BOB TURRI

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 Bob Turri to interview him about his experiences growing up at Latuda, Utah and later as a BLM employee in Monticello, UT where his job included working with uranium mining companies. Jim Mattingly is also here, recording the interview.

LB: Ok, to get things started Bob, give me you full name and your date of birth.

BT: Robert Edwin Turri,[1] T-U-R-R-I, born May 5, 1928.

LB: Ok. Where were you born?

BT: I was born in Latuda, Utah.[2]

LB: How do you spell that town?

BT: L-A-T-U-D-A

LB: Ok. Now we're in Monticello at your house here. Have you lived other places?

BT: I like Monticello real well. I liked the little mining town we lived in [Latuda], you know, it was home. But this has got more advantages than that little mining town had. We didn't have a lot of things that are common today, like water in our houses, inside toilets, that kind of thing. We didn't have those when I was growing up.

LB: What took your family to Latuda?

[1] Before the interview began, Mr. Turri said he has always been called Bob. If someone called him Robert, no one would know him.

[2] Latuda, sometimes called Liberty, was located in Spring Canyon in Carbon County, Utah. It was developed by the Liberty Fuel Company and named after owner Frank Latuda. Today it is a ghost town. Mr. Latuda and his family maintained a permanent residence at Trinidad, Colorado; he died in 1931 ("Funeral Services for Head of Liberty Fuel Company Are Set," *Salt Lake Telegram*, May 11, 1931).

BT: My mother came there with her family; they came from Colorado. My grandfather was working in the coal mine in Oakview, Colorado when it blew up and he survived that explosion.[3] They came to Utah to work in the coal mines in Carbon County. The coal company had a boarding house [at Latuda] and [my mother's family] operated that boarding house.[4]

LB: What was the name of the coal company?

BT: Liberty Fuel.[5]

LB: Was it a company town?

BT: The town was all owned by the company except the grocery store. The grocery store and two houses belonged to my dad's aunt.[6] My dad migrated here from Italy in the early 1920s. He came here to work in his aunt's store. That's how he came here. As a result of delivering groceries and so forth, he met my mother at the boarding house. That's how they got connected.[7]

LB: Did your dad ever work in the mines?

BT: Yes. My dad was really seriously hurt in the coal mine, twice. He was in a cave-in; it killed a guy, maimed one guy for life, and injured some others. My dad was buried under a thick rock for several hours. They couldn't get him out. They had been cleaning up the coal [after a blast], shoveling it by hand, and he had gone to get a drink of water. When he got back the guys had cleaned up a bunch of the coal around them and as he reached down to pick up his shovel a rock fell, the whole roof fell in on them. He had enough coal around him to hold most of the weight of the rock. It killed one guy, just smashed him, and injured those others.[8] It took several hours to get my dad out from under that thick rock. It broke his back. He was in the hospital for a long time. He always had back problems after that.

LB: Was that when he went into the tavern business?

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[3] The Oakview Mine was located near LaVeta, Colorado and was operated by the Oakdale Coal Company. An explosion on August 18, 1919 killed 18 people. Deaths were apparently due more to lack of oxygen than to mine collapse ("Eighteen Miners Dead in Oakdale Disaster," *Herald Democrat*, Leadville, CO, August 20, 1919).
[4] In 1920 the town of Latuda had 343 residents, with almost all of the adult men employed by the coal mine. Many, but not all, of the residents were foreign born. Three women were employed at the boarding house, two as cooks and one as a housekeeper (1920 US Census, Latuda Town, Carbon County, UT, ED 42).
[5] Liberty Fuel Company was operated by Frank Latuda and partners. The mine, named Liberty, was located about 1/2 mile from the town of Latuda.
[6] The town was built by Liberty Fuel in 1918 and originally consisted of 20 houses for employees. It was first called Liberty but when a post office was opened the name was officially changed to Latuda. The fact that the town grocery store was not owned by the company was unique in the area and caused by the fact that another party owned the land on which the town was laid out; private ownership of the store was a condition of Liberty Fuel's purchase of the townsite (Historic American Engineering Record UT-52, 1988).
[7] They married in 1926 (Western States Marriage Collection, Brigham Young University, viewed at abish.byui.edu).
[8] This may be a reference to a roof fall on June 8, 1937 that killed Antonio Corsetti, and injured Valentine Turri and John Krissman ("Killed in Mine," *The Ogden Standard Examiner*, June 9, 1937). Several reports of death due to rock fall in the Liberty mine are found in local newspapers, although names of injured parties are not always listed.

BT: No, he was already running the bar.

LB: What was the name of the bar?

BT: Val's Place.

LB: V-A-L?

BT: [Nods in the affirmative] Val's Place.

LB: Did he own it?

BT: He was renting it, at first, from his aunt because she owned that building and the bar was in the basement of the store.[9] The top was a store and a post office, and the basement was my dad's bar. He rented that for a long time and then he bought the whole building, eventually. He never operated the store; the store was shut down. It was then just the post office[10] and the bar in that building.[11]

LB: Did you go to school in Latuda?

BT: Yes. I showed you the pictures of the little elementary school where we went. It was a complex. On one side was the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades and on the other side was 4th, 5th, and 6th. Three grades had one teacher [two teachers in the school]. An interesting part about that: When we started in the 1st grade there was quite a bunch of us, but by the time we got to the 4th grade there were three of us left. When it was time to go to the 5th grade, there were two of us left. The teacher said, "We can't hold a class for just two people. You guys go into the 6th grade." So we went from the 4th to the 6th grade. The next year we were supposed to go to the 7th grade, to the junior high at Helper, Utah. When it was time for me to go to the 7th grade she said, "No, you guys have got to go back now, to the 5th grade." So we went from the 6th to the 5th to the 7th. I guess that's why I'm not very smart (laughing).

LB: What was it like, growing up in a company coal mining town?

