

INTERVIEW WITH LOIS McCLEAN

Ferraro: Can you trace a give me some of the high lights of the early life of Mother Jones?

Lois: Well, now Dave you know that she celebrated her one hundred birthday but she was actually was only ninety three when she died. So probably if you would tell me if you want from her childhood or womanhood or single life or when she really got known as a lie labor agitator then maybe I can come up with some of the stories.

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Ferraro: Why don't you just a take me briefly through her entire life.

Lois: Well, alright since you put it that way. We're back where we started from. Mother Jones was born in Ireland in the city of Cork. A she says in 1830 and never gave her birth date and so she and she lived in Cork City from 1837 until 1850 and this was a very turbulent and tragic time in Irish history. She grew up in an era of Ireland's greatest political agitator, Daniel O'Connell who led the Irish Catholic struggle for immancipation before that on the basic of religion they were bared from different things. Another interesting agitator who came from Cork City when she was growing up was Father Peuball Mathew. He was a great temperence crusador. Howard, he didn't have much luck in converting the members of the Harris Family which was Mother Jones' maiden name. She nor her brother nor her father I believe subscribed to the total abstinence league at any time in their lives and the family was poor. The record, census records show that both her parents were illeterate. She had two brothers and two sisters. She was the oldest daughter and they were probably tenants of some English or Anglo Irish family. It's hard to say what the background was. Possibly

her father could have been in the military. She claimed that one time she was the darling of his regiment and a so this was a she was a second child and the oldest girl. She had an older brother and then Mary Harris and then two sisters and a younger brother and she claims that a and then in forty five to the eightys there was the potato famine in Ireland where a million people died from hunger and fever and it was almost miraculous that those that survived did. So she showed a strong physical survival factor to have gone through that and lived through it according to my research she came to the United States in 1850 and she her father had preceded the family and a again this was a dangerous thing. There were thousand and thousands died in the crossing from Ireland to this country and of course there was much prejudice against Irish against Irish both nationally and on the basis on the religion and her father was a railroad construction laboror and the living conditions and treatment of the Irish was not exactly benevolent in this country. They weren't welcome but in spite of the poverty and the father moved from one job as the railroads were built and this was from New England into Canada. Then the family settled in Toronto, Canada and a she was an intellegent girl because in Toronto she enrolled in the teacher school. Toronto normal school and again I think was one of the first a Catholics accepted in that. A this was a very strong English as opposed to the French section of Canada and anyway what she studied there for two years and when she enrolled it said she had previous experiances at teacher. So this would have been her background. In some stories she said that she went to the House of Parlament and watched the politicians but the Irish were very politically aware having lived through the period of Daniel O'Connell and knew the value of the vote and after they made such good use of it they mainly passed laws requiring longer years a before you could become a naturalized citizen and could vote so that was another thing but she really was rezilliant and how she got from one era from one era to another, I don't

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know. She went from Toronto, Canada. She shows up in Monroe, Michigan. She taught in a convent school there. Didn't like teaching but was trained as a seamstress and so she was familiar with she was lived and worked and knew poor working class conditions and identified with them plus as we were saying earlier she was very class conscious because of the environment in which she grew. The poor were slaves or serfs really. They had a every-thing was at the whim of the rich land owner and a they had little input or there was no democracy. It was just beginning to come along in Ireland and a but they were quick to take advantage of it in this country and so she again went in then she ends she comes into Chicago as a seamstress. Well, there was a pattern of migration out of Canada into the United States and other members of her family ended there to but how she got to Memphis, Tennessee which is where she said she went and I found evidence that she was there and she met and married an iron molder. Well, this was the beginning days of a national union organizations as in the iron molders were among the first national unions and a her husband was an iron molder and she says they had four children. There's evidence of at least one but Memphis was plagued by yellow fever. She doesn't mention anything about the Civil War but she does mention a again she became familiar with the principals American Trade Unionism through her husband and a so then after the husband and the children were killed in epidemic she went back north to Chicago where members of her family and a strong Irish settlement were and I think she gradually she again went back to sewing. She had had business herself and again was wiped out in the Chicago fire and no possessions and no records and went to California after the there was a mass movement out of Chicago with the depression in those days. So she went to California and there probably she said she first became aware of the labor movement and this was under another Irish man a Dennis Curney. It was called the Sandlot Movement in California and it was a strongly flavored anti-

