

RONALD W. JEWKES

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 Ronald Jewkes in Kenilworth, Utah to interview him about the company town of Kenilworth and his family's involvement in the company-owned store. Jim Mattingly is also present and will be recording the interview.

LB: Would you give me your name and your date of birth, please.

RJ: Ronald W. Jewkes, born Thanksgiving Day, November the 23rd, 1927.

LB: And were you born here?

RJ: I was born here in Kenilworth.

LB: Have you ever lived anywhere else?

RJ: No.

LB: Were you ever employed as a miner?

RJ: No.

LB: Why not?

RJ: I didn't want to go in the mine.

LB: Ok. Were there other members of your family that were in mining?

RJ: A lot of them. My dad was a miner when he first came here in 1922. He worked three months in the mine¹ and they had a job opening at the company store, which was owned by the Independent Coal & Coke Company; it was called the Kenilworth Mercantile.² They offered him the job so he left the mine and went to work at the store and worked there for 48 years.

LB: Tell me a little about the history of Kenilworth.³

RJ: The Englishmen that discovered coal here in Kenilworth, they named it Kenilworth after the Kenilworth Castle in England. That is how it got its name.⁴ They really started mining coal about 1906,⁵ In fact, in 2006 we had a 100-year birthday party here for Kenilworth, which was nice. In the early days they had to bring water into Kenilworth by big barrels. Eventually they bought water rights to the Price River and just outside of Helper they built a pump house and ran a line all the way from the pump house to Kenilworth.⁶ They stored water in two big redwood storage barrels [tanks]. We still get the water that way today. Just outside of Helper there's a big tavern, then a coal facility; that's where the pump house was. In between the pump house and that tavern they had two settling ponds. They would pump the water out of the river; at that time the Price River was a polluted river. They'd pump it out and let the water settle, and they had a

¹ A survey of the Kenilworth mine property, including railroad yards, portals, and surface structures was conducted in 1983, prior to reclamation at the mine. The complex was determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as "one of the few and best" examples of a company town-mine complex in Utah. Following reclamation work, the majority of the mine area as well as Jap Town and Greek Town had been removed, buried, or otherwise obliterated; only the Kenilworth town remained relatively intact (David Merrill, Independent Coal & Coke Company Kenilworth Mine Workings, Historic American Engineering Records No. UT-31, 1984; David Merrill, IMACS Site Form 42CB385, 18 Jun 1983; M.Searcy, IMACS Site Form Addendum to 42CB385, 21 Jan 2011).

² The Kenilworth Mercantile Company was incorporated on 30 Nov 1908 and took over the original store operation; officers of the new company were also officers of the Independent Coal & Coke Company. By March 1909 its first manager, Mr. Stevenson had retired and a new man, Edward Lambson, was ready to take over. By 1919 Lambson had moved to Segoe, Utah where he ran a store, and Samuel Woodhead stepped in as store manager in Kenilworth ("Coal Men Organize Mercantile Company," *Inter-Mountain Republican*, 1 Dec 1908; "Kenilworth Breezes," *Carbon County News* 13 Mar 1909; US Census records viewed at Ancestry.com; "About You and Your Friends," *News Advocate*, 12 Jun 1919).

³ A survey of historic buildings in Kenilworth had been conducted by or for the State of Utah in the early 1980s and several houses, the company store, and the hospital building were identified as contributing to the eligibility of the town as a historic district or area, but a report on the work was not located during background research for this interview.

⁴ The countryside may have reminded the men of the Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire, England, or the name may have come from "kenil" an old European term for bituminous coal (John W. Van Cott, Utah Place Names, University of Utah Press, 1990, pg 213).

⁵ The initial mines were the Aberdeen, developed by the Price Trading Company, and the Bull Hollow Mine operated by Heber Stowell. The Independent Coal & Coke Company was incorporated in Wyoming in 1906 with the Bull Hollow Mine as its principal interest; the Aberdeen Mine was added in 1907 (Ronald G. Watt, A History of Carbon County, Utah State Historical Society and the Carbon County Commission, 1997, pg 113).

⁶ Water system improvements were planned for 1911, including a pumping plant on the Price River and a pipeline to the town. Part of the package was also an electric plant to provide the mine and town with lights (Kenilworth, Model Mining Camp, Shown to Visitors," *Salt Lake Herald*, 18 Sep 1910).

pipe from each settling pond. They would open the valve, run the water into the pump house where it was chlorinated and pumped to Kenilworth.

LB: So it is gravity feed from the tanks?

RJ: Yes. In fact, right now Price River Water [Users Association] takes care of all our water and sewer lines. They have a smaller pump house. Partway up from Spring Glen, where you go up to the top of that steep hill, you'll see it [pump house]. Pressure takes it up to there and then it pumps up [to Kenilworth]. Now we have a big metal storage tank up on top of the hill that we store the water in.

LB: Did the company that owned the mine also build the town?

RJ: Yes, they did.

LB: How does it work being a company town? Did the miners rent the houses or what?

RJ: They all rented houses. I'll tell you another thing. A man by the name of E.B. Phippen⁷ designed all the homes, all the houses in Kenilworth including the company store and the hospital. He was a self-trained architect; never went to college. If you drive up and down the streets you'll think that most of the houses are the same, but they're really not. There are probably 20 different designs of houses in Kenilworth. He designed them all. Maybe they hired him because he was a self-trained architect and they could get him a lot cheaper than if they hired a real professional! He did good.

LB: The building across the street from your place, is that the hospital?

RJ: That's the hospital. That's where I was born and my two oldest children were born there. The last company doctor that came to Kenilworth to be the mine doctor came in 1926. His name was Dr. Roy Robinson.⁸ I was the second baby he delivered. He stuck around for 43 years and delivered all four of my children, the same doctor! That's quite amazing.