BT: It was different. We didn't have any structures. We didn't have a swimming pool, we didn't have a ball field, we didn't have a tennis court. We didn't have anything. We had to develop all our own things to do. There was nothing structured for us. There wasn't even a church in our little town! No Boy Scouts or anything like that. We had to generate our own things to do. And we did! Some of it wasn't too smart. On days when the mine was idle, we'd go up to the mine

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[9] Val's Place became the "hub of social activity despite prohibition and periodic inspections by the State of Utah" (Historic American Engineering Record UT-52, 1988).

[10] The Latuda Post Office opened in 1920 and closed on Nov 30, 1958 (John S. Gallagher, The Post Offices of Utah, The Depot, Burtonsville, MD, 1977, pg 25). The first postmaster was Katherine Bottino and the last was Mrs. Edith Baird (Appointments of U.S. Postmasters, 1832-1971, viewed at Ancestry.com).

[11] By 1930, Mr. Turri's father listed his principal employment as pool hall manager (1930 US Census, Latuda, Carbon County, UT, ED 17).

and run all the machinery outside of the mine at the preparation plant. We'd run the belt line and ride the belts. We did a lot of things we probably shouldn't have done, but we did it for something to do. We were pretty good about developing things to do. I'm amazed at some of things we did when we were kids! We built a skating rink.

LB: Ice skating?

BT: Ice skating. My dad's bar was right by the railroad track. The track that served the mine went right by our house and right up to the mine. On the opposite side of that railroad track my dad built what he called the bocce grounds. It's a game that was generated in Italy and is played with wooden balls. He built a little court and the surface of it was packed, rolled, sand; really smooth. The guys would go up there from the bar and play the game to see who was going to buy the beers. It was so popular that my dad ended up putting lights on it.

LB: Was this a game he brought with him from Italy?

BT: He didn't bring it, it was something he knew about. He bought the balls, they are some kind of unique wood. I had those for a long time and finally gave them to my grandson; he still has them. When wintertime came they quit playing on the field so we got the idea that if we could flood that place, we'd have a skating rink. Like I told you, the company owned everything, and we went to the superintendent of the mine and said, "How about giving us some water to flood that?" "Absolutely not," no way does he even want to talk about it. The engineer on the train that went up and down that track was a real friendly guy. He'd throw gum out the window to us, and things like that. Real friendly. [The train would] start at the top of the canyon and collect coal from the mines; there was a mine about every mile up and down that canyon. They delivered the empty cars and when they came down they would collect the loaded cars. The front engine would hold the train and the back engine would collect them at the mine and put them on the tail end of the train. That front engine would always stop right by my dad's bar where the bocce grounds were. We were there talking to the engineer, he was such a friendly guy, we told him about our desires to do this [ice rink]. He said, "I think I can help you guys." He got off his steam engine and opened some big valves. Out comes all this water and he flooded our bocce grounds for us. It froze and we had a skating rink, with lights on it no less! We had a ball there. We built a fire and all the kids in town would come there and skate and have a good time. Every once in while that engineer would stop and refresh our ice by opening a valve and reflooding our field. Like I say, we had to generate our own things.

LB: Did you ever work in your dad's aunt's grocery store?[12]

BT: No, I never did.

LB: Did you work in your dad's bar?

[12] The 1920 US Census for Latuda lists only one merchandise store in town, operated by S.N. Marchetti, wife Otilla, and daughter Ida. In the 1940 census Otilla was widowed but still operates the store; Ida was the postmistress.

BT: Oh yes. I started working in my dad's bar when I was very young, about 8, 9, 10 years old. How that happened was I would go to my dad's bar just to visit him. He'd say, "Keep an eye on things here for a while. I'm going to go get a sandwich." It was nothing to draw a beer; I could draw a beer. Guys would come in and I'd draw the beer for them. My mother showed me how to count change when I was real small. I could tend that bar when I was 8 and 9 years old, and I did. That's how I started tending bar. I tended bar for many, many years. That's why I've got this oxygen on. When I went to the doctor with this problem he said I smoked too much. I said, "I've never smoked in my life, but I tended bar." He said, "That's even worse." I remember the smoke in that bar would be 2-3 feet [thick] under that ceiling. A blue haze, you know, so thick. I tended bar long after I was married. That's how I got on oxygen.

LB: Did you ever go in the mines? Were you ever a coal miner?

BT: I started working at the coal mine when I was 16 years old [1944]. World War II was on. When we weren't going to school they would let us work at the mine because they were so short on manpower. They wouldn't let us work underground; we had to be 18 to go underground. We could work on the outside at 16. I can remember when high school was out we all got together, we all lived in that town, and went up to the mine and asked for a summer job. They hired all five of us.

LB: What did you do?

BT: It was a whole bunch of things. The first day on the job we all arrived with our brand new hard hats, brand new hard-toed boots and gloves. We really looked new. The foreman had only one arm, I remember, and he lined us all up and gave us our assignments. He looked us all over and said, "Well, I guess half a man is better than nothing at all." I was offended, but I found out he was probably right. The first job we got was to clean up around the railroad cars, the spillage. We were to shovel it back up into those railroad cars. The first shovel full I took went up and hit the side of the car and came down and hit the ground. I knew he was probably right.

LB: How far up did you have to pitch it?

