## INTERVIEW WITH DEWEY WOODRUM

Ferraro: Start out, start out with a what you know about over on Paint Creek in

1912.

Woodrum: I don't know, I wasn't over in there none.

Ferraro: When did you hear of your uncle talking about?

Woodrum: Oh, bout way they treated them.

Ferraro: Yeah.

Woodrum: And a they kill one another like a war over there. They gathered em up,

my uncle Cleve Woodrum said, when they hauled em out of Paint Creek

Cabin Creek box cars. They wasn't no ambulance or nothing the blood

would run on the tires out of that box car.

Ferraro: Who were they carrying out?

Woodrum: Both sides was taking em out. That a shot em. He got killed. He sleeps

on Cabin Creek somewhere now.

Ferraro: Your uncle?

Woodrum: Uncle, my uncle and a they met him and a he told us about it and the man

one that owned the mine old Pale Slater they called him. They shot one

another met up in a berry field and Cleve shot shot him they claim way

it looked and he had enough breath in him he throwed his gun back and

shot him. My uncle get his diamond ring and as he throwed his gun

back his last breath.

Ferraro: Why were they fighting?

Woodrum: Just over this mines - scabs. They didn't like the miners or yeah, you'd work for nothing over there. Your kids would go in the mine to work, I mean a store to get script they'd slap them clear out in their yard. See the didn't even come in yet. Wouldn't give em nothing and a go to work of a morning. This is all true. You go to office, get ten checks off of a board and take them to the mine and what coal you loaded that's what script you'd get and they go there for script they say the checks didn't come in yet. Wouldn't give you a dime or nothing.

Ferraro: Who started the fighting on Cabin Creek?

Woodrum: Well, I guess the miners did. Trying to organize em. I went a while and try to organize em. We never took no guns with us, but, I tell you I heard bullets and the shots a firing now.

Ferraro: Bout what year would that have been?

Woodrum: It been about 22 or 3 or 4. Long when the for the T-Model Fords come up here. Up in here. It wasn't no time we slipped out that night it got too hot for. They throwed us off the road, didn't want us to go and got a we found out we was on the wrong road and we went to the right place. We stayed a couple hours. They had it fenced off yet. They buried alot of people in them power houses over there and Cabin Creek Jewelry they tell me - them thugs.

Ferraro: Did you ever hear Mother Jones speak anywhere?

Woodrum: Ah, yeah, Clower after the mines. After pert near got our union.

Ferraro: Hang on a minute, ok, they got...Tell me now about seeing Mother Jones.

Woodrum: Well, I can't tell much about her only I see her speak.

Ferraro: Uh...

Woodrum: And she wasn't afraid to talk.

Ferraro: What type of things did she say?

Woodrum: All kind of stuff. How dirty they was. How they treated the people and their children - the scabs. Yeah, called em everything. They didn't, didn't say anything back to her cause we bout had em whooped and she said whatever she wanted to. Know she had plenty of backing. I was very small back then, I young 20, 21 or 22 year old. Back when the T-Model Fords come up in here. Bunch come from Cabin Creek. Had some wasn't able to travel very much and a fellow that owned a little store down here had one said we'd like to borrow that Ford to take some of the men with us can't hardly go. He didn't want to. He didn't like the miners either and he was one of the neighbors round here and said, well, we can drive it. We'll pay you for it and they took it. No, he went with em after he found out he was going to take it.

Ferraro: Do you remember anything about Mother Jones's language? Was it a did she talk dirty or foul or...

Woodrum: She said everything. Yeah. That's how dirty they was. The way they mistreated the people watch them bleed to death. 500

Ferraro: What kind of effect did she have on the people listening to her?

Woodrum: The miners? They enjoyed it but the other fellows didn't like it.

That's what we went for. That 23 or 43 hundred on the march.

Ferraro: Tell me about that in 1921.

Woodrum: What's about when it was.

Ferraro: Ah, how did you get caught up in that?

Woodrum: Well, I went to help win the union.

Ferraro: Start from the beginning and...

Woodrum: Yeah, I help organize in these mountains down here in a fellows feed store. I was in the beginning of it. Buddy I'd fight again for it.

Yes, buddy. I would stop one bullet anyway. That's how well I love it.

**7.00** 

Ferraro: Ah, what did you actually do on the miners march? What part did you play?