⁷ Edward Bert Phippen was a Salt Lake City architect who lacked formal training in architecture but was known for his sense of principle and design. His first design for the Kenilworth Mercantile building was later modified in both material and scale. By 1918 the Independent Coal & Coke Company wanted to expand the store and again hired Phippen; the present store footprint matches his design although exterior finish details are no longer present (Wayne Balle, "I Owe my Soul": An Architectural and Social History of Kenilworth, Utah, Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol 56, No. 3, Summer 1988, pgs 250-278).

⁸ Dr. Robinson was born on 27 May 1901 in Utah to parents who were natives of Canada; he died in June 1983 at Price, Utah. He earned his medical degree from the University of Utah (various databases viewed at Ancestry.com).

LB: I'm curious about the company town aspect. If the mine company owned the property and did the town layout and built the houses, how did they determine which miner got to live here?

RJ: They really didn't determine anything. If they had a vacancy and they hired him for a job, if there was a house that was vacant that's what he got.

LB: Were all of the houses about the same size?

RJ: Pretty near,⁹ other than the doctor's house; it was bigger. Of course, the superintendent's house was bigger.¹⁰ As you come into town, that section of town is called New Town.¹¹ The two rows of houses on the upper side, they're all single-level houses. The two rows of houses on the lower side, they all have an upstairs.

LB: How did the town take care of its sewage?

RJ: They had cesspools.

LB: What do you do now?

RJ: Price River Water takes care of it. They have a regular sewer line now that they take care of.

LB: Did the railroad come up here?

RJ: Oh yes.

LB: Which one was it?

RJ: The early one was called the Kenilworth-Helper Railroad.¹² The railroad tracks ran right past the company store here at that time. Now it's a street. It went down as far as Spring Glen

⁹ A 4-room house was the most prevalent size, having 2 bedrooms, a kitchen and a living room. Exterior and roof details were varied to provide different styles. A few duplex homes with a single bedroom were built and shotgun cottages were typical of Greek Town. Larger single-story homes had 3 bedrooms, kitchen, living room, and a dining room; 2-story homes had 2 bedrooms upstairs and 2 on the ground floor (Balle, Fig 22-37).

¹⁰ The doctor's house was formerly the mine superintendent's house, until a new and larger one was constructed. This new home had a kitchen, breakfast room, dining room, living room, sunroom and a servant's room on the ground floor and 4 bedrooms upstairs (Balle, Fig 38-29).

¹¹ The New Town addition to Kenilworth was added in about 1923, the last major expansion of the town. It was located southeast of Kenilworth on the opposite side of a deep ravine (Balle, pg 252, Fig 4).

¹² The Kenilworth & Helper Railway was organized by the Independent Coal & Coke Company, who shipped the first trainload of coal on 10 Aug 1907, but used a leased engine from the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad because their first Shay engine did not arrive until September ("Kenilworth & Helper Railway," UtahRails.net).

and then they had a switch down there, and they would switch it onto the Denver & Rio Grande railroad tracks. They used what they called Shay engines. They were smaller engines but they were powerful; they could go up steeper hills and make sharper turns. When the coal business got more and more [increased production], they had to put more railroad cars on and the little Shay engines couldn't pull that many. So they went broke. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad took over the railroad line, but they couldn't run their trains on the old original track because it was too steep and had too many curves. They had to run a whole new line up and it came from Helper right up to Kenilworth.¹³

LB: Is that the one you can see coming in? You can see some real flat stretches.

RJ: Yes.

LB: How does a company store work? Your dad ran it. Did the company tell him what he had to stock?

RJ: Not really, no. They used their own money, they had company scrip money. Of course, they also had charge accounts to people that they trusted to pay the bills. In fact, I donated my whole collection of company scrip to the mining museum; it's on display at the mining museum. They had a nickel, dime, 25-cent piece, 50-cent, dollar and five-dollar.

LB: Were the miners paid in company scrip?

RJ: I think they did way back in the early days. I don't know for sure. But eventually they passed a law where they had to pay them in cash. But they still used the scrip. For example, if a miner ran low on money in between paydays, he'd go to the mine office and draw a \$10, \$15 dollar [advance] but they would give it to him in scrip. He had to spend it at the company store.

LB: Were all of the customers at the store members of the mining community here?

RJ: Not really. You'd be surprised how many people came up from Price and Helper to shop.¹⁴ They had a shoe department that was as good as anything in the county, and a nice meat market,

¹³ The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad constructed the new alignment to Kenilworth in 1926, and applied jointly with the Kenilworth & Helper Railway for authorization to abandon the old steeper grade ("Kenilworth & Helper Railway," UtahRails.net).

¹⁴ As part of a general expansion of their holdings, the Independent Coal & Coke Company in 1918 enlarged the Kenilworth hospital, constructed or remodeled the doctor's residence, and added to the Kenilworth Mercantile such that the latter assumed "the appearance and importance of a young department store." Also added were 18 houses, and a bowling alley in the basement of the amusement hall ("Expende Huge Sum in Improvements," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 Nov 1918).

huge grocery [department], dry goods; anything you wanted to buy you could buy there. And the prices were reasonable, they didn't hold people up.¹⁵

LB: When your dad ran the store, did he do the ordering?

RJ: Oh yes.

LB: Did anybody run a bill or a tab at the store which was then deducted from their paycheck?

RJ: If their bill went on and on and they didn't pay it, then they would turn it over to the company and they would take care of it. They didn't have too much trouble. Most of them paid their bills pretty regularly.

LB: What was the relationship between the people who ran businesses here and those who mined? Was it pretty friendly?

