FAYE LEE MARTIN

Oral History Interview

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

April 3, 2014

This is Lee Bennett and I'm here today at Faye's home in Spring Glen, Utah to interview her for the Utah mining history project. The interview is being recorded by Jim Mattingly.

LB: For the record would you state your name and your date of birth, and where you are now.

FM: Faye Lee. My birthday is 2/11/48 [66 yrs old]. I'm in Helper, Utah.

LB: Not Spring Glen?

FM: Spring Glen, Utah.[1] Right!

LB: I know the address is Helper.

FM: Yes, it is.

LB: Where were you born?

FM: I was born in Standardville, Utah.[2]

LB: Where is that?

FM: That is about four miles out of Helper.

LB: East or West?

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[1] Spring Glen once referred to the farming area that extended southward from Castle Gate to Blue Cut and its first settler was James Gay, who arrived in 1878. The area was one of two major farming locales for Carbon County but lost some of its fields when the railroad established a place were extra engines could be added to trains and the LDS Church established a community; these two locations are known today as Helper, Utah. The community of Spring Glen was probably established in 1888 (Ronald G. Watt, A History of Carbon County, Utah State Historical Commission and Carbon County Commission, 1997, pg 2, 40).

[2] Standardville was established about 1912 for miners working in the nearby Standard Mine. The mine closed in 1950 and the community was soon abandoned ("Carbon County Ghost Towns - Page 4" at legandsofamerica.com, viewed on April 13, 2014).

FM: Towards Salt Lake.[3] You can see some of the little houses that were there on the left hand side as you're going up. The hospital and mine house.

LB: That was a little coal miners' community?

FM: Yes.

LB: Ok. That must mean your family were coal miners.

FM: They were.

LB: How many generations of coal miners?

FM: As far back as I can remember. My grandfather came from Italy; he was a coal miner. My uncles soon became coal miners, then my nephews. But I'm the only woman that became a coal miner. Against everyone's wishes.

LB: How long have you lived here in Spring Glen?

FM: I was born and raised here but I moved away for a while. Then I came back and I've been here four years.

LB: How old were you when you started mining?

FM: I was about 24 [1972]

LB: Why did you go into the mines?

FM: I had a daughter that was a diabetic and we'd just found out. I had a husband who was a drunk and would not stay working. I needed the insurance badly. Without insurance we couldn't make it, so I decided it was either the mine or welfare. I chose the mine and went to the mine, begged for a job, got my job, and my daughter got her insurance.

LB: So which mine did you go to work in?

FM: Wilberg.[4]

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[3] When the US Geological Survey compiled the Price, Utah 1:250,000 map in 1956 they placed Standardville about 5 miles west of Helper along a road that served the small communities of Mutual, Rains, Latuda, Standardville, Spring Canyon, and Peerless. The same locations are shown on the DeLorme Utah Atlas and Gazetteer of 1993 pg. 46. Both maps show an area north of Helper and left (west) the highway to Salt Lake City on which foundations can be seen today; that location is labeled Martin.

[4] The Wilberg Mine is located at the northern terminus of SR-57 on National Forest land in Emery County, about 12 miles northwest of Orangeville, Utah. The mine was named for its developer, Cyrus Wilberg, who opened it in 1945 or 1949. In 1958 it was divided into separate operations, the Wilberg and Cottonwood; they shared a surface plant that handled coal from those two mines and the Trail Mountain Mine. Coal from the latter was moved via beltline through the former mines to the exterior plant. The Cottonwood-Wilberg complex includes a lease area of about 6800 acres (Edward A. Geary, A History of Emery County, Utah State Historical Society and the Emery County

LB: You mentioned that your family was not totally supportive of this new occupation of yours. What were they afraid of?

FM: My uncles. Of course, being a woman we were bad luck going in a mine. Women weren't allowed in a mine. My uncle forbid me to go non-union for the first thing. The second thing, they really didn't want me under[ground] because they were so afraid of what could happen. But like I told them, I could walk out on that street and be killed just like you can underground.

LB: What was your first job?