Woodrum: I went to help win it, fight in the march like going to army. It was an army. It rained bullets up there. They killed hundreds of em. I never got no further than where that big school used to set. Madison over there where the kroger store. The state malitia was on the way from Huntington, big guns on cars and they out numbered us and we had to get out. I don't know why they went for the other side. You know, to be too many killed over nothing much and we got out. They had guns no doubt now hid in the them trees or maybe stand under rocks over there yet. Didn't ever go back to get em. Tell me over here at a Racine where you go up Short Creek them old buildings there they said they was a lot of guns put down behind the wall and behind it everything was over and then go back and get em. I don't know whether they did or not and they down behind it. Yeah, they we had had some had nerve and some didn't go. I know one fellow I helped to work with when I was just a very small boy bout 19 years old small and he didn't have guts

to go. He went a closet in his house cut his own throat. Fellow name of Mitchell. Found him dead and I had so me cousins hate to say this. This kinda scared too and they went in the mountains near the dam up and took em. They went. They after they got everything over they liked him.

Ferraro: Who was making you go? Anybody?

Woodrum: Ah, union asked us to go. We had to go and win or we'd never got nothing. We'd all set down we'd been a scabbing today. Working twenty cents a ton for coal. I dumped coal down here fourteen hours, hundreds and hundreds of days and got seven for it. Yeah. Church would be a breaking up when we quit dumping coal. They'd they had a dirty boss down there who loaded coal back in scab days. They found a piece of slate as big as your hand in the car. If he didn't like you they'd set it off on the side track and at night the dirty, the dirty man they called him he'd they'd dump that coal after everybody would go to bed. He had a conveyor start up taking the coal off the hill there. One little piece of slate. They found three pieces in it you was a goner. Nobody couldn't do a thing about it. Now we can strike and win it. We got a union.

Ferraro: What would why would three pieces of slate?

Woodrum: Slate?

Ferraro: Why three peices of slate?

Woodrum: Dirty slate won't burn. Dirty coal they called it. You had to call it dirty.

Ferraro: So that you weren't paid for the car?

Woodrum: They'd take it all. They wouldn't give you nothing for it, but they'd dump it that night though. They wanted clean coal and you had to dig it out your hand that's when you couldn't make a living. You had to take your own cottinpicking coal or slate out of your coal.

Ferraro: Did you see anybody that had been shot or killed at Blair Mountain?

Woodrum: No, I never did.

Ferraro: Did you know of anybody or heard about anybody to?

Woodrum: No, I never had no name. They kept everything secret. They been quite of me after that. I said and go and talk somebody else. That's answer I'd give em.

Ferraro: Who was the head of the miners at that time? VOOO

Woodrum: Well, we had two or three different presidents. Fellow name a Young lived in Kentucky, somewhere. Ed range I believe he was the one in the miners march. Oh, he'd been way older than me if he'd been a living. He been dead for ages.

Ferraro: Well, do you think that the union wanted Blair Mountain?

Woodrum: Uh?

Ferraro: Do you think that the union won what they wanted at Blair Mountain by fighting?  $^{10}$ 

Woodrum: Yes, their trip was use worth going. We got our union. That's how come Mother Jones gets to talk up there in Logan County and now you liable get a whooping from this scabbing up there in Logan, now. They love it that good. They can make a living.

Ferraro: What did Mother Jones look like?

Woodrum: She just an old big rough woman. Had a voice seemed like it jarr the

ground. WOO

Ferraro: How was she dressed? Do you remember anything?

Woodrum: Just common. Just everday common clothes. Just no duty clothes. Just very rough clothes. Like you see women wear everday here. Just old

time clothes.

Ferraro: Did she, did she yell or was she...

Woodrum: No, just talk big and loud. Didn't cut no dye though just laid the \\\3D law down to em. What she ought to do the other side...Oh, they was bad back in them days.

Ferraro: Do you remember any stories about the miners march that you could tell me? Ah...

Woodrum: No, I never heard no stories about her only we just went and back. Got stopped that when we all got ready go from Van, here our bunch come and laco get us. Freight train pulled up down there to unload groceries from Madison and when it pulled up the miners got on top of the Boxcars and in them and a waved it back down the river and buddy they went and down at Madison. They, they said what are you all doing back down here so early? Said we are down here on a strength of a forty-five and a big powered rifle. They unloaded it come back up. That happened I was in a...