RJ: Kenilworth was a real friendly town. What made it nice, was Kenilworth had a welfare association and everybody that worked for the company, regardless of whether they were a miner or a store employee or an office employee, a dollar was held out of their paycheck every month. It went into the welfare association and they had officers and directors; it was their job to see to it that the town had recreational activities. [For example], every Thursday they would have a free movie at the theater at 4 o'clock for the kids, then at 7 o'clock they would run the same movie again for the adults. They bought softball equipment for the kids; they'd sponsor four or five free dances during the year at the amusement hall; New Year's, of course, being the big dance. All that money would come from the welfare association. Christmas time, you know, they'd have the special movie with Santa Claus bringing bags of candy and nuts to all the kids. Another good thing they did every summer, they would pay Helper City \$500 or Price City, whichever one they chose, and they would purchase free swimming passes for all the kids.

LB: How did the kids get into town?

RJ: In the old days there weren't too many cars, so a lot of the kids if they wanted to go downtown would have to thumb a ride. There was always somebody going in and out and they would pick you up if you needed a ride.

¹⁵ Shortly after its completion the Independent Coal & Coke Company offered a tour of Kenilworth. They rented their houses at less than rent for similar sized homes in Salt Lake City, and prices at the Kenilworth Mercantile were "about 10 per cent under those in some of the nearby towns." A company spokesperson explained that it was not about profit, but "simply a matter of providing the necessities and some of the luxuries of life so as to make the place attractive" ("Kenilworth, Model Mining Camp, Shown to Visitors," *Salt Lake Herald*, 18 Sep 1910).

LB: Was there a school here?

RJ: Yes, there was.

LB: Did you go?

RJ: Oh yes. They had first grade to eighth grade.

LB: What part of town was the school in?

RJ: When you come in [to Kenilworth], where you cross that fill, it sets right on the left, right next to the highway. It was kind of an unusual school.

LB: How so?

RJ: On the main floor you had the first grade, second grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, seventh grade, and the eighth grade. Then you went down a flight of stairs. At the bottom of the stairs, straight ahead was the furnace room, to the left was the boys' bathroom, to the right was the girls' bathroom, then you turned the corner and went down four more steps. The third grade was on the east side and the fourth grade was on the west side. They were below ground, those two rooms.

LB: How long did that school operate?

RJ: They closed it in 1959 and in 1960 they tore it down. The only one of my kids that went to school there was my oldest daughter, Laurie; she went to first grade and that's when they closed the school. The rest had to be bussed out of town after that. She was the only one that went to school here, other than me. Oh, and the principal that came in 1928, his name was Vern Rampton, and I think he was a cousin to Governor Cal Rampton. He stayed until the mid-1940s and then they left.¹⁶

LB: Did World War II bring any changes to Kenilworth?

¹⁶ In 1918 the school had four teachers and served 140 children; at the time the town population was about 800 including 200 children ("Expends Huge Sum in Improvements," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 Nov 1918).

RJ: Yes, I can tell you an interesting story. At one time we had a Japanese boarding house, we called it Jap Town; we also had a Greek Town. They're in the upper section of town.¹⁷ When the war started they had to take all of the Japanese people out of here. I remember we had a new family move in [and their] Japanese boy was two grades lower than me. He was kind of big for his age and he could do all these tricks out on the monkey bars that all of us kids couldn't do. We were all kind of jealous of him. Anyway, the day [after] Pearl Harbor,¹⁸ when I went to school Monday morning we had just got into class and a government car pulled up. Two government men came in and they called the principal out. The next thing I saw was them taking that Japanese boy out and putting him in the car. They were gone and I assume another car went and picked up his parents. We never saw them or heard from them again.

LB: Did the coal mines increase their production during the war?

RJ: Oh yes. They were working seven days a week, double time. A miner could work almost as much as he wanted to work.

LB: How did that affect the store?

RJ: It helped the store! I graduated from Carbon High School in 1946 and in 1947 I started at Carbon College--it is not Carbon College anymore--and I went to the fall quarter and the winter quarter, and I played on the college basketball team. Most of the service men were home and the mine was still booming and all the young kids my age, they were hiring them to work [at the mine]. They wouldn't let them go into the mine but they gave them jobs on the tippie, the carpenter shop, and different [jobs]. They made more money than my dad could pay help at the company store, so he said, "You're going to have to quit long enough to get me over this busy time." So I did, and that year the company store did a third of a million dollars business. That was a record for a mining camp store! \$339,000 they did in business. I liked it so well that I never went back to college. That was my college experience: two quarters.

LB: How long did your dad stay there working in the store?

RJ: Well, he stayed until they closed it up. Then he and another fellow bought it on their own, and he ran it for another three or four years until my mother's health got so bad that he had to quit. The reason another man went in with him: The Post Office was in the west section of the

¹⁷ The Japanese boarding house was designed by Edward Phippen and was located at the far north end of Kenilworth, close to the railroad-switching yard. Greek Town was located on the northeast edge of Kenilworth on both sides of the railroad (Balle, Fig 4).

¹⁸ The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, happened on Sunday, 7 Dec 1941. The US Census for 1940 noted five Japanese men living at Kenilworth, but no Japanese families.

hotel and they'd sold the hotel and torn it down, so they made one room at the west end of the company store into the Post Office. The Postmistress' husband went in with my dad to buy the building so they could keep not only the store going but also the Post Office going.

LB: What do you think your dad enjoyed about that store?

RJ: He loved it. Actually around 1951 the Independent Coal & Coke Company bought the mining camp of Castle Gate and Clear Creek. They had a company store in each of them. [Dad] was over all three of them; he was the manager of all three stores at one time. It kept him pretty busy!

LB: When he was out managing those other stores, you were here running this one?