BT: Man, it must have been, I'll say, ten feet, 10-12 feet. It didn't go up there, it hit the side of the car and came back down. He [the foreman] saw that, so he comes over and gets me. He gives me a new assignment. This assignment was digging new toilet holes for the town. The company owned the town and there was no indoor plumbing, so every house had an outdoor toilet. We'd have to go down and dig new holes when they filled up, so I had to go down and dig new toilet holes. The next job I got was working in the shop with this old man. He was in his 70s and he was repairing mine cars. They had about 300 mine cars in that mine, and our job was to keep them running. Greasing them, repairing them, and all that. He was an interesting old guy. The thing I remember about him was he used to talk about his experience with Butch Cassidy. He had witnessed Butch Cassidy hold up the payroll at Castle Gate mine; he saw that. He used to tell me about it all the time, how easy it was for Butch Cassidy to take the payroll

away from those miners. He said they were all there at the mine office waiting for their payday, all the miners. The pay came on the train and the train was right next to the office at the Castle Gate mine. The train pulled up with the payroll. The mine office was upstairs and the stairs were on the outside of the building. The paymaster came out of the office, down the steps, and over to the train and picked up the pay and turned around. When he got to the foot of the steps, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were there and took the payroll away from those guys, turned around, jumped on their horses, and were gone.[13] That easy. All the miners stood there and watched them go. He used to tell me that story, several times. It was interesting. Eventually I ended up being the outside foreman. I stayed long enough. I had a lot of different jobs. I ran a bulldozer for them for a while and ended up being the foreman on the outside.

LB: How long did you stay with that?

BT: I started in about 1943, when I wasn't in school, working for them [in] summertime and whatever days off I had from school. In 1948 I finished school and went to work permanently on the outside. Eventually I got the foreman job. I stayed there until 1966, when I was offered a job at the Job Corps center in Price. A friend that I was born and raised with was the director of that Job Corps center. We were lifetime friends; we still are friends. He kept after me to come go to work. I kept telling him, "I'm not going down there and work with a bunch of kids." Finally he talked me into quitting my job and going down there. My first day on the job I thought I'd made the biggest mistake of my life.[14]

LB: How had you seen Latuda change during those years?

BT: Say that again, Lee.

LB: How did Latuda change during the years that you lived there?

BT: It didn't change a whole lot. Well, yes, it did too. They modernized a lot of the houses, putting bathrooms in them.[15] The grocery store closed, though, in that period of time. They eventually closed the post office, too; they put mailboxes on the road for us. They closed the schools. First they closed the junior high. We had a junior high there, it not only served our little town, it served the little town below us, which was about a mile away, and the town above us, which was about a mile away.

LB: Do you remember the names of those places?

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[13] The robbery occurred on April 21, 1897 and the payroll was around $8,000. Other versions of the story claim it was Butch Cassidy and Elza Lay rather than the Sundance Kid who committed the crime. A posse was formed to chase the outlaws but failed to catch them (A History of Carbon County by Ronald G. Watt, Utah State Historical Society and Carbon County Commission, 1997, pgs39-40).

[14] The Castle Valley Job Corps Center was the second one operated by the BLM in the nation and enrolled about 100 corpsmen who worked on projects for the Price District BLM ("Young Men of Castle Valley," by Lorin J. Welker and Edward R. Evatz, in Our Public Lands, Summer 1966, pgs 25-27).

[15] Indoor plumbing was installed in 1945 (Historic American Engineering Record UT-52, 1988).

BT: Yes. The one above us was Rains, R-A-I-N-S, and the one below us was Standardville. Standardville was where Racine, my wife, was born and raised. Her mother ran a boarding house in Standardville. Those kids actually had to walk to school every day. Walked that mile up the canyon to the junior high school in Latuda.[16] That junior high closed, I don't know the year, but it was when I was going from the 6th to the 7th grade they closed it, so we had to go to Helper. They bussed us to Helper. They kept the elementary school there [Latuda] for a long time, then they closed it and bussed those kids, too. Everybody was bussed to school after that. The schools [in Latuda] closed. Those are about the biggest changes that I witnessed in that time. As I remember my dad had one of the few cars in town. I remember that people used to come to him and say, "Hey, are you going to town?" Town was Helper, Utah; it was about six miles away. People did the majority of their shopping there. Payday was a big day, when they got paid everybody went to Helper to shop, get drunk, or whatever (laughing). They'd all head for town. We had one of the few cars in town and a lot of guys used to go to my dad wanting to know if they could get a ride to town. There weren't very many cars in town at that time, either. As the cars got more and more use a lot of guys moved to Helper, moved out of [Latuda] and moved to Helper and Price, and were driving to work everyday. Instead of living in the little mining towns they were driving, so the towns kept going down, down, down.

LB: How long did your dad stay in business?

BT: He stayed in business, I'd have to take a guess at this, but he was [in business] until about 1960, 1962; something in there. He finally closed the bar. My dad was also working at the mine. After he got hurt inside the mine he went outside and worked as a blacksmith. He was trained as a blacksmith in Italy when he was growing up. He took over the blacksmith job at the mine there, along with the lampman [job]. He was the guy that took care of all the mine lights.[17] He handed them out in the morning to the miners and he took them in at night and charged them, and all that; he did that, too. He also shoed all the mine horses. He hated that job!

LB: The mines would use horses to tow the cars?

BT: Yes. I showed you those pictures [referring to a poster he has]. You see pictures of the horses in the mine. They would go around to the farms in Carbon and Emery counties, the superintendent and my dad always went with him, looking for the right horses to buy for the mine. They wanted low profile horses, heavy bodied. Then my dad had to put shoes on those things. Man, that was a job! Sometimes they'd pull the shoes off, you know. The guys who used the horses in the mine, they were called drivers. They would come early in the morning and get the horses and go in before the men went in the mine so they could be out of the way when they were transporting the men into the mine. They'd have the horses out of the way. At night they were the last ones out. They'd come out and my dad was there taking the lights in, and

[16] In the fall of 1952 the Carbon County School Board offered the junior high school for free, but it had to be removed from Latuda. Unfortunately, removal was complicated by the fact that the school was constructed of stone ("Like a School?," *The Ogden Standard Examiner*, December 1, 1952).
[17] Lampman was his principal occupation according to the 1940 census (1940 US Census, Latuda, Carbon County, Utah, ED 4-16).