Ferraro: Did you take your rifle with you?

Woodrum: I wasn't married then, I was single.

Ferraro: Did you take your rifle?

Woodrum: Oh, I never had nothing but a little lets see a thirty-two twenty pistol.

That's all I had. I could got one maybe over there somewhere. Didn't have no high power.

Ferraro: Were you gone for more than one day?

Woodrum: I, just stayed one night. One day is all. They stopped us. We didn't \GDO
get to go there. They died down, we got our union.

Ferraro: Ah, what, what would you have done if you got yp there, Did anyone tell you?

Woodrum: Ah, if I see somebody a shoot at me, I'd protect my own life if I had anything to do it with. I got a high powered rifle in there now.

Eighty some year old. Kind that my uncle killed them bunches on Cabin 1335

Creek them scabs. He got eighteen fore they got him he told us and a swedish mouser. Swedish shell bout that long. Six shells five shot in that. It's eighty three your old. It exactly like a new one. Money wouldn't buy it. It's antique. Not hardly, but shoot through a big tree that big around.

Ferraro: It's the gun your uncle fought with?

Woodrum: Same make. Same kind. It wasn't one he had. It a mouser, Swedish Mouser.

A hard shooting gum. They tell me...be a bunch a talking these fellows a bunch of thugs that scope he had on. I, he'd kill em out and drop a hill with it standing. Shoot em out. He got a good, good shot and I've got a gum that throw a bullet five mile. A twenty two will go over two

1430

mile along. You believe that. Twenty-two...

Ferraro: Tell me what it was like in the early days being, trying to have a union

meeting, or a where the problem...

Woodrum: Do what?

Ferraro: Were there, were there problems in the old days trying to have union

meetings?

Woodrum: Couldn't you had to hide. Couldn't have one out in the open.

Ferraro: What would they do to you?

Woodrum: They'd slap you head or billow you one with a black jack. They was down

here them thugs that's what the called em state police. They was company thugs what they was. You couldn't go along a road without they stop and search you and a going and a coming. Went from our store over in another little town had a bridge and I cut over. They'd stop you going and coming. You'd be a standing and talking three of you they'd

get out say one of you move out and said both of you standing here when 5.30

I come you better be a moving. Wouldn't let you talk. They'd go up

and down a road bent over like a an old raincoat with a browning machine

gum on their back humped over if any trouble started so one get behind

and do the shooting. He didn't have to use it and kept, I don't know  $\sim$   $\sim$   $\sim$   $\sim$  what kind of machine gun it was on the top club house porch. I was up

there fooling around where had no business. I raised up and looked.

I don't know what kind of maching gun it was.

Ferraro: Do you think things would be different today?

Woodrum: Uh?

Ferraro: Would things be any better today if the union would go out of existance?

What would happen do you think?

Woodrum: It all go down the road. You'd say or do what the other fellow would do. Tell you eat grass you'd go down eat it and be glad to. That's the way the union - that's way they believe. You didn't believe in nothing they wanted it all. Yeah, you do what they said - the other side - yeah. I heard the bullets whiz up here at this mine. Teple fore they built, I mean, this new teple had a wooden teple bullet holes in it teple now in it before they tore it down and shot over our heads one mountain. Bullets went in the ground was ship truck and they dug em out. I got behind a big pile of headers I know it wouldn't go through them, they quit shooting. If don't sound good. Over at Wydon they done the same thing. Me and my friend, with us, we used to gather, a bunch of us went. We layed down in the ditch couldn't tell where the shots coming from, it was dark.

Ferraro: What were you all doing, trying to organize?

Woodrum: Organize. We went peaceable. We told em we didn't come for trouble, and a, had it fenced off. You didn't get in. The gate as far as you got. If you, a crossed it you'd a, been carried out undertaker in my opinion, but after that the big store and everything burnt down and a, another company took it over and I think that it was organized after that. It was rough over there. They didn't like the union.

Ferraro: Ah, how did you hear that hte march was going on? Who came and told you and...

Woodrum: The miners come right down the down this creek from Cabin Creek in  $\c 8.30$  strings when I was bordered down there with Milton Whites a talking

about. That's when it was.