RJ: The butchers they had taught me how to cut meat and eventually I became the butcher at the company store. I'll tell you something else. During the war I was a junior in high school and I had my drivers' license. I was called the iceman. A lot of the homes in Kenilworth still had the old fashioned ice boxes so every two weeks the store would call the Carbon Ice Cream Company in Price and order 1,200 pounds of ice. They would bring it up in four 300-pound blocks and slide them off of their truck onto the store pickup and I had to deliver ice. I had a list of customers all wanting 50 pounds of ice. I had a rubber apron, a pair of ice tongs, and an ice pick, and I got so good that I could chip those 300-pound blocks into 100s, and chip them into 50s. I delivered the ice around town.

LB: You actually put it in the ice boxes?

RJ: Yes, I had to lift those 50-pound blocks out of the truck, carry them to the house, lift them up and put them in the top of their ice boxes for them. In the early, early days the Kenilworth Merc had their own ice plant; they made their own ice. If you go over to the company store today, all the floors in that whole building are wood except one. When they closed the ice plant they boarded it up and then put cement over the top because they used ammonia fumes back in those days to make ice. There is one room over there that has a cement floor, that's where the ice plant was.

LB: When did the company close the store?

RJ: Around 1963, I think, 1964. I'm not exactly sure. Early 1960s I know.

LB: And did that coincide with closing the mine?

RJ: Yes, they were starting to down-size everything.¹⁹ They sold the Japanese boarding house; some people bought it and tore it down. They sold the hotel; it was torn down. They sold the amusement hall; it was a huge building, a brick building. It had a 500-seat theater, one of the nicest dance halls in Carbon County, they had a library, union hall.²⁰ According to prices now, the man that bought that [amusement hall] and tore it down brick-by-brick, he bought it for \$3400 and I bet he got \$50,000 worth of material out of that. He made a pretty good bargain!

LB: In 1963 or thereabouts, was the market for coal drying up?

RJ: Well, it fluctuated. Coal would go up sometimes and then it would drop down. It was still doing pretty good. See, what happened was they hired a new general manager in 1951 or 1952; his name was W.J. O'Connor. He was what they called an efficiency expert out at Kennecott, and they hired him.²¹ The first thing he did was get a program started and they tunneled through the mine at Kenilworth and connected Castle Gate; they owned both mines. So they closed the Kenilworth operation down and all the coal went out the Castle Gate side.²² In fact, the men that worked at Kenilworth had to go to Castle Gate to go into their own mine to work. Mr. O'Connor was the one that did that. That was really the downfall of Kenilworth once they tunneled through the mine and closed everything down.²³ Kenilworth had the biggest tipple in the United States.

LB: How big was it?

RJ: I've got a picture of it; I'll show you. It was huge.

LB: When you were a kid growing up here, what did you do to amuse yourself in summertime?

¹⁹ Independent Coal & Coke Company all but abandoned the surface workings of the mine in 1960, then sold the Kenilworth, Castle Gate and Clear Creek mines to North American Coal Company in 1968; that company closed the Castle Gate mine in 1972 (Devid Merrill, Independent Coal & Coke Company Kenilworth Mine Workings, Historic American Engineering Record No. UT-31, 1984; "Castle Gate Mines," UtahRails, net).

²⁰ What Mr. Jewkes calls the amusement hall was identified by other sources as the company auditorium; it housed the movie theater, dance hall, library, pool hall, and meeting rooms (Balle, pg 255).

²¹ In 1946, William Jerome O'Connor, Sr., was manager of American Smelting and Refining Company. By 1957, he was the president and general manager of the Independent Coal & Coke Company. He explained that the new tunnel would eliminate the railroad freight charges for moving coal from the Kenilworth Mine "around the corner" to the coal washing plant at Castle Gate (Salt Lake City Directory, 1946 and 1957, viewed at Ancestry.com; "Kenilworth Coal Mines and Railroad," UtahRails.net).

²² The connection was achieved in 1959 by a mile-long tunnel from the old 1924 Aberdeen Mine tunnel to the old Willow Creek Mine. Coal was then gravity-fed through the Castle Gate Mine haulage tunnels to exit near the coal washing plant ("Castle Gate Mines," UtahRails.net).

²³ Mine owners offered a different explanation in March 1958, when the Independent Coal & Coke Company announced the third layoff of miners in the last four months, explaining that the mine "must reduce coal production because of slumping market demands," ("Kenilworth Mine Idles 34 Workers," *Deseret News*, 5 Mar 1958).

RJ: I've lived in the hills around Kenilworth. I climbed every hill around! When I was 10, I was the town marble champ. Nobody could beat me playing marbles, nobody. I had a flour sack about one-third full, I don't know how many thousand [marbles] I had, but I won them all. In fact, from the first to the fourth grade all the kids stayed over on the west side; they had a playground over there with swings and whatnot. The older kids were over on the east side. One day they had a big ring and they were having a marble contest. I guess they weren't doing very good, so the sixth grade teacher came over to me and brought me over to show them how to knock those marbles out of the ring. At that time they had a State marble tournament and he [teacher] wanted to send me up there so bad. He said, "I know there's nobody in this state that can beat you!" But it was during the Depression and nobody had any money so that fell through. Then when I was 12, I was the junior tennis champ of Kenilworth. When I was 16, I was the town horseshoe pitching champ; I could throw 60% ringers. Then I got started in basketball, put my own basket up; I was self-trained and never played a game on a court until I was in the tenth grade. In Junior High I made the team; I was first string. Then I played two years for Carbon High School, and one year for the college. Self-taught! The coach never told me, but I heard it from another source, my own basketball coach said I was the most natural shooter that he had ever seen.

LB: That's quite a compliment.

RJ: I know!

LB: What were you doing when you were out in the hills? Were you a hunter, collecting rocks?

