

INTERVIEW WITH BERNARD EDELMAN

Ferraro: Alright Mr. Edelman a you were a young boy in Batona when the miners marched through - can you describe what you saw and heard?

Edelman: Yes, ah that's been of course some time ago a I was around probably eight or nine years old. My father was in a was into this march and these men came through from the Kanawha - all through the part of Kanawha, Ohio everywhere through Batona going making a march on a non-union mine in Logan County West Virginia and a they each and everyone that you come in contact there - these men they had guns of some description or some kind anyway they had guns and plenty of guns and a they were going into Logan to organize a non-union mine and they was a severe battle fought on Blair Mountain and many many a fellows were killed on Blair Mountain and a at the end of that a they <sup>1:00</sup> guns were hid in trees a they were hid under leaves anything that they could dispose of becasue a the troops - the United States Troops were sent in there to stop it a which they did and they come up to Madison and set up head they set up headquarters. By the time they got there why they had called it off. It had ceased and a during this time they taken over a they taken over the railroad. They taken over the engines a that was steam engine the end <sup>1:30</sup> they burning coal and they a taken the cars. They taken flat cars and hauled their men on them all over Big Coal and up Little Coal into Madison right on up to a Blair and nobody bothered - nobody said anything to them about it cause they knowed they was no use.

Ferraro: Tell me what you a what you actually saw as a boy in Batona.

Edelman: Well, no a a

2:00

Ferraro: Hold on for a second. Alright Mr. Edelman one more time tell me what you saw and heard in Batona.

Edelman: Well, a there Batona and getting up of a morning and particular one morning here and all this quite a number as I said quite a number of miners going into Logan and the a road there was just like dust. It had been tramped so much so you can imagine that how many men was behind a behind this - in this <sup>2:30</sup> march and I know in particular a little incident happening over there a fellow named a Stein Jones and a man by the name of Freeman Frye that lived there in Batona. A Mr. Jones a Mr. Jones he a was out of the army of few months prior to this and he was kind of a leader. Training the men what to do and how to do about a using their guns and like so a <sup>3:00</sup> he kinda put the army stile to em so a he called on he told them advance a step forward and advance one and be recognized. A well, Mr. Frye was there and he misunderstood Mr. Jones and he thought he and the C&O at that time had dumped some ballas in there - about three quarter ton a three quarter ballace in the on a railroad over there and so when Mr. Jones told em a step forward - advance one he <sup>3:30</sup> misunderstood him and thought he said dance one. Well, Mr. Frye couldn't dance and he just tore up jack there in that ballacer. My father he laughed until he cryed about it a knowing that he was there to see this and it was right commical and Mr. Frye couldn't dance a lick but he tried. He was going according to what Mr. Jones said - told him to do so a other than that that's just about all that I know about the Blair Mountain.

4:00

Ferraro: What did a what did the road look like?

Edelman: Oh it just it was looked like core. It just pulverised that walking an a just plain country road there we didn't have this highway through there this country then. Just looked like a a well what you might compare it like flour. It was just it was about two or three inches deep where they just be so much tramping - just dust. It was just it was it was just pitiful to look at it and you could tell from that they was quite a number of people that was moving in that road during the night.

Ferraro: How many men did you see? 400

Edelman: Sir.

Ferraro: How many men - how many miners marching did you see?

Edelman: Oh Lord have mercy now that a be something. I'd say hundreds and hundreds of em just like I said a while ago they were from Ohio. They was Pennsylvania. They were from everywhere and they were coming through - came through Batona - come right up right up over this mountain here going right into Blair Mountain up here.

Ferraro: What kind of men were they?

Edelman: Well, they were all kinds. They were young and old and all nobody that could handle a gun could be of any help to try to organize that that's who went along. They they taken everybody they if they had any guns they they taken their guns if they didn't go couldn't go unable to go and had a gun they taken the gun - went on.

Ferraro: What did you and your neighbors think a when they were coming through?

Edelman: Well, we were kindly a in a way kind a scared to a certain extent but although they didn't bother nobody - they didn't bother anybody as they were going by. There were very peaceful and quite of course they made noise a tramping the road you know and talking and of course that course could disturb alot of people especially the elderly people at that time.

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Ferraro: Did they all wear a did the miners all wear a red bandanna around their neck?

Edelman: Alot of em did. Alot of em just wore just ordinary clothes - just everyday clothes - majority of em and a a I don't know just a I I they went to store. I think the stores give em a give em alot of food. People had these grocery stores and like give em alot of food and bread and cheese and various can foods to eat on as they went. That's the only way they could operate.

6:00

Ferraro: Where did they stay?

Edelman: Well, they they just they just slept just a anywhere they could. They just rested anyway they could and anywhere they could. Didn't have any any facilities like bedding or anything. They just sat in the chair - laid down on the on the ground or anything like that.

Ferraro: Where were you when the shooting started?

Edelman: Well, and I that was on Blair Mountain you know. I I was at home cause I just a kid you know - eight or nine years old at time and they was no way

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I could go with em up there they heard so didn't have any TV's to that at that time and oh we couldn't see nothing on that so that taken care of that but a I know they they was some they was some really hard fighting on Blair Mountain.

Ferraro: Ah I'm sure you heard some stories about that.

Edelman: Well, that's right. They they they a they killed alot of they killed <sup>7.00</sup> alot of alot of those boys out of Logan County. It was well what we call was on a scab line you know but the man the man was running that was name of Don Shafin that was the leader. That was the man that the miners were after. He was the man was running those mines over there a non non-union.

Ferraro: You say that a there were a number of people killed up there. How do you....

