

Argonaut High School
Oral History Interview
Biographical Sketch

Subjects full name: John Aime
Address: 332 Pioneer Circle

Telephone: Home: (209) 223-2690 Work: Hardware Clerk
Date of birth: 12-5-1918 Place of birth: Jackson Ca.
Date of marriage: Divorced Place of marriage: Jackson Ca.
Name of spouse: _____
date of birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

Subject occupation: Hardware Clerk
Spouse occupation: Nurse

Name of mother: Maria Vallone Aime
Date of birth: July 4th, 1880 Place of birth: Italy
Occupation: _____

Name of father: Joseph Aime
Date of birth: July 15th, 1890 Place of birth: Italy
Occupation: Miner

Subject's children and dates of birth: None

Subject's brothers and sisters and dates of birth: None

Subject's primary and secondary education: (Schools attended and dates) 1-12 grades Jackson

Subject's higher education: (Schools attended, graduation date, majors, degrees) None

Subject's profession or occupations: (Job, dates, where) Hardware Clerk 1937-present Jackson
Spennetti Brothers, Spinco

Military service: (Branch, rank, dates of service) United States Army Air Corp Sargent
Nov 5th, 1941 - Jan 21st 1946

Civic and community activities: (Offices held, activities, etc.) Sports Coach, Little League diamond named
after John Aime.

Miscellaneous information: _____

Prepared by: Patrick Keene and Jeff Porte
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Interview of John Aime

by:
Jeff Port
and
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5-13-97

Prepared by:
Jeff Port
6-18-97

Interview with John Aime

How old were you at the time of the mine?

I was born in this country, and I was born then, and that was 1918, and it went up until the early forties.

How old were you when it quit?

Well I went into the service in 1941, so I was around 20.

Did you ever work in the mines at all?

No, but I did go down in it one time.

What do you remember about going down in the mine?

Well, you get in the skip, naturally, and it used to go pretty fast, I don't recall the distance and how many minutes, but I would say about a thousand feet every three or four minutes. When you got down to the nineteenth, nineteenth station would you call it, and at that time they had taken out all the high-grade gold out of that area, and the skip would oscillate in the shaft, because of the fact that there's no (mumbles) in the background. They would slow down to where they were barely crawling through there and after they got through there then they dropped it again. So they dropped it down to 4800 feet approximately. And from there we

took another skip that went down another 1000 feet on an incline. This one went straight down (gesturing), then incline. From there we went out on a raise and we went up into a certain area. No, it's not a raise, it's a drift that we went through. And then we went up a raise, and about 100 feet up and into this raise they had an area where they were mining not high-grade gold, but gold, quartz, and it was called San Quentin because it was so hot up there, and these fellas had an 8 inch line of air blowing on them, an 8 inch pipe.

You knew a lot of people that worked in the mines, then?

Oh, yes.

What was a working day like for someone who worked in the mines?

Well, let's see. They went to work pretty early in the morning, I'd say about 6:00. They would get off at three or four o'clock in the afternoon. That's about it. They had different shifts, 3 shifts I think it was, the morning shift, the afternoon shift, and the graveyard shift. I don't know this for sure, but I heard this, but the morning and the afternoon shifts would do the mining, and the graveyard shift would do the blasting in the evening. I never did ask my dad, because he worked the mine, and well, I wasn't interested.

So your father worked in the mine?

Yes.

The roads were pretty narrow, all over the county. Some of them were dirt still some were gravel, and some, the big highways, were better. But they weren't wide, they were just narrow enough for a horse to get through, and cars.

How long would it take to go from Jackson to Ione?

In those days you had pretty slow cars, so it would take an hour, or an hour and a half.

Do you remember the other industries they had around Amador County, beside the mining?

Well, they had cattle raising and they had lumber, and they had the clay plant down in Ione, which is still there. That's about it, for the major ones.

Was your father involved with the Argonaut fire, by helping the trapped miners?

