

## **BENNY MARTINEZ**

### Oral History Interview

Statewide Oral History Project, Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program  
Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining

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*This is Lee Bennett and I'm here today at the home of Benny Martinez to interview him about his mining experiences in Utah. Jim Mattingly is also here and is recording the interview. Bennett later added the footnotes.*

LB: To get things started, I'd like you to give me your full name and your date of birth.

BM: Emiliano Benny Martinez, born March 1, 1926.

LB: Where were you born?

BM: In Monero, New Mexico on a Spanish Land Grant.

LB: What part of New Mexico is that?

BM: Over by Chama. See, that's part of a land grant.

LB: And how did you get into this neck of the woods?

BM: The New Mexico Lumber Company owned a sawmill at Dulce, New Mexico, and they moved it from Dulce over here to McPhee, and my dad came with it. They took it down and set it back up at McPhee.<sup>1</sup> My dad stayed working at it until they got it all up, and then I came out. My mother went back to see my grandpa over there and then she moved over here, to McPhee. But I was born in New Mexico.

LB: Ok. Your mining experience in Utah was in Lisbon Valley, is that right?

BM: It's right on top of Lisbon Valley on the rim of East Canyon, overseeing Church Rock. It is right on the rim. The name of the mine was Humbug.

LB: Do you remember who had that mine?

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<sup>1</sup> In 1924 the New Mexico Lumber Company erected the mill and established the company town of McPhee, Colorado. Peak operation was in 1927 and the town had about 1400 occupants. McPhee produced more than one-half of Colorado's annual lumber in that year (The River of Sorrows: The History of the Lower Dolores River Valley, Gregory D. Kendrick editor, National Park Service, Denver, CO, 1981).

BM: I can't remember their last name. I leased it direct from some private people and they lived in Little Gyp [Little Gypsum Valley, Colorado]. I leased it from them. I mined it until I ran out of ore. I mined there about 2-3 years.

LB: Do you remember when you started? What year it might have been?

BM: It was around 1965.

LB: How did you learn about that Humbug mine?

BM: I knew the people that owned it, so I leased it off of them. Somebody else had leased it and they couldn't make it pay. I leased it from them and made it pay. I did pretty good for about 2 years in there. One year the crew got snowed in and we were snowed in for about 15 days. They had to stay there during Christmas; it was a big, big snowstorm. Apparently these people had leased it from Climax. Climax used to take care of us. They would fly over us and see how our groceries were doing. They sent a big snowcat and took the people out to Monticello to get their groceries, then they brought them back.<sup>2</sup>

LB: Tell me, from Monticello how you got out to the mine. What roads did you take?

BM: What number? The one going to Moab, the road going to Moab from Monticello. There's a road that turns right before Church Rock. The road zigzags up to the rim of East Canyon.<sup>3</sup> Also, we can get from West Summit over there, too. There's a road there on the rim. Some of my mines were in that area, in Colorado--the Delany Group--and I mined there. I had about 4-5 different mines there. I was sinking a shaft, or driving a drift or an incline. I started mining in 1960 until about 1970. I had mines all over and I had 33 men working for me. I had mines in the Dolores Group over by the river in Slick Rock [Colorado] and then up on top by the Spud Patch [northeast of Egnar, Colorado], and Bishop Canyon where I had Summit 21 and Strawberry Roan.<sup>4</sup> In the Spud Patch I had Marn #2 that I leased from VCA [Vanadium Corporation of America]. I never mined for Union Carbide. I would not lease from them because they wanted to keep the depletion allowance, and that's a big plus when you're mining. Depletion is quite a bit, you get it off the top, from the gross instead of the net. [By keeping the depletion allowance] I could stay in business, otherwise you couldn't hardly make it. That's why a lot of those little guys couldn't make it. They didn't realize, they didn't even know about the depletion allowance. That was income for me because I able to deduct that tax right off the top. I had a mine way

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<sup>2</sup> Upon reviewing the draft transcript, Mr. Martinez recalled that a bulldozer had been sent in to clear the road to the mine. The operator parked it for the night and a blizzard buried it completely. That's when Climax decided to send in the snowcat.