Edelman: Oh yeah well, they we just got that through the papers and through the grapevine you might put it about people being killed. I don't know just exactly how many as I say I was real young a I don't jut remember but I know theys they was alot of people killed and alot of people hurt a as probably well probably all em are dead now - at this time because that's been quite a while ago. <sup>7.30</sup>

Ferraro: Ah did could from where you were living could you hear any of the shooting?

Edelman: No, no see that's that that there here that's just a twenty five - I <sup>8.00</sup> suspect that's right around oh I suspect that's around sixty miles from

Batona to Blair Mountain where the shooting was on top of the mountain right at it. I'd say somewhere between fifty and sixty mile.

Ferraro: Alright a I learned you remember several stories relating to a the armed march. Can you tell me a few?

Edelman: Do how?

Ferraro: Some stories.

Edelman: Ah no, nothing at I know of other than what I've told you. That's about all all I... 8:30

Ferraro: Well tell me about how they took over the train.

Edelman: Well, they just come up and told the crew they said we're going to take this train over and course they a men they railroad men at that time. They they just say ok here she is. They is no question about it a they just turned it over to em and of course fellows a handling that train they they was some of em fellows that was engineers. They knowed they knowed they knowed how to operate the engine. They knowed how to a how to put the water in it - fire - put the coal to it and all because they picked the guys for that and a that a that kinda went along pretty good. They knew what they were doing and a they - I know in particular they and went down they'd caught a caught a hog somewhere along a track and they threw him up on the camp car - up on that flat car and they was two foreigners on that. I don't know whether they was Italians or Hungarian or what and they was holding that hog and that hot got routing and knocked 9:30

them down between them two cars and they still stayed right with that hot. Now that's just a story that I heard and I guess it was true because they was telling about it.

Ferraro: What did they use the trains for?

Edelman: Ah to haul all these men and to haul their supplies say like over on over at Batona. They'd come down here to and come right up Little Coal River. See that track forks come right there above Allen Creek. See you go up Big Coal and come there and go up Little Coal. That's the side we're on now a of course like I say we didn't have this road through here then. We didn't have any road like that. It was just plain old plain old what I say plain old country wagon roads all they were and that's what they had to travel on of course the train was a great asset to them. They got their supplies and get their men because a you know you had alot of men there rode. They just couldn't stand to walk alot but still they could do alot of things to help out at other parts so they that's one reason they use it. They officially didn't they didn't tear up any river company and the river company didn't make any attempts to sent the rosters up there to take over cause they knew they wasn't no use and everything went off nice. They didn't they didn't try to punish the miners for it all. They just laughed it off and went ahead.

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Ferraro: Ah do you remember the soldiers coming in?

Edelman: Ah not to much. They they they were come they came into Madison by they run a special train in there into Madison and unload these troops and by time they got here why like I said a while ago that was called off so they

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returned to where ever came from. I don't remember where they come from  
cuase like I said I was a little bit young to know to much about it.

Ferraro: You didn't spend much time in Madison when you were a young boy then?

Edelman: Ah that's right. Yeah, of course like I say I when I got up sixteen years  
old I went with the river company and I put in fifty years with them as a  
conductor here. I retired in 1973. <sup>W 30</sup>

Ferraro: You worked the railroad for fifty years?

Edelman: Fifty years.

Ferraro: Do you remember anything a else that your neighbors or anybody who might  
have seen anything happen on Blair Mountain? You remember anything that  
they might have hadn't said?

Edelman: No, not at this time no. You know a that's been a right smart while ago.  
Lots of things there that somebody could say now.

Ferraro: <sup>12:00</sup> Ok, let me a did you talk to any of the miners when they came through?

Edelman: Well, not too much you see my father he done he was in there and he done  
he done a bigger part of the talking. Just like I said I was small a our  
family and all we just a stayed in you know. We didn't get out and do  
anything at all because well, I wasn't big enough to help anyway but I  
know everybody was kind a shook up a little bit on it you know they just  
didn't know what could happen just like anything a pressure you never <sup>12:30</sup>



know what's going to happen and that's same way with a majority of the people in these homes. They just set attention. They didn't know what what might happen or anything. They was kinda shook up over it really.

Ferraro: How was your father involved?

Edelman: Sir.

Ferraro: How was your father involved?

Edelman: A well, he he was a miner. He he worked over all his life in the mines up to 1925 and he run for assessor for Boone County and was elected and served twelve years in that and then he retired from the mines when he died. I guess he's one of the oldest United Mine Workers they was in the state of West Virginia or anywhere else and a he would fight you over over being a union man. You knocked the union you you had you had on he turned the fan on right now.

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Ferraro: Well, a tell me what he did during the armed march.

Edelman: A he just talked to men. He knew alot of these men - right here around in Boone County - around by Toney there. He knew em and he was giving them ever bit assist he could a and dad at that time he'd been mashed up in the mines three different times and he just wasn't a to good a you know to stand too much cause he was getting along up in years hisself. He wasn't no young man at that time.

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Ferraro: Was he actually in the armed march now?

Edelman: Oh no no, he didn't get right in but he a he would have a but he a give em ever bit assistance - anything they he could go an get help em why that's what he did. <sup>14:00</sup> So a that's about all that I can I can tell you on that end of it.

Ferraro: Ok, is there anything else you can remember that you'd like to a or does that pretty much cover it?

Edelman: That pretty much covers it a at what we've talked about there and of course they a a they finally they finally got Logan organized and a like I say they killed alot of alot of people over in there and alot of people got hurt and a probably alot of them went to their grave <sup>14:30</sup> as had many scars in that by being shot, beat up and so forth - things like that.

Ferraro: Thank you.

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