Yes. He was in one of the crews one of the safety crews that went down in there. You won't any pictures of him though, because he didn't believe in that. But he did go down.

Did he work just at the Kennedy, or did he work at other mines too?

How long did he work in the mines?

Let's see now. I guess since I was born, since 1918 he worked in the mine, and that's about what, about 20 some years.

Do you remember what jobs he had?

He started as a miner, and then he went into contracting and digging the shaft, for which the fellows got a little more money than the others because it was a little more dangerous. At that time they had jackhammers, but they were all run by air, and that created a problem with the health of the fellows. Then they improved the machines and they used water and air after that, so the dust would stay down. After that he was a jigger boss; that's what they call the guys who used to run the machines; there would be 4 or 5 guys to a machine. After that he was not a foreman, but a shift boss, and after that he became, Bill Sinclair died, and he became a foreman. So, that's about it.

We have heard about the tailings blowing around town; how did that affect you?

Well, where we lived we didn't have any of that trouble, because we lived up on a hill and the only tailings that blew around were down by the Kennedy, by the Slav church, in that area. Once in awhile you would come into town, and there would be a streak of sand blowing around the air, but not that bad.

What was it like to travel around the county, for instance to Ione or Upcountry?

Well, he worked mainly at the Kennedy, but during the fire they had to have some men over at the Argonaut Mine, because of the location of the shaft that connected the two mines and he did work there for a while to get that baby straightened out and cleaned up.

Do you remember the strikes at the mines?

Very little. I was going to school and I wasn't too interested. They did have a tent up there by Linda Vista motel, you know where that is. They had a tent there where they would stay the winter summer and fall, and finally, I think it was over a year or possibly a year, the businessmen of Amador County, of Jackson here got tired of crediting these people, I mean, they had no way of earning any food or any money. So, they all got together and went up there and gave them a push, and got them out of there. They had a little bit of trouble, they had a little bit of fighting and stuff like that.

What about the different ethnic groups around the county?

Oh, there were Spanish, Italians, Slavs, Mexicans, Chinese, and that's about it.

Do you remember any different conflicts within the ethnic groups or between the ethnic groups?

No, I don't. At that time there wasn't too much of that going on. There was a little naturally, but not like there is today.

Did your family own a car?

Yes.

Did most the families in the area have a car?

Quite a few of them.

Do you remember, talking about the ethnic groups again, were there different jobs one ethnic group would usually do?

Since the area wasn't too big, everybody participated in being a miner, or a contractor down in the mines, or something in that area. The fellas that were more knowledgeable that knew mathematics and stuff like that got the bossing jobs. Of course, there were a lot of Mexicans, who did a lot of mucking and mining. By mining I mean drilling machines and stuff like that.

What kind of entertainment there was around the time of the mines?

You know what kind of entertainment there was. We had the little girls and we had gambling, and that's about the biggest. They had little drinking parties now and then. They used to have the Italian Picnic and they used to have the Fiesta Del Oro, which was a big parade. There were a lot of contests going on like drilling with a hand drill and shoveling cars full of gravel. Then the used to have a rodeo, and football games and baseball games.

Baseball used to be pretty popular here at one time. Since we didn't have any mode of traveling the kids didn't have any place to go so they played ball.

Do you remember the different businesses that were around back then?

Well, they had the mining, the farming and the lumberjacking and all that. Spinco Hardware used to be a big hardware store, and still is. Cassanellis used to be a hardware store and grocery store. Delow's used to have not so much hardware but a lot of groceries and kitchen ware. That's the hardware stores in town.

Who were the big farmers and ranchers around?

As far as farmers are concerned I don't recall them, but I recall a lot of cattlemen. The Allens, and the Kreths. Fuller used to have a ranch, and I guess they still own a ranch.

What were they different gambling halls that were around here?

