out a package of cheap mints. The boys would get 4 or 5 packages of mints, would sit in class and you could tell when the teacher's attention was diverted, on either side of the canvas, because the boys would sit looking at their books but with a cheap mint on top of their thumb, and when the teacher was not looking, pressure would be applied to the thumb to propel the mint over the canvas over into the other classroom, and of course there were boys over on that side that would send the mints back when the teacher on that side attention had otherwise been diverted.

Rivesville High School gymnasium

One can tell there wasn't as much schooling under those circumstances as there had might have been. The Board of Education of the Paw Paw District, that being the district in which we were, then decided to build a high school building or a gymnasium up on the hill known as Highlawn. So the question arose as to whether, because of lack of funds, the Board of Education should build a high school or the gymnasium. For some reason they decided to build the gymnasium and not while I attended school, nor while any of my younger brothers and sisters who attended school, did they get the high school building ever finished. Now they built the gymnasium and the outside wall were very good walls but the inside walls were temporary walls that were almost paper thin. By leaning against the walls you could push it either way by putting your hand against it, it could be pushed either way. For the most part there was little improvement over the canvas because when the class discussion was going on one room, particularly if there was any loud talking on the other side you could hear what was being said on both sides of the wall and sometimes even farther away. The entire 4 years of high school that I attended was under those circumstances.

We had a basketball team and I went out for the team although I played very little and was not much of an athlete. President Joe Rogier of the Fairmont State Teachers College permitted the boys from the Rivesville High School to go up and use their gymnasium for purposes of practicing at times when the Teachers College was not using the gym. That generally meant that immediately after 4 o'clock all of the boys who were out for basketball would take off from Rivesville and ride the 2 ½ miles by street car or by automobile, if they could thumb rides, to the gymnasium and practice their basketball. There were times when the Teachers College

students did their practicing after 4 o'clock which they would phone and tell us then we would go up at 6:30 or 7 o'clock and practice in the evening time. During the entire 4 years we played the games they were played at the gym at Fairmont State Teachers College. In this manner it wasn't all a disadvantage because by this means I became acquainted with the Fairmont State Teachers College and it became a natural step to go from the small high school we attended with the circumstance I mentioned to the Fairmont State Teachers College. We did have a football field at Rivesville and such games as were played locally. I was not large enough or strong enough and possibly not brave enough to play football so I had no football experience. The high school, the second one that was built was located about a mile or a mile and a half from home and we walked both ways

END OF TAPE 4