<sup>3</sup> Although road numbers have changed since the 1960s, he is talking of US-191 north of Monticello and its intersection with San Juan County Road 108, which continued to CR 105 in the bottom of East Canyon. The zigzag road he mentions is today little more than an ATV trail.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Canyon, located east of Egnar, Colorado, is a tributary of Summit Canyon, which begins in Utah but ends at the Dolores River near Slick Rock, Colorado.

down in Silvey's Pocket in Big Gyp,<sup>5</sup> that was also from VCA. I mined Summit 21 from the VCA. Then the VCA somehow ended up Climax, and Climax ended up with Root.<sup>6</sup> Finally the price of ore got so low that I couldn't afford to mine it. The price of ore had to be \$100 per ton in order to make it because the expenses were so high. When I couldn't make it in 1970, I just quit. I quit mining because I just couldn't afford it. I was the last of the little ones, of the little guys. I had my family helping me. I had my boys helping me. They mined with me. They were only about 16 or 17. I got caught a few times by Cal Warnicka, the mine inspector, with my boys in there. I'd get chewed out, then he'd leave and they'd go back in. But we made it. We did well.

LB: The ore from the Humbug, where did you ship that?

BM: That went to Grand Junction. It went to the Climax mill in Grand Junction.<sup>7</sup> From Summit 21 went to Naturita.<sup>8</sup> Some of the Delany [ore] went to Shiprock, and some of it went to Durango, to VCA in Durango.<sup>9</sup> Gem #2 on the rim of the Dolores that went to Durango, also, to the VCA in Durango. I shipped all over. I had my own permit; in those days you had to have a B Permit to haul ore.<sup>10</sup> The trucking was regulated then, but now you can haul anything you want. But at the time you couldn't, you had to have a B Permit in order to haul ore. I bought a truck from Charlie Griffith so I hauled my own ore. Also, my brother-in-law, Johnny Francisco, he hauled for me for about seven years under my permit. They had a hard time finding him on record because I paid him myself for the hauling. VCA paid me with a separate check for the hauling and I just signed it [over to Johnny].

LB: So they paid you once for the ore and again for the hauling?

BM: Yes. Hauling was \$.06 per ton per mile. Uranium at the time was \$55 a pound, and vanadium was around \$7 a pound. When you had vanadium in your mine you did pretty good but some mines did not have much vanadium. The Humbug was mostly vanadium, big in vanadium.<sup>11</sup> Real black ore. I had a cave in one time, the whole back caved in, so we had to go in and get it all out and start over again. Like I said, I had cabins for my men that worked there.

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<sup>5</sup> Silvey's Pocket is in Little Gypsum Valley, which is actually the northern extension of Big Gypsum Valley.

<sup>6</sup> Rather than Root, it was Foote Mineral Company.

<sup>7</sup> Climax Uranium Company operated the Grand Junction mill between 1951-1970, with about 2/3 of their ore coming from individual mines in the Uravan Mineral Belt (Summary History of Domestic Uranium Procurement Under U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Contracts by Holger Albrethsen and Frank McGinley, 1982, US Dept of Energy, Grand Junction, CO, pg A-15). In 1968 the Climax mill was one of two uranium mills that produced U3O8 concentrate exclusively for the commercial market (not the AEC) (C.L. Bieniewski and W.C. Henkes, "The Mineral Industry of Colorado," in Minerals Yearbook 1968, viewed at <http://images.library.wisc.edu/EcoNatRes/EFacs2/MineralsYearBk/MinYB1968v3/reference/econatres.minyb1968v3.cbieniewski.pdf>).

<sup>8</sup> Vanadium Corporation of America ran a mill at Naturita, Colorado from 1949-1963, but maintained an ore buying station there until 1967, when VCA was merged into Foote Mineral Company (Albrethsen and McGinley 1982, pg A-24 to A-25).

<sup>9</sup> VCA acquired the Shiprock mill in 1963 and ran it until 1968. They operated the Durango mill until 1968 as well (Albrethsen and McGinley 1982, pg A-10, A-64).

<sup>10</sup> The authorizations on this permit and the issuing agency are unknown.