FM: I was on an all-girl crew. This was the greatest job! We were paid U4, which is next to the highest paid job. We went and picked up garbage, which was timber, boxes, cans of oil. We'd do that in the morning and in the afternoon we'd kind of mess around. It was straight days, which was fantastic. Not everybody got straight days.

LB: So you sort of did grounds maintenance at first.

FM: Right. Underground. And we got to learn so much because we had time, they had time to teach us things. We did some masonry work, we learned to drive motors, so it was really an interesting job. We got to learn more than most.

LB: And was this done as a way to groom you for some other position underground?

FM: You know, I'm really not sure. We could bid, of course, if we chose to. Straight days, with my children, was fantastic. Grade 4 was next to highest grade; you couldn't beat that! I worked in the mornings and had the afternoons to learn all that mining. We went to the face, we went exploring in places we shouldn't be.

LB: How many were on this crew?

FM: There were seven women and one man besides our boss.

LB: What was your impression when you first went underground?

FM: The first time when I went under, we went to a mine that was a scab mine [non-union]. The guy that was taking us through it--I'm only 4 ft 11 [inches] tall--he would grab me by the back of the pants and haul me up and down. My first impression was that it was white under there; it's not black, it's white! It was because of the rock dust. I didn't stop to think that they rock dusted underneath there. Everything was snow white! It was a little different. There were lights underground and there was machinery going. I thought it was going to be pick and shovel and black. It was like there were rooms underground, actually.

Commission, 1996, pg 328; Cottonwood/Wilberg Permit C0150019, Utah Coal Program, Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining).

LB: For all the mining in your family, it was kind of a surprise when you got under there yourself.

FM: Right. They [the family] didn't do a lot of talking. Today you get miners together, they talk, talk, talk about mining. Back then I don't remember my uncles doing that. We met as a family every night and we never talked about mining. I don't remember ever hearing much about mining. Today you get miners together and that's all you'll hear.

LB: How did you get from your house to the mine?

FM: I drove. I bought a brand-new truck and my license plate said I was a woman who thought I could do anything. Never having had a brand-new truck, I could drive to the mine. There were four of us that rode together, three were on the girl crew and the other was long-wall. Each one drove a day.

LB: Did you have your own bathhouse at the mine?

FM: Sure did! We had a little tiny room that was our bathhouse. It was fairly nice. It was well kept. The guys had theirs. We never had any problems. I've heard that others [women] had but we never had any problems.

LB: What was your relationship with the other miners when you got to be on a crew? Were you the only woman in the crew?

FM: No, there were five women on this crew and one man. We had to ride down sometimes on a motor with some guys, and we ate in a lunchroom with some of the guys. At first it was really hard; they were nasty-mouthed, very nasty-mouthed. One day one of the men was really giving me a rotten time and I stood there and ate and listened and listened. I got up and grabbed some rock dust and started throwing it on the side of the kitchen, then I threw it at him. He said, "You have no business under here." I said, "I'll gladly quit if you will take care of my children. I have four children. If you will pay for my children, I'll quit today. I'm here because of them. I'm not here to impress you. I'm not here to date any of you. I'm not here for any reason other than to take care of four children that need a mom, a house, food, and medical. If you'll take care of them, I'll quit." After that day we--his name was Fancy--became friends. To this day I'll never forget him because to this day we were best of friends. He hated women underground, but I explained and we became really good friends.

LB: What positions did you hold in your career as an underground coal miner?

FM: I was general labor, I could do masonry work. Because I didn't go to work one day I had to do a graveyard shift and my boss sent me for a pork chop, which was a piece of metal shaped like a pork chop. I went and got it and then he decided I knew what I was doing so he quit razzing me. I worked one day on the crew and it was mostly masonry or whatever they needed. If they needed bradish put up, I did bradish. We walked in when the mine was completely closed

down, went to all the faces and brought all the trucks and stuff out. There were two of us, myself and my partner; we walked in and would get all the equipment back out.

LB: You mentioned a piece of equipment that I don't recognize the name. Bradish? B-R-A-D-I-S-H?

