



Interview with Sidney Gilmore, Jr.

July 26, 1995

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Wheat Croff (Ky.)

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Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University
Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life
in the Jim Crow South

Interview
with
SIDNEY GILMORE, Jr.
(DOB 6/26/31)

Wheat Croff, Kentucky
July 26, 1995
Alexander X. Byrd
Interviewer
[James Eaves also contributing]

Byrd: Mr. Eaves when it gets down to the stuff about the mines, you've just got to help me out because you know I don't know all the right questions.

Eaves: Okay.

Byrd: Thanks a lot for talking to us today. If you'd start off just by saying your whole name.

Gilmore: Sidney, S-i-d-n-e-y, Gilmore, Jr.

Byrd: And where were you born, Mr. Gilmore?

Gilmore: Wheat Croff.

Byrd: Wheat Croff, Kentucky. What county is that?

Gilmore: In Webster.

Byrd: And what's your birthday?

Gilmore: 6-26-31.

Byrd: You know what I noticed Mr. Eaves?

Eaves: What?

Byrd: Is all the men I ask their birthdate, they give me the numbers and all the women I ask, they give me the whole date. I don't know what this means. I don't know why that is. Well, Mr. Gilmore, can you tell me ... I'm real interested in sort of your growing up in Wheat Croff and how you ended up from Wheat Croff into the Army.

Gilmore: I went to school in Wheat Croff and when I finished the eighth grade, we moved to Earlington.

Byrd: And what'd you do in Earlington?

Gilmore: Well, I went to high school there.

Byrd: At Million?

Gilmore: Yeah, Genevieve.

Byrd: And where'd you go after Million?

Gilmore: Well, after Million, I went to work in the coal mine.

Started in the coal mine in 1950.

Byrd: Did you graduate from Million?

Gilmore: Yeah, graduated from Million in 1950. I got a girl pregnant so I had to get a job in the coal mine.

Byrd: I was just about to ask you why you have to get that job?

Gilmore: Yeah, I got a girl pregnant and go into the coal mine.

Byrd: Which mine did you go into?

Gilmore: Pleasant View.

Byrd: How'd you get that job?

Gilmore: Well, my daddy-in-law and daddy got a job for me out there.

Byrd: They had already been working there?

Gilmore: Yeah, they was working here.

Byrd: So, had your father been working in the mines while you were coming up?

Gilmore: Yeah. My father worked in mines all my life. Only place I ever knew him to work.

Byrd: Okay. So what'd you know about the mines before you

got in them?

Gilmore: Nothing. Just see people going. Well, I used to go around the mines when I was little, small. When the guys would get off work and bring their horses and things in, you know, we used to ride them to the stables, you know, so they could feed them.

Byrd: Okay. So about the time you got out of high school and went over there to Pleasant View, ...

Gilmore: Well, I delivered papers when I was going through high school.

Boyd: Okay.

Gilmore: I delivered the *Courier-Journal*.

Boyd: Okay. The Louisville paper. So what was it like? I mean, you knew your father worked in the mines but to just show up in the mines at 18.

Gilmore: Well, see, I always wanted go in the mines. When I was little, I used to get there around the house and play mines all the time. I had my own little mines I had done build under my house. Had my little lantern out like a coal mine. I'd get off from school out there and get out there and work all day in the mine, _____, and then come in in the evening and my mother used to have to bathe me. Yeah.

Boyd: Was it anything like you imagined once you showed up there?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Boyd: What was your first job in the mines?

Gilmore: I was a timber man.

Boyd: Okay. For those of us who have ... I know what a timber man is now but only because I just spoke to a man

Gilmore: I'm going to tell you something about that. The first day I worked in the mine, we had a big fall. And I didn't even

known the way how to get out of the mine. I got scared and I left the mine. And I asked a guy, a man named Uncle Bud Cox. He'd been working in the mine. He's a timber man. And he had a mule, he used to haul timber. And I didn't know how to get out.

So I asked him how to get out. And he told me to follow him. Because they told me to ride a belt and I didn't know what a belt was. And I hadn't been in the mine I guess about four hours. And I quit! And I went home. I stayed home about two days and wouldn't go back. Finally, my dad and them talked me into going back. I went back. When I went back, I said I got to do something better than this. So I timbered I guess for about five months. And I learned how to drive a shuttle car. And once I started driving that shuttle car, everything was all right then.

Eaves: It hauled that coal.

Gilmore: Yeah, a shuttle car is what you transfer coal to the belt so they can ...

Byrd: And the belt takes it up to the top?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: What's a loader then, Mr. Eaves?

Gilmore: That's what you load the shuttle car with. After they shoot the coal, drill it, shoot it, then the shuttle car picks it up and puts it on my car and I take it to the belt and the belt brings it on out.

Byrd: How many men ... Did you work with folks that you knew?

Gilmore: Oh yeah. Just about everybody I knew, all but the boss man. But you know, later on, I got to know him.

Byrd: Were there Blacks and Whites in the mines?

Gilmore: Yeah. The first man I started working with was a Black. His name was Clayborne Woodruff. Do you remember him? Crystal's daddy.

Eaves: Oh.

Gilmore: You probably don't remember him. Clayborne Woodrift. That's was Crystal's daddy. Crystal's a mine inspector now. You know him. I worked with him and Old Man Cotton. He was a White fellow. We all got along good.

Byrd: So folks tended to get along.

Gilmore: Yeah. I never had no trouble with race relations when I was in the coal mine.

Byrd: Was it any different in the mines than it was in the town?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: What was the difference for Blacks?

Gilmore: In the mines, you take the White fellows, you know, you get along better. But you catch them out in the store, and you know where we go to get our groceries, they'd be with their wives. They knew you and hardly say anything to you. But you

be in the mines, we got along good. I don't if they was afraid you were going to talk to their old lady or what. But the White fellow wouldn't hardly say nothing to you at the company store.

Byrd: What did you all say about that? Did you all talk amongs yourselves?

Gilmore: No. We'd just go on. If they didn't speak to us, we didn't speak to them. Just keep on going.

Byrd: You just noticed it. Did everyone do every kind of job down underneath, Whites and Blacks all did all kinds of jobs?

Gilmore: Oh yeah. You work with Whites. Some jobs, you know, Whites work by themselves.

Byrd: What kind of job would that have been?

Gilmore: Like a loader. If you're a White man be running a loader, you got to _____ on the loader, you know, pull

your cable and machine man. My daddy was a machine man. He had a White guy _____ for him.

Byrd: Well how long did you stay in the mines when you first worked there?

Gilmore: Well, now, I worked in the mine for about a year and a half the first time. And I got tired and moved to Detroit. And I was working at frozen food factory up there in Detroit, Michigan. And my mother passed away and we decided to bring her back to Hopkinsville to bury her. And after we brought her back to Hopkinsville, I didn't have no peoples up there in Detroit so I went back in the coal mine.

Byrd: Well, how'd you end up in Detroit?

Gilmore: I just got tired of working in the mine so I'd go up there with my mother.

Byrd: So you had people up there. That's how you go there.

Gilmore: Yeah, my mother. I moved up there with her. After

she passed away, I moved back here and went back in the mines.

Byrd: Was there any difference between living in the big old city Detroit and Hopkins County?

Gilmore: Yeah. Detroit was too fast for me. Yeah, you could get in trouble easy up in Michigan. But I worked most of the time. So I didn't get a chance to go. And I wasn't there long enough.

Byrd: Were there other folks up there that you knew from around here?

Gilmore: Well, yeah, but I can't think of their names. There was a lady up there we knew but I don't know her name. She had a business up there. She had a dry cleaning business. But I can't think of her name. It's been so long.

Byrd: But it wasn't like you all would just go up there and get started. There were other people that you knew from around here.

Gilmore: M-hm.

Byrd: Okay. So you worked about a year and a half and then you went up to the frozen foods. Then you came back down.

Gilmore: Yeah, came back here.

Byrd: Same mine?

Gilmore: No, I went to a mine called Slap House. We called it Slap House.

Eaves: Yeah, but that wasn't the name of it.

Gilmore: That wasn't the name of it. I can't think of it myself now.

Byrd: Do you know why they called it Slap House?

Gilmore: No, that's just a nickname. But it wasn't Slap House. That's what we all called it -- Slap House. That was a good mine too.

Byrd: Better than the ...

Gilmore: Yeah. Better than Pleasant View. Pleasant View had a lot of bad _____. We didn't have much back _____.

Byrd: Okay, so it was safer.

Gilmore: Yeah, to me it was. Haul more coal. Atkinson.

Eaves: Atkinson, yeah.

Gilmore: That's the name of it -- Atkinson. I knew I'd think of it in a minute. That's the name of it. Atkinson Coal Company. I left Pleasant View and went up there. Used to be the superintendent out to Pleasant View picked me to go with him to help him open up Atkinson.

Byrd: Okay. Was that still in the county? Still in Hopkins County?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: How long did you work out there?

Gilmore: Well, I worked there until 1955. That's when I was drafted in the Army.

Byrd: Any difference besides it being safer and just a better place to work? Was the coal mining still about the same?

Gilmore: No, it was about the same.