We had the one down there where the Bank of Amador is. It used to be was a subterranean gambling hall bar and restaurant called the Louvre. And then up the street a few buildings from the Bank of Amador used to be used to be the Bank Club. Across the street where the Wells Fargo is now used to be a gambling place. And up the street used to be the Pioneer Rex. And there were a couple more little ones around, but nothing else big.

Did the fact that the mines were up here do a lot to keep places in business?

Well, the people from down in the valley kept them pretty well in business too. They used to come up here and like to play around. You didn't see too many miners, except a few of them, mostly it was just people from out of town. That's about all the big gambling houses. The National Hotel had gambling and of course a restaurant and a bar. A lot of the places had slot machines, like some of the little bars, they might have two or three slot machines.

Do you remember some of the other jobs that some of the people in the mines had?

People in the mines had the mill upstairs. Upstairs they call it, on the top ground. The mill used to cut the timbers to take down into the mine and install them in the raises or the shaft and all that area.

Do you remember the switch from steam to electric power in the mine?

Yes, the Kennedy mine had a steam. I don't know if the Argonaut did or not. The Kennedy for a long time had a steam engine there, until the fire. Then the fire came through and they put in electric. But the steam always was faster than the electric.

Do you remember how the fire started?

No, but I think it started in the lumber yard pile, near the shaft down next to the saw mill. I was in school and all I remember is them blowing the whistle to get people up, I guess, and get them out of the mine, and to get help to put the fire out. But I guess they didn't get to

much help, or at least didn't get help enough, because she burned right to the ground, except the mill, the mill didn't burn.

What do you remember about the timber industry in Amador County at that time?

I don't remember that much, except Redlins, they were a lumber company, and you had Berry's, and then of course on the other side of town they Associated and all of those. Snyder had a mill around here one time, a long time ago.

Do you know if the loggers took their trees off of public land, or did they go on to private land too?

They had private property and government property too, sure. Actually, they used to buy the lumber from the private owner and then go in and log it. That's how they got their timbers.

What do you remember about the boarding houses around Jackson?

Well, there was one out here on Broadway, Paravich's, and Buscaglia's and Teresa's on Jackson Gate. Cosulu had the Broadway Hotel and he had some boarders there. Those were the prominent ones that I can remember, because I lived out of town at that time, and I was a little guy.

Did you ever work in any surface jobs at the mines, such as at the stamp mill?

No, I never worked there. There was the stamp mill, which had 120 stamps, which they didn't run all the time. They had the Oneida mill and they had the tables that would vibrate and pick up the gold, and they had the black sand that they shipped out, and later on they put in a floatation system, which used something like pine oil and they would blow up the wood and it would bring up the bubbles and the bubbles would be swept off into a container, which was supposed to have the very fine gold in it, and I don't know if it did or not.

Was that up at the cyanide plant?

No, this was done right in the mill, the cyanide plant came later. I don't know too much about that except it was a pretty big job.

Are there any memories you have of the mine that just really stand out in your mind?

Mainly the fires and the disasters. I was only about four years old when the Argonaut mine burned. Living up in Kennedy flat I could remember the people going by the house.

I do remember going up into the mill when they brought up all the fellas, and they had them all lined up in coffins. Very dimly, but I do remember that.

What was it like to actually go down in the mines?

I guess I was a little timid to begin with. You go down in that skip and that's enclosed, you had four sides holding you in, and then it's dark going down. You go fast, and you feel that skip oscillating in the shaft, but it's not that bad. I just went down and looked around. They

took me through a couple raises and they took me through San Quentin, which is awfully hot up there. The raises go almost up, and you have to walk up them. You don't get an elevator there, you have to walk, and it gets kind of tiresome. You go up a hundred feet on the little ladders. It was interesting. And of course they had electricity down there. They had it in the places where they were mining and working, and they also had carbide lamps. It gets pretty dark down there. It sure does; you can't realize until you go down there how dark it gets. You'd think if it's daylight out here it's daylight down there, but it's not, even with the hole going down in there. It gets pretty darn dark. I stayed for two or three hours.