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Chinese movement too but the outgrowth was working mans party and Curneys party won the elections in California and they rewrote the California Constitution. So again you have her <sup>9:30</sup> politically active person moving still primarily within an Irish group and then she got back to Chicago again. She just moved and moved and that's one of the difficulties in tracking her down is that she never had a permanent address. She said her address was like her shoes, it traveled with her and a she just hopped skipped and jumped all around but she through the Knights of Labor and then she got into and <sup>10:00</sup> she was always a political activist - third part movement. She went with the populists party. They were protesting against unemployment jobs for the unemployed. This was in the 1890's and then you had the a railroad strikes. So I would say that her first movement would have been among the railroad <sup>10:30</sup> unions and with Eugene Debbs and prior after the Knights of Labor because Knights of Labor rose and fell in about ten years strongly. So she would she was an organizer and an agitator. She claims that the Knights of Labor and she got I feel into the <sup>11:00</sup> miners in 1894 or even a little later because the railroaders were alot of em you know the use of coal and transportation and heating homes and all that. So a she road the rails which she was familiar with railroad construction and the Irish dominated the the rails as far as the jobs went and so she became familiar with the miners and there were alot of those who were Irish <sup>11:30</sup> imigrants and a she sort of in 1897 when she was very closely associated with Eugene Debbs is she ended up in the strike in Pittsburg. This was the first national bituminous strike and a and in <sup>12:00</sup> that one is where she became nationally famous. She already had a reputation in the south and in the west and the midwest as be an ardent advocate for a trade unions and labor organizations and political action but it was in the 1897 she showed her various techniques as a leader and how successful she was with em and first they booked her as a one the <sup>12:30</sup> major speak speachers orders at one of the rallies for the a miners in Pittsburg and it was impressive.

It was also an election year and a but the thing that made the people the working people and the miners and their families love her is when she got up to address the crowd she didn't say my dear friends or Mr. Debb and so on and so on so she just opened it up with fellow slaves indicating that that she had been in the work force. She was old. She knew what they were going through and this was their position as far as she was concerned and it had also been hers. So see this would immediately establish some sort of repor with her audience. Plus she had an unusual voice and one speech it said somebody reported that her voice and this was before micro-phones and amplifiers. She could her voice would carry two hundred yards. Anybody within two hundred yards because part of the intertainment those days for politicians in any were these up open air meetings and a some people said she had a course voice that sounded like a man and others said that it was an unusual voice which she could pitch it high or low and a she had tremendous range seems like an actress in how she could control her voice and she could make really immotional appeals and have people on the point of tears or weeping and then immediately come up with a joke and have em laughing. Had tremendous impact on whomever she was speaking. So that was prime and they primarily used her to and then they wanted her to speak to the women. They felt that she would if the women would back the men and there were mines again working. They would refuse to come out on strike, so her rule was to appeal to the women and she would do this at public meetings and saying that this is your fight as much as theirs and a....then she would also meet em individually. Go to their homes and a just was immediately at home in any situation. She wasn't some of em were very neat clean people. The poor ones, the foreign elements who had less and lived terribly. A they were all the same to her...so that was really how she became and then she met the up and coming leadership of the UMW and so then that she still kept on with her other political activity and then she went