Byrd: Where'd you go after you got drafted?

Gilmore: Let me see, when I got drafted, I took Basic Training in Ft. Leonardwood, Missouri. I finished Basic. I came to Ft. Knox.

Byrd: Okay. So back to Kentucky.

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: What was the Army like in the beginning?

Gilmore: It was rough in the beginning but I made sergeant in the U.S. I called back here to see about how they was working.

They wasn't working but one or two days so I said, "Shit, since I made sergeant ..." I had two kids. I said, "Well, since I'm sergeant and I got two kids, they got an allotment going." So I just stayed in because I like to travel a lot. So I just stayed in the Army.

Byrd: Okay. So when you say they had allotment, they'd take part of your check

Gilmore: Yeah. They'd take part of my check and send it to my kids. I had me a place to sleep, clothes, three meals a day. Hospital, everything paid for. I said I'm going to stay in. So I stayed in.

Byrd: Was the Army any different than what you ... I mean, I'm sure the discipline was a lot different.

Gilmore: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. After I made sergeant, it got alright for me then.

Byrd: It's got to be all right when you got some stripes.

Gilmore: Yeah, it got better.

Byrd: Well, what kind of work did you do in the Army?

Gilmore: Well, when I first went in, I was a tank mechanic.

Byrd: Would you characterize the kind of race relations in the Army any different than working in the coal mines?

Gilmore: Yeah, it was a lot different. We had guys come from big cities, you know, you had a little rank, they didn't want you to tell them anything. You know, the White guys. But, you know, as you go along, by you being in the Army, they couldn't be too hard on you because they would get punished, you know.

Byrd: How'd you deal with that? Did you ever have to deal with folks trying to buck you because ...

Gilmore: Yeah, I had to deal with it. Well, sometimes I'd come in and if the guy didn't make up his bed ... I mean, the ones that give me a lot of trouble when they come in at lunch time to eat or something, I'd go in and tear the bed up. Then when lunch time's over, when they'd take a fifteen minute break, they'd have to go in and make their bed. And they'd come to me and want to know why the bed's always tore up. I wouldn't tell them but they finally found out. And they said, "Well, we better quit picking on sarg."

Byrd: So you're talking about privates and folks just out of basic?

Gilmore: Yeah, just out of basic. Yeah.

Byrd: How about your rank superiors?

Gilmore: No, I didn't have no trouble with them. No.

Byrd: How many places did you see? You said you like to travel.

Gilmore: When I left Ft. Knox, I went to Germany. I stayed in Germany about I guess three years. I came back to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. And I was stationed in Mannheim, Germany. I was playing on a German baseball team. They had baseball in just about every country over in Italy, Belgium and all those places. But they didn't have baseball in Germany. And they had two German guys come to America and they played baseball. And they came back to Germany and started baseball. They come around to each unit, you know, get a couple of guys to help them, you know, that know baseball. So I was picked -- me and another guy. And they asked me did I want to play for them. So I told them yeah. And the reason I got to play for them is my battalion commander married one of the German guy's sister. So he give me a break to play with them. So I played with them for three years when I was in Germany. And then I came back, that's when I came back to Aberdeen Proving Ground. I was at Aberdeen Proving Ground for I guess about six months. I got orders to go back to Germany, right back at Mannheim, right back on the same baseball team and I played three more years with them. Same team.

Byrd: The Army was just moving you around for baseball.

Gilmore: Yeah, but the onliest reason I got to ... all this happened because the battalion commander was married to these two brothers' sister, which the last name was Helmut. That's all I know. That's a German name. I played with them for three more years. Then when I come back this time from over there, I came to Ft. Riley, Kansas. And I stayed in Ft. Riley and then I was transferred to Washington.

Byrd: And that's your whole ...

Gilmore: No. Washington, then I went back to Germany. After I came back from Germany this time to Utah. It was too _____ Utah. I didn't like it there and I volunteered for Viet Nam.

Byrd: What year did you go over?

Gilmore: I went over I believe it was '68.

Byrd: How many tours did you do?

Gilmore: I stayed in Viet Nam two and a half years. Then I

came back to Ft. Campbell. I was a drill sergeant at Ft. Campbell. In 1971, they cut the basic training out at Ft. Campbell and then I left there and went to Ft. Benning, Georgia.

And when I got to Ft. Benning, Georgia, I was in charge of Project Transition. They started a school, when they started putting G.I.s out of the Army, they would call themselves setting up a school to teach them some kind of training that they could do when they get out.

Byrd: Okay. That was for when they started down-sizing?

Gilmore: Yeah. You know, when it was time for them to get out of the Army, they started teaching them, letting them go to school so they could teach some kind of trade what they could do when they get out of the Army. But it didn't last for about two and a half years. So they stopped it. Then I went back to my old outfit as a supply sergeant. And that's what I retired as, a supply sergeant. Came back to Madisonville in 1975.

Byrd: From there you went back

Gilmore: and then back in the coal mine. In 1975, went back to the coal mine.

Byrd: I'm going to try and take you back to Wheatcroft for a little while. Just have you tell me what kind of place that was to grow up.

Gilmore: Then, I was so young, it was all right.

Byrd: You didn't have much time?

Gilmore: No. We had a lot of playing, you know, stuff to do. I remember when we was small, how we used to steal apples and watermelon. Swim.

Byrd: Did you have to work around the house when you were youngsters?

Gilmore: No, I didn't have much work. Not that I knows of. Most of the time we was out playing.

Boyd: How long did you stay in Wheatcroft?

Gilmore: I was born in Wheatcroft. Yeah, but I left Wheatcroft

when I was in the eighth grade. Let's see, I finished in '50 so I went to school four years in Earlich. Let's see, '50 -- figure from '50 was about the time I left Wheatcroft.

Eaves: Well, Wheatcroft was kind of a mining town.

Gilmore: Yeah, it was a mining town. You know, usually when a mine closed down, the people just take off. And then it got so that the company, it got so they started selling the houses. That's the way they kept peoples in these mining towns. Back then, when a mining town would go down, they'd just move them. And see now, like, you know, up in the years, they started selling the peoples that work for the coal mine the houses.

Byrd: Sell the miners houses?

Gilmore: Yeah, sell the miners houses real cheap.

Eaves: Yeah, real cheap. Didn't have no more use for them. See, there wasn't no work.

Gilmore: Wasn't no work. So they just, now they got to start

selling the houses. By going to Earlich, see, instead of that town going down, they just sold it ... the miners the houses. You could buy a three room houses, you could get it for about eleven or twelve hundred dollars.

Eaves: They're most of them little boxed houses, you know.

Gilmore: Shotgun houses or something.

Eaves: Or shotgun, whatever you want to call it. Three rooms, you know, in a row. Most of them were coal miners.

Byrd: Would folks pretty much leave the ... Would folks living in the mining houses, would they leave the houses as they were? Or did they improve upon them? Or they were just living in them?

Gilmore: No. They probably didn't; just like they was.

Eaves: Well, I tell you, some of the houses that they ... See, now, you must remember a company's out to make money. If a house is running down, _____. People would get wood off

of them houses, and burn it. And if they caught you, you paid for it. They might charge you for the whole house.

Byrd: So if no one was living in this house and it was going down, sometimes folks would come and get wood off of it?

Eaves: M-hm.

Byrd: But you better not get caught.

Gilmore: No. They make you pay for the whole house.

Eaves: That's a shame. But they could do what they wanted to do with it. Wasn't much you could do about it.

Byrd: Did the company always have to come out ahead or on top or was there ever any times when the coal miners and the folks living in the mining town made a little leeway against the company?

Eaves: Well, I tell you, see, if you're fighting a man and he got a double barrel shotgun and you ain't got nothing, so you

know who's going to come out ahead.

Byrd: Well, nineteen times out of twenty! But sometimes don't the shotgun jamb or something?!

Eaves: Yeah, but you know what kind of chance you got. Slim or none.

Byrd: You was going to say something, Mr. Gilmore, to that.

Gilmore: Oh, I was going to say about the same thing.

Byrd: So you all didn't much come out on top too much, not against the company?

Gilmore: No. The only way you come out against the company ... well, you didn't come out then. You get hurt, you might gain a little bit. But you still ain't come out. See that's what happened to me. See, now, I got hurt in the mine in '79. And I haven't worked since then. And it took me from '79 to '82 to get my compensation. But now I got it and I've got a good life. See, by me retiring from the Army, see I got an Army check in

retirement. By me being hurt in the mine, I'm living a good life now. I still have trouble with my back but I'm living a good life now.

Byrd: But back then, you got hurt in the mines or something, if you had gotten hurt in the mines in '51 or '52 ...

Gilmore: Well, you wouldn't have got as much then as you do now. See, back when I started in '50, it was a non-union mine. And now it's a union. And that's a lot of difference in the mine. Back when I was working, it was non-union. Things was different when the mines become union. A man could take your job back in them days.

Byrd: That was one of the ...

Gilmore: Yeah. See, like I run the shuttle car. If a man come in the mine, back in them days, he was a better shuttle car driver than I was, he could take my job. But now, union -- only way he gets your job is you're getting ready to get off of it and then he'd have to bid for your job. Back in them days, he'd take your job.

