

INTERVIEW WITH BILL BLIZZARD

Fr: Beth Nogay

Nogay: What prompted the march on Logan?

Blizzard: The 1921 march on Logan is a long story. These fellows simply did not put on rifles and take off just for no reason. The miners felt they had extreme provocation. To understand what prompted in general the labor history about unions and their role in our society is not something is divorced from our general history there is a part of that historywilderness, small farms and that sort of thing...the coal deposits were discovered before the Civil War and they brought it down by barge on the Kanawha River also. Hugh financiers came into WV or some local coal operators had enough money to open up their own coal mines. The development of the coal resources in WV after the turn of the century in 1900 when the coal land was purchased wholesale 400 to 500,000 acres at a time by industrialists who knew about the coal. A great many acres of land was purchased by large corporations in Philadelphia Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh and other areas and were held until it could be developed. When they were developed they needed workers to dig the coal. No machinery yet. Europeans were also brought in to work the mines. The labor unions sprang into being about the same time that the large corporations began to develop in this country. Not long after the revolutionary war. In WV when the coal mines began to be mined the UMW had organized the Central Competitive Field north of WV. When this was organized WV remained nonunion. The Central Competitive people were complaining that the WV coal was competing with them. UMW was formed in 1890 in Columbus, Ohio. District 17 was also formed in 1890 at the same time the national union was formed in Columbus. This group was formed to have some kind of say in their own livelihood, in response to representatives of large financiers who came in to run the mines. That was the reason for the development of the unions. The activity got started around the turn of the century in 1900 in WV and proceeded to develop very rapidly and people got rich hurriedly sometimes. U.S. Steel came in 1900 and had their own railroad the Norfolk and Western Railroad . The miners reacted by attempting to get the best wage conditions they could because their living conditions

were poor at the time. The coal miners and the coal operators were the two factors.

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Nogay: What prompted the 1921 march on Logan?

Blizzard: The situation in Mingo County. There the miners had been organized by the UMW and they were evicted out of their homes and that was standard procedure in those days and they were living in tents in winter time and suffering tremendously and so the primary factor was the situation in Mingo County....a locked out situation a considerable number of the population were living in tents at that time. The situation in Logan County where Don Chafin had been hired as sheriff by the coal company operators and eventually became a millionaire himself by gifts, stock, etc..... the march was a result of the refusal of the coal operators to negotiate in any way over the situation in Mingo County generally. A hard headed attitude on the part of the coal operators. The miners were equally adamant and wanted to organize and had organized it but were locked out. This was to go and free the people in Mingo County. The slogan of the march was "On to Mingo". They were going to stop in Logan first and hand Don Chafin to a sour apple tree. That was to the tune of John Brown's Body...they sang on the marches going down to Logan County on the way to Mingo. There were other factors like martial law and beside living in tents in very cold winter time weather. General economic factors....the first World War the price of coal sank dramatically from \$120.00 per ton to \$5.00 on the ton ...they were pinched and couldn't give any way to the coal miners. There was a bad downturn in the economy. Nationally more than 200,000 coal miners out of work. The coal operators refused to yield because they were not selling their coal at the prices they had before war time. The miners wages had been frozen to \$5.00 a day during the war and they were angry. They were determined to break the shackles that had been placed on them during the war to get a pay increase.

Nogay: Your father was active in the union movement here. Can you describe what kind of person he was.

Blizzard: My father was a coal miner. Attended school very little which was not unusual in the coal fields. Went to work at 8 or 9 years old. He got a \$1.00 a day. Went to work with my grandfather doing whatever boys could do.

Cleaning and hand loading.

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Nogay: How did your father get involved in union activities?

Blizzard: Because his father was a coal miner and in WV the people weren't born coal miners ...they were small farmers but when the mines came in and saw an opportunity to cash in on local coal operator. My grandfather was evicted from his home by the company.. My father was a field commander of the armed march in 1921. The newspapers called him a general isimo compared to Pancho Via and not given to him by himself or by the coal miner.

Nogay: What was your father's role in the march?

Blizzard: a field leader of a segment that departed from Lynns Creek. Which was the major segment at the mouth of Lynns Creek on the Kanawha River just above Marmett is where the large majority of the miners assembled and went up 119 (Route) through the mountains. They had started out 2 years earlier but that was halted. Frank Keeney and Fred Mooney were also officials.

Nogay: How would you describe the organization for the march. Passwords... uniforms...red scarves...etc.

Blizzard: The coal miners were organized in the sense that they belonged to UMW but were not a military force except they had acknowledged leaders they were obeyed. By consent to threat. Because they had started a march in 1919 they took advantage of this organization. The march was a part of UMW organizing tactacts. The early records in WV started up a march and went down a hollow and the people would come out and join the crowd and go on down and grow as they went. This was a part of organization. In 1921 women wore nursing uniforms with UMW on caps. The only uniform the miners had was red bandanas around their necks. They were called red necks because of that. There were passwords which meant they had to set up guards which they did. They had opposing forces. The friendly territory was in Boone County which borders Logan County. Logan County Was enemy territory where Don Chafin was...coal operator country. Guards were set up in overnight camps and the passwords were used...the password was I come creeping.....maybe changed in certain areas.