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to Pennsylvania in 1899 and was called in by a district leader to save the strike. The men had been on strike and they were all set to give up. They had gone on. There were losing what they wanted and it was important for this district leader that he not lose face or lose the strike cause they would again lose their union and so she gives the jazzed up version in her book about how she caught the train and traveled by night and was met by a buggy and had a wild race over the mountains to this little town in northern, north central Pennsylvania. Well, they found an account of it later by a man who had been there and said the people had gathered in this bowl and they were all discouraged and felt they weren't going to win anything at all and so she comes in and she just had such enthusiasm and a way of kindling peoples enthusiasm and in this particular case this is another technique she had and she said for the men to stay home and for the women to meet her the next morning near the mine which the men were going to reopen and so the women showed up and this is where she told them to bring their pots and pans and rolling pins and brooms and noise makers and they would have been there before dawn and then as the men started to come in why the women just made this awful clatter and the mules were scared and Mother Jones' story was that even the mules ran away because they weren't going to scab in the mines that day but a and then the strike was won. It held on and she would travel and in different nearby towns she contacted farmers and she would beg, borrow and not steal but people would she would present the miners side of the strike and create sympathy and then these people would allow the miners credit. Would a donate food. She went to other sections in Pennsylvania collected funds and this money went into a strike fund and maintenance fund plus she had introduced an element of fun in a strike. The parades. In one strike she found the biggest fat miners wife she could find and this one carried a sign sixty nine cents or bust. Well, of course the woman was built like a tank

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and she was carrying this signs with this was a commic element and this one they marched. They had a brass band and their favorite song during this strike was Marching through Georgia or John Browns Body and a but it created a tightly knit group who eventually won and this was part of her secret plus the support but she would she had a pound party and then she had special activity. A she went to maybe unionized plants away from the area. These people all marched in carrying food and they would have a big all day picnic and rally and a so that was part of her secret. This again was why and she had gone through this again in Pennsylvania in Anthrisite strike. That was a remarkable strike and this was where she became inter-nationally famous. So that left West Virginia in the non-union field and a we better stop because I think maybe we might be getting one sided. Don't you?

Ferraro: Oh, I don't know about that.

Lois: Cause I don't know how much time that you wanted and I don't want to...

Ferraro: Well, I you were doing real well. My next question is going to be a describe the role in the Paint Creek a Cabin Creek strike. Well, you've answered about six of my questions already but just lets go ahead with that then.

Lois: Well, I want to go with this 1901-1902 three strike because the leaders in the 1912 strike and I'd like a cigarette and I don't know whether anyone smoke. Alright, I'll go without. It's part of my health program anyway. I just feel I'm talking and being real dull and I it's getting too serious you know. We got to have a little fin in it too. Alright now where did we cut off? It was...

Ferraro: 190 the early 1900's strike.

Lois: Ok, this was the. Alright, the 1900 strike was when she became inter-  
nationally famous and this was a six week strike and the anthrisite fields  
in Pennsylvania. It was here that she met John Mitchell who was the young  
fairly new president of the United Mine Workers. Her district president  
whom she had saved this strike for was William Wilson who was now secretary  
treasurer of the the UMW. A the men that she had worked with in the 1897  
strike were international board members of the United Mine Workers. A there  
was a man from Alabama whom she had met. A she had all these contacts.  
These were all young men. Young you know rising leaders and she had been  
affective in making them look good and helping you know win strikes in which  
they were involved which lead to a Wilson eventually became the first  
secretary of labor and a he also went into politics too but because of her  
success in Pennsylvania and out of these strikes the United Mine Workers  
control of miners organizations was Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois.  
Those were the four crutial states. They called em the central competative  
field. A West Virginia's coal was really starting to boom in the 1890's  
and this it was competative to both Pennsylvania and Ohio. So when these  
operators signed contracts with the union there were putting pressure on the  
UMA to organize West Virginia because they were under selling em and stealing  
their markets and they opposed a threat to the whole structure that they had  
negotiated with the union and so they needed somebody unusual because other  
organizers they had sent in here were beaten up. A Mitchell himself was  
sent in 1898 and a he was a an attractive looking man an esethitic man and he  
was polite, soft spoken and his ideas that he would call on the operators  
as one gentlemen to another but he found out as he sat in many an office  
waiting to get in that they weren't going to let him in and he could forget  
about that so they sent Mother Jones in. I think one of the interesting