Byrd: Did he always have to be a better shuttle car driver than you were?

Gilmore: Yeah. Back in them days.

Byrd: Or could a worse shuttle car driver get it?

Gilmore: Yeah, that's back in the union, see. But now since the union, you know, they can't take your job. And back then, we'd take a man say like Mr. Eaves was the loader runner. That's back in the non-union. If I wanted to help him, it wouldn't be nothing said. But now, since they gone union, and Mr. Eaves the loader runner, and I've driving a shuttle car, and I get off my shuttle car to go help Mr. Eaves on his load, they call you a scab. They think now, a union man now, all he do is drive a shuttle car. He ain't supposed to do nothing else. So you ain't got no what you call "buddy-buddy" system like it were when I come up.

Byrd: So you all would help each other?

Gilmore: Yeah. When I come up in the mine, we'd help each other. If I see Mr. Eaves doing something, he'd be straining, I'd go and help him. You know, buddy-buddy system. But nowadays, shoot! Them guys see you doing something like that, they'd be over in the corner, "Hey! Look at him!" Instead of getting off and help him. If you got off and help him, they'd call you scab, wouldn't they, Mr. Eaves?

Eaves: Yeah, they will.

Gilmore: Call you a scab in a minute.

Eaves: A lot of them would do something to you.

Eaves: Yeah, they do something to you. M-hm. Sure do. If you get off and go with a buddy in that mine -- shoot! They call you scab. I get to fighting now because he get all his buddies and then you get out of the bathroom and the guys talking about "You ain't nothing but a scab! You're down helping your other buddies." That's just the way the old guys was. The young guys, they don't ... One job now.

Eaves: I might add the non-union was pretty powerful back in those days. And why it went union, the UMWA bought every mine down in the _____. When they bought the mines, they went union. Everything in West Kentucky went union. That's how the union come into effect in West Kentucky. There were a few scattered mines that were union but most everything from West _____ County all up to M_____ County. That's up on the other side of Muellenberg. _____ Now Muellenberg was a pretty strong union mine up there. See, down here, your law enforcement was against organized labor. You couldn't get by them. Because if you picket, the county judge and sheriff would stop you. It wouldn't be allowed but two men down there to picket. The two men down there, they're like to ... they're liable to beat the hell out of you, do anything. I remember what the turning point was it about, oh, I guess 2,000 people out of West Virginia, Muellenberg, Ohio, come down here and picket the mines _____. And they stopped them. Stopped the whole production. Course when everybody went back home, they started right back up again. You remember that, don't you?

Gilmore: No, I was in the Army then. I don't remember all that because I was in the Army at that time. So when I left and went

to coal mining ... when I was here, it wasn't but one mine around here and that was West Kentucky Coal Company. And see, they went union a year before I went in the Army. I believe it was 1954.

Eaves: '54 or '55, somewhere along in there.

Gilmore: Because I went in the Army in '55. And they were just beginning to go union. I stayed in the Army 20 years and 6 months. So when I come back, everything was organized as a union.

Eaves: And all the old miners that worked West Kentucky, they put them in unions. Some of them _____. They never worked in a union mine before. They wanted them in the union _____.

Gilmore: Yeah. A union mine was better than your scab because your benefits was better. You got more benefits. Your wife.

Eaves: That hospitalization means a whole lot.

Gilmore: Sure do.

Eaves: Because that hospitalization now ... I paid \$5.00 when I get a prescription filled until up to \$50.00. When I pay \$50.00, then all my medicine is free. And if you go to the hospital ... As many times as I've been in the hospital, I've never paid a penny.

Byrd: And all that's union benefits?

Eaves: That's union.

Byrd: Well, when you were first coming up into the mines, how did you do all those things that Mr. Eaves just talked about that now the union helps take care of. You said your wife was pregnant. How would you -- you just pay cash for all of that? How'd you get by?

Gilmore: When I come up, my wife had two kids and I ain't never know her to go to the hospital. The doctor'd always come to the house.

Byrd: Okay. Was this a company doctor?

Gilmore: Yeah. The company doctor. He used to come to the house. What was that doctor's name? I forget his name now. It was Dr. Claiborne used to come. Black doctor. And peoples working the mines, he used to come and I guess he'd just come and cut the baby's naval string or something. Because you had the babies at home.

Eaves: Back in those days, they had always some women in the neighborhood to deliver babies. I forget what did they call them.

Gilmore: Midwife or something like that.

Eaves: Yeah, midwife.

Gilmore: Yeah, and they'd come and help the others have a baby.

You take some of the people had thirteen and fourteen babies and mostly when I come up, that was comical to me. Yeah, one family have twelve, thirteen kids. But I just lucky; my mother just had two! But she wasn't around no coal mining town all her

life.

Byrd: So the company had a doctor ... kind of did your health care.

Gilmore: Yeah. Back in them days, people didn't go to the hospital.

Byrd: And you said the company doctor was a Black doctor.

Gilmore: Well, yeah, sometimes. Dr. Claiborne was Black, the only Black doctor around at that time. The rest of them were White. Doc Collins was our doctor down at Wheatcroft. He was a White doctor. That's his name--Dr. Collins.

Eaves: A lot of them go to Hopkinsville and they had two Black doctors ... Dr. Ford and Dr. Brooks.

Gilmore: Yeah. Because my mother got sick in Wheatcroft and we took her all the way to Hopkinsville so Dr. Brooks could take care of her.

Byrd: Folks kind of knew where the doctors

Gilmore: Well, see, she was from up around that way. So we took her up there.

Byrd: What things did the company either provide or pretend to provide before the days that the union came, that took care of?

Gilmore: Well, back in them days, they had a company store. I guess you heard that record.

Eaves: Owe my soul to the company store.

Gilmore: Yeah, owe my soul to the company store. That was true!

Byrd: Working 15 hours a day.

Gilmore: Yeah, now that was true. You know, I worked in the coal mine back then, I guess, well, I'd say I had about four years in the coal mine all together. I never did know when pay

day come. And I'm going to tell the truth. I didn't know when pay day come. Everyday was pay day to me. Because we could go to the company store ... You might think I'm telling tales but it's true. Ned probably would have told you the same thing. But you could go to the company store and get a ten dollar book or whatever you could get. If you were a good worker, you could get you a ten dollar book every day. Because see, I was a good worker. See, now we were working one or two days but I'd work ... I'd get about three days, four days a week because I'd work over time. I'd work my job and come out in the evening and somebody didn't show up, I'd go on and work again. So I could get money. But we used to get ten dollars or twenty dollars every day. You could get a ten dollar book and sell it for eight fifty. Got guys around the store buying it from you. I never was broke. And then, my first car I got, I found a white guy needed a washing machine. So I bought him a brand new washing machine and he traded the car for the washing machine. But I bought it through the company store. You could get anything you wanted back ...

Byrd: He wasn't a miner?

Gilmore: No. He wasn't a miner. That's the way they do. They'd buy them books and see, the people that wasn't working in the mines, them guys was buying them books. They'd make some money off of it. See, we'd sell them for eight fifty, which we'd lose, you know, lose about two dollars and a half. So they'd sell them and make them a little more money.

Byrd: If you didn't sell the books, they were for use in the store?

Gilmore: Oh yeah. That's what I say. You could go to that company store and get anything you wanted. But they took care of the men. You know, you'd go up to the store and get your food. Your house.

Eaves: You could always tell a guy from West Kentucky by the clothes he wore. They had some of the best clothes in there.

Gilmore: Sharp. Guys stayed sharp. Yeah, them Dobb hats, they got them. Shoes. Yeah, boy.

Eaves: Blue serge suit or any kind of suit you want, if they

didn't have it, they'd

Gilmore: They'd get it for you. And if you'd go up the store and see a washing machine or something they didn't have, they'd tell you to come around and they'd get it for you. Car. They'd get you a car.

Eaves: I'd like to add one thing. See, when I built my garage where my cars is now -- You saw my garage. I went over _____ build a garage. He said, well you get the lumber company and get out there _____ Tell them to send me the bill. I got all the material I wanted to build my garage.

Byrd: So there was a convenience to it.

Eaves: It was convenient.

Gilmore: And see, back in them days, the town was dry. You konw, you couldn't drink nothing. And we used to go a little old town called Madison or Dawson Springs and get drunk and be headed back home. And the police would pick us up and put us in jail for drunk. Or transporting. Go get us some beer and bring

it back up, they'd get you for transporting beer from a wet town into a dry town. The police would put you in jail. And all you had to do was get up the next morning and call the company store. Tell Mr. Chris, "I'm in jail." And he'd call up there and tell the man to let you out. And you'd come on out and then you'd go to work and pay your fine. You know what? You could go up there and get anything you want. They take payment out of how you work. They didn't set no fifty dollars or hundred dollars a month. If you worked, they'd take out five dollars, ten dollars. Just so you make some kind of payment. Yeah, they were pretty good to you. But now if you didn't work now, you couldn't get nothing. No. What do you call that woman up there, we call her "Yo Black". Oh shoot. Victor. Yeah. And she looked like ... she kept us down. That was her job. She kept us down. If she see you coming, if you didn't work, you started shaking your head. But with a man named Chris, you can get anything you want from him. Yeah. We used to go up there and wait 'til lunchtime, if we couldn't get nothing. And as long as Miss Jo Black Victor, as long as she was in there, them guys would stand around over there and talk. As soon as she'd go to lunch, there they come. And Mr. Chris used to laugh. But he'd let you have anything. he didn't care because he knowed

they going to work. They're going to get it anyway.