Nogay: What was the role of the national union in this. Mother Jones told the miners not to march.

Blizzard: Correct. Mother Jones did tell the miners after they had assembled at Lynns Creek not to march and told them the President Harding said through telegram- he would take action in their favor. Keeney, Mooney and my father told the miners that the telegram was a fake. I asked Keeney in later years, if there was a telegram . I didn't get a straight answer.

Nogay: How many miners marched?

Blizzard: Nobody knows. The estimates vary. Possibly 6 to 8,000.

Nogay: What was the role of the national union?

Blizzard: Philip Murray was with the union until John Lewis kicked him out Lewis testafied shortly after the march the UMW was opposed to the march. I believe it was true and John L. Lewis was opposed and Mother Jones who was hired by John Lewis was acting on his instructions when she spoke against the march. In 1924 the local officials were no longer elected by the local miners as my father was but Lewis sent his men and put in his own president of District 17. The local guys listened to the local officer. The national was opposed to it.

Nogay: What was is like for your family when the march was going on? Was your family afraid.

Blizzard: No. Trouble had been with my family and struggle was common. Machine guns were familiar. My mother wasn't afraid but some apprehension was felt but no panick.

Nogay: How many people were killed?

Blizzard: Approximately 12 or less. and there 1,000s and 1,000s of shots fired. With all kinds of weapons.

Nogay: With all the shooting going on how could there only have been that few killed.

Blizzard: Because I really don't think they were trying to shoot one another. But making noise. On Blair Mountain one side went up shooting and the other side was at the crest and until they met on top. Also in airplanes (private) were hired to drop bombs one kind was a nauseating the other a high explosive type.

It is amazing that more weren't killed. Because they weren't drawing a bead on anyone. There were good shots there.

Nogay: Do you think the federal government bombed the miners?

Blizzard: No. The government had no opposition and it was called off.

Nogay: Why? What do you think the miners felt at that time.

Blizzard: They were fighting a highly military force with organized weapons and alot of them were former soldiers.

Nogay: How do you think your father felt about the march.

Blizzard: He never told me. I agreed with mother that it was probably a mistake. They were opposing armed forces on the other side. Baldwin Phelps Thugs, national guard were used to break the strike. They felt justified. The only alternative was to to it illegally and that is what they tried to do. My father never told me as to how he felt but never liked mother jones after that.

Nogay: Why didn't your father much about the march?

Blizzard: He had learned it is a good idea to keep your mouth shut. Had he not died we would have talked of it more.

Nogay: What happened after Blair Mountain.

Blizzard: The Logan County grandjury, some of the miners were in the local jail at that time and the grandjury indicted several hundred people on various charges. But the coal operators were after big game and they thought the best was was to accuse them of treason. If they could make charges stick it would have ruined the union forever.

This was a beautiful way to crush the union because of the people from all over the country. Some of the operators encouraged the march along the way

Nogay: With all those charges how come more weren't convicted.

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Blizzard: There were just too many of them. The coal operators overreached themselves ...it was a jury trial....and they had to persuade a farmers jury of the justice of the case in a treason trial and simply did not succeed with this. They could hire the best attorneys but they could not prove that treason actually occurred. It was not a treasonous act. They were not against state forces they were against private armys of the coal operators.

My father was the first one tried on the case however he was not a president of district 17 but he was acquitted but later a fellow named Walter Allen was tried from Dry Branch...was convicted of treason but there are no records of this in Charlestown. The records had been transfered on appeal to Supreme Court. I guess Walter jumped bond and not heard from since officially.

Nogay:Your father was also tried on murder charges.

Blizzard:; Which stemedKeeney and Mooney... also tried on murder.. three were killed on Blair Mountain but my father was not accused of pulling the trigger he was the leader and so on that basis he was tried.

Nogay: What was the memory of the trials.

Blizzard:; Yes I was very young 5 or 6 but I remember a few things. I remember when the jury came in my father was sitting beside me my father leaped onto a bench in front of me a squatted there until the verdict came in that it my only real memory of the trial itself. I rode on the neck of Jimmy Cane a reporter who became a family friend.

Bill Blizzard

Nogay: What, in your opinion, prompted what would be called the march on Logan?