FM: Right. It covers different things. We had bradish over the top of the high voltage lines so it wouldn't get wet or get anything on it because it would stop the motors. We used it at stoppings, we covered the stoppings so the air would not go through. It was a way to stop air from circulating in different parts of the mine.[5] I guess that's the best way to explain what it is.

LB: Did you ever drive a shuttle car?

FM: I have. The first time it was quite different. They taught us how to drive a shuttle car. That was the great thing where we worked, we got to learn to drive those cars. We drove motors [electric locomotives], we drove trolleys. We had track and trolleys in the mine and that's how we would get into the mine. We rode trolleys, like a little car. We got to learn to drive those, and a tractor. I learned to drive a Bobcat [and a] forklift; there were a lot of things I got to learn because of my crew. I don't know, but I think everybody stayed on that crew until finally they dissolved that crew because they were paying quite a bit for our crew.

LB: Did you ever work the beltline?

FM: Yes, I did.

LB: What did you think of that?

FM: There were times it got pretty hard. The shoveling kept you in shape but it was hard. We'd have over spills, which was called an "A". They would actually close the mine down for an "A". The mine superintendent would go in close it down if you had too much coal on the side of the belt. The whole mine had to come out and shovel until we had it all picked up.

LB: How large a mine was this?

FM: I would say it was one of the largest in the 1980s.[6] It was the one where we lost 19 people in a fire. I would consider it one of the largest. They ran all three shifts all of the time, always running. We were going for a record at the time we had that fire.

LB: When you exited the bathhouse at the beginning of your shift to go into the mine, how long did it take you to ride into wherever your working area was that day?

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[5] Bradish was the burlap cloth used to control airflow in Welsh mines ("The meaning of bradish" at Rootweb.com, posted 14 June 2005). It may be an alternate spelling of brattice, which is generally defined as a fire-resistant fabric or plastic used in mine passages to confine or direct airflow (Glossary of Mining Terms prepared by the Kentucky Foundation, 2007, and posted to www.coaleducaiton.org/glossary.htm#B)

[6] In December 1984 daily production averaged 11,000 tons and employment included 290 underground miners working three shifts, five days each week (Wilberg Mine Memorial Facebook page, viewed April 13, 2014).

FM: That would depend on where we, as a crew, were going. There were times it took 45 minutes, there were times it would take us two minutes. Sometimes 10 minutes. I always went to crosscut 13. I had family down there that I had to go take care of: a mommy mouse and five little ones. I used to bring them lunch every day. So, you know, I had to go down and visit her and her family. One day I went there, it was an 18-foot ceiling, and I walked in and there were crosscuts and cribs everywhere. It had fallen and shifted, and I was 4 foot eleven and I actually had to bend my head to go through. My little family had gone somewhere else. That was really heart breaking but it shows how the ground can shift overnight.

LB: Is that something they call a bump?

FM: No. A bump can do that, but usually a bump you will hear it. It will raise the ground or sometimes you'll hear a bump when a wall is pulling back. We waited for 13 days one time for the top to fall. You'll hear it, a bump. It will pop your ears. The sides will come down and it blows everything out. It was a shift [that affected the mice]. There were three mines at that time working: Des-Bee-Dove was on the top, Deer Creek, and then us and it shifted. When it shifted the mountain, it came down so much. It's kind of different.

LB: Scary?

FM: You know, really, I was never scared in there, except once, all the time I was underground.

LB: Tell me about that one time.

FM: We had seen smoke in front of us. There was a gentleman who had been underground for many, many years. You could see the smoke, like the haze of the smoke. There were four or five of us and we were walking out. All of a sudden he found a rope, he kept us calm, he tied our belts together and led us out. That was the only time I was ever scared. I like it underground. I liked it.

LB: Why?