Eaves: Yeah, he'd let you have it.

Gilmore: Yeah, he'd let you have anything. I'm going to tell you what got me started. I was married. I was living in a little old house, a little small house. But it was a fellow that came to Earlington and he got married to Miss Essie. Do you remember Miss Essie, Eaves? I never did know that man's name. He married her and worked in the mine.

Eaves: I remember his name but I can't think of it.

Gilmore: I can't think of it but Miss Essie Eaves' husband and he got ready to leave. He had a car, a house and a house full of furniture. So he decided he was going to leave Miss Essie. So he went up to the store and told Chris that he was getting ready to leave, get rid of his house. So I was a good worker and Mr. Chris called me and asked me, know I hadn't been long got married. Asked me did I want a house. I bought the house, the car, the furniture. Didn't pay nothing down! Just Mr. Chris called me up and asked me did I want a house, car and

furniture. And I told him yeah. And I signed my name on a piece of paper. The next day I moved in. Bought the house and all, that car.

Byrd: Did you know by the time that you went into the Army that all that was taken care of? How'd you know when you were finished?

Gilmore: When I went into the Army, I turned everything over to my brother-in-law. I let him have the house, the car. I don't know what he done with that.

Byrd: You didn't have to worry about any of the payments?

Gilmore: No. I just did it because he was working in the mines. Mr. Chris knowed that I just let him have it.

Eaves: ... they's family was all close together.

Gilmore: M-hm. See, when I went into the Army, I couldn't have paid for nothing. I wasn't getting but \$78 a month. I mean, that \$78, by the time I took some out for my kids, I think I was

drawing about \$35, \$40 a month. I was smoking. By the time I smoked and buy me some cigarettes, which the Army didn't give you that, and go buy me some beer, I was broke! But now as far as clothes, and food and a place to sleep, by me being in the Army, I had that. That's one reason I stayed in. And all my medical and everything was taken care of. My wife, my kids. And see, when I was in the Army, if my kids got sick, yeah, take them to the Army base. Or you could take them over here to the medical center and the Army would take care of it. Yeah, that's one reason I stayed in. I was having trouble with my wife too. I'm trying to go up here and get me some money, after we separate, I'm trying to get me some money to have a ball. She's trying to get money for the kids clothes. So I was in between.

Byrd: That was when they could get that money.

Eaves: They could get it all.

Gilmore: Yeah. We'd be working. You come in, them women had gone up there and got what they want. And they let them have it too. Then you go up there and got to get something, "Well, your wife got this today." Well, you have trouble then. You better

make sure your buddy got some money. Back in them days, it was good to have a buddy that wasn't married, you know. Yeah.

Byrd: ... she was in the Army, you needed a friend who was single.

Gilmore: Oh yes. I mean in the coal mine. If a man's single, he can get some little money. You and him are tight.

Byrd: Oh, so you was talking about the coal mines. That the wife could come up and get your money from the coal mines.

Gilmore: Oh yeah!

Byrd: I thought you was talking about the Army!

Gilmore: No! They didn't get your money from the Army. No, you make out your money to them in the Army. You make out an allotment and the Army takes so much from you, your money and they put so much to the allotment.

Byrd: Okay. But in the coal mines ...

Gilmore: In the coal mines, no! Shoot! You could be at work and your wife go up there at the company store and get what she want. They let her have it!

Eaves: [inaudible]

Byrd: ... got kids.

Gilmore: Yeah. They going to make sure they got them _____.

Byrd: So they kind of kept an eye on ...

Gilmore: Yes, they did. Back then, we wasn't making much money. But these laws and things stick on you back than it is now. And these people around now, got kids, they don't do nothing to them. Back then, we had to pay or we went to jail!

Byrd: Someone was telling me -- this was in Muellenberg County about ... gees, what'd they call them? I don't know if they called them possum hunters or something.

Gilmore: Oh yeah.

Byrd: Explain that to me so I can see if it was the same thing.

Gilmore: I guess you're talking about when you're hunting.

Byrd: No, I'm not talking about hunting possum.

Gilmore: Oh, oh, oh.

Eaves: No. It was something simple ... for a claim. You know, down Mrs. _____'s family, white neighborhood. There's some Black guys in the area. Down Mrs. Streater's family _____. They'd find them hiding out in the woods

Gilmore: and beat the shit out of them. Okay.

Byrd:

Eaves: They give them a beating.

Gilmore: Yeah, I don't know about that.

Eaves: I used to remember. Yeah. Just about everybody living in the community participated in it. If you go home and damage his kids, his old lady or something like that, shit, they'd lay and wait on him. And they'd get his ass too, man.

Gilmore: I don't remember that.

Eaves: Yeah, I remember. See, I'm a little bit older than you.

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd; But the company then, they didn't ... I mean if there were any domestic troubles, like what Mr. Eaves was talking about, like if there were men who were mistreating their wives and stuff, would the company get involved?

Gilmore: No, no.

Eaves: See, if she goes to the sheriff, you know, if somethings serious, they go to the sheriff or something like that. But you take them out and just give them a good end whipping. They wouldn't say nothing. _____ wouldn't even know about it. Unless they whipped _____ couldn't work, you know.

Gilmore: When I come up, if I done something wrong with my wife and kids or something, my daddy would call me and talk to me.

Eaves: See, back in those days, the community was pretty close together. If somebody died in the neighborhood, the men would get together that morning with picks and shovels and dig the grave and bury them.

Gilmore: That's one thing about a coal mining town -- just about everybody knew everybody. Yep, sure did.

Eaves: And they'd help each other.

Byrd: Was it ever dangerous in the coal mining town, in that tight community?

Gilmore: Yeah, it was dangerous.

Eaves: If a man got killed, everybody _____ in front of the grocery store. It looked like when a guy got killed back then, it seemed like it was one out of your own family. You know, people was so close together.

Byrd: So it was dangerous most in the mines. But I'm wondering whether the coal mining town itself ...

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: What'd you have to watch out for in a coal mining town?

Gilmore: Down there at Wheatcroft, somebody used to get killed down there just about every week end. You'd get some guys that wasn't working, they'd get to gambling. They wasn't working; that's all they was doing, just lay out gambling. They'd gamble all week. Then some old guy would get broke and then he'd be trying to take the coal mining man, you know, take his money.

Coal miner would kill you!

Eaves: All of them had 38's They'd shoot them too.

Byrd: They'd shoot the coal miners?

Eaves: No. Shoot the man.

Gilmore: Shoot the man. Somebody always had a knife or a gun on them. And they'd shoot you. And the police back in them days, the police was scared of those guys. A guy get killed down in Wheatcroft ... That's Wheatcroft now. Somebody got killed down there just about every ... If somebody didn't get killed in a week, it was a good day. And if somebody get shot and you go get the police, the first thing he'd ask you, "Is he dead?" Because he'd be scared to go out there. He wouldn't go. Sure wouldn't. Wouldn't do nothing.

Eaves: If he made it back to ... In other words, if he killed a man in town and he made a back to the camp where he lived, nine times out of ten the police wouldn't even go in there.

Byrd: They're not going to go in a coal mining camp.

Gilmore: See, you had a lot of guys round there that wasn't working. Them coal miners was working. Them guys was laying out there fooling with them coal miners' wives. Taking their money. [End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Byrd: So were there ... I mean, there were places that were dangerous in camp. Were there places that folks would try to keep their children away from?

Gilmore: Oh yeah. We had a good time place called The Jingle where you could go dance, drink. But, like I said, everything was dry but people used to go there and ... A guy would go out and bring it in and then he'd sell it at something like a bootleg place. And dance. Had that same thing in Earlington. But the place in Earlington was The Park. That _____ Dixon used to run.

Eaves: [inaudible] a get together for something called a shoe-fly

Byrd: Shoe-fly?

Eaves: Shoe-fly. People would get there _____ and jamming.

And then the next week it'd be at somebody else's house.

_____ somebody will just start selling

Gilmore: [inaudible]

Byrd: Were these things mostly organized ... I mean was it like The Jingle or The Park, any shoe-fly from time to time -- were those interracial things or just Black?

Gilmore: No, just Black.

Eaves: Every once in awhile you might find, they might bring a young White guy with them ... Mostly it was Black. But you know, _____ West Kentucky.

Gilmore: Sure do.

Byrd: Some other places _____ Do you think that

might have been because were there just Blacks in higher positions in those towns or what?

Eaves: _____ just regular guys, you know. Pretty decent guys. Then you find some, you could look at their neck and tell that they were the red necks. They worked with you because they had to. Didn't have a choice. But when they got through working, they'd go their way and you go yours. If somebody saw down the street If their wife was with them, they'd look the other direction. But now if your wife is with you, they'd always want to be up in your face talking.