Blizzard: The 1921 March on Logan. The reason I say the 1921 — because there was a previous march, which is not so well known, a couple of years earlier. But what prompted it is a long, long story that it depends on how far you want to take it back. But in general, of course, as I told you earlier when we had a previous conversation these fellows did not simply put riffles on their back on the spur of the moment and take off, just for no reason at all. The miners felt of course ~~if~~^{that} they had extreme problacation. In the first place, to understand what prompted it, over—that is in general—rather than a specific incident that did it, the—you have to understand the, a little of the history of West Virginia. Because Labor history, which we are talking about now specifically about unions and there role in our society is not something that is divorced from our general history. It is a part of the general history of West Virginia. The general history of West Virginia was a stata say during the Civil War particularly people came in -- it was still pretty much of a wilderness, very low, very little settlement, no industry, small farms, that sort of thing. The coal deposits were discovered, of course they had been exploited somewhat before the Civil War on Coal River, they had what is called Canal Coal - Canel being a corruption of the word candle, because the coal itself ignites with a match -- that kind of thing has extreme high oil contents and of course the canel coal was mind up coal

River before the Civil War and brought down -- they had dams and locks in Coal River in there -- and brought it down by barge and of course on the great Kanawha also, far up above Charleston. What had happened was -- when you had huge _____ came into west Virginia there was some local coal operators that had enough money to open up there own & coal mines of course, in a local way, that kind of thing. Some with the local works after the wood began to get a little scarce, there were local salt works around Malden--in that area--very famous at that time. What happened was the development of the coal rescourses in west Virginia after the turn of the century, after 1900 when the coal lands in West Virginia were purchased whole-sale -- 400,000 / 500,000 acres at a time -- by large industrialists who had become aware of the vast coal resources they had hired geologists to explore it and that kind of thing, and become acquainted with the & vast resources. So they bought it up. and added _____ holding companies of that kind of thing. So as a result of which a great portion of the land area in West Virginia was purchased by a large corporations in say, Phildelphia, New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and other areas -- and they were simply held until they could be developed. Which they were. When they were developed in time they & needed workers to dig the coal, you didn't have the machinary--yet--quite--at that time in order to dig it. They brought in supervisors, frequently from England, they could speak english very well. They brought in people of all nationalities from Europe to come in and work the mines. There were people from Southern Europe, there were Russians, there

were Memonga. If you will go up-- just look at the tomb stones up there, the Great Mononga Explosion,-- I believe-- it was 1907. You can see nationalities from all over. They had to be brought in -- well what had happened of course, when you do this the labor movement in this country sprang into being about the same time, really, that large corporations began to develop in this country. That means not too long after the revolutionary war. Unions themselves came in-- I will give you just a little background on Unionization, I'll get back around to our 1921 period just to connect it up-- but the unions came in about the same time the large corporations came in. Simply because the workers felt that they were not able to negotiate successfully with there employers, and of course, that was the reason for the existance of unions in general--primarily ~~in~~ sprang up in Philadelphia, in that area -- but in West Virginia in particular, when the coal mines -- reserves began to be mined a very great deal then the UMW, which had previously, prior to 1890 or so, organized what is called the Central Competative Field north of West Virginia. That's western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois -- when that central competative field, there's four states in there, was organized prior to that West Virginia remained non-union although they had, as I said, brought in people from Eugope, from everywhere to supplement the local native population, in order to mine the coal. The central competative people were complaining because the West Virginia coal was competing with them, and of course they were complaining to the UMW people, up there, during there organizing meetings, negotiating wage scales, union conditions and that sort of thing, and so this was shortly after the

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1890 period. UMW itself, United Mine Workers was formed in 1890 in Columbus Ohio, there had been coal miners unions prior to that but this is at least the most permanent of them. The formation and the incursion, we will say, of the UMW into West Virginia came along about that time and had its center here in the Kanawha Valley in what was called District 17, which was also formed in 1890 at the same time or shortly after the national union was formed in Columbus. So this group of workers were organized in order to fight for their own working conditions and to have some say in their own livelihood and that kind of thing. In response to usually not local coal operators, in some cases there were local people, but others who were Large, Finn, and Sears-- or representatives of Large, Finn and Sears, who came in to run the mines. That was the reason for the development of the miners union, just as it is for all other unions. This--primarily the activity that really got started real well around the turn of the century around 1900, here in West Virginia. It proceeded the development of the coal, the exploitation of the coal resource developed very rapidly and people got rich pretty hurriedly sometimes. A large amount of money went in. United States steel came in and had his captive mine -- this was around the same period in 1900 along in there, they had their own, what I call a captive railroad the Norfolk and Western railroad was a part of this huge combine that came in which brought Gerard Truste was connected with it in Philadelphia which was connected with the J.P. Morgan, Finn and Sears and all of that-- all came in to West Virginia another words there were huge national and by this time, of

course, international combines came in. Of course, the miners reacted by attempting to get the best wage conditions they could because their conditions -- living conditions were pretty poor at the time, they thought, and I think they were in absolute terms. So that was ~~a~~ the reason for this. It was the two contending forces. The coal miners and the coal operators, just as simple as that. In this particular case, it's that simple although...