things was Mother Jones never approached the operators. She went directly to the miners and she was in here for about two weeks and she and she was by this time a <sup>24.30</sup> sixty six over past sixty. Thirty seven. She's almost sixty five years old and again the area that she was to organize was the Kanawah New River field. Now there had been strong Knights of Labor organizations in that area in the 19 in the 1880's and even till the a Knights of Labor <sup>25.00</sup> broke with the UMW in 1894. So you'd had a nucleus of an organization there and fairly effective one but it had in 1890 strike it had not worked and now once again they were trying to rebuild an organization and make them all in United Mine Workers and a so she came in and the other they sent organizers from the other organized states and a one man <sup>25.30</sup> wrote to the UMW and hailed Mother Jones as the new force that had entered the organizing campaign in West Virginia. So here was this old lady sixty five years old. She always dressed in a two piece black outfit. They called the top bask and skirt is the I guess is the proper way of saying it and a former seamstress. She made her own clothes and a <sup>26.00</sup> the style remained the same from like the 1880's or 1890's but the trans so she was covering the and she was very smart because male organizers had been beaten up by mine guards, knocked in the rivers and just marched to town with the gun and said get on the train and head west and it's they weren't afraid to do that with her because there was still <sup>26.30</sup> respect for old age you know and women and all that and a ...so she that was their technique. Well, she just came in and she had one meeting and she would announce the meeting. Well, she would have to travel by train and then if there was a you know and then walk and the New River especially you know you would <sup>27.00</sup> either ride up the hill or come down it. There fifty some mines located on the New River and the only means of reaching these would be along the a the train along the railroad tracks and the company was a the land was owned by the operators and so they would have guards at the stations seeing who got in and who got off. Well, in her first

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summer here, she invited a New York City woman reporter with her which was and of course this was there were two women traveling together. It was an added protection plus the reporter was identified so this was a measure of safety for em that they were fairly safe because of the publicity surrounding the trip, but the two of em...

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Ferraro: You want to get that?

Lois: I'm hooked up. Just who is it?

Ferraro: She was traveling with another woman.

Lois: This woman reporter

Ferraro: You ready to roll? Ok, go ahead.

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Lois: And so the reporter wrote this thing up and it was an interesting trip. She said they traveled from Quinawant on the New River to Raymond City covering the whole territory that Mother Jones was to organize and a there were several funny incidents. They came to south Caperton and a they wanted to cross the New River and the a they operated by ferry boat but the ferry boat operator <sup>29:00</sup> refused to transport em across the river. He was in the pay of the company and Mother Jones says even they these coal operators don't own the river. God owns the river but they still didn't get across. Some of em had watch dogs and a on this trip in order to to a throw off the dogs she claims that she had a butchers bone in her purse and when the dogs came, she'd throw em a bone and the dog would go off and bug off and leave em alone <sup>29:30</sup> and then with the reporter they were stopped by a probably a deputy sheriff whether he was a mine guard or deputized by the company, it didn't say, but