Do you remember how long it took to get down?

Well, if it drops 1000 feet every three minutes and you have that little delay in between. I would say it probably took about five minutes to get down there. I'd say about five or ten minutes. I went all the way down the straight shaft. There they had a lift station and a little engine would take you another thousand feet on an incline. They had no more progress from that thousand feet except they had drifts going out.. That was the East Shaft, the Main Shaft.

Do you remember any specific sights, sounds, or smells from down in the mines?

Well, it was strange, but you could always hear the Argonaut mill and the Kennedy mill because they made a lot of noise, but by golly, when one of them shut down or both of them shut down it was so quiet you would wake up. You really would, you'd suddenly be wide awake and wonder what the devil was going on. They would close down for some kind of repair, and it would make a big difference.

Then the mills and the mines and the noise they made was just always part of your life?

That's right, up until 1941 when I went into the service it was part of my life.

Did it seem different with the mines shut down when you came back from the service?

Well, it was different to the extent that all the other industries came in and the mining was closed. Like the lumber came into real prominence, and cattle became quite an industry. That clay plant in Ione became much bigger. Everything became larger. I don't know if Central Eureka was working at that time or not. Central was the mine down in Sutter Creek. It was a gold mine too. That belonged to Hattie Green, I think.

Do you remember who owned the Kennedy and the Argonaut mines while you were growing up?

The Argonaut, I don't know, but the gentleman who ran the Oakland Tribune had quite a bit to do with it. I don't know if he was the sole owner; he was probably just a stockholder, but a large stockholder. Nolan, I think his name was. That's what you should do. Call Oakland, because they must have some kind of record of it, especially if this guy Nolan was in it. I think it Nolan. I don't know if they still have the Oakland Tribune. They must have some kind of records of the mine.

Did the owners come around the mine much?

I don't know if they came up or not, they may have come up. They had a nice big office up there, you can see it from the road. They had rooms in there, they had a kitchen, so maybe they did come up. They may have gone into the mine itself, but I don't know.

So the closing of the mine really helped other industries take off.

Oh, yes. That's what is keeping the town going now or was. Now whatever that lumber company that used to be is down. That's about it. Then they built those dams up here, the Pardee dams and those other dams, those brought in a few people. Then they had the fire stations up in the country there, the rangers. PG&E came in with their big plant. Well yes, they kept this little town pretty busy. Then they brought in some tourists, you might call them. Like the Places resort up the country, and Carson, and the other one over there, twin lakes. It's now Cable's Lake. There's also another one, Kay's, they used to have a resort too. The whole town benefited by those people, they had to come down and buy groceries, hardware, and stuff.

Where did you go, during the time of the mines, to get your groceries or gasoline or other necessities?

In town. We used to go to the meat market, which was Roger's at that time, Mother Lode Market, and Spinetti Bros. and Chicazola. That's about it. Once in a while we would slip off and go to Piggly Wiggly, which is now Lucky's, I believe.

Do you remember, after the fire, was there a lot more activity in the town?

There was a little bit more, not concerning the miners, but construction that was going up in the Kennedy mine. That brought in a lot of business and industry, like ironworkers, and big engine installers. I would say that the work was stable. There was about the same amount, because some of the miners did work on top. They had to clean up the area, That kept the miners going, and of course the Argonaut mine never stopped going.

Do you remember the installation of the new steel headframe and new buildings?

I can remember them installing those things, yes. Putting in the big engine and hoist, putting in the big new furnace, putting in the change room; they were trying to make it like the original. Of course they put in a new sawmill and everything like that. They put in a new tressle over to the mill, because half of it was burned down. I do remember the day, they used to have a little donkey pulling a cart over at the mill.

Talking about travel again, what was the trip to Sacramento or San Francisco like?