Nogay: What do you think prompted the 1921 March on Logan?

Blizzard: The 1921 March on Logan, ~~k~~ actually was again the specific thing that prompted it was the situation in Mingo county. In Mingo County the miners had been organized by the UMW actually their strong hold was in here, but they went down and organized down in Mingo county. As fast as they were organized into the UMW, they were evicted ~~ad~~ from their homes, which was standard procedure in those days. They were living in tents in winter time, and all of that, and suffering tremendously. So the primary instagatory factor actually in the '21 march was a situation in Mingo County which had been organized but which was being a locked out situation down in Mingo County were -- I don't know how large -- but a considerable portion of this population of Mingo county living in tents, at that time. There were other factors, the situation in Logan County where Don Shaffin had been hired, as sheriff down there by the coal operation ^{of} and eventually became a millionaire himself by gifts, stock, and that kind of thing. That was what it was, it was primarily a result of the refusal of the coal operators to negotiate in any way over the situation in Mingo County -- generally, and in general -- a rather hard ~~hated~~ ^{headed} attituded

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on the part of the coal operators. Then of course the miners, the organizaers were equally audited, they wanted to organize the area. Had organized it, but were locked out. This was to go down and to free the people down in Mingo County. This Logan march was on Dimengo. They were going to stop off in logan first and hang Don Shaffin to a sour apple tree, that was to the tune of John Browns body, is what they sang on the armed marches. They went, going down to Logan County on the way to Mingo. But that was the primary thing. What I wanted to make clear initially was what the general contending forces were and how it came about before we got into specific things about 1921. But that was what it was specifically.

There are other specifics that I would like to mention of course, which were very general which had to do with the— not all together with simple organizing activity in Mingo County and the fact that the coal miners in Mingo had been treated as they were being treated. There was Marshall Law and all kinds of things that had been accounted. It was a very bad situation, besides living in tents and very cold winter time weather. There were other factors -- there were general economic factors, the first world War the price of coal sank dramatically. I think it was about \$120.00 a ton during the war and had been ¹⁹¹⁹ \$1,919.00 the coal operators would then start getting about \$5.00 perhaps on the ton. So they were pinched economically. They were in ~~pe~~ no position because of that, to give any ^c concessions to the coal miners. There was a bad down turn in the economy. There nationally maybe more than ^{200,000} ~~125,000~~ coal miners out of

work and unemployment was pretty ripe^f, in any case, That was the national, the general economic situation nationally was extremely poor. You had ~~extra~~ the coal operators refusing to yield because of what they felt they simply were ~~not~~ not selling their coal at the prices that they had sold it during war time. The coal miners, their wages had been frozen, I think to \$5.00 a day during the war — they were very, very angry. Here it was still \$5.00 a day after the war had ended, and of course that was part of their big complaint. However, they didn't refer specifically to the 19th one but it was just a part of general grievancés they felt they were being paid very, very little, and they were determined after the war was over to break the shackles that had been placed on them during the war and to see if they couldn't get an increase in pay, and in favor of working conditions as well.

Nogay: Your father was very active in the Union movement here, can you describe what kind of person he was?

Blizzard : My father. Well, of course, my father was a coal miner. He went to school very little, which was not unusual in those days in the coal fields. He went to work & very early in the coal mines, probably eight or nine years old as what was called a trapper. Even after the union was organized trappers, I think, got a dollar a day for a nine hour day^o or something like that. But anyway as a kid and also he went to work with his father, my grandfather, working around the place, doing whatever little boys could do in order to help out. Shovel up^{bug} dust, that kind of thing and help clean up the place and each miner in my grandfathers day

had a place to work in, and he did all of the stuff, it was all hand loading, breast over was all hand and that kind of thing and they had the rooms to work in. They usually gave the coal miners what was called a boy car in those days. If they had children in the mines with them in order to compensate them for the fact that they had a family, and that kind of thing, back in those days, at least in this area.

Nogay: How did your father get involved in Union activities?

Blizzard : He got involved in union activities, because his father was a coal miner. In West Virginia, people weren't born coal miners, in otherwords before the industry came in, we'll say it came in before 1900 but it really got a big impetus during that period. They were small farmers, largely so was my grandparents on both sides, were coal miners and small farmers before that but when the mines came in they saw an opportunity for a little cash income so they started working for the local coal operator. My grandfather did in Fayette County and — in the 1902 strike, which was an anthrosite strike but nevertheless the local coal miners went out and my grandfather was evicted from his home, by the New River Company.

Nogay: Some sources describe your father as a general lisemo of the March. What did that mean, and how did he get that name?

Blizzard: Well, of course, this was simply some unknown newspaper writer, gave him applachian. He was a field comander really of the Arm March in 1921, released a very large sector of it. I assume that the comparison that the newspaper writer had in mind was with Poncho Via or some of the insurgents south of the border down there. Hoover had also called generalisimos

and I presume that was where it came from. It was certainly not given to him by himself or by the coal miners.