Gilmore: _____ They come to you when you're with your wife. _____ When they're with their wives, they don't want to.

Byrd: Did bands and stuff come through here then?

Gilmore: Oh yeah.

Byrd: Bands and like tent shows and all that kind of stuff?

Eaves: I went to hear Ray Charles.

Gilmore: B.B. King.

Byrd: Ray Charles and B.B. King.

Eaves: B.B. King, I ... He

Gilmore: Well, now he was here ... They was over at The Park!

Byrd: He came to The Park?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Eaves: Yeah, Ray Charles and B.B. King.

Gilmore: Bobby Blue Bland. All of them came to Earl And
_____ Hill was here in _____.

Byrd: Was this back in the fifties?

Gilmore: Yeah. See, they wasn't popping then but you couldn't

get them here now.

Byrd: Okay.

Gilmore: Shoot. But you couldn't get them here now. Not any way you could get them here now.

Eaves: They had a big farm there in Earlington _____ and they'd get all those popular guys.

Gilmore: Cost you about a dollar.

Eaves: Now the first time I heard Ray Charles singing ...
[inaudible]

Byrd: Well, did you all listen to radio at all?

Gilmore: Oh yeah. We didn't have no tv back then. So we'd listen to the radio.

Byrd: What shows would you get on the radio then? Could you get Ray Charles or B.B. King ...

Gilmore: No.

Eaves: [inaudible]

Byrd: _____ get no

Gilmore: But static. You might hear them talking and try to figure out what they're doing.

Byrd: But you couldn't get no picture.

Eaves: Boy, I was sick too.

Gilmore: Come out with this cable and stuff and made it better.

Byrd: What about all these ... I mean ... like now, in and around Muellenberg County, now you can't ride on any street or anywhere around here really without all these streets named after these country music singers or something or blue grass. Did that music play? Did Black folks listen to that music? Mose Rager and ...

Gilmore: I didn't.

Eaves: No. This place here always out there with the blues and jazz. _____ Because I heard a guy say, this fellow _____ down south. And many of them people drove _____ and then when the guy _____ [inaudible] but if you made to Kansas City and got through, you're ready for the world. That means you're trying out for them. In Kansas City, you know, _____ [mostly inaudible]

Byrd: Were there any local guys? Any local Black bands or ?

Eaves: Yeah. They had a

Gilmore: Jimmy Church.

Eaves: Yeah. We had a Black band up in there in Green.

Gilmore: No. Danny Crow and them had one there. Danny Crow and what's his

Eaves: [inaudible]

Byrd: Yeah. I remember the time Mort

Eaves: A big old fat guy played the piano. _____ I remember one time we had a hall up on _____ piano and a wagon and mule. Put this piano in the wagon and took it out of the church. Tried to put it in this hall.

Byrd: That's serious. Were these guys, Jimmy Church and Danny Crow and folks like that, were they just performers or did they have other jobs as well?

Gilmore: No, they had other jobs. Yeah, like Danny Crow and them, they was teaching school, but he was teaching music. He played in a little band. Him and ... I'm trying to think of this other man who played with Danny Crow.

Eaves: I never did know too many of them. I remember him pretty well.

Gilmore: Because he left and he went down to Job Corps and got

a ... made him up a band. He used to come around here and play all the time. What's his name? With Danny Crow. I think Danny Crow played the sax.

Byrd: Would this have been Danny Crow and Jimmy Church, this is the fifties and sixties?

Gilmore: M-hm. Jimmy Church still got a nice band. His son got it now. Jimmy Church was from around Hopkinsville.

Eaves: You know, they used to have a band up there in Muellenberg County. _____ One of the guys that played in this band, a little small bright guy, and he died about two ... _____ Because he built a church and put it up on ... _____ and right after that, he died.

Byrd: His name was Burt Young. He was in Muellenberg?

Eaves: Yeah, in Muellenberg. He run the train up

Gilmore: Well, see now, Jimmy Church's band still going but his son got it now.

Byrd: Okay. And that's in Hopkinsville?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: Well, what would you do coming up around here in the forties and the fifties? If you're going on a date, what are the different places you could go and what are the things you could do?

Gilmore: Movies.

Eaves: The only place you could go.

Gilmore: Only place you could go.

Eaves: Well, there were lots of

Gilmore: If you wasn't old enough to go to these bootleg joints, the only place you could take is a movie. But then when you got older, you know, there's always three or four little houses, selling

Eaves: Of course, the movies back then you had to go upstairs.

Byrd: So you all had one movie theatre.

Gilmore: Yeah, and you had to go upstairs. Better not go downstairs.

Byrd: You say you better not go downstairs.

Gilmore: No. Go upstairs.

Byrd: Did anybody ever try to go downstairs?

Eaves: No.

Gilmore: No, that's one thing Black people ... If they didn't want you to go nowhere, they wouldn't go. Like now. I could go out here to this American Legion, White American Legion, because I'm a soldier, you know, VFW. I could go to them. But do you think I want to go? I don't want to nowhere I don't want to be.

They don't want me. I just, you know, wouldn't go. I can join that VFW out there right now because I'm a soldier. But, I wouldn't; don't want to. I don't want to go where nobody want me. All you're going to do is go out there and drink.

Eaves: Do you know what I

Byrd: I'm having a little trouble picking you up, Mr. Eaves.

Eaves: What?

Byrd: I'm having a little trouble picking you up.

Eaves: I ain't supposed to be on it.

Byrd: No, but you're saying things so I got to get you down. You've got to talk a little louder.

Eaves: I don't feel comfortable around the _____. Like I'm let's say one or two in a bunch of them, you know. I don't feel _____. I'd rather be in my own _____.

Gilmore: You take these White guys. I mean, they treat you nice, some of them do. But, they'll forget some time and want to go kicking on you. And they think that's funny.

Byrd: Did you say kicking on you?

Gilmore: Yeah. Yeah, they're kicking your behind. Yeah, we saw a bunch of them at the mines do that.

Byrd: It seems like there used to be a lot more kicking going on in the world

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: ... people talking about kicking. You don't mostly kick people now, no matter what.

Gilmore: No, not now.

Byrd: But that was ... I mean, you'd be walking ...

Gilmore: Yeah, the White guys, they was good at that.

Eaves: _____ I played _____ [inaudible]
 Every time the ball was _____ fell.

Gilmore: You talking about Jerry?

Eaves: No. Across the road over there.

Gilmore: Oh, okay.

Eaves: .. the next morning.

Gilmore: Yeah, I can't think of the name of that place. Yeah,
 I know what you're talking about.

Eaves: I went out one day and wasn't feeling too good.
 _____ He's a little older than I am. He had
 kicked _____. I told him, "I'll slap your damn
 butt. Don't you ever do that again." See, I was just ... I
 was young ... And every time he seen me, he got that
 _____. Because, see, I _____. [inaudible] No man ain't

got no right to put his foot on my ass. I had a brother. His name was _____. He'd get mad at me and sometimes he'd kick my ass _____. He was about six years older than I was. I couldn't do nothing with him. One day he kicked me. Then I fell on a _____ and come back up. I just _____. [inaudible] See, he never did tell _____. And I was scared too because see that was my _____. And I came over there. _____ I got a shotgun. That old shotgun didn't have a _____ I said I'm going to get that _____ He never kicked me again.

Gilmore: We had an _____ out there at Pleasant View. Remember Big Lee?

Byrd: What happened?

Gilmore: Well, he was in a _____ and a White fellow kicked him. Big Lee, that's right. Well, Manny _____. That's all right, Manny, I'll get you. He wouldn't bother him. Big Lee could have whipped this White guy in this mine. Big Lee said, "I ain't going to bother you." Just forget it. I ain't going to bother you. Went to the company store on pay day.

This White fellow and his wife went to the window to get him a store book. When this White fellow, you know, bent over to sign for his store book, Big Lee walked up there and pushed his wife back. I mean, there was a bunch of Whites in the line to get their money. Big Lee pushed his wife back and kicked that White guy in the ass. Pow! You could hear it all over that company store. But Big Lee was bigger than the White guy. And the White guy was scared of Big Lee. And when he turned around, he wouldn't bother him. He got scared. And he tried to have Big Lee arrested. Because, you know, Big Lee kicked him in front of his wife. And that stopped them White guys from kicking over at Pleasant View. Sure did. Big Lee said, "I told you I'd get you, Manny _____." Kicked a White guy in the company store. And I mean you could hear that all over the store. Pow! Like I said, Big Lee could whip him in a mine. But see, he had two or three White guys around there with him then, to help him, see. They'd put him up and do it. See, that's just like they do in the mine. The White guys get together, about two or three of them, _____, they'd get together and whip you. I remember a kid named Cluellen. Do you remember him? Boy, they whipped him so bad he got on disability.

Byrd: In the mine?

Gilmore: Yeah. They whipped him. He got on disability. Now, that he got better, the silly fool went back to work. And then after he got hurt again, he like not got on disability. But he on now again. Sure did whip that boy so bad. And I was supply man.

Byrd: This was after you came out of the Army?