<sup>11</sup> Atomic Energy Commission records indicate that between 1948-1970, the Humbug produced about 23,000 pounds of uranium and 321,000 pounds of vanadium.

I had about 4-5 men there. Depended, sometimes one or two wouldn't show up, but they kept going. We hauled the ore out with a shuttle buggy, a little diesel buggy you could drive in there. [It had] a scrubber to get the carbon out of the exhaust; the carbon monoxide would catch on the scrubber. We did pretty good.

LB: So you had a little mine camp there for the fellows?

BM: Yes I did. About every mine that I've mined had cabins for them, or old trailers, or built some shacks in there for them to stay in. They'd go home and I paid them every two weeks. They went home practically every weekend but I only paid them every two weeks. I did pretty good. I had good people. Some groups of miners, they liked to drink--tramp miners really liked to drink and fight. If the drunken group missed Monday after payday, they would make it up on Saturday. I always worked five days a week and 40 hours a week. But I got along real well.

LB: Were they local fellows?

BM: No, they were from Dolores, Mancos, Cortez, and Summit Ridge. A bunch were from the reservation, and some from Mexico. They all did well. Everybody got paid the same. There was no differential on a miner, driller, or mucker; they all got paid the same. We didn't have problems or complaints because everybody got paid the same.

LB: Do you remember what you paid them?

BM: Five dollars an hour. I paid by check and they had their Social Security paid and all that. That's how come they can go back and get records. When they get bad lungs they can go back and check the payroll records and they don't have to remember where they worked or who they worked for. It was all in the record. Some, even now, try to tell me that they mined for me so I would sign for them so they can get it, the uranium money. At first I paid them cash but I only had two [employees] at first. After that I started keeping records and paid their Social Security and everything. I did get in trouble twice and the federal government took \$18,000 I had in the bank, different banks for different mines. So they left me broke. I had made payroll and I went ahead and talked to the bank and the banker told me he would cover them [payroll checks], even though he wasn't supposed to. He would cover me until we could go back and high grade, and ship some more to get the money in. Which I did, we went back in and I told the men what had happened. I said, "I know you have kids and you need money to live on, but for 30 days there'll be no payday until we get some more in there." I got them credit at the store where they could buy their groceries, make a bill. Then when we got going again and they got paid, they would pay their grocery bill. I had good credit with the banks, stores, everything. Some of them [miners] couldn't take it, they had kids in school, so they left. When I got going again they came back. I had a good record with my people, I had no problem. They'd fight among themselves, they'd get drunk on Saturday night sometimes, but with me I had no problems at all. The men themselves took care of the lazy ones; if they didn't work they didn't stay. The Navajos were good workers and they wanted everyone to put out, to do their share. They would tell me if they didn't want that guy because he was too lazy. They would bring another man in to replace him. Other than that I had no problem, everyone got along with everybody. I had my family working

with me, too, clear down to about 12 years old they'd be out there doing something. Sorting the rocks out of the ore; when they'd dump it in the bin they would pick out the rocks. I had two [sons working in the mines], one died already and the other one has bad lungs and we're trying to get him the money now. My kids I paid with cash, I didn't make them a check because they were only 16; they weren't supposed to be working. They have records now, they found ways of getting their money; he's going to get his money because he's got bad lungs, bad lungs. Other than that I can't tell a whole lot more, except about the mines in Colorado. I had them all over. I did have one in Arizona, Teec Nos Pos, but the ore was not good enough to ship so I did not keep it very long. I stayed there about two months and left it.

LB: Did you actually go underground and mine?

BM: Yes, I did most of the geology work. And when there was a man missing I would take his place. But the mucking, they wouldn't let me muck. They wanted a mucker who would get in there and get with it (laughter).

LB: You were too slow?