RJ: No, just hiking and playing. I knew everyplace in Kenilworth.

LB: Did you ever have to watch out for mine vents or things like that?

RJ: No. If you climbed up this mountain here [points], right up in this area and walk along the top, there are crevasses. Years ago some of the kids in town went up there and they tied a rope around him [one of the kids], and they lowered him a hundred and some feet down and he still hadn't reached the bottom. So there are a lot of crevasses up there. But just around town there is nothing, no.

LB: Did you go on family picnics or anything like that?

RJ: Oh yes, we used to always go on family picnics.

LB: Were most of your social activities here with the people in the town?

RJ: Yes. I'll tell you another thing. My dad came from a big family; they had seven girls and four boys. There were all born and raised in Orangeville, over in Emery County. One sister still lived in Orangeville, but all the [other] sisters and brothers lived in Kenilworth and every one of them worked in the mine at the same time.

LB: So this was definitely a family town.

RJ: Yes. All of his family lived here and all the husbands worked in the mine.

LB: And they all left Orangeville specifically to come here to be in the mine?

RJ: Well, my dad being here, and they were hiring,²⁴ so they would come up and get a job. Yes, they all lived here in town.

LB: What time was the heyday here in Kenilworth? Was it the 1920s? The 1930s? The 40s?

RJ: I'd say the late 1930s and the 1940s, was the big time.

LB: Do you remember how many people that might have been?

RJ: Kenilworth had almost 1,100 at its peak.²⁵ Now there's probably 300 hundred left. No business up here at all, nothing.

LB: What were the businesses that were here when you were growing up?

RJ: Just the company store, that was all. Well, down below the town we had a little village down there. Some Italian people, John Arronco, he owned the coal mine in the next canyon over from Kenilworth; he had a coal mine up there and he operated it. Down below town he had a home, he had built a big rock building [where] he had his own store. People from here could go down there and buy things.²⁶

²⁴ During World War I Kenilworth was "happy and prosperous, and engaged in an occupation essential to the winning of the war" and both the Independent Coal & Coke Company and its employees "responded liberally" to each call for war bond subscriptions, buying more than the quota for the town ("Expend Huge Sum in Improvements," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 Nov 1918).

²⁵ The US Census recorded 542 individuals of any age living in Kenilworth in 1910, 830 in 1920, 858 in 1930, and 878 in 1935. The 1940 Census shows that many of the 1935 residents had moved elsewhere. It is possible that other people worked in Kenilworth but did not live there.

²⁶ John Arronco (1876-1945) was an Italian immigrant and talented stonemason. His rock store also served as a social center for early Italian immigrants (Balle, pg 276).

LB: You mentioned earlier that people from Helper and Price would come up here to trade in the store, and that the store had a big shoe department. What else attracted people from outside the area to come here to the store?

RJ: A lot of them liked to come up and go to the free movies on Thursday [laughter]. I don't know, they made friends and would come up to visit with friends. They had some great dances at the amusement hall, some great dances. When they had a dance, boy, people from all over the country would come up to the dance.

LB: Is that where you met your wife?

RJ: No. My wife is from Helper and I was playing on the town baseball team and her brother, older brother Joe, got a job here working on the tippie. He was a ball player and he was on our team, so she would come to the games. Then she was also the usher at the Strand Theater, so I would go to the movies down there. Eventually we got married [laughs]. We just had our 63rd wedding anniversary.

LB: Congratulations. Tell me about the inside of the store. How big was it, how was it laid out?

RJ: The big long part was the grocery section. Next section in was where they had all the dry goods and the shoe department and whatnot. The back end of the store was where the butcher shop was.²⁷

LB: How did you like being a butcher?

RJ: I liked it, yes. I was a good meat cutter.

LB: Where did the meat come from?

RJ: Mostly Cudahy Packing Company and Swiss Packing Company out of Salt Lake. They ran their trucks out here. I'll tell you another thing, and I'm the only one left that even knows this. In the early days of the company store the office was upstairs in the balcony. Down on the main floor where they checked out the things they'd bought they had a double wire that ran all the way

²⁷ The store structure is a composite of two buildings, one on each end (west & east) and an addition in the middle that joined them together. As mapped by Balle (1988, pg 264) the front two-thirds of the east building was for groceries, and paints were toward the rear. The building on the west side housed the butcher shop and ice cream parlor at the front with the old ice plant at the rear. The middle addition contained hardware and clothing, shoes in the rear, and a display case across the front. A covered porch united the buildings along the front, giving the appearance of one structure. A bulletin board outside the store was used to post company information.

up to the office, with a little metal cap on it with a jar that screwed into it, then they had a pull-handle. Say a customer came and bought \$12 worth of merchandise, the clerk would wrap it up and add it up on their adding machine. Say the customer gave them a \$20 bill, well they would take the \$20 bill and the adding machine tape, unscrew the jar and put those in, and pull the handle to shoot that up to the office upstairs. They would make the change and send it back down. No money exchanged hands on the main floor. I think the J.C. Penney in Helper had the same kind of set up and I know the Dixon-Taylor-Russell store in Price had the same kind of setup. Eventually they moved the office down on the main floor, and of course they had a great big electric cash register from National Cash Register Company, and they also had a register on the dry goods side and also one in the confectionary. In fact, the one in the confectionary I have it stored in my basement, the old register came from the Kenilworth confectionary.

LB: Who was the candy-maker?

RJ: Who was the candy-maker?

LB: Yes, for the confectionary.

RJ: They purchased all their candy: Sweets Candy Company out of Salt Lake, Shupe-Williams from Ogden. They purchased all their candy. In later years, Pearson Candy Company in Price would come up with their truck and you could go out and pick all the candy that you wanted.