Gilmore: Yeah. I was a supply man. And boy, before I'd get there, I could hear them whipping him. He'd be hollering. And then when they'd see me coming up with supplies -- Well, they could see me before I get to them. They could see my light coming. They didn't know I was a Black man. "Here comes the supply man." They'd quit whipping him. But I could hear him all up and down. I told Cluellen then, I said, "Cluellen, you ought to go to the bossman." Go the big man. The boss man, he's right ... Lunch time, Cluellen's lunch time, he'd tried to eat by himself to keep them guys from whipping him. He was the only Black down that run. And I mean they took a and you could hear them popping that man.

Eaves: [inaudible]

Byrd: Eaves is trying to say something important and sitting over there again. Let me just ... see, because I'm looking at this meter whenever he talks and I'm not getting anything. So I'm going to bring it right back up and you say what you were saying.

Eaves: I'll say this and then you can put it back on him. Up in Muellenberg County, you see, a lot of them mines didn't have but maybe one or two Blacks working, you see, and they was red necks, you see. And we wore coveralls. And I got a shut nub .38, a shoulder skin. I wouldn't change clothes up there. I put that gun up under this arm and when I made the mines see, because you could hear them make cracks. Of course, talking never did bother me, you see. But I always say if one ever put his hand on me, that's where I was going to leave him. But I never did have no trouble. You'd see "Nigger" wrote up there, words in the mines. All that kind of stuff. And buddy, I didn't give them no breaks. I'd shut one down in a minute. If I didn't shut a mine down, I'd shut a piece of machinery down. And I didn't have any trouble. And Pistol, my buddy, he went

out right out here. At Zigler Mine. And he told a guy to do something. The guy told him, "I don't take orders from no Nigger." Well, the safety man was with Pistol, see. And he told him, "Well, if you don't take orders from him, you might as well go outside." When he got outside, they had his check and paid him off. All the rest of them, that stopped them right there. And then the general manager, Harlan Crieg, told them guys over at Creston, told the superintendent. That's the man that runs the mine. Said if a federal mining inspector come out here and tell you to do something, I don't give a damn if you're Black, White, Blue or Pink, if you don't do it, you ain't go no job. So that eliminated it. See, when the big White man speak, these small ones, you ain't going to have no problem out of them. But see, if he don't speak out, you ain't going to have nothing but trouble. But then I'd go up there and after I got to know them, I took my pistol off, started leaving it at home. Because, see, I know a White man. If he get the ups on you, he'll destroy you if he can. _____ where I live.

We had a hole ... You know where I told you when coming the back way, we used to go over there and swim? Well, every time we'd swim in there -- if there was six or seven of us, we didn't have no problem with the White guys. But if there was one or

two, you had problems. And one guy down there, he was bull headed. He wouldn't run. And he picked up a stone and threwed it and hit one of them on the arm and broke it. It broke it, man. And his daddy told him, "I know that boy's daddy. I know him. You all didn't have no business fooling with another person." _____ You know any Drakes live over in Mottsville? One of them live out on Broadway with his daddy. He run the _____ in the mines too. He worked down in one of those camp mines. Eulah. Well, that was Eulah's half-brother.

Byrd:

Gilmore: ... five nine. I was working out there. And I was a supply man. And I used to have to go under some timber and it was so dangerous, water and stuff, I was scared to go under it. And I used to go to the boss man and ask him about fixing it. They wouldn't fix it. So me and Pistol, the one he just got through talking about, Pistol Pete, an inspector. I went over to his house in Earlington ... And I was telling him about it. And I told him, "Well, next time you come out there, don't" I wouldn't let them know I'd been to him. I said, "The

next time you come out there, you go by and check that place and see if you can't get them to fix it because I'm scared to pull under it. The boss man had been getting on me because I'm scared to pull under it. But it's going to fall." So one day Pistol come in. he went down on the run and wrote them up. But I told him, don't tell them that, that I ... But he wrote them up. And the next day And you know what? My boss man asked me did I say anything. Because they know me and Pistol ... because we were just like sisters and brothers. We all were raised up together. My mother used to keep Pete and his mother used to keep us. He asked me did I go to him. I told him no. He said why'd he just happen to go out? I said I don't know why he did that but he did. And if I'd have told I did, they'd probably have fired me. Yeah, they'd have gotten rid of me.

Byrd: You all didn't come up ... When were you ... You were an inspector in the late sixties, seventies maybe?

Eaves: I started in the early seventies.

Gilmore: Were you the first one?

Eaves: No. Pistol was the first.

Gilmore: Okay. Then Ned. No, Ned wasn't no I mean Sam.

Eaves: Well, Sam

Gilmore: But Dallas is dead, ain't he? But Sam's not.

Eaves: Sam is retired.

Gilmore: Yeah, but you don't never see him much no more.

Eaves: Well, you know, his mother passed.

Gilmore: Yeah, I know his mother died.

Eaves: _____ staying by himself now.

Gilmore: Sam's older than Eddie. I believe.

Eaves: Yeah. Because when Arthur King died, she had a pretty

good insurance and _____ and she wouldn't do it.

Gilmore: I ain't seen Sam in a long ... You know, Sam was married to my sister. His first wife. Sure was. His first wife was my sister. They didn't stay married long. Down there in Wheatcroft, he married her. I think Sam went in the Army. Him and my first sister got divorced.

Eaves: Was that the first time he'd been married?

Gilmore: Yeah. Minnie Lee. My sister.

Eaves:

Gilmore: No, no. My sister's dead now. No, after she and Sam got divorced, she married a Brentley. And he left and went to Muncie, Indiana. That's way off. They was young.

Eaves: How many times has Sam been married?

Gilmore: About four or five times. Married Lou Della.

Eaves: And this other woman he was married to ...

Gilmore: Yeah, what is her name? Him and Bernece never was married though. Sam's been married about four or five times.

Eaves: [inaudible]

Gilmore: Yeah. I think his wife's _____ Somebody said he's married to a White woman up in eastern Kentucky. But I ain't seen Sam around no where.

Eaves: [inaudible]

Gilmore: Done got fat.

Eaves: Yeah.

Gilmore: I ain't seen Sam around no where.

Eaves: You know those guys over in White Plains _____, you know number nine, number eleven _____ They told me how nasty it was. I threw my chicken out. How the hell would I ...

And it was nasty. _____ They gave him a shovel

Gilmore: Because he told it.

Eaves: They didn't know he was told. But anyway, somehow
____ he was on the burner I think at the time. And he told me
_____ and I never _____.

Byrd: What would ... before you all came on, you and what's
the other guy -- Pistol?

Eaves: Yeah.

Byrd: I mean, before you all came on as mine inspectors,
what would you all do in the mines when you saw something that
wasn't right that you wanted to?

Eaves: Well, what I would do -- see, I was on the safety
committee at the mine. See, the union elects three safety
committee, three fit committees, see. And the safety committee
would look out for safety and your fit committee would go about

working out complaints. And see, I worked out of office like Jim Connell for about six, seven months. And then, I worked up as a boss part time. So I had pretty good up there where I was. _____ Pretty decent type guy. He wanted coal. But he redeemed himself _____. He believed in safety first. And one guy in particular -- I don't know who the _____ man was down there _____. The guy was bolting roofs. And your roof's supposed to be four foot apart. _____ So he could never get out of the _____. Now, I told him one day, I said, "You know, I've been in this place." Well, the safety man from West Kentucky went in there and inspected the place. And this boy didn't want to go back in there _____. The safety man told him that you go back in there and refit it and I'll go home _____. Then about two months after that, a small piece of rock, not much bigger than that, fell on the guy, paralyzed him from the waist down. _____ bent over _____. And he went to the hospital. And I didn't have _____. If it ain't safe, I'll make it safe myself. Every time I go down to these _____ and he died ... I guess _____. It was about a couple, three years after he got hurt he died. When you're bolting that roof, that's for your own protection as well as anybody else.

Gilmore: Yeah. Yours and other mens too. A little mistake and that top'll come in. Don't care who it fall on. Just like I was telling you about the man I started with, Claiborne Woods. That's how he got hurt. A piece of rock fell on him. But it didn't kill him but he never did ... you know, do no good after that. It helped kill him. Didn't do no good after that rock fall on him. Well, see in them times of day, we didn't have no ... wasn't putting up no pen.

Byrd: This was in the forties or fifties?

Gilmore: No, we wasn't up no pen. You was putting up 2x4s and then you had to go look where you wanted it good. See, timber nowadays is different from when I first started in the mines. We used old props. They'd go cutting them. Then some of them would be crooked. Try to find ... got to go through the whole thing to find a straight one. But now, see, they make them! Yeah, they got a company that just cut regular timber now for these mines. They're just square and pretty. Just like the poles I got here in the carport there.

Byrd:

Gilmore: No, there wasn't no pens. See, when I went in the Army, I didn't know what a pen was. When I come back, that's when I found out was pens was.

Eaves: [inaudible]

Byrd: They did then?

Eaves: No.

Byrd: Okay.

Eaves: Those _____ [inaudible]

Gilmore: See, the mines is changing now. You don't even have to have no shute or no drill now.

Byrd: You didn't tell me that.

