

INTERVIEW WITH RONCE HUNTER

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Ferraro: Ok, Mr. Hunter me a (pause) Tell me how old you were in 1921 and what you were doing - where you worked.

Ronce: Well, I was a I was on a farm and a I was I was twenty two years old.

Ferraro: Well, tell me what a where the farm was and what you were doing.

Ronce: Well, there a what they call the Craddic Fork...a right next to Kroger Creek. Kroger Creek head up again in Kroger Creek and a hunt of what they call a Bill Hunter farm. They had to do it. Had had the lake on side you know.

Ferraro: And and what what were you doing out there?

Ronce: What was I doing out there?

Ferraro Yeah, what sort of I mean, you were farming - what...

Ronce: Oh, a raising corn, potatoes and one thing another you know, like a fellow would farm - a little bit of everything beans, corn, potatoes, tobacco...everything nearly you could raise. What you could raise you know.

Ferraro: And a then what happened what happened in a in August of 1921 as far as you were concerned?

Ronce: Well a

Ferraro: With the miners and the a thugs and all. ^{1.30}

Ronce: They wasn't none that I I done on neither side nor nothing like that. I wasn't interested on either side as far as having evil will toward anyone. No, I just a what you call a a what you call a good moral citizen with all - everybody and and I didn't have no enemies of no ^{2.00} and I'll need a place nowhere as far as I know. If I had any enemies, didn't know it.

Ferraro: Well, a what happened when the miners started coming in?

Ronce: Well, they moved closer closer to each other - tried to as near as way I can ^{2.30} describe it. They just frowned at each other and then they just a seemed to happen like I told you - they shoot went to shooting.

Ferraro: How many miners were there? Were there alot of them? What did it look like when they came in?

Ronce: Well, now I didn't see I didn't see em all of em, I just seen a few of em, just a few of em when it started in but they kept hid. ^{3.00} The miners kept hid you know, in the hills...and just when it started a then I seen three or four of em on on both sides you know, and part of em got captured and...and a then a when they at happened and one got captured why, the other one run and a he give a warning - ^{3.30} fired a shot...and then it started.

Ferraro: Tell me a little bit more. Tell me that story in detail about that how that one fellow, I guess he's from the Logan side or where ever got captured.

Ronce: Well, a they a they was a spying him going down seeing what they could locate and got down so far and they run into some union men and one of them got captured and the other one run back and fired it. He gave a warning on this side, Logan side and a then it a...they went to shooting at each other.

Ferraro: You have a real interesting story to tell about a where where you and your family were when the shooting started.

Ronce: Well, we was in the middle. A we was in the middle a a of the union and the Logan side. Like a there's a house sits here and one over there and we was living and caught in that and couldn't get out. They was all come in unexpected you see and a an that fellow run back said you all better get in the clear said it started and that's all we could do. We could just get in the clear you know and do the best you could..and a...I didn't see nobody on neither side after then. They was they was all a kept hid I guess or you know how it would be and...all you could hear the shooting a going on.

Ferraro: Tell me about the shooting and how you family was caught in the cross fire there.

Ronce: Well, a they shot both ways and there's a building and a well there you know how people be they'd be-frightened and scared and try to keep in the

clear and couldn't get out. Uh, if you got out why you more apt to get shot and a... 600

Ferraro: Didn't a...didn't your wife was pregnant with your first son?

Ronce: Oh yeah, she yeah, well a way it was now a she a we all got in this log house together and to be together you see a and a I lived down there and I had to hog in the pinned up and a we all got up there together a to be protected you know, that we could and a at hog would done without something to eat for three or four days and I happened to go down and turn it loose. I said it's liable to starve to death and a he said no said you better not go said a me and a your sister will go down there and they went down there and as they went in why they shot and shot a broom and a a sitting on the porch shot shot a broom handle into. Well, they shot that house roof all to pieces. Well, she went in there and a they a didn't know what hardly what to do and they stood things over and they got a wanted to come back you know and a they took a curtain rod and put a pillow case on a curtain rod and a come back up and they didn't shoot at them at that. They that protected them you know and they didn't shoot at them but they said if they hadn't after it was over with they come over the hill and said that pillow case all that saved them that there white flag you know - all that saved them.