LB: Did you buy dairy products from any of the local dairies?

RJ: Yes we did. Waterman's Dairy in Price used to bring milk to the company store in the bottles. They had a dairy in Spring Glen, it was owned by the Fazio [family], Blue Hill Dairy. They didn't deliver to the store; they delivered around town in the bottles. Eventually they got hooked up with Highland Dairy, and we got milk from Highland Dairy for years and years. In fact, when I left the company store, when they closed it down, that's where I went to work. I worked for Highland Dairy for 24 years. Luckily they had a milk depot just out east of Price. We had refers and trucks out there and they would bring the milk down on semis from Salt Lake and we would load our trucks. I didn't deliver door-to-door; I delivered to the stores in Price and Helper and the schools and whatnot. That's what I did for 24 years after I left the company store.

LB: What was your favorite part about being in that company store?

RJ: Oh, I don't know. I liked working in the grocery department and the butcher shop. During the war my mother went to work at the company store and she really took care of the dry goods section. They had shelf after shelf of bulk goods, people making dresses and all that kind of

thing. She did all the buying for all the dry goods; ladies and kids panties, the hose, and all that kind of stuff. You look over to the company store now at the front [and] you've got all those big windows. She used to decorate them up just like you'd see in the J.C. Penney store. In the spring she'd decorate with all spring things. We had two mannequins, a blonde mannequin and a red-headed mannequin, and she'd decorate the mannequins and put all the stuff in there.

LB: Did any of your other family members work in the store?

RJ: My older brother did just like I did; he worked after school and on Saturdays. He worked there for two or three years until he got into high school and then he didn't want to be bothered with it anymore. That's what I did. I started there after school and on Saturdays, and eventually went there full-time. I put in 17 years there before they closed it up.

LB: You were on a salary from the mining company?

RJ: Yes, I was.

LB: The sale revenue from the store went to the mining company?

RJ: Oh yes, everything went back to them.

LB: How did they determine how much money you could spend ordering supplies to stock the store?

RJ: One of the early, early store managers of Kenilworth Merc was a man by the name of Sam Woodhead. The Woodhead family were big in Kenilworth: Sam Woodhead, Gladston Woodhead, Roy Woodhead, Billy Woodhead. Billy Woodhead one time became the superintendent. Sam Woodhead was eventually transferred into the Salt Lake office--the main office for the Independent Coal & Coke Company was in the very top floor of the Walker Bank Building--so Mr. Woodhead was actually my dad's boss. He would come down every so often and they would go to the store and they'd go over the books and all this kind of stuff, and see that everything was going good. He was a nice man, smart!

LB: Was it up to your dad to decide what to stock and where to get it?

RJ: Oh yes, you bet.

LB: Did you go on buying trips with him?

RJ: A couple of times, but not really. He belonged to the Utah State Grocers Association and every year they would have a convention there in Salt Lake and they'd have all their booths set up with all different products. They took me up there a couple of times to it.

LB: Did you eventually take over the store from your dad?

RJ: No.

LB: Just worked beside him, huh?

RJ: I'll tell you a funny thing. The safe over at the company store was a stronger safe than the one they had at the mine office [in Kenilworth]. The one at the mine office was a walk-in safe. When there was a lot of money involved, they'd rather keep the money at the Kenilworth store. [Dad] gave me the combination and I knew how to open it. In fact, you had the combination [lock] on the outside and then you had another safe [door] on the inside with another combination. Well, the man that bought that safe, he spent two days trying to get it out of that store because it weighed so much he had to prop up the flooring and everything to get it out. I went over there and was just watching them do all that work to get that safe out. He got it down in his pickup truck and I said, "What are you going to do with that?" He said, "I'm going to take it over to Spanish Fork to a safe cracker over there, to see if he can crack open this safe. I want to get what's in it." [Ron said], "Well if you'd told me I have the combination. I could have opened it up for you!" And guess what he found in it? One bag of scrip nickels, probably two or three thousand scrip nickels in that bag; it was the only thing he found in it [laughs]. I could have opened it for him if he would have asked me.

LB: What are they doing with the store now?

RJ: It's vacant. A man here in town by the name of Richard Blanchard bought the store. For two or three years he opened the entrance on the west side and had a little grocery store there, but it didn't pay off so he finally closed it up. Five years ago we had an arsonist in town and he burned a couple of houses, and then the company store caught fire. We thought we were going to lose the store but the fire trucks from Helper, Price and even Wellington were up here and they saved it. I don't know how much money he spent, but he had to tear that whole roof off clear down; he put a brand new roof on, metal roof, and the work he's done on the outside, he's even repainted it. But the inside looks like hell. I don't know if he's ever going to do anything but he spent a lot of money fixing it up, at least the outside. I think he'll eventually try to sell it, but I don't know why they'd buy it or what they could use it for. I don't know.

LB: Looking back on growing up here in Kenilworth, what do you think your best memories are?

RJ: Probably baseball. We had a town baseball team. They had a Carbon County baseball league; it was called the Carbon County Coal League. They had teams from Price, Kenilworth, Hiawatha, Dragerton, Sunnyside, and Columbia. The mining companies would hire ball players, give them a job so they would play on the ball team if they were good. There was some good competition. I played for 12 years for the Kenilworth baseball team; I have a lot of good memories. Ended up pitching in three State amateur baseball tournaments, one in Helper, one at the old Dirk's Field in Salt Lake, and one at Smithfield up by Logan. I had some great times playing baseball, I'll tell you. Of course, I had a good career in basketball, too. After I graduated from high school and I played one year for the college, I played for about 10 years on some independent teams playing. They had a Helper basketball league and I played for many years down there. In fact, I hold the high school record at Carbon High School. This was when I was a junior. Every night when you'd go out you'd warm up, he [the coach] would divide them up to different baskets. You'd shoot free throws until you missed 10, so if you shot 20 and missed then it would be 10 out of 20. I never got to shoot over four. One night I made 125 in a row, just as fast as they'd shoot me the ball. The coach would blow his whistle, "We can't wait for Ron Jewkes all day. We have to practice!" I watched the Jazz and they can't make free throws; I get so disgusted because I could really make them.