Eaves: Yeah, I did.

Byrd: You didn't tell me the shooting and drilling was gone.

Gilmore: Yeah, shooting and drilling ...

Eaves: Because I told you ... I remember telling you this too. That when I was in the mines back during the but now they turn them on 45. And they got a belt off of this motor. They don't use no shuttle car. But I remember telling you that. That's on the 45 see. In other words, all your _ just look like that. They ain't going to ____ just like that, see. They turn them on 45 just like that.

Byrd: _____ too.

Eaves: _____ too. On an angle, if you have to make a short turn.

Gilmore: Yeah, they got a thing now -- I forget what you call it -- but it eliminates the driller, machine man and the shooter. And he don't even have to get on the thing.

Byrd: Well, where does he run it from?

Gilmore: The motor. He be sitting on another break through and that thing be ... swoosh! swoosh! Diggin that coal out of there. And he be sitting on the motor. But you don't see many Blacks running them things.

Byrd: Okay.

Eaves: They had those miners ... control and it sound just like a big barrel on each side of the load and that thing just go around like that. It goes around and around. It's got this sticking up like that all around it. And it just eats that coal and falls in a pan. That pan got a conveyor chain in it. And it dumps

Gilmore: Now you watch. Sooner or later they're going to eliminate that car. See, when I first went in the mine, we could just ... When I first went in, we used to build a ramp and you dumped the coal on the belt. Half of it would go off on the ground. And they'd have a big board behind it to keep from falling. And half would fall on the ground. And then they had

what you called then a belt man. And that son of a gun had to work, buddy.

Byrd: Because he's putting it on the

Gilmore: No. Well, he got to shovel it and put it back up on there. Somebody would come out there and get mad at the car driver. But they wanted you to pull coal then. If you pull 35 and 40 _____ a day, you're jumping. And you go up there, we'd be spending coal half ... but when I come out the Army, they got a thing to put on the end of the belt now, don't spill much coal. They call it a Roscoe.

Eaves: Yeah. That's Roscoe. You can load it off a van on each side.

Gilmore: Yeah, each side. Don't spill.

Eaves: Because it's got a conveyor chain in it, you see. You can go up there and dump your coal all at once.

__But see, now this long _____ down, they got a ... In other words, you take here. This is a block of coal. Okay.

___ run some entries this way and to come down this way. Then a loader, a machine, will go on the back side. And that ___ will go through here and set all around and come out. All right. Now this is your loader. It's not a ... I forget what you call it. But this guy starts here, see? Get all this coal, you see. When he get to this end, he go back there and he gets through _____ until he get all that coal. And when he gets about half way up here, he'll stop and set a row of helpers right here _____ that top _____.

Byrd: Just fall?

Eaves: Yeah. Just let it fall, see. That takes the weight off of the other guy. Then they start right back to get that block of coal. They don't leave nothing. Don't leave nothing!

Byrd: They drop it as soon as they pick it all up.

Eaves: It breaks just like you took ...

Gilmore: It seems like ... see people ... It's a lot of different than just going in coal mining. You take a coal mine,

you got that earth set up just right. Everything. Got to check for gas. You got gas in coal mines. You got gas in a coal mine, one's dead _____. That's what you call black

.

Eaves: When I was working as an inspector, I'd go up on the hill. I'd go up ... _____ going on the union. And I'd walk across the face of where they're working. When I get over to the last open crossing, I take an air reading to see how much air was going through the units. Well, when I do that, sometimes I walk across the _____. It depends on _____. Like the way you turn a tv on. And I can press a button and it'll tell me ____ how much gas is in there. And a loader ... [inaudible] got one and a half foot fence. That loader _____. When it get to two percent, that loader _____. I have been going up on a unit _____ on and off. I know _____ I can't understand why that _____. So I went up there and I got _____ and I shut them down. And he _____. And I told him that he had _____ and he had worked at other mines for several years, _____. No sooner I shut that unit down, he sent everybody outside. But see, if a man ... Now, if a roof fall, that's

something you can't _____ but most of the things in a coal mine is a human error.

Byrd: That's what causes most of the trouble, human error?

Gilmore: Yeah. We had a fellow who'd been working in the mine I don't know how long. Stu Brock. He'd been working in the mine all his life, as long as I've known him. And he knew it was wrong. I don't know what made him do it. He was getting ready to retire. He said, "I'm going to work about four or five more months and then I'm going to retire." He went up there. But he knew it was wrong. On a cutter. It's got a long blade on it. He was cold and then laid down on it, trying to warm up. And his _____ went back and hit a buttom and started that loader and that thing cut both his legs off. A wonder if he hadn't died.

Eaves: Just like I told him, if my rescue had been _____, he would have died.

Gilmore: He sure would have. That boy had ... Teach one of them boys all that first aid stuff and he stuck his finger in

one artery and he rode with him all the hospital. A White guy. Wasn't no Black guy; that's a White guy. See, now that's the buddy-buddy system. He held him. That's what kept him.

Byrd:

Gilmore: And he was getting ready to retire. Well, it was his fault! That was Curtis, wasn't it, Mr. Eaves?

Eaves: He liked to hunt. He liked to play baseball.

Gilmore: A good baseball player. He's the best home run hitter around here. He could have made it to the pros if we ... Because he tried to get me ... I played with some baseball teams around here. Down in Mayfield. Because I was Black, they wouldn't let the team play. Sure did. I played with a baseball team there in Mayfield, Kentucky and because they was Black, they wouldn't let me

Byrd: When you were coming up?

Gilmore: Yeah, back in the fifties. And they wouldn't let me

play. And see, I'd play with the Memphis Allstars, down here from Nashville. We played the Harlem Globetrotters up in Hopkinsville. I remember that just as good.

Byrd: You played basketball and baseball?

Gilmore: Yeah, I played basketball. I wasn't no good at basketball. I didn't get good at basketball until after I went in the Army. I wasn't no good.

Eaves: I'll tell you something else too. Down at Mayfield _____ . [inaudible] And that grandstand would be full of Whites.

Byrd: To watch Black folks play?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Eaves: Well, Mayfield had a pretty good ball club itself down there.

Byrd: So this was a Black semi-pro team?

Gilmore: No, just a team.

Eaves: I was working in the mines. We just played on weekends.

Byrd: Okay. So this was one of the things that you all ... one of the things for recreation.

Gilmore: If they didn't have enough players, they'd get a player from _____ and we'd play together and go. See, like a big day in Crofton on the 8th of August. Oh, man. We'd have some ball games up there. We used to go everywhere to play baseball.

Eaves: [inaudible]

Gilmore: We had a good team. There was a bunch of people in it could have made pro if you could have in them days. But you couldn't.

Eaves: [inaudible] one hole shotgun

Byrd: Shotgun _____?

Eaves: Shotgun whatever. Another call Big Red, he's a south paw. Boy, he could hum that ball. I used to bat at him.

Gilmore: Yeah. Old Big Jim Bumper.

Eaves: I always

Gilmore: Rupert Daniel, John Albert.

Eaves: Yeah.

Gilmore: John Albert would throw so slow it'd look like you swing about three or four times before the ball get to the plate.

Eaves: The ball look like it

Gilmore: Yeah, you'd be swinging at it.

Eaves: You'd swing over it or under it.

Gilmore: And Rupert would throw so hard and his first ball, he'd throw right at your head.

Eaves: You know Rupert, he's a dirty ball player.

Gilmore: Yeah, you better not got out there. _____ pistol and he'd shoot you. But that first ball, right at your head.

Eaves: And smack you in a minute when you come

Gilmore: Yeah. Rupert, he's dirty. He'd throw that first ball right at your head. Then you'd be scared to swing. The rest of them are trying to get out of the way. That's the way Big Jim Bumper ... Big Jim Bumper and every time Jimmy, he was good hitter. But he's scared. Big Jim Bumper wore about 12, 14. Boy, when he'd kick that leg up, I couldn't see nothing but the feet. And he'd come in there and he could throw! I bet he throwed about 95, 100 miles per hour. And that first ball is right at you!

Eaves: You know the games sometimes get tied one and one, or

_____. He would get us all the time. Oh, them guys ...
And the coal companies back them. Buy them all bats and suits.

Gilmore: Yeah, bats and things.

Eaves:

Byrd: The baseball suits? What'd it say again?

Eaves: William Powerful Coal.

Byrd: Would you say that into the mike so I can make sure I
got it.

Gilmore: William Powerful Coal. Yeah, they'd look out for you.

Byrd: So were all of these guys miners?

Eaves: Yeha. The mines _____.

Byrd: Wow. And so, then you were saying you'd go to the

grand stand and it'd be full of Whites watching you.

Eaves: Yeah, it'd be full of Whites. Of course, on the 8th of August, it would be Blacks all over West Kentucky. They celebrate that day like you now do for the fourth of July.

Byrd: What was the day again?

Gilmore: 8th of August.

Byrd: Why'd they celebrate the 8th of August?

Eaves: Well, see, the fourth of July was the White man's day. So they adopted the 8th of August for the Black man's day. All over west Kentucky. Paduka. Guthrie, Kentucky.