Sacramento takes about an hour now, so it was almost two hours then. The roads didn't really get any better. They were still bumpy and narrow, and curvy. To get to San Francisco took quite a bit of time. It took us three and a half or four hours to get there in the old Ford. Yes, at least three and a half hours. Then we took the ferry across to Frisco. That was quite a thing for us old country boys.

Did you really need to go to Sacramento, or was the town really self-sufficient?

Oh, yes. But after all, just like any other human being, you have to see what is on the other side of the hill, just like the chicken crossing the road. We used to go over there a lot because we're naturally Italian, and we used to go to these Italian grocery stores down there and buy Italian food once in a while. That was a big treat. Everybody else liked to do the same thing. Oh, and then they used to have the big Alhambra theatre down there, which used to be an attraction. That was quite a theatre. I remember it was gigantic. It was a Spanish type building. I used to go down there to see some of the films that used to come out in those days.

Since travel took longer then, could you get everything you needed in town?

All the necessities, let's put it that way.

Do you remember businesses that were around at the time of the mine, but have moved out since then?

Well, they lost two hardware stores. Cassanelli shut down a long time ago, and Joe Delow shut down a while ago.

Where they all located here in town?

Yes. It's up the street from Placer Savings, up about two doors from there. That was Cassanelli's and then... the other hardware store was in the same building as Well's Fargo. Delow, that's right Delow had a store.

Did you know anyone who was on a jury for the labor strikes?

No. I was too small to care about those things.

Do you remember about the labor unions they had at that time?

Well, they probably had a labor union in there, but I don't know of any. Then later on the mill came in, and I believe they did get a labor union. Carpenter Union or something of that sort. Politics wasn't my field, so I wasn't too interested. I should have been, I guess. My living depended on them, I guess.

After the mill came in, were they still taking trees off the private land?

Oh, yes. Of course this new fellow seems to have bought out everybody. They used to mill off of Boskovich's ranch up the hill there, and off of Mace's and all the places up there. They did have a lot of land up in that country that was privately owned. Of course, I don't have too darn much to do with the lumber companies or the lumber mills. I think that's what they did up there.

Getting back to your father, how many days a week did he work in the mine?

Well, he worked six days a week and once a year he got two weeks vacation.

What kind of jobs were around for teenagers back then?

Nothing except chores at home. Some might have gone looking for work in a grocery store or a hardware store. Younger people weren't allowed to go in the mines, though they might have been able to clean up the area around the top.

Was there a minimum age that you had to be to go in the mine?

No, I don't think there was. If you were big enough and strong enough and lied well enough you could get into the mine. Just like anything else, just like getting in the army. You gave your age as so and so, and if they took you fine and if you didn't you looked for something else.

Do you remember any funny stories or occurrences around the mine?

Oh, we used to have a tug-of-war team up here. In fact, I think they were California's champions. It was a team of miners. They used to have their practices over at the Kennedy mine. A lot of people used to go watch them. They sure grunted and groaned and pulled and strained, I'll tell you that. Big men, little men. Little men were stronger than a son-of-a-gun, I'll tell you. Little chunky fellas, you couldn't hardly pull them. There was one fella, they

couldn't ever pull him out of his cleats. But he didn't ever go on a team, he didn't care to. But he didn't mind pulling. He enjoyed that. They had quite a tug-of-war team up here.

Did you dad always work the same shift?

He had his shift yes, with a shift boss and so many men, and that's his group. They had an afternoon shift, an evening shift, and a day shift. So it was six to four, or whatever it was, or seven to four, I think, but I can't remember. Then they had people who would go down the hole at four o'clock and get out at twelve. They all rotated between shifts. Except the graveyard. I think the graveyard rotated also, but my dad never had to work the graveyard. He just had the morning and evening shifts.

Do you remember if the graveyard shift hauled all the water out?