BM: I was too slow, I guess, for them. So they said, "No, no, no. You go do something else, we'll take care of it." They wouldn't let me, but anything else. I did the hoisting, I did the geology work, and once in a while I'd go in and help them muck. But like I say, they didn't want me to muck. I could drill, I drilled ok with those machines. I bought mostly the Cleveland drilling machines because they were lighter than the Rand, the other brand were heavy machines. They were too heavy. I had extra machines in case one went down. There were all the same brand so I kept extra parts. I did my own repairs. That was my job, keeping the equipment. They never complained except when the people were not good enough, they didn't like the way they worked, then they would tell me. Or tell my brother, he was my foreman at some of the mines. He'd let him [the unproductive man] go. That only happened maybe five times in ten years. Most of the time if one didn't show up, they'd bring another one, the Navajos did, from the reservation. I had 33 men working for me a big part of the time.

LB: How many of them worked for you at the Humbug?

BM: About four or five. It depends. Once in a while we had quite a bit of ore and we'd put on an extra shift. That way they worked day and night, sometimes.

LB: You say you did the geology. Can you describe for me inside the mine, what the ore body looked like?

BM: It depends. Sometimes the uranium on the Brushy Basin doesn't run like in the Shinarump. The Shinarump is mostly level but the Brushy Basin goes up and down, up and down. If that ore started to go up it would come down and create a big pocket [gesturing] on the other side. A lot of people quit when the ore got to the top. If the ore went down to the bottom, most of the time that was the end of it. But if the ore went up, most of the time I would put in a long hole, drill a 100 ft hole in the face to check the ore behind there. That's how come we did better than

most of the little guys, because I had the equipment to do it with. I'd just drill [gesturing], no more than 100 ft, and if I didn't get any trace ore we just didn't follow it. But sometimes that ore would take a quick right or a quick left or go off; it very seldom if ever went down. That ore on the Brushy Basin just goes like this [gesturing in an undulating manner]. Once in a while it would take a big dive up to the top, then come back down again. I had one mine, the Gem #2 on the rim, we drilled a little ore and the next day [after the explosives went off], there was a whole big face of ore, the whole 6 ft [high] and about 12 ft wide. When you're in ore you go with ore, when you don't have ore you get back down to about 6 ft [wide] drift; 6 ft x 6 ft. That way the men don't have to be ducking all the time. On the Gem #2 we drilled one day and the next morning that whole face was ore. We drilled one round and that was it. It [ore] ran out. One round was all we did, 6 ft, and that was the end of it. We drilled a long hole and [found] nothing. Apparently it was a crack and the ore fell in there. That was the end of that and I quit mining that one. It was good vanadium and good uranium.

LB: When you see uranium on the face, what color is it?

BM: I had ore that was green, yellow, gray; different colors. It never was just one color. We had some that was pure yellow. I mean yellow yellow, some was black black. When you had vanadium it was usually black or real dark. I had one mine, it was a tree and [the previous operators] left it because it looked just like sandstone. I checked it with my counter and it was good ore. I mined that; it was a log. You could see the circles on the log [growth rings]. It was good ore. I looked just like sand rock [sandstone], but it was good ore in there. You had to go not just by sight, you had to use this machine [pointing to his Geiger counter] because it will tell you whether it is ore or not. Like I say, it came in a lot of different colors. Gray, green; you couldn't tell by the color. I had one mine way down in Gyp Valley, the Penju, it had gray rock and it was 17% lime. The ore was about twenty-one hundredths, but it had so much lime that the mills couldn't take it. They couldn't mill it, it messed up their chemicals. The Penju was over by Dry Basin [Colorado]. Ore was different colors, you could never go by color. Sometimes it would change colors as you went. In the Summit 21 mine [Colorado] we drove a drift and we put in a raise up there, about 25-30 feet into ore. It was a big pocket, about 30 feet wide. It was good ore, it was a gray-looking ore. They canceled my lease. The VCA had a habit of canceling my lease as soon as I hit high grade. They were paying 15% royalty and they gave me 30 days. I didn't have a contract the way I should have to keep the lease for [a specific period] of time. But I didn't. In the Marn #2 in the Spud Patch I had five drifts with ore in different directions. I don't know if it was a tree or what the deal was, but I had about 3-4 ft of ore going different directions. They canceled my lease on that, gave me 30 days, so we went day and night. Sometimes we'd get all the ore out before I had to let it go. The men were willing to work because they were looking out for me and for themselves, too. On that one, they paid me for driving the drift. Climax would pay for driving the drift, that's how come I could afford to drive a long drift. They would pay me \$35 a foot to drive drift and that made the expenses. It paid the men; I didn't make much profit on that one. But it paid the labor and the expenses; when I got to the ore I would make some profit. It was a very satisfying job for me. I had minded coal before but never very long. I didn't like it. You'd come out all filthy and my wife had a lot of trouble getting my clothes clean. She didn't have a washing machine at the time. Anyway, that's about it on my mining. Of course, now I have bad lungs from that, about 19% bad on my lungs. I have a