they'd say, "Old Baullie's got a shoe off." Oh man, [dad] would throw a fit, cuss and rage. Before he went home he had to go put that shoe on for the next day. In the summertime, one of the things we did, they would let us take the horses and ride them over to Scofield. The mine would close down a couple of months in the summertime [due to] lack of orders for coal. All our coal at that time was domestic coal being used to heat houses. When the weather got warm the demand for coal would go down and the mine might close down for a couple of months. When they did that they'd take the horses to Scofield and pasture them. We had the honor of riding them over the hill to Scofield. No saddles; just get on the horses and ride over the hill to Scofield, which was quite a ways. We looked forward to that, and then going to get them when it was time to retrieve them. Those were big things that we looked forward to as kids. When I was still pretty young my dad bought us a horse, me and my brother. It was a wild mustang that had been caught on the desert and broke. My dad bought that horse; it was the most gentle horse I've ever seen. We'd pile all the kids we could get on it, there'd be five or six on that horse, falling off the back, but that horse would just stand. It never tromped on them or anything; he was so gentle. We had the first horse in town then others got some, and to pasture those horses we went to one of the mine companies that owned a canyon right out of town, it wasn't Latuda or Liberty Fuel, it was the town below us, Standardville, that owned that canyon. We went to them and asked if we could pasture our horses in there. I can remember the guy saying, "As long as you don't put sheep in there, that's fine." We put a fence across that canyon and we pastured our horses in there. Every day we would go look for those horses. A lot of guys in town started buying horses and there were three or four of us that took care of everyone's horse. We looked after their horses, anybody that wanted us to. In payment for that we got to use that horse anytime we wanted, along with all the tack they had for that horse. We did a lot of riding. We'd pack a pack on one of the horses and take off into the mountains there and ride for a week. Just ride in the mountains, camp out for a week, you know, just riding. We had a great time. Everyday we'd go looking for those horses, walk all over up that canyon looking for those horses. We'd catch them, bring them home, give them a little bit of oats, then turn them loose [back into the canyon]. I don't know why we did that, but that's what we did (laughing).

LB: In reading some history about coal mines in Utah, some authors imply that life in a coal camp was rough. I don't mean because there wasn't indoor plumbing or the wages were low or anything like that. It was rough in the sense that people got into fights and did dirt to one another. Did you experience that?

BT: Oh yes, did I ever experience that. That's true, you know. The miners would come in there [dad's bar] and get to drinking too much and get in fights. What was amazing to me was how they would fight, they would actually fist-fight, and the next day they'd go to work like nothing had ever happened. There were a few grudges held, but normally there weren't. But as a bartender I got involved in a lot of that stuff. I'm going to tell you this story. I hated tending bar and it was one of the reasons that I never drank. It isn't that I didn't like a beer, I did, but I never drank. The reason I didn't is because I saw too many guys come in my dad's bar, he [the customer] could be the nicest guy in the world but he'd get too much to drink and become somebody else that I didn't like. I can remember this one guy, he lived across the street from me and Racine, he was the nicest guy in the world, do anything for you and he was so nice all the

time. He come to my dad's bar, like on Saturday, I'd be tending bar and the bar would be full. He'd come in and go down to the end of the bar and pull up a stool, [say] "Give me a beer." He'd drink about three beers and then he'd get up and start dancing with the music a little bit. Now he'd move over to the center of the bar, push in, look up and down the bar and say, "I can whip any son-of-a-bitch in here." I hated that! Most of the guys would ignore that, but somewhere there's one just like him who's going to take that challenge. I hated that kind of stuff. I have to tell you about one occasion. My dad used to tell me all the time, "You don't have enough patience to be a bartender. You don't have any tolerance." I said, "Dad, I can't handle that, I just can't handle that kind of stuff. It gets to me." I didn't tend bar anymore than I had to, toward the end there at least. But I remember one day I was working at the mine and he was, too. My mother would open the bar in the later afternoon, and when my dad came home from work he'd take over. I'd go down and take over while they ate, then my dad would take over for the late shift. Anyway, he came to me this one day and said, "I have to go to Salt Lake. Would you open the bar tomorrow night when you get home from work?" "Sure," [Bob said]. I came home from work that night, ate dinner. I was married. Went over and opened the bar and it was one of those nights when hardly anyone came around. Because the store had closed my dad had a little bit of groceries in one corner of the bar; he had milk, eggs, and bread. That was about the size of it, just a little bit of stuff there to accommodate people because they had to go clear to Helper to get groceries. Sometimes they'd come in for a loaf of bread, a quart of milk, or whatever. They might come in and have a beer, whatever. A lot of the guys chewed tobacco, Copenhagen. They'd come in for their Copenhagen. I opened the bar, anyway, but hardly anyone came in. Once in while somebody would come in, then drift off. I was sitting there all alone and I looked at the clock--it was 9 p.m.--and I said, "I'm going to lock this place up and go home." Just as I thought that, four guys walked in the front door that I'd never seen before in my life. [One of them] comes up to the bar and said, "Give us a beer." I opened them each a bottle of beer; a bottle of beer was 25 cents at that time. Do you know what a punchboard is? We had a lot of punchboards, a lot of different things on punchboards. One of the favorite punchboards was for chocolates, candy chocolates. They were very popular, especially if you had real good chocolates on there, people would punch those boards. It was in sections, you know, and you'd get 10 punches for a quarter. This guy picks up a punchboard, punches out a section. I see my dad's car go by the window so I know my dad is home. Anyway, the guy throws down a dollar bill and I said, "You owe me another quarter." He says, "For what?" I said, "Well, four beers at a quarter apiece, that's a dollar. A section on the punchboard is a quarter, so that's a dollar and a quarter." He said, "I paid you for those punches." I said, "You know darn well you didn't pay me for those punches." About that time my dad walks in the backdoor and he heard this. He says, "What's the matter?" [I said], "This guy owes me a quarter. He doesn't want to pay it." My dad says, "Don't stand there and argue for a quarter. Let it go." No way am I going to let that go! I'm not going to let that go, so I turned to the guy and I said, "Get your butt out of here." He says, "Why don't you put me out?" Down under the bar we had a cable, about that long [gesturing, about 18 inches], an electric cable that was about that big around [gesturing 1-1/2 inches]; it was off of mining machinery. We used that for an equalizer or shillelagh in the bar when things got out of control. You hit a guy with that and he went down. So I grabbed that. I didn't dare hit the guy on the head because I was afraid I'd kill him. But I hit him right there [gestures to shoulder], hard, and knocked him off the stool right onto the floor. When I did that,