That's right, that was one of their jobs. I forgot how many gallons that skip held too. But that skip must have been about twelve or fifteen feet long, and they filled the whole thing up with water. They filled it with water, pulled it up, and dumped it. Over and over again, all night long. They had sump pumps would pump it up to the tank, and that's how they loaded up the skips, from these tanks. I don't know how many they had.

Did all that weight ever cause problems with the skip?

Well, I think it jumped the track a couple of times. I don't think the wire ever broke, or anything like that. But maybe it did. If it did, it was before my time, before I could

remember. They had safety devices on those skips. When anything broke, they had shoes on the side that would clamp on the rails, that's all I can tell you. It held on the rail on the side of the shaft. They had two rails going up, that the skips ran on. If you go up to the mine, you can see one of those water tanks out there. Incidentally, all of the skips had those automatic brakes on them. You could see where they would squeal against the rails as they went down. Those were just for emergencies. Any slowing of the skip was done upstairs in the engine room, on the hoist. Those engines, or hoists, were quite a piece of machinery. We would sit up there and watch that wheel, and when the engineer hit the brakes, it would stop right on that level. Maybe it would go down a little bit, to make it level with the hole in the shaft. They were pretty clever, those boys, they never missed. That's 4800 feet underground, where you couldn't see.

Was there any way t communicate underground?

Well they had telephones, but in the skip they had a bell system. On the shaft. So many bells for a station, and so many bells to pull it up, and so many bells to stop, and so on. The bell rang in the shaft would be heard up in the hoist room. On the shaft collar, they used to have the same deal they had in the hoist room. Wherever that skip would stop, they would have a pointer, to show where it stopped. Then it could go back down again, or come up. That was to give the skip tender a notice too, of what was coming and going. When he heard a different bell, then he knew what he had to do. There were a lot of things. You had to get the water kegs down, and you had to get the equipment down, and the timbers had to go down. The skip tender was pretty busy.

Was there pressure on the man running the hoist, or was it one of the better jobs?

No, it was just like driving a car. I would say it was one of the better jobs. The other jobs were really dangerous. If somebody made a mistake, and left a live round somewhere, and it blew up, that was a cause of accidents.

Why was it you had no interest in mining?

Well, mainly, it was because my dad told me, "You're not going down in the mine." Secondly, I didn't think I would want to go in the mine after being down there for just those few hours. You get used to daylight, and then you get down there and it gets kind of funny. Depressing in a way, too. But then again, those guys get used to that mine and they'll never go to work anywhere else. Unless they definitely have to, like for the mines shutting down. Then they went into the lumber business. But my dad had a good job in Sacramento, in the railroad yard. He had been a miner before coming to Sacramento, and he quit that job and went into the mines. Just gets in your blood, I guess.

Did your dad tell you any horror stories about accidents in the mines?

Yes, but I don't want to tell you about that, because it might affect some of the people that died in the Argonaut mine. It wasn't horror, it was what they had to do to pick those poor guys up. You can imagine, down there twenty-some days, you can imagine what happened to their bodies. When they say they brought them up in baskets, that's what they did, they

brought them up in baskets. I don't want to tell you about what I heard, anyway. It was a gruesome thing. My dad had to deal with it first hand, he and the crew he was on.

(continuing, after a pause)

Well, they use to have a lot of good times in this country. The Fiesta Del Oro, and the old picnic grounds. In fact they had a big parade in the old days. The Italian Picnic was one of the biggest events, until they had the big Fiesta Del Oro come in. Then they had the mountainmen deal come in. They were pretty good sized too. They had plenty of entertainment up here. You could go hunting almost any time. There wasn't too many restrictions like there is now. Go down the road, and get a jackrabbit or two, and you would have fresh meat.

Did any other members of your family work in the mines?