Nogay: What was your fathers role in the March?

Blizzard : My fathers role in the March was actually as a field leader in the March. At least of that segment of the March has departed from Lynns Creek, which was the major segment. Let the mouth of lynns Creek on the Great Kanawha River just above ~~M~~armet is where the large majority--probably at least in the Kanawha Valley--of the coal miners assembled and, of course, took off I believe it's 119 -- Route 119 -- and they took off a nice pass through the mountains there which the highway still goes through there, and that's where they left from. They had initially started out on a March two years earlier -- right after World War II -- but that had been halted. My fathers fole was as a field leader and of course, Frank Keeney, Fred Mooney, Keeney was president and Mooney was secretary of treasure were also officials. but they were not actually actively in the fi&ld except on occasional orders of the governer or military forces or something, trying to stop the matters on occasion But that was his real role in there, also his real role was ultimately on his orders _____ the march was stopped. I think.

Nogay: How would you describe the miners organization in the March, do you think-- did you think they were organized, could you explain some of the characteristics of their organization, including the emplication of passwords, or perhaps any kind of uniform dressing, did they wear the red scarfes or anything like that?

Blizzard: Yes, indeed. The coal miners were quite well organized in the sense that they belonged to United Mine Workers of America, They were not a military force and organized in any real military manner, particularly, except that they had acknowledged leaders; such as my father, Keeney, and Mooney. They were obeyed however, pretty implicitly but it was by consent rather than by any threat of being shot if they didn't do such and such. It was well organized in that sense but not in a military one -- of great military efficiency or legibilitary efficiency, or anything like that but because they had previously started a March in 1919 and had organized their people they took advantage of the organization. Also, I will mention this, the March in general was a part of UMW organizing tacticks. The very early records of a UMW historian, a fellow named Chris Evans, by the way has recorded some of this -- at least in this area, the way they did it in West Virginia they would start up a hollow or something and organize a March of people and as they went down the hollow people would come out from the homes, that kind of thing, sometimes from the mines themselves-- join the croud of them and go on down and growing in bulk as they came -- and it was an organizing tactic this was, and this was a sort of a large scale organizing March in a sense. It wasn't organized exactly it was a part of organization in the same way the previous marches had been, so it was quite in ^{the} tradition. There ~~were~~ were of course organizational factors to be seen in the fact that in 1921, women were wearing nurses uniforms with UMW sown on their caps, they had caps and the uniforms, that kind of thing. The only uniform you could really say that the miners had, of course they wore blue jeans

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or ruff work clothes but they wore a red bandana around their neck. That was suppose to be a differentiating thing. It didn't always work, people forgot to put them on or they maybe put a blue one on, but in general that was it and of course they got called red necks because of that in part. Which, in West Virginia there is conotation of the word red neck is different from what it is farther South, which simply implicates someone works in the sun a long time had a red neck, which means a country bumkin down there I guess. It was a different implication here they were called red necks later because of the red bandana. That was sort of the official uniform. To answer your question further there was passwords. In otherwords — which means they had to set up guards, which of course they did. After all they had apposing forces they new the friendly territory toward the miners was in Boone County, which of course has a comon border with Logan County. Logan County was enemy territory. That's where Don Shaffin was it was coal operative country down in there it was ruled in the armed force in that area. They new that they would meet oposition of course on the way to Mingo, and in that area, and naturally they set up guards and that kind of thing for their overnight camps. There were passwords, if you want to go through, the main password -- at least in the portion of the march where my father was leading was "I come creeping". Now, that may have been changed in that area, but that was the primary one. My father told me later, (Ha, Ha, Ha,) He said, they got it all mixed

sometimes, they'd say "I come crawling, I come creepy" all sorts of variations on it, but they did have a password which indicated of course, organization. Yes, they had thought the thing out, it wasn't just, it was a long way from being just a spur of a moment deal, in which a bunch of guys all got together. It was organized. It had acknowledged leadership and it had nurses going along, I don't know whether they were able to persuade a local doctor or two to go along, but I wouldn't be surprised. At least, in touch with doctors.

Nogay: Why did the United Mine Workers -- the national -- what was the role of the national union in this? Mother Jones in fact told the miners not to march?

Blizzard: You're quite correct about that. Mother Jones did tell the miners--after they had assembled at Lynns Creek--now this was only a day before our lease, maybe the same day, I have their exact notes here but that is not important. In any case, right at the time at Lynns Creek, when miners were assembled there in some thousands at the mouth of Lynns Creek--Mother Jones did speak to the miners, tell them not to go on the March. Wave a piece of paper in the air telling it was a telegram from President Harding, saying he would take action in their favor. Keeney and Mooney and my father, told the miners that the telegram was a fake.