his buddies picked up all the saltshakers on the bar--we always had salt shakers on the bar because guys put salt in their beer. They start throwing those salt shakers at me. Well, I didn't have any trouble ducking those saltshakers, but my dad was standing behind me and I saw the first one hit him right in the head. Klunk! Then they picked up the bar stools and they started throwing those at me. I just ducked down behind the bar. I was kind of at the end of the bar and at the end was a glass showcase full of candy bars. We sold a lot of candy in that bar. The showcase was made out of thick plate glass because it served as an extension of the bar. The top was thick glass. I'm down right there and these stools are going. Our back bar was all mirrors with glass shelves on it. My mother used to keep those beer glasses all shiny and on those shelves. All I could hear was glass crashing--those stools were going everywhere! I saw one go over my head and go through the window in the backdoor. I kind of raised up to see what was going on and this guy that I'd knocked down, he's up and he's got a stool by the legs and he's going to clobber me. He goes like this [swings] and I duck back down. About that time I heard his buddies running for the front door. They had run out of stools and they're running for the front door. About that time he saw that his buddies were leaving him, so he took a wild swing at me and he comes right down through that showcase. Crash! Then he ran for the front door. I'm young at that time, and I went out that backdoor and down that alley and I caught him as he came out the front door. His buddies were already out, but I caught him. I knocked him down again. I hit him with my fist and I knocked him down, and I jumped on top of him. I was so mad at this point that I hit that guy every place that he didn't protect himself, and I hit him hard. He was pleading with me, "Please don't hit me again. I'll pay for everything, but please don't hit me again." That didn't matter to me; I was crazy. I hit him again. About that time I sensed that something went past my head and I turned around. His buddies are coming behind me with big rocks. There were three of them and he's the fourth one. They're throwing these big rocks at me and I'm trying to duck these rocks, and he gets loose. He gets away from me. It's dark out there and he disappears in the dark and then his buddies all disappear in the dark. It's all over with. Now I'm thinking, "What just happened here?" My dad's bar is torn all to hell for a quarter! I have to go in and face my dad. That was a hard thing to do, to go back in that bar. I knew I had messed up bad (laughter). I'll never forget this: My dad was sitting on a chair, holding a towel to his head. I walked up to him and the only thing he said to me, that he ever said to me, was, "Well, are you satisfied?" Of course, I'm trying to get out from under everything and said, "Dad, it's not the quarter, it's the principle of the thing." My dad's bar was really torn up bad, you know, for a quarter! Those are the kinds of experiences I had tending bar. I didn't like that.

LB: So you went up to Price and you went to work for the Job Corps for a while. How did you end up with the BLM [Bureau of Land Management]?

BT: The Job Corps center I was working at [in Price, Utah] was administered by the BLM. The Forest Service had a lot of Job Corps centers and the Park Service had some, too. BLM only had four Job Corps centers: one in Oregon, one in Idaho, one in Utah, and one in Arizona. They decided to close two centers. They wanted to keep the ones in Idaho and Utah open and close the other two. We had some evaluations to support us and we [Price center] could not pass the evaluation. They had to close our center. When they closed our center we had a staff of 52, and they were trying to find jobs for us. We were all working for the federal government. I got a

call from the BLM state director offering me a job in Monticello. He offered me the Chief of Operations job in Monticello. Do you remember Bob Dalla? He was working at the Job Corps with me.

LB: What's his last name?

BT: Dalla, D-A-L-L-A. He was an engineer up there for us, and he got hired at the same time. We came down here [Monticello] together with some pretty specific instructions.

LB: What was Chief of Operations? What responsibilities did you have?

BT: All the contracts. I don't know how to explain that to you, Lee. Doing all the Force Account work,[18] that kind of stuff, the physical work part of it. If there were any projects planned, we either did them or contracted them.

LB: What year was it that you got here to Monticello?

BT: 1969.

LB: What was Monticello like at that time?

BT: Smaller. There's been a lot of growth, I don't know about population-wise, but there have been a lot of homes built in Monticello since then. This whole subdivision where I'm living was just a hayfield. Well I couldn't find a house when I came here; there were no empty houses. There was one empty house and it needed so much work but with starting this new job I didn't have time to do it. I couldn't find a place to live and I considered turning the job down. A friend of mine, his dad had a big court up there in Price for mobile homes, and he said, "Why don't you get a mobile home and put it in?" He took me to his dad's court and showed me the different mobile homes there, and how nice they were. I ended up buying one and I put it on this lot right over the fence [pointing to his backyard fence] from where I'm living now. There was nothing else here, just me sitting out there by myself. I had that for a long time, then Racine and I bought this home.

LB: At the time you arrived in Monticello was there a lot of oil and gas and mining activity?

BT: Mining was big. Oil and gas was fair.

LB: What kind of mining was big?

BT: Uranium mining. I don't remember any copper mining going on at that time. There was a lot of uranium mining going on.

[18] At its simplest, Force Account work was labor performed by BLM employees.

LB: Did you end up with much involvement with mining?