LB: Did any of the coal towns to the west of Helper--Rains, Latuda, any of those--did they participate in this league?

RJ: Oh yes. Hiawatha was one of our nemeses. The reason is there were three Jackson brothers, Thomas Jackson was the security guard here, and he was killed when they had the Greek strikers in 1909.²⁸ He had three brothers. George B became the superintendent of Kenilworth. When he died his brother Bill Elias became the superintendent of Kenilworth, and the younger brother was the mine foreman here; he left and went to Hiawatha and was superintendent over there. All three of those brothers were superintendents. Anyway, when we played Hiawatha it was not only us against Hiawatha, it was brother against brother [laughs]. We had a lot of fun. But as one team would drop out, another team would come in. I think Columbia only played two years then they dropped out. Price played for about four years and then they dropped out. Wattis came in

²⁸ Greek miners believed the coal they dug from the Kenilworth mine was under weighed and hence they were underpaid when compared to weights and payments made to American-born miners. After negotiations with the Independent Coal & Coke Company failed to satisfy the Greeks but succeeded in stirring up the other miners, shooting broke out and lasted about nine hours. Thomas Jackson was killed, as were two Greek men; the event happened in 1911 ("Coal Strike Causes Death," *Carbon County News*, 10 Feb 1911; "Echoes from the Dust, Gunfire Erupts in Coal Mine Dispute," *Vernal Express*, 21 Aug 1975).

with a team for a couple of years. After Kenilworth bought Castle Gate²⁹ they sponsored a team, too, so Independent Coal & Coke Company had two teams, Kenilworth and Castle Gate. One year even the town of Ferron, Utah put a team in the Coal League. And there was a team down at Spring Glen, they were called the Spring Glen Mudhens, and they were good! They played for three or four years. But I have to tell you this. I always played center field and I was good. I wasn't even a good hitter, I was a fair hitter, but I was a good fielder. We got to fooling around and they found out I could throw a really good curve ball, sinker ball, so they started working me as a pitcher. I ended up pitching in three State amateur baseball tournaments. One year the mining town of Rains came into the league and they came up to play us; I pitched that day. When I played I was always lead-off batter. We beat them 31-1 and I batted lead-off and I got to bat eight times and got eight base hits. If you could go back to the old records of the Coal League over the years, you'd find out that was a record that nobody ever beat!

LB: Did your family come watch those games?

RJ: You betcha! Our original ball field was just a softball field. Then when we got in the league, they had to go over and expand it out into the cedars, make it bigger. We had a huge backstop behind home plate, we had a flagpole, water fountain, they built cinderblock dugouts, they put a fence around it, and we had a bleacher section and a concession stand. Even though it was a dirt field they fixed it up pretty good.

LB: Was that the mining company that did that?

RJ: Yes, Independent Coal & Coke Company. If you ever go down to the mining museum, you'll see my uniform hanging there.

LB: Were there fraternal lodges here? You know, IOOF or that kind of thing?

RJ: No. They did in Helper. In fact, my dad and myself both belonged to the Helper Kiwanis Club and we both belonged to the Elks Lodge in Price. I still do, in fact I'm a 40-year member of the Price Elks Lodge. I just paid my dues!

LB: And your kids all grew up here?

RJ: My two oldest ones live in Price, and my two youngest ones live in Helper. We actually had two families. I had my oldest daughter and oldest son, and then for 13 years we never had any

²⁹ The purchase was made in Dec 1951 ("Castle Gate Coal Mines," UtahRails.net).

kids. Then our youngest daughter, Stacy, she was an accident [laughs]. After we had the accident, we figured maybe we should have another one so those two could grow up together.

LB: How did the town differ for them compared to when you were their age growing up here?

RJ: It was pretty much the same. They liked to do all the things, they liked to hike and play ball and everything. My two boys were good ball players, especially the youngest one. He was better than the old man was; he played three years for Helper American Legion, two years for the high school, two years for the college, and one year for Colorado State University. [Laughing] He was better than the old man! They loved the sports and my oldest son, now, is one of the best golfers in Carbon County; he's a scratch golfer.

LB: That picture there right by your shoulder, with all the people in it, what's that of?

RJ: These are the men taking mine rescue [training]. These are mine rescue apparatus [pointing], and they were training. There's the superintendent there, and the safety engineer; different men that worked in the mine [pointing]. These are the ones that were taking the training.

LB: When was that taken?

RJ: It was taken sometime in the 1930s in front of the mine office over here [gestures]. You know, I can still tell you about three-fourths of the guy's names. My memory is pretty sharp.

LB: You say you do some volunteer work for the museum. What do you do?

RJ: I'm on my 21st year down there as a volunteer. I'm tour guide; I lead tours for the school kids and grown-ups. I work in the gift shop. I was even on the Board of Directors for four years and they made me the display chairman. The baseball room I designed and the Kenilworth room I designed. I have so much of my stuff donated down there in the Kenilworth room and the baseball room.

LB: What is the most common question you get from the school kids?