I knew Keeney, by the way, in later years--I remembered him when I was young, as a matter of fact--In later years I got to know him and I asked him point blank-- I didn't know him very well at that time--If there had been actually a telegram, I didn't get a very straight answer, I didn't...(End of side 1)

Blizzard: (Tape 1, Side 2)

I don't know about that. No work and could infer anyway.

Nogay: OK, you were talking about Mother Jones telling the miners not to march?

Yes, in part there, I mean, we were referring to that.

I said she waved a telegram, saying that she had one from President Harding, indicating that if they didn't march that he would take some favorable action. That is favorable in point of view to the coal miners. But Kenney, and Mooney and my father, diswayded the miners saying that the telegram was a fake. I rather think, this is my own opinion--I think the telegram was genuiune, but in any case the miners believed that it was not. What ever they believed, they did go on the march, without a question. They were not coearsed. They were--so far as I know there was no, there might of been minor incidenses of coeration, but in general all the evidence points to the fact that virtually all of the coal miners and their families were involved in the thing and were actively involved and quite sympathetic toward the move-

ment itself.

Nogay: How many miners do you think marched?

Blizzard: No body knows, the estimates vary, and I just cannot say.

(Interrupt) If you are going to use that question, I would appreciate you would have a response...

Nogay: OK, How many miners do you think were actually in the march?

Blizzard: I don't know, and I don't think anyone knows. However, I mean I can give an estimate. I have studied this for over a period of 30 years, somewhat at least off and on, and tried to and I have asked people over there and they don't know either because if you are in one part of the area you can't judge how many are in the other part. It was probably between 6 and 8 thousand, I would say along in there. It might tend toward the higher figure. The...

Nogay: Why did the union--What was the role of the National Union?

Blizzard: The role of the National Union--apparently the National Union claimed--Philip Murrey was with the UMW at that time and of course was for many years later until John Lewis kicked him out, which was another story indeed--but anyway the Lewis testified shortly after the march, even before investigative committees, congregational committees or in a court trial or something, that the UMW nationally was opposed to the march. I don't think

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that what he said was simply said for effect, I believe it was true, and John L. Lewis of course was president at that time. John L. Lewis was opposed to the march and I believe it, and I also believe that Mother Jones, who was after all hired by John Lewis, was acting on his instructions at the time when she spoke against the march going on. This is based upon the fact that when Lewis later, after this whole thing had blown over after the trials had ceased and all of that, Lewis came down I think in 1924 was when it went into effect--that the local officials were no longer elected by the local miners, as my father was and as Keeney and Mooney were, but Lewis sent his leutinent in, fired everybody that had anything to do with the march and put in his own provisional District 17 president. There were two or three of them and the name I recall most distinctly and recall meeting was, of course, Percy Tetlow. So the role of the national--it didn't have a role really, the UMW had good sized membership then and it also had a good sized treasury and it had its own atonomy and the local guys would listen to the local officers and that's what they did. The national was opposed to it and when they got the chance they went ahead and decided that wouldn't happen again --when they didn't put in their own officials which of course, stayed true up until the Miller era in the UMW history.

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Nogay: What was it like for your family when the March was going on? Was your mother tense, was your family afraid, do you recall anything as a child, knowing that your father was in trouble. Did it--

Blizzard: No, not really. My people--my--you know, they grew up in the coal fields and I suppose trouble was--had been with them say in the same area generally 1913 strike on Paint Creek, and all of that--a struggle of all sorts, and a very violent nature was a very common place. Machine guns were on the temples and sometimes in the roads up and down Cabin Creek and Paint Creek and other areas in West Virginia so, you know, by that time, I suppose they were enured to that sort of thing and my mother as far as I--her disposition also, I don't think that she was frightened, particularly about it. Oh I'm sure they felt some apprehension. After all you could be shot, you know, that kind of thing. But it was certainly no panic, nothing like that.

Nogay: How many people do you think were killed in this march and in these wars?

Well, I tell you, I tried to check it out really carefully at one time--to the extent of the information that I had at one time--I thought that perhaps there were only about 3 or 4, but I will revise that estimate now and say all that I can really--now, I'm speaking of the whole reigamorole--let's see there were 3 on Blair

Mountain on cooler operators side, and then there was maybe 2 or 3 on the union side and then they chapel 3 or 4 in there. Three, 7-10, I would say a dozen or less were killed in the whole armed March and there were thousands and thousands of shots fired from both sides by machine guns--like machine guns, they didn't have any 50's in those days, but anyway light machine guns but mostly miners, simply what they had was there own little squarrel riffles, shot guns, whatever they could dig up. What they call owl head pistols which was simply a cheap pistol that had an owl on it as its trade name, and of course, any pistol got called owl head after that but that was all they had. The weapondry was more sophisticated on the other side, because the state police, national guard, and that kind of thing were actually involved on the other side, and they had of course more modern arms and that sort of thing.

With all of the shooting that was going on, how could only a dozen or so people be killed?