Ferraro: And they said just get a gun and come on or...

Woodrum: They went on and they stopping above Madison there. They most of em didn't get there. They just kept coming though. They was so many forty-three hundred is a big lot of people.

Ferraro: Did you, did they make you feel like it was your duty as a union man?

Woodrum: I they didn't make me that. I knowed my duty. I was tired a working 100 for a song and had to try to sing it. Yeah.

Ferraro: So you felt like if, if they were going to be fighting, you were going to be there with them.

Woodrum: I'd take my gun right now and go. I'd die for my rights.

Ferraro: Ah, tell me one more time about how you got started with the miners march. You say the men came down the creek here, ah...

Woodrum: Going to organize at Logan.

Ferraro: They, they didn't tell you, you had to go?

Woodrum: They wanted us to go. More of us though be easier won. Scare em out.

Ferraro: So you felt like it was your duty as a union.

Woodrum: Yeah, I knowed it or I wouldn't a went. I said no I ain't yellow.

I've got the nerve defend my country, my union and my children. A,

you wouldn't want your children children kicked out of store out of

your house would you? Nothing to eat. Now they done that over there

2000

thats true. They took an old, they said, they go to whoop the union.

Build a big old some kind of a car steel, you know, it come up Cabin Creek in the creek, anyway and they'd go to dry clean the miner, you know.

Ferraro: A car of steel?

Woodrum: Made out of steel.

Ferraro: Was it a railroad car?

Woodrum: Yeah, and it come up bout head of Cabin Creek. They was sitting on them big high they made bottom out of that thing. Back down Cabin Creek it went wrecked and killed alot of em.

Ferraro: It did?

Woodrum: Sure did.

Ferraro: Did they have guns mounted on it?

Woodrum: They had em in it and, yeah, we had the guns they had the guns waiting for it. They thought them bullets wouldn't penetrate that steel. Why aloo just like shooting a piece of newspaper. That happened. Yeah, my uncle, the one that killed old the operator the main operator.

Ferraro: He was...

Woodrum: Old Slater. That when I tell you they shot one another in the berry patch. Met up...

Ferraro: And your uncle was killed too.

Woodrum: Yeah, you shot him, oh he shot him. Shot one another. That's way it looked when they found em. They killed one another. It all they could

31.30

figure. Cause both guns fired a bullet - a shell.

Ferraro: Did you ever know miners that were kicked out of their homes, or a...

Woodrum: No, I never did see none, but over there they did. Never got that bad here.

Ferraro: Ah, when they told you, when you heard that they were going to Blair Mountain to fight did you hear anything about Mingo County or Logan County? Ah...

Woodrum: Oh, yeah. I knowed it was going on scabbing. They want to work for nothing. Like they wanted us to do here, but we didn't want to do that. We wanted freedom that's what we was a fighting for. Freedom. We got it too and I tell you the miners better hold on to it now, I ain't lying.

Ferraro: What would you have done or did you all have any idea how you, what you were going to do once say you won the battle fighting? What, what would you have done?

Woodrum: We'd rejoiced over it. We know we had our freedom. We do as we please.

Go when we please. Didn't have to work for nothing and listen to other higher ups. If I tell you go out there and woller in a creek, you wouldn't want to go, would you in the mud hole. That's what they wanted you to do.

Ferraro: How many, how many union men were involved do you think on the in the 2300 fighting on Blair Mountain? How many?

Woodrum: I don't know how many on that side. They was a lot of em. Had men go all Logan County. Men go in Logan and all them places - different

place. I don't know how many there, but...

Ferraro: Did you a ever hear of the sheriff in Logan by the name of Don Shafin?

Woodrum: Yeah, Don Slater.

Ferraro: Don Shafin.

Woodrum: He was a Don Shafin.

Ferraro: Yeah.

Woodrum: They flew little old planes over here try to scare the miner.

Could have shot em down with the high powered rifles. They put out

some mustard dust they called it. Drop it. It would go in your eyes.

It might have burnt a little. It hit in top of beech trees, that stuff

you wouldn't believe, it turned em white, it killed em.

Ferraro: Where was that they were that they were doing that?

Woodrum: Right down here at Van.

Ferraro: They were dropping

Woodrum: In that strike in that strike. Just little old two man plane.