RJ: "Did you ever work in the mine?" No, never worked in the mine. But this is quite a story in itself. Over the years I had dozens of chances to go in the mine. Their main tunnel is a mile and a half, solid rock tunnel [with] double haulage, all lit up and everything. The superintendent, he says, "Anytime you want to go, I'll take you in." The mine foreman [said the same]. My next door neighbor was the State mine inspector, [and he said] "Anytime you want to do, I'll go." My

Uncle Rex Jewkes was the company mine inspector; he had to inspect the mine everyday before the miners could go in. So over the years I had dozens of chances to go in the mine. Most of the time I just chickened out. Anyway, after they closed the mine they brought all the equipment out of the mine, dug up all the rails and the track and brought them out of the mine, shut the power off, and temporarily sealed it. Over the course of all the years at Kenilworth, there was so much water in that Kenilworth mine. In the early days they pumped the water out, piped the water out of the mine so they could water the company lawns; it burned them up [because there was] so much sodium and chemicals in that it just burned the lawns right up. They couldn't use [the mine water]. Every ten or 15 years they'd get the bright idea, "Well, let's try sending some water samples in to Utah State University and have them test it again." They always got the same answer back. But they were always reading about new ways of purifying water. After they had closed the mine down and everything, like I said they pulled everything out of there, we had a town water board; I was secretary-treasurer. The president got an idea, "Let's go get another water sample. I just read where they have a new system of purifying water." So, I went in the mine. I didn't want to go but three of us from the town water board, two State mine inspectors-- Steve Hatsis and Frank Dlarich, and one federal mine inspector--Joe Freeman, went up to the mine entrance and they broke the seal. Now for all the years I could have ridden in, now I have to walk in a mile and a half over piles of debris where they'd torn out the track and rails, wading through water, just to get into the main part of the mine where the entries went off in different [directions]. Then the No. 2 Slope went down quite a ways and that's where they had to go get the water. So they said, "Mr. Jewkes you sit right here. Don't you move." So they sat me down; I had a light [gestures to his head, like a miner's lamp], but a mine like that is black. I mean it is BLACK! So I'm sitting there all by myself--they all went to get the water samples--and boy the noises that you hear! Creaking and cracking, every once in a while you'd hear a grumble where someplace in the mine it was caving in. They were gone about 25 minutes, and finally they came back with gallon water jugs. So now I had to carry a gallon of water a mile and a half! Have you every carried a gallon of milk out of the store? You'll know how heavy it is. We got out and they resealed it [mine portal]. It wasn't until ten years ago that it dawned on me: For all the years I was never in the mine, I ended up being one of the last men out of the Kenilworth mine! How about that? [laughs].

LB: What else do you want to tell us about your time in Kenilworth?

RJ: Oh I don't know. We had some terrific dances over at our dance hall. In fact, that's where we had our wedding reception, in our town dancehall. It's funny, my wife and I were married on Thanksgiving Day, November the 22nd, 1951. So I was born on Thanksgiving Day and I was married on Thanksgiving Day, but they are different days! Anyway, the man that ran the hotel,³⁰

³⁰ The Kenilworth Inn was completed in 1909 ("Kenilworth Breezes," *Carbon County News*, 13 Feb 1909).

John Driscoll and his wife, they catered my wedding and they brought turkeys and the trimmings. We had turkey dinner at my wedding reception! Another thing, my dad ran the projection machine for the movies for 15 years. Oh, another thing I wanted to tell you, Mr. Rampton, when he was the principal [of the school], he and his wife were really great for putting on operettas and programs, especially Christmas programs, but they had no room down at the school. The Independent Coal & Coke Company let them use the theater and amusement hall. They would take the big screen that was on the stage and move it clear back against the back wall so it wouldn't get damaged, and they had that big stage for the kids to perform on and everybody in town could come and watch their kids because they had 500 seats there. That made it nice, you know. Also, boxing was big in Carbon County back in the 1930s and Kenilworth had three really good boxers, fighters. They would stage fights over there; once again they would move the screen back then they would set up the boxing ring on the stage. People would buy a ticket but instead of watching a movie they were watching the boxing matches.

LB: I read in an old newspaper that Jack Dempsey came here.

RJ: Yes he did. He set up his training camp up at Consumers³¹ and that's where he trained. In fact, at one time they wanted to name the town Dempseyville³² and they wanted to sell him interests in the coal mine; he didn't buy in. Boxing was big in those days. Also, once a month they would have what they called a Saturday Night Smokers. They would take the boxing ring down onto the dance floor and set it up. No women were allowed, just men and the boys. They'd have maybe six or eight fights and they would start with the young kids and go up, you know; three, three-minute rounds. I fought in two of them; I was a pretty good scrapper [laughs]. In fact, I fought the same kid twice, and you'd fight three-minute rounds and they would never raise someone's hand as the winner. They would raise both our hands; you knew whether you won or lost. It was a night for the miners to get out with their boys, you know, for an evening of good entertainment without the women being around [laughs].

LB: Can you think of anything else?

³¹ Consumers was a company-owned town established by the Consumers Mutual Coal Company in the 1920s. In the early 1930s it was considered a model mining camp (Ronald G. Watt, A History of Carbon County, Utah State Historical Society & Carbon County Commission, 1997, pg 120; Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration, Utah: A Guide to the State, Hastings House, 1941, pg 404). The community was located in Gordon Creek Canyon, a few miles west of Price, UT.

³² Coal City was founded in the 1920s as a coal camp for workers at the Great Western Mining Company, and was located about nine miles west of Spring Glen in Consumers Wash. During 1923 Jack Dempsey had a training camp in town. His fame, and the town's persistent efforts to get him to invest in the mines, led to the label "Dempseyville". When the fighter failed to invest in the mines the town lost some of its gloss and the name reverted to Coal City; mine and town were devastated by the Depression of the 1930s and the town was abandoned by 1940 ("Utah Legends, Carbon County Ghost Towns," viewed at legendsofamerica.com; John W. Van Cott, Utah Place Names, University of Utah Press, 1990, pg 85).

RJ: Not off hand.