Well, because they really weren't trying to shoot one another, I don't think, or at least they were shooting not at one another especially--not as you say would in a regular war. They were making a lot of noise in order to try to frighten one another--the other side was part of it and I think a good deal of it on Blair

Mountain, of course, what they did the one side went-- one side shooting going up and the other side was pretty at the crest on Blair Mountain and up in that area and until they really met at the crest. And not only that, of course, the cooperatives had a couple of fellows to--in an airplane. As you know aviation was in its infancy in those days. All of the air force ultimately did land planes down there in what is now Kanawha City. The private planes were hired-- a couple of private pilots to drop bombs on the armed marchers. One was a non-explosive, nauseating type, the other was a high explosive bomb, there may have been 2 or 3, may have been more than that, but anyway that kind of thing. It is amazing that more people were not killed. The only explanation and this is simply my own interpretation is that obviously they weren't drawn a bead on somebody because my father and all of the guys in the coal fields, part of the recreation was firing riffles and they could shoot squarels any old time and they didn't miss too often, they weren't to free with their amunition they didn't have that much money to buy. They were very good shots, in other words, and so if they had really been drawing a bead on a target they would have had a lot more people killed.

Nogay: Is it your opinion that the Federal Government bombed the miners too, with chemical bombs?

Blizzard: No. So far as I know they did not. They did bring down--the federal Government did along toward the end when the federal government did finally intervene, Billy Mitchell came down, who later in World War II became famous because he was an advocative air power which of course became a very important factor in World War II and he was down in Kanawha City of course claiming air power would help the situation down there. But they didn't really turn the airforce loose. As a matter of fact, there was no opposition with the federal forces when they came in. It was simply when the federal forces landed, so to speak, or literally in the case of the planes there was no opposition put up by the coal miners and it was called off at that time.

Nogay: Why? Why was there no opposition put up, and what do you think the miners felt at that point?

Blizzard: Well, this is simply an opinion but it seems that the logical thing was that the coal miners--there was a little point in the first place in putting up resistance against such a huge, organized military force with highly efficient weapons. Secondly, it was the United States Government that they were fighting against, many of the guys were of course former United States soldiers from World War I in there, and they simply were not disposed to fight governmental forces. And it was a variety of factors but that--those, I would say, would

be the main ones.

Nogay: How do you think your father felt about the march. Had it been a success, had it been a failure, was it worth it?

Blizzard: Well, of course, my father was a leader in the march and he was not very much prepared to back up on what he had done, or he never told me he knew that my-- with a gift of hine sight, I agree with mother that it was probably a mistake, you know, that it actually did occure. But that's because of hine sight, which is easy. In his case and in the case of Mooney and Keeney, of course they simply felt the only way to do it was the way they were doing it. But they were opposing armed forces on the other side. No question. I'm talking about Bald Felts thugs, I'm talking about National Guard who were incorporated in and used by the coal operators to break the strike. They felt they were justified and felt there was no other way to do it. And infact, what happens of course with any large ruling class eliment as the coal operators certainly were and still are, in West Virginia, they had control of the legislation so they make the laws so that it was virtually impossible for the coal miners to get redress in the legal matter. So, the only thing they had left open to them, so far as they could see was to do it illegally, so that was what they tried to do.

My father never told me as to how he felt really about it. I don't think that he had ^{many} ~~really any~~ regrets. I know that he didn't like Mother Jones after that on the count of the thing and there was some resentment on his part towards Mother and--it's understandable in a way. These guys have worked down here and they knew there own miners and everything. Mother was sent down with her own program and her own plans and of course, a very hard headed individualist in her own right. And of course had a great following and of course to them was a disrupting factor.

Nogay: Why didn't your father talk about it?

Blizzard: Pardon!

Nogay: Why didn't your father talk about this march much?

Blizzard: Well, my father had learned, I suppose, that it's a good idea to keep your mouth closed about many things. And I suppose that was about it. Even to his family, well to my mother he may have said, but to me he did not. Not to speak of. He told me some things and if he hadn't died we would have gone into it a great length because I had all of the basic background material and everything and he would have told me more. But it didn't work out that way.

Nogay: What happened after Blair Mountain. Can you tell me about the trials?

Blizzard: Yes, well, of course, after ~~the~~ Blair Mountain the Logan

County Grand Jury went into session down there, of course, some of the miners had been captured and were in the Logan jail at the time. The Grand Jury indicted oh gosh, I don't know how many it did indict--But several hundred people down there on varied charges of-- _____ are the baseball team my father was on, the charges and all of that. But there were many hundreds of them indicted, the coal miners were--and for some reason it was on the statute called the redman act, which it might have been relatively easy to prosecute the miners under. But the coal operators were after big game, I think, they really wanted to snuff out the union and they felt that the easiest way to do that was to accuse the miners and the coal miners union of being treasonists. In other words, some sort of alien force, that kind of thing. And if they could make the chart stick it would of course ruin the union forever, and not only this one but all over the United States, because don't forget, the forces against the union in this state were not nearly local West Virginians they were international capital from all over the world. At that time not so much all over the world, but certainly in the United States, at that time. So what was helpful to them here, would also be helpful with other unions, other industries, and that sort of thing. So, to them it was a prime, beautiful way to

crush the union. I didn't mention it, but there was also some talk that ^{some of} the local operators and other that actually encouraged the march along the way, in a sence. On a generally theory, you know, if you gave them enough rope they would hang themselves. (Ha, Ha, Ha) It was certainly a possibility that that was true.