BT: Yes. My job changed several times when I was working with the BLM. I worked as Chief of Operations and then I worked in watershed. I was even Fire Control Officer for a while. Then I got a new job called Chief of Realty and Minerals. That's when I got heavily involved in mining and oil and gas.

LB: What was BLM's involvement? I realize that a lot of the mines were on land administered by the BLM, but what kind of responsibilities did the BLM think they had?

BT: None. Hardly any. They didn't have any regulations controlling that at the time. We were always concerned, cultural resources being one. It wasn't required to do inventories of cultural resources or anything. Just nothing. I could go out and talk with the miners, try to convince them that they had some responsibility even though there were no regulations. They accepted that, a lot of them. I didn't work with the individual miners, there were too many of them. I was working with the major ones.

LB: What were the major miners?

BT: One of the major ones was Utah Power & Light. They had some mines but they weren't actually producing them, but they were doing lots of exploration work. A lot of it. Minitome was another big company that was in here. I can't remember all of them now, but there were some major companies and they would cooperate, they would work with you.

LB: What kind of things did you try to get them to do?

BT: Mainly to reduce the damage and to rehabilitate what they did. I can remember a guy by the name of Arden Taylor, he was ramrodding everything for Utah Power & Light. He came here year after year after year with crews to do this work. They stayed down in Fry Canyon. I can remember my first contact with him. We met on the road, and we stopped and wound our windows down and we were just talking through our windows. He said to me, "Well what do you guys want from us, anyway?" I said, "Look, Arden, you guys have some responsibility to the land here. You're using it and you have some responsibility." He said, "I'll tell you what. I'll do anything you want me to do as long as it is reasonable." That guy and I, we did some fantastic things. We went out there to some of those old mining camps, probably historical now (laughing), those old dumpy looking mining camps that were out there with old stoves and tables and cars, everything laying around. All I'd have to say to him is, "This is sure a mess, isn't it?" and the next time I'd go out there they would be gone. "I dug a big hole here with my bulldozer," he said. "It's all buried there. You got any seed you can bring out?" I'd bring out some seed and he and I would seed it all up. I go back and look at those places and see a meadow and think, "We made that meadow." Arden was a great guy to work with. I didn't have anybody that opposed, strongly opposed us. I didn't get down to the individual miner because there were just too many of them out there, but I did [work] with the big companies. And I had a lot of success. The [BLM] manager was always thrilled with what I could get done because there were no

regulations. If I could get something accomplished, he was happy. BLM was not really approving oil and gas leases at the time I took over the minerals part. It was being approved by a different division; it was not BLM. I started getting involved in that and go to those on-sites, you know, when they go out and look at the location before they drilled it and decide what they were going to do with it. I tried to represent BLM, and that guy from the other organization would always say, "Here comes the BLM again with all their BS," and turn the operator against me. But I stayed with it and finally BLM got that authority and took over that responsibility. We did well. To this day, I challenge this Area Manager here [BLM Monticello Field Office], "Why are you doing all these things? What did we do wrong? Show me. What did we do wrong?" We did some good work. We would process an application to drill in three days and we did good work.

LB: When did you step into the Realty and Minerals job?

BT: It was about 1975, I think it was.

LB: Had Monticello grown by then?

BT: Yes. I don't know population-wise whether it had grown, but it had in the number of structures. I know that. This whole subdivision wasn't there, Silverstone wasn't there; all those houses had been added. I don't know where the people came from or what they did, even. But it had grown.

LB: When did the BLM start to get authority to ask more of the miners?

BT: You know, I can't remember when that occurred, Lee, to tell you the truth. It came kind of slow but it kept getting tougher and tougher and tougher. It is one of the reasons that I retired. Those restrictions, especially on miners, got to the point where I couldn't believe in them myself. It became difficult for me to impose that on somebody else. I can't believe we have to do this, you know, that became difficult for me. That's when I decided I had the time in, I don't like the way things are going, so I got out. That's when I left. Especially the mining restrictions, they got real stiff.

LB: When did you retire?

BT: 1994.

LB: Can you think of anything else you'd like to tell us about your time in Latuda, your working with the coal mine, or your activities with the BLM?

BT: I want to go back to Latuda a little bit. I like to think about that, when I was a kid, and the lack of things to do. I watch kids today, my grandkids all have a phone or the web, and they sit here together and they're all doing this [pantomimes typing on a phone or tablet]. We never had anything like that, you know, we just went out and did something (laughing). One of our popular

things to do, since we lived right up against the base of the hill, was to hike. We'd go in and get mom to make us a lunch, hike up to the top of the hill, eat lunch and come back down. It was a popular thing for us to do. I look at kids today and think there's something missing in their lives, something that I cherish. The chances I had to develop for myself things to do. They sit there with those things and I keep saying, "What are they doing?" I don't know what they're doing! But they're there doing this [mimes typing], you know, for hours. No talking, even. I can't understand all that. It is hard for me to understand that.

The interview is temporarily stopped at this point to allow Jim to reposition the camera in order to record Bob's explanations of two photographs he has. One is a poster from Liberty Fuel Company containing several images of the underground and above ground operations, and the other is a panoramic view of Latuda.

LB: First of all, Bob, tell us where you got this [poster], and then tell us what it shows.

BT: These pictures [meaning the poster] hung in the mine office at Latuda. For years and years they hung there in the mine office. I don't know how I got it, but somehow I got this. It was hanging in the office. When they closed the office I got this some way. I don't remember how I got it.

LB: This [pointing to a picture on the poster] says "rotary dump." What was that part of?