he said that they wouldn't be allowed to hold the meeting and that there was an injunction against them and Mother Jones questioned the injunction. She says well, alright says I want to see a paper first. She says you go get me <sup>30:00</sup> that paper and I'll just wait right here. Well, the man took off and they sat, she sat on the railroad track and the reporter with her and of course the man didn't come back and she went on and held her meeting and at one of the stops, she and this woman, this reporter describes in detail about the two of em were given overnight shelter in one of these mining camps and the reporter describes <sup>30:30</sup> Mother Jones silver hair in the moonlight, sleeping on the floor and using her purse for a pillow and what a noble person she was but the crux of it, still the miner family that gave em shelter were evicted from their house the next day because she was an unwelcomed guest and they had signed a lease with the company and the company had control over who they considered welcome or unwelcome <sup>31:00</sup> into their company property and of course this you see immediately led people to join the union and another interesting thing there was along the New River almost some of the camps would be all white miners or in the next camp would hire primarily black miners and one of the traits of Mother Jones was this color-blindness of hers <sup>31:30</sup> and this was the message she gave in Pennsylvania among foreigners. You're not Polish, you're not Irish, you're not Slov American, your miners first. You're brothers in the job and in this same way with the blacks and the whites on the New River is that you are brothers and they were and whether they had they had some separate called em called em <sup>32:00</sup> colored locals. They some separate ones but anyway it was extremely effective. There were about fifteen thousand men working in the Kanawha and New River field and the strike, the operators refused to meet with them. The strike began in June 1902 and a the shut down in the New River field, Kanawha and New River field was probably eighty to ninety percent effective and then in the <sup>32:30</sup> northern field the Fairmont field it was not nearly as

as effective and had been hard getting the union in there. So they sent Mother Jones to the Fairmont field and her it was that they they went to the court and had the federal injunction and they were barred from speaking and a this is again where Mother Jones was arrested and a and she protested it because she says <sup>33:00</sup> they had, they had rent the property. It wasn't company property and they had the right to speak on land that they had rented, excuse me, but they were arrested anyway and she was among em and a in a papers and the letters that she wrote she said you know here she was and a she wrote letters to her friends and they were later published in the social list and <sup>33:30</sup> labor newspapers and the return address was the Parkersburg jail...West Virginia or then in the 1913, 12, 13 strike she her return address was the Military Bastille, Prat, West Virginia. She just made great use of this. She knew how to get the play the misgotten, mistreated little old lady and <sup>34:00</sup> on that occasion she was arrested at the school house, taken back to Clarksburg and stayed in her boarding house and then was transported by train to Parkersburg where the hearing was set and she tried a to convert the escorting officer to her ideas of social democracy and union along the way but I don't think he bought it and then when she got there he offered to <sup>34:30</sup> book her in to the hotel and she says no that she was just as guilty as the boys and she insisted that he take her to jail. Well, they didn't put her in a cell. She stayed with the the jailer at a apartment in the jail house. So she stayed in the....

Ferraro: Now we're ready.

Lois: <sup>35:00</sup> So the upshot of this arrest in the Fairmont field was nationally publicity on this little old lady being arrested as being an agitator and Mother Jones being the actress she was played it to the hilt. The hearing was several weeks later and a mean while she had gone to Indianapolis. She had been

interviewed by reporters there and a somebody well, what about all these injunctions. She says well, they've got an injunctions on me. Says the only place where I can go with an out injunction is straight up to heaven and a she says I've got so many injunctions in my purse she says, but I'm saving them cause I'm gonna make my shroud out of em some day and a so of course the the courtroom scene was real dramatic and a she confronts this Judge Jackson whom she accused of being a scab because she said he got the job that was intended by his father and he assured her that he was not a scab and a she came off of it very well and he gave her this little lecture about here she was obviously an intellegent and nice person and why in the world was she doing this kind of work and was associating with these rough characters and he thought she could find a much more refined type of work, but she said no that she liked what she was doing and she would continue doing it until she died and a so he didn't sentence her. He said he wasn't going to make her a marter but he sentenced the a other organizers and especially the out of state ones and a she reports this in her book too and a but it was true is that after the trial and I'd found verification of this she she went, she called on Judge Jackson at his home and in this instance she pleaded for mercy for this man Barney Rice from the a 1900 strike or 1899 strike in North Central Pennsylvania. She said he had a heart condition and a his wife was terribly upset and he had all these children and would he please release Barney. So a the judge she reports called the jail and asked for Barney Rice and asked him about his heart condition and Barney is cussing the whole time and saying there is nothing wrong with my damned heart. It's that damned old judge that put me in jail and all this stuff. and a when he repeated what Barney said to him why Mother Jones assured him that cussing was the working mans way of praying that they got better results that way than if they used fine language and a so he agreed that Barney would Barney was released and but in the little blurb in the newspaper it