No, just my dad. He was the only one in this country. I think my dad liked mining, not that anyone enjoys working, but it was good money, in his case. It was a job, but jeez, it killed him. Yep, it killed them all. They'd get silicosis, rock in the box. They were good hard workers in those days, just like the lumber jack. They used to like to drink their wine, and their whiskey, and their beer. Yet, you never saw too many fights or anything like that around here. The miners all got along pretty well. They were sort of separated in town; the Spanish were over here, the Mexicans were over here, the Italians up there, and the Englishmen someplace else. The Slavs were ever on Broadway. They were a pretty tough bunch of fellers, believe me. They had to be, to take that kind of beating.

Did the job in the mine actually pay pretty well?

Well, at that time, it paid fairly well, but it was a dangerous job. They didn't pay well enough until the unions came in, and then I think they did get more pay. The unions did get them a few more dollars. But, you know how it is, you see that gold stuff around you and you get light fingers once in awhile. You have all heard of the highgrading going on in the country, that helped a lot. It supplemented the wages. A lot of people got rich in this country buying that gold and reselling it.

Were the jewelers then pretty big business too?

No, just normal. In those days, there wasn't too much ornamental jewelry sold, except a lot of watches were sold. Railroad watches, and other types. Once in a while someone would splurge and buy something, with diamonds and stuff like that. There were only about two jewelers in town then, that I can remember. There were a lot of bars. I don't know how they survived, but they did. Like I said, those boys would drink up their party, I'll tell you. The bars were open from morning until cleanup, and then they'd open up again, or they would stay open while the cleanup was going on. All night long.

Would you say the bars and saloons were the most successful businesses in town?

No, I wouldn't say that. I would say there was a lot of them. Maybe one or two might have been more successful. There was a lot of competition. With twenty one of them, I'd say so. Imagine that in a town as small as this.

Did they all get pretty good business?

Well, yes. They would start from one end of town and go through the whole town, so everybody got a little bit of it. Of course some of them had their favorite. They would stay there all night and all morning, then get up off the stool and go to work. They had some pretty good parties.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Well, there were some practical jokes my dad told me about. Tie their clothes in knots, just like young kids do, or nail their shoes to the floor. The miners had a lot of fun with each other. Of course everyone was watching out, because you never knew who would be the next to get it. They were no different than we are, practical jokes are always a lot of fun. We did talk about the water keg they took down in the mine.

Why don't you tell us some more about it?

Well, they used to have a little compressor that would make ice cold water, and it had a little barrel, with about a fifteen gallon tank on it. They would hang them on the skip and take them down in the mine. That's how the miners got their cool water. Even starting out ice

cold, it would be hot toward the end of it. In some places it was really hot down there. Like that one place I told you about, San Quentin, it was really hot. It was hot because it was so far down. They was no running current air in there except blowing through those pipes. And those pipes weren't actually cold air, like you see now, but it would blow on you so you felt cool. That level in there was about eight feet wide and about eight feet tall. That's what they were going after, that ledge that was that wide.

Before the disaster, was there a lot of rivalry between the Argonaut and Kennedy mines?

I'd imagine there would be. That's some I wasn't interested in and didn't know about. I wouldn't be surprised if there was rivalry between them. In fact there was rivalry between each shift. I heard the old timers talk about the Oneida, out by Jackson Gate, they'd go down and they would try to beat the other team. Cousin Jacks were pretty good men, because they did come from England, so they knew a lot more than the people over here did. If you were a cousin Jack, which is an Englishman, they got a job before almost anyone did, because they were miners coming over here. They did bring over something that was real good, and that was the large pasty, the Cousin Jack pasty. They were good. They would make the dough, and they'd put in meat, potatoes, and onions. And then they would fold it over and bake them. The old Cousin Jack, that my mother used to make. She learned from this English lady. They used salt and pepper, onion, potato, and meat. It was a special kind of meat. They used hamburger now. They used to buy the meat and cut it off into little pieces. Then the Italians had their raviolis, the Spanish had their chilizo, and the Slavs had their contadina. Next time we'll have to talk about the diets of the different ethnic groups.