nurse that comes every two weeks and checks on me and I go to Grand Junction every 2-3 years to have my lungs checked. In three years it had gone 1% bad; it had been 18% bad. I do take care of myself. I don't hang around anyplace where there is smoke. I stay away from the people and the places where they smoke. They can't smoke in my pickup.

LB: Can I ask you how you mine on an incline? For example, if you exploratory drilling finds an ore body up above where you've been working, how do you get there?

BM: You put in a raise. You mine straight up. There is a machine that drills straight up. The leg pushes the drilling machine up to drill. As you go you drill to the side and put stubs in and put planks [on the stubs to make a platform] to work on. You don't put scaffolding up, you drill in the walls and put timbers to stand on. You have to take them off every time you shoot, otherwise they'd break. After you get up in there you separate it, you separate the wall from the ore. You go off on one side [of the ore]. Some places you don't [separate the ore], you just put a ladder and go up. But most of the time you have to put a [separation] because the ore breaks from the face and hits the crossbeams. You have to keep it separate so you don't break up your ladder. In the Slick Rock area the rocks are pretty solid but in some places the rocks are too loose to put in the stubs. You have to be careful. We had square sets to put up in there [when the rocks were too loose]. But mostly you separate your wall from the ore bin and you have to keep the bottom pretty clean. Otherwise the ore is likely to break your ladder, your work space going up. I had experienced miners that did that. One miner had done that a lot for different companies, so he was usually the guy who did the raises. You go up, then you go to the side, and you mine to the side. It is real interesting. I had good people working for me; I didn't have to do any of that myself. But, like I say, I did all of the geology work in the mines that I mined. At some places the [prior] miners would quit, they'd give up, so I'd lease that mine. I'd go in and look it over, do the geology work on it and if it looked like it would pay I'd go ahead and lease it. I'd buy their equipment and everything. I kept buying people out. They'd give up and either go to work for me or for someone else instead of mining on their own.

LB: How did you learn the geology part of it?

BM: Just by studying it. I didn't have any schooling on it, but I read books about mining. There was no written book on uranium. Gold and different minerals there were [books], but not on uranium. Once you get in there you learned, you study it and you learn it. I don't know of any mine in the Shinarump that had vanadium, it was mostly uranium. It was deep and usually level, the ore bodies were usually level. Apparently at one time it just flooded over, I don't know how it formed up.

LB: The Shinarump is an old riverbed. The ore body follows a river course, from what I've been told.

BM: On the Brushy Basin and Slick Rock, yes. But the Shinarump ones that I've been in it had to be a pretty wide river because it was a pretty wide formation. The Brushy Basin and Slick Rock went kind of like that [gestures in an undulating manner], and made different turns quickly.

The Shinarump I found pretty level and pretty straight, 'til it ran out, then you had to go find it again.

LB: How far in was the Humbug?

BM: I would say at the most, probably, half a mile when I quit. It was quite a ways back in there.

LB: How did you deal with ventilation?