said that Mother Jones stayed for dinner and when she made a great friend of Mrs. Jackson and the two women had a little week together before she she left the house. How the reporter knew that I don't know but it made a very good story. So Mother Jones was <sup>38:30</sup> extremely newsworthy but she didn't leave the state even then though Jackson threatened her. She went to the southern Federal Judicial District and there the strike continued on and it was in this strike that you have the elements for the beginning of the mine wars in West Virginia because it was on the New River that they introduced the Boldenfelts thugs. The a Major Thames who started in the coal business on the New River <sup>39:00</sup> reported that a when the strike was declared that the operators on the New River agreed that they would just close down their mines. They wouldn't try to operate. A the exception was an operator named Justice Collins and so although he said that he would go along with them the next day, he had imported three or four dozen Boldenfelts <sup>39:30</sup> guards from the Boldenfelts felts detective agency and these men arrived by train with machine guns. They installed search lights around Collins works and his mines continued to operate. He established his own coal agency and while the other mines were closed down he was getting twice the price for his coal that he had before the strike. Eventually the operators bought him off and so he came into the Beckley <sup>40:00</sup> area but these were this was the introduction of mine guard system and this strike continued and then near Beckley her at Stanaford City the miners had marched from the New River over here to close a mine down and they had had to rally here and it's east Beckley now and the a federal marshall had come to serve injunction papers on the miners and strikers that had come to the <sup>40:30</sup> meeting and instead the men disarmed the marshall and sort of rode him out of camp which aggravated him and so he went and got more deputies. So they had this predawn raid out at Stanaford City. You can see it now it is an unincorporated little area but they came up from the railroad tracks on Piney Creek in a predawn raid and they just fired into

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this miners camp and I have interviewed several the people that lived at Stanaford City and a the one man who lost a leg as a result of that but there were seven killed and then two died later but this really and these guards also were responsible for the eviction of the miners on the New River, excuse me, One man that later became an arden socialist and a UMW activist family was evicted. The man had scarlet fever and so there was just hatred from these mine guards and Mother Jones shared it to. A another case a....of the mine guards, another man from the New River Mother Jones was having a meeting and the guards shot into the meeting and this man was a little man anyway but he says he carried Mother Jones across Arbuckle Creek and out of gun fire and she was a good size woman and I kept thinking my goodness it must have been a heavy load fellow. A but you made it but he really became a radical organizer for the UMW and again a socialist which Mother Jones was too. So that was the basis for this mine war. These men on the New River were blacklisted. Their families were evicted and so they moved into the union fields on a Paint and Cabin Creek. They were Cabin Creek was just starting to develop and a they were extending operations on Paint Creek. So this this introduction of the mine mine guard system was really bad and Mother Jones left West Virginia after that. She felt she had done all she could. She was tired of it. They was fractionalism between the UMW leadership, Mitchell and Tom Lewis and a so then she buzzed off all around the country. She went west again. She was active with the Western Federation of Miners. Still lecture for the socialists party and was called upon to give speeches here and there and everywhere and help with organizing for all different unions and a then in 1912 she heard about the strike and a many people think that Mother Jones sort of invited herself in. Just came in and was a trouble maker and liked to come and stir up things. Well, in most cases the things were already furmenting and one woman on Cabin Creek said well, the men all knew the thing that Mother Jones was telling them was

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 wrong. That's why they were agitated but she added a cohesive element and  
 a was able to unit those that couldn't see it that way and again when she  
 came in 1912 she acts like she just heard about it and put all her things in  
 her shawl and headed for West Virginia but in tracing her steps she very  
 astutely stopped off in Kansas. A had several interviews along the way so  
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 that her coming was not a great surprise plus again there would be reporters  
 following her to see what she was doing and I think most of this are familiar  
 with Paint and Cabin Creek strike and she really was responsible for pulling  
 out the miners in Cabin Creek but she said for them to organize and then  
 strike.