BT: The rotary dump is where they dumped the mine cars. The cars came out of the mine in strings, ten cars in a string. We'd dump them individually through that rotary dump, turn them clear around and dump the coal out of them. We weighed the mine cars. Each car was weighed to see how much coal it was bringing out. Some of the cars were loaded by contractors, by hand. They were contracted and got so much a ton, so when those cars came out some of them would have a brass tag on them with a number on it. When we weighed them we would record that number because that car belonged to an individual; he loaded it and he got paid by the ton. The bad part about it is, as I remember it now, was the superintendent of the mine, when we were dumping these cars, he came to us and told us, "Don't ever give anybody more than four tons on one of these cars." A lot of these cars had five tons on them. He would only let us pay that guy for four tons. That's why they got a union, because [the superintendent] wouldn't let us pay that guy for more than four tons, when there was actually five on those cars, some of them.[19]

LB: This one [pointing to another picture] says "reciprocating feeder and breaker." What was that?

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[19] The coal mines in Carbon County recognized the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in 1933. Some unions had obtained earlier success although they never achieved the kind of influence enjoyed by the UMWA (A History of Carbon County by Ronald G. Watt, Utah State Historical Society and Carbon County Commission, 1997, pgs 159-160).

BT: When the coal came out of the [rotary] dump, the feeder fed the coal on down. It shook like this [demonstrates a side-to-side motion]. It went from the feeder into a crusher, a rotary crusher; they called it a breaker. Some of those chucks would be half as big as this couch, and they'd go in the crusher and get broken down into smaller pieces.

LB: [Points to another photo on the poster] We have an "elevator." What's all that about?

BT: Where's this elevator?

LB: This one, right here.

BT: [Turning to better see the picture] I don't know what that's referring to. I can't see it well enough.

LB: [Reading the caption] "Conveyed to the shaking screens for grading and separating into the various standard..."

BT: Yes. See these holes all in this screen stuff? [The coal] came down and went across these holes and it sized the coal. This thing is shaking like this [gesturing] and the coal is sliding, and it drops through these various holes to size it, and then it comes out on these conveyors like this [pointing to the picture]. Depending on the size and which conveyor it came out on, it would load into the railroad cars. See these cars all under there? Depending on the size, it would load into those cars. We even loaded boxcars.

LB: Really?

BT: Yes. There's a picture here of the boxcar loader someplace.

LB: Is that one right there [pointing], right up there by your hand?

BT: Yes, this is the boxcar loader. A lot of people ordered their coal in boxcars because there was theft on coal, so they wanted it in boxcars so they could seal them.

LB: When you say that Liberty Fuel was selling for the domestic market, this was not industrial use. This was home and business heating?

BT: It was rare that we had any industrial use. Sometimes we'd get maybe a small contract, like the power company or something. We didn't do well in that business [coal for industrial use]; we couldn't compete. In the breakdown of the coal, in sizing it, there was small coal for stokers, was three-quarters and under. When I say under, it was clear down to zero--dust. In order to make our coal look better, not burn better but look better, we de-dusted it. We took the dust out. That became a problem because the dust started to build up in a huge mountain of dust. Coal dust.

LB: That's explosive, isn't it?

BT: Well, in certain conditions. You can put enough dry coal dust on top of a quarter, to cover the top of the quarter, to have an explosion. It doesn't take much coal dust, but it has to be dry and in the right conditions. But anyway, the coal dust piled up. Somebody from Japan came and bought that whole pile of dust. We had to load it all on the railroad and ship it to Japan.

LB: This picture here is of the mine itself and all of the workings that go with it?

BT: Yes, that's the preparation plant. You can trace the mine back here [pointing]. Here's the mine back up in here. I think you can even see the mine cars, can't you, coming out of the mine? This is where the small coal, the coal for stokers, went up this belt here [pointing]. This is where we treated it. We treated it over here, we oiled it. That coal for stokers, we oiled it so it would hold the dust down.

LB: You sprayed oil on it?

BT: Yes.

LB: This big picture here [pointing to a panoramic view of Latuda that is on the poster], you have an enlargement of that.

BT: Yes.

Another pause while the camera is repositioned and the enlarged photo of the Latuda panorama is set up so Bob can point out some buildings.

LB: Let's start by showing where the mine is.

BT: The mine is up here and this is the mine office, right there [left end of picture]. It was above town a little bit. This is the store and bar that my dad had, here. I was born in this house right here, but I was raised in this house. When Racine and I got married we lived in this house, right here. Later we moved up here to this house [all in center portion of picture].

LB: At this end of the picture [right end] there are a couple of larger buildings. Those are schools, is that right?

BT: This is the junior high school. Like I told you, it served three towns, three little mining towns. Right next to it, this duplex, was the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, 5th, and 6th grades with one teacher for three classes. It's where I went to elementary school. I never did go to this school [junior high] because they closed it before I got there.

LB: There's another large building up the street from the school. What is that? On the opposite side of the street.

BT: They called that the bunkhouse. It was like an apartment. There's another one right here; you can just see the top of it. It was for bachelors, guys that weren't married and worked at the mine.

LB: Which way was Standardville?

BT: This way, down. This is down canyon [to right]. This is up. Standardville was down here about a mile. Rains was up there [to left]. Up this canyon there was a mine. There was a mine about every mile. The first one was Peerless, Spring Canyon, Standardville, Latuda, Rains, Mutual, and Little Standard [moving up Spring Canyon from the east].

LB: Were they all different companies?

BT: All different companies. Each of those towns was owned by a little mining company. In some cases they even owned the stores, grocery stores. If you started at the mine and say you didn't have the money to buy your mining equipment--boots, whatever--they would give you script. It was a little coin with a dollar figure on it. You could take that to the store and they would take that like it was cash. They would turn that back to the company for money. If you were between paydays and you needed money, you could go draw script and take it to the store and get groceries. [The store and the mining company] worked pretty closely together.

LB: What else can you show us on that picture from your time in Latuda?