FM: It was my place. I'd go under there and I felt secure. My boss was fantastic, my crew even better. I had the best crew anyone could ever, ever have. The crew that I had made you feel so good. I'm crying because I'd lost a son at the time, and my crew kept me strong. They were just a great crew. They made you feel like you were always protected. So, I was never scared. I should say except one time I did hit my partner. I had no brakes in one of the motors coming down and we went down a very steep hill, she was in front of me and I hit her. It threw her out of the motor she was driving. Of course that did scare me, I could have hurt her seriously because I had no brakes at all in mine. I kept telling her go "Go! Go!" and how you told them was with your cap light. That kind of bothered me, but that's the only time. The crew I had, if you could meet each and every one of them, they'd be like God's little angels.

LB: You had mentioned that when you first started you had an opportunity to learn about the mine, explore the mine, and that sort of thing. Tell some more about that. What did you see underground and where about did you go? Did you get in trouble for doing it?

FM: I could have! We could have! We went up to the fan; we walked up to the fan. We went to all the ruins. We went into some old, old workings, which are crosscuts. We'd go through crosscuts, which we should have never been doing because if something would have happened they would have never found us, of course. You see a lot of the old ruins. We actually had water up to here [pats her chest]. There were places in there that we actually had little boats we took from one end to the other. There was a lot of old ruins where you could see, I mean they'd left everything in there. All the belts, all kinds of old stuff. It was fun to go explore where we had no business, but it sure was fun.

LB: After you'd spent some time in the mine, did you family come around? Did they kind of get accustomed to you as a coal miner?

FM: No. My uncle, who was my Godfather, he accepted it I guess. I guess he accepted it, but he wouldn't talk to me about it. I was there, he knew I was there and why I was there, but we weren't going to talk about it. I was the still the little kid that he thought I should be.

LB: You mentioned that there was some belief that women didn't belong underground. What's the basis of that?

FM: I really don't know. Just that if women went underground that something bad would happen. You know, I'm not sure. That's all I've ever heard, that we are bad luck to coal miners. I really never heard anymore. That would be something I'd like to know, if somebody really knew: Why?[7]

LB: Tell me what a typical day was like. When did you start your day at your house, what time did you get to the mine, and all that.

FM: I would get up and go have coffee at a restaurant, then I'd go to Price to meet my riders. We'd get in the car and take off and we'd go to the mine. We'd go in about 7:30 a.m. and we would discuss where we were going at that time, if there was anything that we would need to bring with us, like gloves, wet gear, whatever we needed for that day. Get it, then we would go to that part. If we were picking up timbers we'd go get all the timbers that we'd need, to what crosscut we would go, pick it up, take care of it, bring it out. Get it to wherever it needed to be outside of the mine. So we got to go in and out. Then we'd go back in and have lunch. Sometimes we'd go to the kitchen, sometimes we would just eat wherever we were. On

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[7] Folklorist Wayland Hand conducted interviews during the 1940s among Utah miners. He reported that bad luck beliefs applied equally to women inside the mines and women around a mine entrance and on other mine property. Her presence was taken as a sign that she didn't believe her husband or son would have a safe return home at the end of his shift, which in turn implied an accident or disaster would happen. Hand noted that this superstition applied to a woman who appeared alone, and not to a group of women. Some miners believed that a woman's presence at the mine would change luck, but it could be for the worse or the better (John Greenway, Folklore of the Great West, American West Publishing Company, Palo Alto, CA, 1969, pg 299).

Wednesdays we would have safety meetings, and we'd all bring something. We always said we were going to McDonalds, that was a McDonald day. We would actually have boiled eggs, fruit, each one of us would bring toast. We'd have a proper safety meeting, eat breakfast then go to work. That would be half an hour, 45 minutes. After lunch we would go messing around. Sometimes there were days that we had to go into different sections and take garbage out of that section. Maybe it would be rock dust sacks, maybe bricks that are broken, maybe it would be cement; whatever needed to be taken out. You didn't want all that stuff laying around. The oil would get gassy, you know, mix. We would take that out, but usually we could do it all in the morning time. We'd leave at 5:30 p.m. We'd come out and the other guys would be waiting to go in. Most of them were clean and here we come out, a little bit dark! Black, some would be white with rock dust. I depended on what we were doing for that day.

LB: Tell me about rock dust.