Ferraro: Did you know anybody on the Logan side of the Mountain doing any of the shooting?

Ronce: Well, now a I don't know where Sonny Goore, he a I knowed him and a he as I see another Goore, let see what was his name - about Sonny's age. I

don't know whether they done any shooting or not but they was with them when they come off the hill...after it was over with. I don't know where he had anything to do with it or not.

Ferraro: ^{8 30} Did they tell you any stories?

Ronce: No, they didn't talk to much. A Sonny Goore a now told me that a he said a he said now the old man Hunter said I know him, he said he Don Shafin's friend and he a told em to be careful not try to hurt em anyway. A a Sonny told em that and a I recon they a maybe listened at him and told him and it we wasn't bothering her but we was in that a you know and was kinda dangerous you know, way I look at it dangerous. You had to stay put or get get hurt. That all there was to it. They hid you know when I they shoot and all that place up in a.. ^{9 00} 9 30

Ferraro: Tell me what you did to keep out of the fight.

Ronce: What I did to keep out of the fight.

Ferraro: Tell me what you told Mike.

Ronce: Well, I I keep out of the fighting. I didn't want a fight to start with a far as that's concerned. I was just caught in the middle of it and a I just a tryed to keep hid to keep from getting hurt. Ah...ah tryed to hunt a hiding place. I guess, there'd been a hollow log I'd a crawled in it to get out got out of it you see. I just trying to keep in the clear. Like anybody else would guess. Oh, would of been into it more a I didn't care for my life. Why I guess I would I would been in hadn't

care nothing for myself and the other fellow either - why I'd a been in it but I wasn't that kind of a fellow. 10 30

Ferraro: When was the shooting the heaviest where you were?

Ronce: Well, a one morning about...I'd say a half an hour or a a maybe an hour, was just before daylight just the break of day anyhow, what you might say you know about time you'd get up or something. Awful shooting and my his side, both sides...and I hear the Kroger Creek and a where it was em fellows come up a ridge...they knowed the country all right. These fellows - I knowed two of the fellows that led the gang - had knowed the woods just like a puzzle you know. They could go anywhere - been all over the place in there and a they slipped closer and closer all the time one morning there when the big shooting went on and then after that why...it all ceased and a government men come in and stopped it. 11 00 11 30

Ferraro: Ah who, who were the men that came in and stopped it?

Ronce: Who was the men?

Ferraro: Yeah.

Ronce: Oh, I don't I don't know their names. 12 00

Ferraro: Well, no I mean were they army troops or state police or...

Ronce: Oh no, they was army troops...a government government man - soldiers.

Ferraro: What they do?

Ronce: Well, they just a a so many of them I guess, they a come in and told them to stop it. That's all I know about it.

Ferraro: Did you see them gathering up a rifles from the miners or anything? ^{12:30}

Ronce: Ah no, I never seen that.

Ferraro: Did you talk to any of the government men?

Ronce: No, a well, a we men a one of my brothers a want a go up in there and see what went on and they wouldn't let us go in there until everything was cleaned up in there. No, they wouldn't let go in there and after it was all over they said you could go anywhere you wanted to. 13:00

Ferraro: Anybody get killed back there?

Ronce: I didn't see nobody but now they tell tell me that they's hauled out of there in truck load. I don't know, that's what they said.

Ferraro: What a describe what you told me earlier about a that you heard that they hauled them out there with truck loads with canvas over them.

Ronce: Yeah.

Ferraro: Tell me that.

Ronce: Well, a they a I was told, I don't know it to be so now - it could be a hoggy but they said they was a truck load went out of there. Truck load after truck load of dead men and a just throwed in the trucks and canvas over them and hauled out of Kroger Creek.

Ferraro: Did you know Don Shafin?

Ronce: Knowed him, oh yeah.