BT: Up here on this side, the base of this hill is right here and it goes up steep like this. It was steep and it was pretty high. There were a lot of snow slides that came down there. In this area right in here [pointing] there was a family and the whole house got smashed. That morning up at the mine the men went in the mine. The mine foreman was on the outside in a little shack there and a snow slide came down and wiped it off the map. They called all the miners out and they dug and found the mine foreman. He was killed in that snow slide, so they knew that those snow slides were going to come down. This one family was right in this gulley where they knew a snow slide would come down, and they wanted to move this family out. At that time they didn't have a truck, they had a team of horses and a wagon or a sled, probably, in this case. They went to move this family out and while they were moving the family out the slide came down. I think it killed two guys in the house.[20] The teamster, I worked with him a lot, he ran the team [of horses] and sled, in this case, he was buried completely under the snow. All that was sticking out of the snow was the heads of the horses. One guy had a 2x4 that caught him right across here [gestures under the chin] and choked him to death. The teamster used to tell me his experience being under that snow. He could hear the people on top but they couldn't hear him. But they

[20] The slides occurred on February 9, 1927, killing Gus Goodart at his shack. Another snow slide trapped four miners who lived to tell their story ("Utah Miner Perishes in Snowslide; Four Escape," Salt Lake Telegram, February 16, 1927). There were probably others that Bob recalls.

dug him out, alive, you know. They would become playgrounds, those snow slides. When those snow slides would come down, it was like walking on that floor right there [pointing to his living room floor]. It was packed that tight, hard. We'd go to the grocery store and get big empty cardboard boxes and we'd go up on that snow slide, break open the boxes, then sit on those things and hold part of it up in front of you, and go down the slide. You could go like a bullet down that slide (laughing). It was fun! We'd get on those snow slides and play; they were a big playground for us.

LB: How long did the company, Liberty Fuel, stay in business?

BT: They closed in 1966, right after I left.[21] They opened in the early 1900s. That mine started up in the early 1900s. They had real high quality coal in that mine. The high seam was about seven feet, then they got down to lower seams. There would be seams in that mine, like 42 inches.

LB: Did the mine have a name?

BT: Liberty Fuel. Latuda mine is all they called it.[22] The local radio station would announce on the radio every afternoon about 5 p.m. which mines in the county were going to work the next day. The guy would get on and say, "The following mines will work tomorrow," and he'd list all the mines because they didn't work everyday depending on the orders. They'd list all the mines that were going to work the following day, on the radio, every day. The guys would [listen] to the radio to see if they were going to work the next day, you know.

LB: Jim, is there anything else on that picture you want him to talk about?

JM: I think he hit all the big spots that I can see.

LB: Ok.

BT: This picture was taken in, I don't know, it looks like the early 1930s to me. You can see this old car on it, right there [pointing], I think that car is back in at least the early 1930s. That picture is pretty old.

LB: Did the [Great] Depression affect that community very much?[23]

BT: Oh yes. One of the things that we didn't talk about that was an important part of my life, was how people helped each other. If you had a sack of potatoes, you shared them. You shared

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[21] Latuda's buildings were eventually "hauled away on trucks and railroad cars to other communities" (Historic American Engineering Record UT-52, 1988).

[22] The mine was first called Liberty when it was opened in 1914 by the Liberty Fuel Company. Coal was initially shipped from the mine in 1917-1918 (Historic American Engineering Record UT-52, 1988). In later years the mine was often referred to as Latuda Mine for its proximity to the town of the same name.

[23] Coal production during the period between 1924-1937 ranged from 125,901 tons to 334,941 tons. The mine was considered a consistent producer, even during the Depression (Historic American Engineering Record UT-52, 1988).

with your neighbors. Like on Saturdays the guys would get together and say, "Well, Joe's family is out of meat." They'd go out and shoot a deer, poach a deer, for Joe. That was a common thing in this town, helping each other. That's one of the things I liked about it, you know. They didn't have TV or anything, so in the evenings people would get out on their front porches. Three or four families would get together and sit on someone's front porch and just talk; a lot of communications going on.

LB: Your dad's family was from Italy. What about your mom's family?

BT: My mom's family was from Austria. My grandfather was from Austria.

LB: Did he move here to work in the mines?

BT: Yes, like I told you he came up from Colorado.

LB: Right.

BT: He worked in the mines and my grandmother, whom I never met, she ran the boarding house.

LB: Were there other ethnic groups in town?

BT: Oh, all kinds.[24] They kind of bunched together, they would be in sections. All the Italians were living here, kind of living in groups. They carried on their lifestyles, like the language. They talked their language when they were together. All talk Italian or whatever. The Japanese people, they lived up here by the mine; they had a little community up there by the mine.[25] We had a few Blacks and they lived up there by the mine.

LB: Can you show me the Italian area? Is it on this picture?

BT: It was mostly in this area, right in here.

LB: Who was up by the schools?

BT: I don't remember which nationality was up there. They kind of bunched together, like three or four families together, maybe just two. But they would kind of be together because they had a

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[24] Italians were the most populous ethnic group, followed by Austrians, Japanese, Swedes, and others. The greatest number of foreign-born residents occurred in 1920, representing 35% of the Latuda population. By 1940 foreign-born residents dropped to 18% of the town (US Census records for Latuda in 1920-1940).

[25] The Japanese community had a boarding house and bathhouse. They were not allowed to use the mine's bathhouse ("The Peoples of Utah, Japanese Life in Utah," by Helen Z. Papanikolas, 1976, viewed at https://heritage.utah.gov/category/history/programs-history/historical-society/utah-historical-quarterly/page/58).

community together.[26] You know, they got along well. That's the amazing thing to me: they got along well. They'd have their fights, especially when they got too much booze; things would go haywire.

LB: Anything else that you want to tell us?

BT: No, I think that's about all I've got.

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[26] The Historic American Engineering Record UT-52, 1988, notes that Liberty Fuel Company was "more enlightened" than other coal companies because it valued "a steady work force with a minimum turnover." Consequently Latuda "had a cohesiveness and sense of permanence not seen in many other coal towns of the region."