BM: I had blowers with vent pipes. Plastic pipe. That's one thing I had good, except one time. In the Marn mine I had gasoline motors running the blowers. I had big blowers. Something happened and the wind shifted and started sending the exhaust into the blower. It was sucking the exhaust out of the motor and sending it down below. I had about three men who were getting gassed. The ore quit coming out, the car was on a track and down there. They were supposed to be mucking and shipping the ore out. It was an incline. It took a while for the [ore car] to come back so I sent a guy in to see what the problem was. He found out the men were down, they were gassed. Right away I sent some help. We went down there and put them in the ore car and hauled them out into fresh air. They came out druggy [groggy] from down there. When the fresh air hit them they would fall. They just sank. I've been gassed one time and my knees turned to jelly. No strength to do anything. I checked and somehow the exhaust was going down to the bottom [into the mine]. I had to correct that problem quick, and learned not to do that; to be careful how you set your gas engine to run your blower. That was a big, big thing at the time, you had to have air. Dr. Sycamore, the one from Grand Junction, he used to come down there and check on us. He's the one that started that place in Grand Junction to check the miners. He's pretty famous. Sycamore, or something like that. He used to come down and check with us. He was a federal man. I never did get checked in Utah. I never had an inspector in the Humbug come check on me, but I did in Colorado. About once a month an inspector from Colorado would come by there and check us. Cal Warnicka, of course he died pretty young. He got exposed to bad air going to these mines. He died pretty young. He was the inspector for Colorado. He was a good, real good, inspector.

LB: How come the Utah operation didn't get inspected?

BM: I don't know, but I never did get inspected in the Humbug. They probably didn't have time there were so many miners around White Canyon and those places. They probably stayed pretty busy. I don't know why I never got inspected. I was shipping to Colorado, so [maybe] they never knew I was working. But I never did get inspected in Utah.

LB: When you were working on the Humbug and you had a camp for your workers, you stayed in that camp as well?

BM: Sometimes I did.

LB: Did you work year-round?

BM: Yes, year-round. Like I said, in some places two shifts. We'd blast and then go hunting. Around that area where we lived, way out in the sticks, there was no game warden who came around. We had deer pretty regularly. At one time things were getting pretty rough and we killed a deer and hung it up, and the game warden came around and saw it. He said, "Benny, just don't waste it." We were eating deer at the time. At the mines it sometimes gets pretty slim. They always got paid. The men got paid before I took out a penny for myself. The men always got paid. The miners liked that deer and they liked their beer! We never wasted any meat, like the game warden said, "Don't waste it."

LB: Where was your family living at this time?

BM: In Dove Creek [Colorado]. When I first started I lived in Egnar [Colorado]; I had a mechanic shop. What happened was all the miners started coming and bringing in big checks. At those times the mining was pretty good and the guys were getting paid pretty good compared to other jobs. I'd see all those big checks coming in, so I closed up my shop and started leasing mines. I started out with a partner on the Strawberry Roan mine. That was the first one in Bishop Canyon. I ran out of ore so I opened up another one with just two men. Pretty soon I kept growing, hitting ore, and I never wasted much. My wife was real economical. Whatever money we made is what she made do with. Like I say, I had my kids helping me so that helped a lot, too. Everybody pitched in. When they couldn't work in the mines they'd work for farmers so we could always make it. My wife didn't like going to mines and she never went into the mines. Annie, my daughter, did, she went up there to cook for us in the summer time. I had a place of my own up there, a cabin of my own. She'd come and do the cooking for us, washing our clothes and everything like that in the summer time. Some of the boys didn't like the mining, so they didn't go.

LB: Did you have a large family?

BM: We had eight of our own and then we adopted one. Then my sister got leukemia from the fallout from the test in Nevada. She died from that fallout from Nevada. She and my wife were real good friends and she asked my wife if we could raise her boy and her little daughter she had at the time. She had three children. She had been married before and [these children] were from that man. She had a baby with her [second] husband and they wanted to keep the baby. So we took the two. Two other orphans came, my nieces, to live with us and they wouldn't go back to the orphanage. So we raised eight of our own, adopted one, that made nine, then we raised four more. We had 13 kids at home at one time. We had 10 kids in school at one time in Dove Creek. My wife made it work. She sewed and cleaned houses, then she cleaned the school and drove bus. She taught English to the Mexican kids and Spanish to the white kids. She could speak both languages fluently. We got along pretty good. Sometimes we had a pretty slim month but we always got by ok.

LB: When your men were mucking out the mine, did they have an overhead loader they mucked with?