Ferraro: What kind of man was he?

Ronce: A well, a he was a seemed like anybody you liked a good ordered man but he was a mean man. He wouldn't take much to stir him up. That's a way I got him figured out. He was a good-hearted man as anybody you liked - why he he was a good-hearted man man but a you know how some fellows is to get stirred up. A they get shamed you know.

Ferraro: What a what did he do to ever get stirred up?

Ronce: Well a

Ferraro: You say he was sort of mean, how was he mean?

Ronce: Well, a you know anybody that would want to kill somebody-have em killed would a would be mean, wouldn't they.

Ferraro: Who did he want to have killed?

Ronce: Well, I don't know but a what what what did they start. Why did they start all over about anyhow? If a like you, if you wanted a..a fight the other man just like this war coming on..why each sides a gonna if they start war they gonna gonna shoot at each other and fight each other, ain't they - protect each other. Well, I guess that's what they they was trying to do - protect each other and a I had a grudge at each other or something you know.

Ferraro: Why do you have any any idea why the miners were up on that mountain trying to get into Logan?

Ronce: Well no, I don't have no idea. Why, I think it trying about what was idea was to try and break the union - what what it was all about. What the whole thing was about - trying to break the union.

Ferraro: Why was the union so important to those men? You told me earlier that that's that a you thought your sympathies made have lied with the union people because if they they broke in the union then it be all over for the poor people.

Ronce: Well, I drawed that idea myself and I'll think it myself too. If that union would to be broke, why..I'd think a us poor fellows would have to just work and do the best you could. Root hog or die a for to make a living..and I think the bottom would drop out of everything.

Ferraro: What was it like without a union?

Ronce: Well, I tell you a back when I was a boy, I worked I worked a when I was

fourteen years old. I worked for a quarter a day and done as much as a man done. They give men back then seventy five cents a day and give boys my size then, I was fourteen years old and give em a quarter a day and I worked a many day - ten and twelve hours from daylight till dark for a quarter...and a quarter now wasn't more than a penny in my way a looking at it - about like a penny. It's a pert near like that, ain't it. Ah, I'd say anyhow back when I was a boy..five dollars was as as was forty anyhow. Five dollars back when I was a boy - five dollars was forty dollars now - buy more with it. I can remember when a you could buy bacon three pound for a quarter. What would you have people pay them now? Three cans of Prince Albert for a quarter and what you have to pay for a can of Prince Albert - seventy five cents. Look at

the difference in price and I say if it's a now I'm I'm I'm for the right of anything but I'll say that a if it's union broke...at people are going to see a hard time, especially poor people. They gonna have to go back and work maybe for a quarter a day or whatever they can get and maybe not get it. They be times they not - was a looking that way right now. They ain't no work now for a lots of them. Thousands of them out of job. Might be the reason they on this AGC - ain't got no work. Way I look at it makes a people meaner and a for they starve they going take it, ain't they - Alot of them. The best of man would, wouldn't he. Before they starve they'd take it. They wouldn't maybe not at tention of stealing it but they just naturally take it - for they'd starve or let their families starve. That's the way I'll look at it.

Ferraro: Did you talk to any of the miners before or after?

Ronce: No, no what a maybe a no I never heard talk about - they never talk much about it afterward. I never hear.

Ferraro: With all the shooting that went on why do you suppose nobody wanted to talk about it.

Ronce: Well, they wanted to keep everything sneaking I guess...and a...I think less a fellow can talk better it is for him anytime...way I look at it I don't know. I always thought it was best the least a fellow could - what he could...say.

Ferraro: Ok, a Ronce how old are you? When were you born?

Ronce: I was born 1899 April the 14th and you know what that is. I'd be eighty four the 14th of this last April.

Ferraro: Where were you living up around a the turn of the century? Tell me about your farm.

Ronce: Well, a I hear that it was a pretty good size farm. They was a one hundred and eighty acres of the whole farm and two big hollars and we a raised corn on one hollar and corn, potatoes and tobacco in the other one and they was three apple orchards on that place. Three big apple orchards. Had all kinds of apples fruit tree.