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 Ferraro: Stop for a second.

Lois: Now the garbage men. Yeah.

Ferraro: Yeah. Alright Lois once again lets talk about Mother Jones and her in-  
 volvement in Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strike.

Lois: Well, I have talked to alot of people and some of em were young a...the a  
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 widow of . This is the man who was killed when the Bull Moose  
 train shot up Holly Grove. Well, I interviewed her daughter or she was the  
 daughter that was born to her mother was pregnant when Sesco was killed.  
 They had one child two or three years old and then the mother was seven months  
 pregnant and a...so she befriended this widow because there was no compen-  
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 sation anything and a in talking about her Mother Francis Estep. Said that  
 her mother prize possession one was a picture of Mother Jones and another was  
 a purse of Mother Jones' that a Mother Jones had come to see her. I feel sure  
 that she's the one that had the studio portrait made of Mrs. Estep with the  
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 baby. She was attractive woman all dressed in black and had a veil on there



widow and then here was the innocent baby and the purse. I'm sure her having the purse reflects this generosity of Mother Jones. She always had candy or coins for the little kids and a she would go into a home. She was paid as an organizer but it said later that they the miners loved her for was her generosity. <sup>47:00</sup> That when she went into a home she would take care a or help soothe the baby or she was a sympathetic listener to the womans problems and a that always she had the open purse and it was she who would go into Pennsylvania and request shoes for em and a she just was a bright spot in their lives. This a one man later the family were living in a tent at Holly Grove too <sup>47:30</sup> and he said they were singing one night. The mother had gathered the children around while they were in the tent and a and a they were singing. What was the name of that song? Cling to the Rock and this man in this interview was singing. He says mother would say Cling to the Rock and lee would echo and as they were singing Cling to the Rock here was this loud ping and it was <sup>48:00</sup> a bullet fired into the tent and it hit the tin pan in there and they just kept on singing. It was just a pause and another beat in the thing but this man again was the one that refused to go further on the march on Logan because he remembered Mothers kindness and efforts and supplies and things she had done for them in that 1912-13 strike and alot of the and you know people are always <sup>48:30</sup> talking about Mothers language and I I never been able to really find out how much she cursed or how vulgar she was because alot of those that I had interviewed were children at the time and anything that was really bad was what they as children shouldn't have said or even heard and a so whether it was more than damn and hell or a <sup>49:00</sup> and then the children weren't encouraged to go to the meetings but she refused and cussed at the miners. A she was probably a typical working class mother. You know you lazy bums, why don't you do something about this. Stand up for your rights. It's like your children are being picked on by neighborhood bully and unless you stake out your turf and claim and fight for it then

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 you're going to loose it and this I felt was the way she spoke to the miners. They got a kick out of it. There's this woman said they enjoyed this a it wasn't the socialist tender. I'll take care of everything for you darling. It was get out there and do it yourself. Now that's the way I've trained you and that's the way your supposed to be.

Ferraro: What did the miners think of her?

Lois: Most of em loved her and they teased her and I was talking to a man. She makes, I never forgot on Cabin Creek when she was going to a meeting and a this one miner, I think he was working at Caper, wanted Mother Jones to come into his house for a cup of tea. Well, the mine guard said no she could not come. She couldn;t be on company property and they were going on to a meeting or they had had the meeting. So Mother Jones 50:00 just got in the creek bed and walked. Now I don't know how deep the water was but this man I talked to later said that the miners kidded her about that. Siad they really made you take a hot bath that day Mother, you know and then she'd get mad and cuss the guard and the'y just laugh. They thought she was cute and entertaining and and she got fiesty when she was older even, I think there's probably a little a rasibility of old age 51:00 1917-1918 and a this one woman in Whitesville, West Virignia told about a there was a strike on there the end the company was transporting scabs in and a this woman remembered seeing Mother at the train station and there was a man who persisted in working and 51:30 a this woman said Mother Jones would just crack her fists. She'd go right up to that man and she'd go you scab you scab and then she had miners on either side of her and they'd say now Mother you know and try to lead her away because they really didn't want an incident but this woman faded and all of em said she was not afraid of anything or anyone. She really was 52:00 fearless and then admired that and she could she obviously spoke rough and