FM: It keeps your coal from being inflammable. It covers it. The best way I can describe it is that it was like talcum powder.[8] They have a big machine that they can shoot it out and around. If there were little spaces you'd do it by hand. I mean, it seems like we played more than we worked sometimes!

LB: You'd mentioned that they gave you some training. Did they teach you how to survive in a mine catastrophe? What kind of training was it?

FM: We had to go to school for six weeks. My boyfriend has to go to electrical school, he has to go to masonry school, he's got to go to Fire Boss, electrician, he has 7-8 titles he has to go to school for. At that time we would go once a year and it was first-aid training, tell us what we need to do, like the bradish and masonry stuff, put up bradish on the opposite side from the fire, and brick to stop the fire and smoke. They would teach us this kind of stuff.

LB: Was fire a constant concern in that mine?

FM: You know, not that I know of. Other than the fire we had. The big one.

LB: What was the cause of that? Did they ever determine it?

FM: I can tell you what I think. They were overloading the belt. We were trying to get a title, we wanted to be in the Guinness Book of Records. The long-wall was cutting coal just as fast as they could. I'm not sure and I can't say for positive, but I think there was an interchange, it got too hot, and the people that were watching the belt should have been watching a little closer. It caught fire. That's my opinion.[9]

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[8] The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) defines rock dust as pulverized limestone, dolomite, gypsum, anhrydrite, shale, adobe, or other inert materials, preferably light colored, all of which will pass through a sieve of 20 meshes per linear inch, and 70% of which will pass through a sieve of 200 meshes per linear inch. The dust cannot cake, nor be dispersed by a light blast of air, and must have less than 5% flammable matter and not more than 5% free silica (www.msha.gov viewed on April 13, 2014).

[9] On the night of December 19, 1984 a long-wall crew inside the Wilberg Mine was racing to set a new record for the most coal mined in a 24-hour period. In addition to the regular mining crew, several managers of Utah Power and

LB: Do you, by any chance, remember what your pay was?

FM: If I'm not mistaken I was getting like seven or eight [dollars] and 42 [cents]. I'm not sure whether it was seven or eight, but I remember it was 42.[10]

LB: Did you bid on any jobs?

FM: No. I was as happy as I could be were I was. Like I said, the boss was fantastic, the pay was great, the crew was great. We all got along. Most time when you work with a crew there's always the one person you don't get along with. But we all seemed to get along. As I remember, I don't think any of us did the ______ of it. We were all happy. Just straight days. We didn't have to change from graveyard shift to day shift; there would have been 2 weeks-2weeks. And we were straight days.

LB: So for your family, your income as a miner was their sole support.

FM: Correct.

LB: They taught you how to operate several different kinds of machinery you've mentioned. Did you actually get to do that? You said you'd drive a motor. Is that the underground train?

FM: Yes! It is. I used to go with Fancy, he's the one I told you we became good friends. I jumped in the motor. There's a hole about 4 foot by 4 foot and I'd jump in there and he'd take me wherever he was going. If I didn't have anything to do I used to ride around with him all the time. He taught me how to operate a lot. And yes, I did drive. Operate is the correct word for that; yes I did.

LB: And you drove the shuttle car.

FM: Yes

LB: Did you actually ever work on the face?

Light Company, owners of the mine, were present to cheer the effort. At about 9 p.m. a worker discovered heavy smoke and called in the alarm. Although the people inside the mine dispersed to different areas in attempts to fight and flee the fire, all 27 individuals were killed. The dead included 19 miners and 8 company officials; among the miner fatalities was the first woman to die in a Utah coal mine. It took two years for the mine to achieve a level of safety sufficient to allow inspectors to determine the cause: an untended faulty compressor. The mine was issued numerous citations and litigation continued for several years. The United Mine Workers union did not agree with the inspectors' findings and the Lady Coal Miners helped the union staff with relief efforts ("Wilberg Mine Fire", United States Mine Rescue Association at www.usmra.com; Edward A. Geary, A History of Emery County, Utah State Historical Society and the Emery County Commission, 1996, pg 397-401; "Company greed killed coal miners in Utah," *The Militant* Vol 68 No 48, December 28, 2004).