BM: They did at one of the mines. Summit 21 had an Eimco 12 overshot mucking machine. Most of the time they did it by hand. At some of the Delanys I had a diesel loader doing that, a little Allis Chalmers 3. Steel to rock wears out pretty fast; that's why rubber tired buggies worked so good, they'll take the beating. But the iron didn't do too good on the rocks.

LB: We're just about done here but I have one more question for you. When we talked on the phone you mentioned that you might have invented some things, beyond just repairing equipment. Or adjusted things to work better?

BM: Yes I did. If you had a set of tracks that you could move out of the way, instead of tracks all the way in, it would work better. Mucking is hard when on the rails. So we made a set of tracks we could move when we were ready to blast, instead of leaving them in there to muck. Then we'd carry them back in and put them back in place. They were a regular set that we could remove. That's about it on the mining end. Now I do a lot of building and inventing for myself for this area here [pointing to his yard].

LB: On the table beside you, is that a Geiger counter?

BM: Yes, Geiger counter. That's the one I started with, the little machine that I started with.

LB: What did that cost you when you got it?

BM: Fifty dollars. It's a Lucky Strike [brand]. It's the first one they came out with.

LB: Can you pick it up and show us? Do you aim it at the ore body? How does it work?

BM: This one here you just carry it. You had a chip over here [pointing to clips on the side of the unit] that had 1% ore. That's how you adjusted your machine here [points to knob]; set it at 1%. You could also put a probe on this.

LB: Did you run a probe down the drill hole?

BM: Yes I did. This one here [Luck Strike Geiger counter] isn't the one with the probe. I had another one with a probe. I had a drill rig so I did my own ventilation holes. You can put a [micro]phone here [points to a connector on the Geiger counter] and listen to the dinging, because it ticks quite a bit. It's interesting. Like I said, you just carry it around and when it starts clicking the needle would tell you what percent of ore you have. Or what grade of ore you have. I bought that Lucky Strike 50 some years ago for \$50 and I've still got it.

LB: Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to tell us about mining, particularly at the Humbug?

BM: I didn't have any bins there, we just laid [the ore] on the ground and they would pile it up there in the wintertime. We couldn't haul it out of there in the wintertime. The trucks couldn't go in there in the wintertime, so we just piled it up. In the spring everyone would get a bonus if

the grade was over twenty-one hundredths. Anything over twenty-one hundredths we'd get a bonus from VCA. I shared the bonus with the men. By spring they had a big pile of ore there and they'd start hauling it.

LB: How did they load the truck?

BM: With a tractor. My brother-in-law had a tractor with a loader on it and he did most of the hauling. My brother-in-law, Johnny Francisco. He hauled for me for seven years.

LB: What kind of truck did he drive?

BM: At that time he had a GMC, about a 1957 GMC 1-1/2 ton. Just a small truck and it would haul up to wherever he went. He bought a little bigger truck to haul to Grand Junction. I own the truck now; I still have that truck. Some of the curves we could not make with a big truck. Later on they had trucks with pups on them, a trailer behind the truck, but we couldn't get into some of the mines [with those trucks and pups]. It had to be just a single axle or just the main truck; no pups. On the rim, on that one up on the rim, they came out this way through West Summit. That's all I can tell you on the Humbug. We mined there for about two years and had a good time.

LB: Thank you so much. This has been just fascinating.

BM: Thank you. It was interesting. I just loved it. Mining is a very interesting job. I could go way back in there, but to climb, I won't climb. I don't like to climb. Down and horizontal, I'd went wherever to prospect. But not to climb. It was funny. I had to tie myself, one time, to a ladder because it was a 100-foot shaft. I went down to check it out and I went back up, about halfway, and I got shock, I guess you'd call it. I had to tie myself with my belt, it had a light on it, to the ladder because I froze. Until I settled down again. I had a guy up there that was supposed to have been talking to me from the top. I could climb or go down but I could not look up or down. I had to just look at the wall. When I got out the guy that was supposed to have been up there talking to me, he had left and was just walking around the area. When I got out I chewed him out. He was supposed to be up there waiting for me, watching for me. I just don't like the height. Now I can get on my roof to work on my roof but before I couldn't hardly do that. That's about all.