Ferraro: During the 1921

24.00

Woodrum: Yeah, that march. That one march all they ever was.

Ferraro: Ah, what did you hear about the sheriff over in Logan?

Woodrum: Well, I didn't just noise. Didn't want the miner have nothing that's

about all. I didn't even know him. Didn't know where Logan County

was at.

Ferraro: Did you hear anything about. You didn't know where Logan was exactly.

1

Woodrum: Never was over in there before. Had no business. I knowed it wasn't

no place for a miner. I mean a...

Ferraro: Why, why was that?

Woodrum: Uh.

Ferraro: Why was it not a place for a miner?

Woodrum: They didn't like a miner, them Logan people, them scabs. They didn't want nobody to have nothing. They wouldn't let you gang up and talk

here at your own place. They'd scatter you out. Yeah.

Ferraro: Did you ever know a, a Bill, Bill Blizzard or Frank Keeney?

Woodrum: Knowed Frank Keeney. I've heard of him never did see him. Knowed

him well.

Ferraro: What about Bill Blizzard?

೦೦ ಪ

Woodrum: Heard about him, but I never did see him. That's far as I got.

Ferraro: Did you ever meet John L. Lewis?

Woodrum: Oh, God, lots of times and heard him talk. Oh, man, yeah. Buddy he

could talk. I've got his picture in my picture album now.

Ferraro: Do you...

Woodrum: John L. buddy he was a rough one. When he spoke it generally worked.

Yeah. He was in they had him up in trial. Trying, trying to get him

to go to jail. They word nincompoop. I don't know what that word is.

He called all em that. They didn't know what to think about it.

Thought he was a fool and they went and looked a dictionary found that

very work. It meant son of a bitch. He a called em. That's what it what it what the dictionary said. He called em that and they thought he was a dumby. He was smart. I guess he about a smart a man as we ever had around here in West Virginia or pert near United States. He wasn't no bodies fool. I tell you I've heard him talk dozens of times.

Ferraro: What was it like when you started out? When you started out in the mines as a boy? How old were you?

Woodrum: How old? 260

Ferraro: When you started in the mine?

Woodrum: I started go I was, let see, going on nineteen, eighteen last part of it.

Ferraro: What about what year would that have been?

Woodrum: 1918.

Ferraro: 1918.

Woodrum: 1918, last part.

Ferraro: What, what was it like in those days mining coal? What was it like?

Woodrum: It was plenty hard. That was scab day.

Ferraro: How was it different from today?

Woodrum: Well, you go you done it all by your...a wheat back in your arms now its making out of machinery. You didn't have pound slate - drill and eat rock dust maybe, that deep in the mines. You got a dampen now.

27 00

weren't no air. You get sick. You go home. You couldn't load (). You didn't get a penny for it. Go back the next day = next morning scome scab would load your coal out and you had to do the work over again. Then, them scabs you miners you had some of them and they cut big thick scrapping have to dig it up with a bottom and they had em give em baccer to get em to cut, to scrape the bottom of the machine. Had bottom machines then and...

Ferraro: In the early days were the union miners working?

Woodrum: Uh?

Ferraro: In the early days were the union miners working with scabs in the mines:

Woodrum: Yeah, they was a union man but they couldn't tell em they miners though - union men.

Ferraro: They'd be working side by side.

Woodrum: Yeah. You done what they said. you didn't say I love the union or something like that. Did you'didn't get to go back in th mines. You go in a coal mines and work load your coal. If you didn't get enough cars clean up in the day shift you come out the boss say you'clean up. No, go back in there if you don't, bring your tools out an empty car in the morning.

Ferraro: Ah, what year did you join the union? What year did you join?

Plenty of good air. You didn't have that when I worked. You worked in there shoot your coal down of a morning weren't no air. You get sick. You go home. You couldn't load nery a dime. You didn't get a penny for it. Go back the next day - next morning some scab would load your coal out and you had to do the work over again. Then, them scabs you miners you had some of them and they cut big thick scrapping have to dig it up with a bottom and they had em give em baccer to get em to cut, to scrape the bottom of the machine. Had bottom machines, then and...

Ferraro: In the early days were the union miners working?

Woodrum: Uh?

Ferraro: In the early days were the union miners working with scabs in the mines?

Woodrum: Yeah, they was a union man but they couldn't tell em they was miners though - union men.