[10] Specific pay rates for the Wilberg Mine were not located. However in July 1982 the average pay for an underground coal miner in the Mountain States region (which included Utah) was $12.15 per hour (Norma W. Carlson, "Pay in Mountain region coal mines outstrips national average," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1984, US Bureau of Labor Statistics at http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1984/03/rpt4full.pdf).

FM: I went there. But to say I really worked, no. No, I was down there and they showed me how to operate these things. And I did for a minute. I did put roof bolts in, but that was just to show me. To say I really worked, no. They taught me, and really a few minutes isn't "taught", but they showed me how to do those things.

LB: Tell me your most memorable story of being a miner.

FM: Some gentleman got killed two or three weeks before this happened. We [Faye and her partner] walked down to this crosscut. We were bringing cars back out so the miners could go back in. We walked in this crosscut and there was a light down there and we were the only people underground. We swear that he was in there. He used to write his name, Sasquatch, on the walls and stuff. We swear he followed us. I always said he was a good friend of mine and he was always following me, taking care of me. The day that I made Fancy my friend was also a memorable day, when he didn't want women in the mine. He and I became such good friends. The first day that I went to work as a coal miner, I could take care of my children, I could do it!

LB: How long did you do it?

FM: Eight years.

LB: And why did you stop?

FM: I had a little boy, my son Jimmie. He kept dreaming of me getting killed in the mine. And when the fire happened I stayed and helped afterwards. Calling miners out, anything I could do. I brought food from McDonalds, I did what I could do there. But I never went back after that. Of course, we didn't go back, but that was my last [time as a miner].[11]

LB: Was that 1984?

FM: I think it was '84 because I lost one of my sons in '81 and it was right after that. I would be '84.

LB: Was your son mining?

FM: No. I lost him in the Price River. He was supposed to have drowned.

LB: What was your favorite part of being a miner?

FM: Just saying "I can do it!" You know, women weren't supposed to be able to do it, and my ex-husband said, "You can't do it. You're not woman enough." Being able to prove to a lot of people that I could do anything that I set my mind to do. Just to go in there and say, "I can do

[11] Dangerous conditions inside the Wilberg mine continued for about two years after the fire, but in 1985 miners were called back to ready the mine for reopening (Edward A. Geary, A History of Emery County, Utah State Historical Society and the Emery County Commission, 1996, pg 401).

it." And I really did love the mine. I don't know, there's something about being underground. The family that you make under there, that's pretty special.

LB: Would you do it again?

FM: Yes. Sure would.

LB: When you were not underground, your 2 weeks on, 2 weeks off for your work schedule.

FM: No, we would work four days on, three days off; four days off, three days on.

LB: Did you recreate with your fellow miners?

FM: I would talk to them. I had my own little way of feeling. I would not date one of my "brothers". If you are a woman that worked underground, you don't date them. Your names aren't very nice. Just be their friends and leave it that way. I would just say, "Hey, we're good friends, we're brothers. That's it." I worked another job as a bartender, so I kind of kept my hands pretty busy. But I would not date them. I might go out and have a drink with them, but that was it.

LB: Were there different ethnic groups in the mine?

FM: We had two Mexicans from Mexico and that's all I know of. A long time ago there used to be. I know the Greeks and Italians came here to become coal miners and they were in Sunnyside.

LB: Did you ancestors come here to be miners? Or did they come here to be something else?

FM: To my knowledge, they came here to be miners. My grandfather went to work in the mines and saved every penny he got until he could buy this farm.

LB: The Blue Hill Dairy?

FM: The Blue Hill Dairy, right.

LB: Did you work in the dairy when you were a kid?