Ferraro: Tell me where it was.

Ronce: That was a head of the Crattic Fork on the Coal River side. Head of the Crattic Fork - head up again Kroger Creek. Isn't that what they call Bill Hunter Farm - what they call them Jay Hunter. Bill was his name. They called him J. W. - my grandfather.

Ferraro: And a so you were you were farming in 1921 when the when when all the thug war started, right?

Ronce: Oh yeah, about all they was to do in you worked if you'd get on it but back then you couldn't hardly buy a job.

Ferraro: Is that why you farmed?

Ronce: Well yeah, you had to do something. 22:30

Ferraro: Tell me what you say when a when all this trouble started...and what you heard.

Ronce: Well, I I heard that they was a going to start a they was a talking about it and stirring up trouble and...

Ferraro: Who, how'd you hear it? How did you hear about it?

Ronce: Well, a they just a talking a fellows talking you know that a you know ^{23:00} how people do when you get stirred up and mixed up and arguing and a about one thing and one another and finally instead of getting less it gets worse you know and that's about the way it got started I recon.

Ferraro: Ok, tell me about a what happened when the shooting started.

Ronce: Well

Ferraro: What you did with you and your family. 23:30

Ronce: Oh oh, we was in we was in a house. We got in the house you'd get - be protected you know...they wasn't nothing much we could do for only stay in the clear about all we could do was stay in the clear.

Ferraro: There were alot of bullets went into the house when

Ronce: Oh yeah, I don't know, I guess about ^{24:00}chimney standing there. Now I guess it was speckled a as a guiney with bullets where bullets hit it. Rock - big rock chimney.

Ferraro: How did a when you were hiding how did you get water?

Ronce: Ah, we just had to a get it the best we could. ^{24:30}Crawl out and get it out of the branch uh, the back way you know...a heard a noise or could they see you, why they'd a shot at you. They shot at everything that moved.

Ferraro: Who was doing the shooting? Both sides you say?

Ronce: Well, a this side was was a doing most the shooting.

Ferraro: Which side?

Logan side 1 the shooting

Ronce: ^{25:00}Logan side. A they shot at everything that moved. They killed two cows up on a point had built on and fighting flies you know while and bells a jingling and they killed them the get shed of the racket and they shot a hog. Shot at an old man that lived a about oh half a mile a quarter pf a mile below. He a..they seen you while you went to well draw water ^{25:30}

Ferraro: You were definately afraid for your lives?

Ronce: Well yeah, a naturally anybody would. You you can't tell em a shooting all around you. You you didn't know what what a minute you were going a get shot. You just take a chances.

Ferraro: Ok, one more time, tell me about a what happened when a about the story about trying to a feed your hog.

Ronce: Well, a I happened go down and a I had the nerve to go down and them to feed my hog, but if I had, I guess I'd a got shot, but a my wife and sister said no, said a you you won't go said I'll go, said they come nearer killing you than they would me and said I'll I'll take the chances and they went down and they shot at them and went on the porch. They shot a broom handle into and they shot the house roof all to pieces. It had to be patched and a they finally turned that hog out. I had them to go turn the hog out - what had them do you see and they shot the hog. Never killed it but they crippled it...and a they a oh studied and wondered how they was going get back and they thought of a getting a pillow case you see and put it on a curtain rod. A a curtain rod you know, putting it on a pillow slip on a curtain rod pole - a curtain rod and a they was safe that way. They held it up you know and when they said it wasn't a if it hadn't been for that they'd a got shot - they'd a shot them. Well, they did shoot everything that moved you know and naturally would and they was afraid of me a going in you know - going down.

personal experience during the fighting

28:00

28:30

29:00

Ferraro: Ok.

Ronce: What did you say?

Ferraro: No, you were going to say something.

Ronce: I say a at about all I can remember about anything as far as I know.

Ferraro: That's good. Well that it. Thank you. It was a good interview.

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