Gilmore: Yeah. Up in a little town of Waverly, all through there.

Eaves: In Allensville.

Gilmore: See, ours around here, mostly we go to Croft.

Byrd: On the 8th of August?

Gilmore: Yeah, the 8th of August.

Byrd: So the mines shut down?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Byrd: And you all would play baseball and have picnics.

Gilmore: But see, now you know what? Nowadays there'd be a bunch of Whites up there now on the 8th of August.

Byrd: Do Black still try and still celebrate the 8th of August?

Gilmore: Yeah.

Eaves: But see, I don't do that now because see, I can't cope with the youngsters now. Now I'm an old man, I may go there during the day and get me a sandwich and keep moving. But now

they got this music blaring, it's loud and it give me a headache.

Gilmore: And they don't play no baseball any more. Don't do but drink and eat. Fight. Gamble. Somebody get to fighting up there just about every 8th of August. When we come up, we didn't fight much. Played baseball and you had good barbeque and drink beer.

Eaves: Our son had a party, _____ in Lexington _____ this past Friday. And about 200 ... see, where he lives, they got a place in there people live _____. And it was about 200 people, Black and White. _____ I didn't hear a _____, Black and White, drinking and having a good time. No disturbing or nothing. And I seen the time something like that couldn't happen.

Gilmore: No. You get rid of all these old White people, and things will be a lot different. [End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Gilmore: ... Well, just like my wife. She look like a White woman, don't she?

Eaves: Yeah, she does.

Gilmore: And we'd be eating sometimes. You'd see White people walk in and see her and they'd be peeking around. You'd hear somebody, "Is she Black or White?" They'd be looking at her. And I have been riding in the road in that Lincoln, you know, and she'd be sitting on my side. A bunch of White guys in a truck pull up side me and think she's White. Sticking their finger out. Then they'd look again and they'd say, "Is she Black?" Then they'd start in on me. Yeah, they'd give me the finger and everything. M-hm. Bunch of old _____.

_____ Get out of here! You'd get over there. Get on out of here. That's a little baby one there. I'm going to knock them down. Where's my paper at?

Eaves: I tell you something else too. You might not pay no attention. You find a lot of these Black guys, they marry these White girls ...

Byrd: ... I'll have to bring you the mike.

Eaves: That's all right.

Byrd: No, because I want to hear it.

Gilmore: There it is. He got it. They're hard to kill, ain't they?

Eaves: A lot of these Black boys is marrying these White girls and you know, they have some beautiful kids. They have some beautiful kids too. Yeah, they do. And this happening now pretty rapid. You take in the next century, you can't hardly tell a Black from a White because it'll be so many, you see, that'll have a White mother and a Black daddy or a White daddy and a Black mother. Now see, this boy of mine, he's bi-racial. Yeah. Of course, you can tell him by him being a Black guy. You can tell it because he got the features of a Black guy. His lips are a little thick, you see, but his hair is neat and he's about six three. When he was in high school, man, them girls just run him down. That's right.

Gilmore: Look at my wife

Eaves: The basketball coach had a daughter, you know. And she was just going to admire my boy. And the girls that he liked, he'd go upstairs with them, see. The ones that he didn't like, he'd sit downstairs in the living room with them.

[laughs] Yeah, she told her mother that she wanted to marry Mike. And I told him all that. I said, "Mike ain't even got no business trying to marry." I said, "He ain't even got a job." That's when he was in high school. He told me he didn't want her no how.

Gilmore: Well, I ain't got nothing against mixed marriages. You know, you got some of these old White girls -- two or three of them, married to these Black guys. They get mad and they go calling them "Nigger this, Nigger that."

Eaves: Oh yeah.

Gilmore: They don't care what they hear when they say it. See, like back in the forties, them White girls used to

with a Black guy then. But they'd get caught. First thing they holler is "Rape!" It wouldn't be rape. ... rape to keep them from messing themselves.

Eaves: And you'd have to leave town.

Byrd: The guys would have to leave?

Eaves: Oh yeah! That bug is kind of rough, ain't he?

Gilmore: He's hard to kill.

Byrd: I believe he's trying to die.

Gilmore: Hard to kill.

Eaves: I know I was awful small. And they hung two guys over here in Madisonville on account of a White woman.

Gilmore: You need to talk to Phil about that. He know about that.

Eaves: Yes. Hannah. Nathan Born and Fleming, I believe it was. But I was too young to remember it.

Gilmore: Bitty know about that. Bitty's 75 years old. He would know about that.

Eaves: Well, see, I'm that old but see, I was way up there at White Plains.

Gilmore: You're 75?

Eaves: Yeah. And the onliest way I could get over there was walk to Madisonville then, see? Wasn't no car. Yeah, I'm 75. Born in 1920.

Gilmore: Bitty's the same age as you.

Eaves: Yeah.

Byrd: I'm sorry. I thought I might have those guys names in Madisonville. I might have it written down.

Gilmore: Have you talked to Donny Nippen?

Eaves: No, I ain't. The last time I tried to find Donny, I didn't even know where to look?

Gilmore: Well, he's

Eaves: He's still staying in Depoy then? Yeah, okay then.

Gilmore: Wyman

Eaves: Yeah, Wyman _____.

Byrd: Do you remember anything about that, what happened in Madisonville, Mr. Eaves?

Eaves: All I know is they hung them about a White woman. She said they raped her. See? And the boy had been going with her the whole time, see. Yeah. And that was, I guess that was 60 or 65 years ago, see. Because I used to hear people talk about it and the guy that ... one of them had a wife. I remember her. And she was a good looking woman. And the judge said any time

a man got a wife like that and run after a woman, the one said he raped her, said he should be hung. She was a good looking woman. And during '47, I believe '47, or '48 one, I went to her house. She lived in Louisville here. But she kind of got older, you see. But she was a ... These three that they hung, they was kin to those Dulins up in Muellenberg. I remember one of the guys called Pete Dulin, he was kin to them. And he had a sister. And up there in Graham, there used to be a lot of Black people up there because they had a mining camp up there, you see. And I don't know how they got tied up with these women. But anyway, these women said they raped them. This woman said these guys raped her, you see. And they'd been going with ... And everybody knowed they was going with her, see. But they just wanted to stop it.

Byrd: Do any Blacks live in Graham now? There's a few, ain't it? They've all moved out?

Eaves: No. Now Bibs, she teaches in Graham and her two daughters teaches in Graham, see. But ain't no Black up there.

Gilmore: They all moved to Cedarville probably.

Eaves: And Greenville.

Byrd: Do you remember anything happening in Hillside? I had read ... when folks was telling me about what happened in Madisonville, would tell me something that happened in Hillside, in Muellenberg County, in ... I'm trying to think of the year. Maybe I can bring it to you later.

Eaves: Hillside. I don't even remember Hillside, do you?

Gilmore: Remember Hillside? Muellenberg County.

Eaves: No, I don't even remember nothing about Hillside. But see, you take Greenville, those guys up there did a whole lot of domestic work. And a lot of those guys was going with those White women, you see. And they'd get into it with their husbands. Then they'd get out and get them another woman. Well, these Black boys are out cutting their yard and doing house work. And some of them looked pretty nice. And they just turned to them, you see. And one guy in particular, he was going with this woman. And they lived upstairs over this

restaurant. And this Black boy was up there with her. And them people hear their whining, see? Must have been putting that rod to her or something. She's whining and taking on. Well, they hear her downstairs, you see. And one of them said, "That boy's doing something to that woman." Well, it got out. He left Greenville; went to Louisville. And the next evening, he was back in Greenville. And her husband told them guys, say, "You's a damn liar. My wife wouldn't fool with no Black man." Said, "I don't want to hear no more about it." And the boy live in White Plains today, his son. And you can tell he's a bi-racial.

And I had a cousin that lived in California. He was growing up in Greenville at that time. And he knowed her and knowed the boy. And every time he'd come in, he'd go by and holler at him and her. But see, nature's going to take its course, see. If the woman don't get it one way, she going to get the other one.

But, you know what, I tell you something else too. You'd be surprised the people live in these fine mansions that don't even sleep together.

Gilmore: That's right, yeah.

Eaves: Just got a big front only. Well, there's about ...

Gilmore: You from around this way?

Byrd: I grew up in Texas, in Houston. But I married into a family in Muellerberg County so my

Gilmore: Are you in the Army?

Byrd: No, but my dad was in the Army. That's why I moved around so much. But I was born in Hawaii and then we went to Ft. Carson and then we ended up in

Gilmore: ... she got a son ... My wife? Her son just left Houston.

Byrd: Okay.

Gilmore: To Ft. Ord in California. Then I got a sister that got a son in Houston, Texas.

Byrd: Well, I'm going to get there. In August.

Gilmore: Your daddy still living?

Byrd: Yep. He's retired and he lives in Midland, Michigan.
So my mom and dad are divorced and he lives up there with his
new wife. Well, this has been great. I sure appreciate.

Gilmore: I enjoyed talking to Mr. Eaves. Mr. Eaves, he ain't
... from the old school.

Byrd: And I hadn't interviewed Mr. Eaves.

Eaves: I told him, I said, you can get me any time. [End of
interview]

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