FM: I thought I did, but I really didn't. My little mother did as much work as the boys did, but the three boys did most of the work. My Uncle Stan, Uncle Joe, my Uncle Ike.[12]

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[12] During the period from about 1930-1960s, the Blue Hill Dairy was one of the largest in Carbon County and supplied milk to mining communities (Ronald G. Watt, A History of Carbon County, Utah State Historical Commission and Carbon County Commission, 1997, pg 58). The dairy closed in October 1977. Owners at the time were Sam and Joe Fazzio (Richard Shaw, "1977: Coal strike gains national attention, Helper police chief faces and beats state AG charges," *Sun Advocate*, undated clipping at http://www.sunad.com/print.php?tier=1&article_id=23220).

LB: You mentioned that your uncle forbid you to mine if you weren't a member of the union. So, you must have joined the union.

FM: I did. My uncle, Frank Menocci, brought the union here to Carbon and Emery Counties. All my family were United Mine Workers, so of course, I went union. I am union and I guess I'll always be union. My uncle was secretary for over 30 years at United Mine Workers. My Uncle Joe was, I'm not sure how long, he also held a position in the United Mine Workers for a while.

LB: Did you hold any office?

FM: No, I worked with them but I never held any office.

LB: I learned when I read the history of Carbon and Emery Counties, that Centennial History Series, that your name was associated with a group called Lady Coal Miners of Utah. Tell me what that is and when it was organized if you can.

FM: They were from back East and I think it was in the late 70s. I am not positive. In 1980 we held a state dinner in Carbon and Emery Counties in Helper at one of the restaurants. It was the largest that had ever been held. We had the women from back East come out to explain what Lady Coal Miners were. We wore green and white and then we were to go back there. We went back to West Virginia to learn more about the Lady Coal Miners. It was an auxiliary, but this has been so long ago. I did hold the position of President of that and we didn't have it as long as it should have been. There are some things about it at our museum in Helper. It was to help women be able to hold and get jobs in different mines because, of course, we weren't supposed to be in there. They didn't want us in there. I did have a friend that I helped get a couple of jobs in different mines; one was at Deer Creek and one at Soldier Creek. I got them jobs in the mines. Because of them being behind us it helped a lot. We tried to get together once a year and see what each and every one of us had been doing that year.

LB: So it was camaraderie among the women who worked in the industry, and support. What else did you do?

FM: We would get together and talk about what it was like. Have different speakers come talk: What we should do as women underground, to teach us how to get better jobs. How to protect yourself when you're working. Teach us stuff and camaraderie.

LB: Is that group still alive?

FM: Not to my knowledge.

LB: There aren't near as many coal mines working in this area as there used to be. Are there any women working underground?

FM: Not to my knowledge. I don't know for sure, but not to my knowledge. I know there is one union mine and two other mines, is all.

LB: Do you know which ones they are?

FM: Yes. Deer Creek is the union mine. There is Soldier Creek and there is a mine in Huntington, I'm not sure of the name of that. And there's one in Scofield, I'm not sure of that name. Those are the ones that I know of. I don't keep up; I do with Deer Creek because that's a union mine and that's where my fiancé works. Otherwise I don't keep up with too much.

LB: How have you seen the local economy change with the closure of so many mines?

FM: People are moving out. People are losing everything. People at Deer Creek mine right at this moment are scared to death because we are losing most of the men. They're either going to Colorado or going to Wyoming to work, or they're losing what they worked for all their lives. I hear them talking and they'll say, "How's things going up there?" "Not good." It's sad. Carbon County and Emery County were nothing but coal mining communities. There is coal there, but they want to have the union die here and just go scab.

LB: And who is "they?"

FM: People that own the mines. They would rather have the union not be there. They don't want the unions because the unions can go in and fight for things. If they want to fire you, they can fire you; if you're a union mine they cannot fire you.

LB: Is there anything else about your experiences as an underground coal miner that you'd like to tell us?

FM: It was such a family. We'd always have Labor Day. The town would come together on Labor Day at parks. We would all become one. It didn't matter who you were, we were all family at that time. There was a party. There were free hot dogs, free popcorn, and parades for the kids. My daughter was the last Labor Day Queen and that's been so many years ago. When we lost that we really lost a lot as a community. It was one day we all were family. You miss being united; it's hard to get people together as one anymore.

LB: Ok, that's all of the questions I have.