Nogay: Well, with all of those charges and all of the money from the coal operators up against the miners, how come more of them weren't convicted?

Blizzard: Most of them were not convicted of anything. There were just too many of them. What, I think, the coal operators-- what happened--who took over really the state machinery, the proscetorial machinery in Charles Town, they over reached themselves a bit, is what happened. It was a Jury trial, of course. There was a change of venue from the area where all of the fighting had gone on. They had to persuade the farmers jury up there of the justice of the case. In the case of the treason trials. They simply did not succeed in so doing. All of the money in the world wouldn't necessarily do it. They were certainly able to hire very fine attorneys, that is people who are quite skilled, no question about that. They simply were not able to prove that treason actually occured. There was not a treasonist thing, in other words, this was treason against the state of West Virginia. Specifically, all right no you--meaning that you are going to have armed forces going against state forces.

The contention of the miners were that they were not going against state forces, they were against the private armies of the coal operators and against the coal operators themselves, who were not really the state. So, apparently they were able to make their case and that was it. Except in one incidence. One person--my father I think was the first one tried on the treason charge because he was a field leader, however, he was not--he was a subdistrict number 2 president. He wasn't a president of District 17 as was Mooney, pardon me, it was Keeney. Anyway he was tried and he was acquitted. But later a fellow named Walter Allen was tried on treason, I think there were more than 2 dozen tried on treason charges, by the way. In any case Walter Allen, I don't know who he was or where he came from, except for a place named Dry Branch, and there is a Dry Branch on Cabin Creek and it may have been there, but there is lots of dry branches in West Virginia. Walter Allen was convicted of treason. I called and got in touch with the Charles Town people, up there, and they could not find any records. And I told them I know for a fact he was convicted. Allright. They couldn't find any records, and so I-- then I thought well the only thing that could have occurred perhaps the records had been transferred on appeal. I went to state supreme court. Sure enough,

they had a record--Walter Allen--the records had been transferred up to the state supreme court presumably on appeal and I guess Walter just jumped bond, that all I know about it because he was never heard from since. He may have been heard from, maybe my father heard from him or somebody and others, but in any case, officially he was never heard from again.

Nogay: Your father was also tried on murder charges?

Blizzard: He was tried on murder charges. Which were stemmed as I recall, and I'm not positive that this is true in all cases, but, Keeney was also tried on murder charges and so was Mooney. But not necessarily from the same incidence. I have forgotten the particulars. But there were three people killed on Blair Mountain. My father was not accused of actually being the person that pulled the trigger. He was of course, a leader on Blair Mountain, was seen in the area around Blair Mountain and so on that basis he was tried on murder charges--because--rather than^{an} accessory, I don't know why he didn't claim an accessory thing but anyway he was tried on murder charges springing from those three people. One of the names was Gore, another I think was Chicago, or something like that but anyway, I've forgotten what the third thing was. But that was what it was.

Nogay: You said in the other interview that you had a memory

as a child of these trials?

Blizzard: Oh, yes. Well, I was very young, I was about 5 or 6 and, at any case, I remember very few things. But I do remember when the jury came in--and my father's treason trial is the principle memory of the trial itself--when the jury came in to reach the verdict my father was sitting right beside me and when the jury came in my father leaped--he was sitting like that, he just took a big leap, he was quite a young man at that time--on to a bench in front of me and just squated there when the jury verdict came in. That is my only real memory of the trial itself. Of course, I was there and I do remember another incident or so in which I saw some white violets, I'd never seen a white violet before. I have seen our native Johnny Jump-Ups, I guess you would call it. But I've never seen a white one. In Charles Town they had very beautiful homes in the area and all of these pretty flowers and there I was picking these white violets out of somebody's yard, that kind of thing. That's all of my real memory. Of course, what I did do, I rode around on the neck of Jibby Cane, who became a friend of the family, he was a reporter with the Baltimore Sun at that time reporting the trials, he became friendly toward my parents and continued for the rest of his life to be so. He came down to visit

my mother, when her mind was going actually, and he--
I corresponded with him later--but I rode around on the
back of his neck for a while, but I don't remember
that, my mother told me that I did. But my own memories
that's about as far as it goes, in that respect.

Nogay: Thank you very much.