Ferraro: They'd be working side by side.

Woodrum: Yeah. You done what they said. You didn't say, I love the union or something like that. Did you didn't get to go back in the mines. You go in a coal mines and work load your coal. If you didn't get enough cars clean up in the day shift you come out the boss say you clean up?

No, go back in there if you don't, bring your tools out and empty car in the morning.

Ferraro: Ah, what year did you join the union? What year did you join?

Woodrum: 1918 when I worked, started to work.

Ferraro: Why did you join?

Woodrum: Cause I didn't want to work for nothing. That's it.

Ferraro: Wasn't it kind of risky in those days being a union member?

Woodrum: Risky? Yeah, if you said anything or talk out of reason it was. You had, you, you wouldn't live in a company house nowhere. You'd get out. You'd have, wouldn't have no job. The boss men, they hate the miners so bad they'd slap em like slapping children. The boss would I seen that. Jerk their pipe, maybe out of their mouth, and throw it over the mountain or said if I told em to they would. You had do most anything if you got a piece of bread to eat.

Ferraro: Were there any good mine owners?

Woodrum: Do what?

Ferraro: Were there any mine operators that were good to the miners?

Woodrum: I never heard tell of one. Never did in my life. Not a one. You 3000 never will. The miner the company right now today would rather see scabbing as a union. Right today. They don't like em. Right this very day. Cause we got a little say so, you know. Don't have to eat the other fellows bunk all the time. You can have your privilege. Go when you please and come when you please.

Ferraro: When you got to Madison on the train going toward Blair Mountain, what was it like when you got there?

Woodrum: It wasn't as big as it is now when I went. Its built up.

Ferraro: Were there alot of people there? Alot of miners, and...

Woodrum: There was right smart. They all had didn't get there. We got on a

erraro: When you got to Madison on the train going toward Blair Mountain, what was it like when you got there?

Woodrum: I didn; t go clear to the mountain?.

Ferraro: In Madison when you got there, What was it like in Madison?

Woodrum: Do what?

Ferraro: What was it like in Madison when you got there

Woodrum: It wasn't as big as it is now when I went. Its built up.

Ferraro: Were there alot of people there? Alot of miners, and...

Woodrum: There was right smart. They allhad didn't get there. We got on a train at Van and went there, over at the end of that bridge where Kroger 5-985. That's when a we heard the state malitia is on the way. Said better get in the clear or a get you, and why they hated the miner I don't know.

Ferraro: What, what happened when the what happened when the soldiers came in in Madison?

Woodrum: They didn't get there, the state malitia. They was on their way. I guess they went back.

Ferraro: You didn't see them.

Woodrum: Just heard about their guns on a flat car. 39

31:00

train at Van and went there, over at the end of that bridge where Kroger store. That's when a we heard the state matitia is on the way. Said better get in the clear or a get you, and why they hated the miner, I don't know.

Ferraro: What, what happened when the, what happened when the soldiers came in, in Madison?

Woodrum: They didn't get there, the state malitia. They was on their way. I guess they went back.

Ferraro: You didn't see them.

Woodrum: Just heard about their guns on a flat car. 3130

Ferraro: Did you have a, any kind of uniform on or anything.

Woodrum: Just an old - very poor clothes. You was lucky to have a pair of overalls or back.

Ferraro: Did you wear any kind of a handkerchief, or anything, or...?

Woodrum: I don't wear even a bare head I guess.

Ferraro: Beg your pardon. What?

Woodrum: Bare headed I guess. I wore hat though. People back then didn't have nothing.

それの But you just went because you felt like it was your duty?

Woodrum: I went was my duty. It was like it be my duty to help you, if I could, and I most certainly would. Sure I would.

Ferraro: If a would you do it all again?

Woodrum: Uh?

Ferraro: Would you do it again?

Woodrum: If I could stand up, yes, I would. Yes, I'd go. I never was yellow.

I've always had plenty of spunk and grit. That's the reason I'm here today going on eighty four. I've been good to everybody. Treated em white. That's the reason my days have been prolonged and that's bible.

Can't get around that.

Ferraro: We appreciate you letting us talk, talk to you.

Woodrum: Uh?

Ferraro: We appreciate you talking to us.

Woodrum: What?

Ferraro: We...

32 EV