then another man said that when she came into a a coal camp and the women were talking why he would she would she says alright you damn cats, now cut out the noise and listen to me and a then I said well, that's pretty strong way to address people if you want an audience and he said well, you know <sup>52:30</sup> life in the camps was rough. People talked that way. She got their attention. He said only one time that the wife of an operatro was attending a speach a and Mother Jones always threw in some anecdote or some bit of homor and a it struck the coal operators wife as funny and so she was laughing and Mother <sup>53:00</sup> Jones spotted her in the audience and said what's that cat laughing at. Well, this upset her organizer friend because the lady was a nice, well educated and had been very sympathetic to the miners cause and he says now Mother now Mother. Well, he took the woman around and introduced Mother and says, now <sup>53:30</sup> Mother I think you owe her an apology and so Mother Jones apologized and then he said they became very good friends. She had found another ally and the women would frequently get together if she was in the area. So again you have this relationship with different type people.

Ferraro: Was Mother Jones more a symbol to the miners or did she actually help straighten, shape the stradegy of the strike?

Lois: I think in earlier times but primarily she was the one to stir em up and that really in <sup>54:00</sup> 1901 and there after her to create dissatisfaction enough of it. There were dissatisfied to offer them the hope. This was A Mitchells policy in 1901 to really make the miners aware of how poor their conditions were so they'd be dissatisfied or and then could explore unite to overcome their dissatisfaction but I think she was she was symbolic <sup>54:30</sup> you know it's they all admire her. Arnold Miller said that she was a fighter. This is what he admired about her. George Tetler said she was the greatest organizers the UMW ever had. Just her manners, speech and how she could convince things.

Ferraro: Lets go back to a what you were talking about. The the a miners women.  
What did they think of Mother Jones?

Lois: Well, the ones that I talked to and some of em were young girls at the  
time <sup>55:00</sup> and a there was a but most of em said that you know they just loved  
her. They just loved that old woman and she was intertaining company.  
They led quite lives. A this one woman who lived in Blair, Mother Jones  
spent three days with them and this was before the march on Logan. Lady  
thought was 1918. It could have been <sup>55:30</sup> 1919 and that Mother Jones came and  
spent three days with them in their home and a the lady's now she's eighty-  
nine or ninety now and her son is in his seventies. He's retired so she  
said that Mother Jones stayed with them for three days. Well, the son  
when I interviewed his said yes, but the reason Mother Jones came to their  
<sup>56:00</sup> house was that they were the only miners home in Blair that had electricity  
plus they had their family had the nicest furniture and Mother Jones insisted  
on staying with the miners family and a this man come and he says the last  
thing my mother wanted was Mother Jones staying with us but after she moved  
in this woman said that she was a <sup>56:30</sup> intertaining. They'd loved having her.  
It generated excitement for them cause there were people coming to see her  
all the time. A she obviously gave a speech in the area. The bands came  
and there were five thousand people and they all wanted to come by and see  
Mother Jones and this woman. Mother Jones liked her fryed chicken and her  
stack cake which is a West Virginia dish which I have never tasted and a so  
<sup>57:00</sup>  
then she said she was the nicest old person that she cussed terribly when she  
was talking to the miners and this woman says that she knew I was a Christian  
woman and she never used any she never did any cussing around me.

Ferraro: Take us to Mother Jones' involvement with the march on Logan including the a  
telegram.

Lois: Well, it's funny. Mother Jones is ready march on there herself and a well when the confrontation came in 21 then Mother Jones was opposed to it. A I've talked to a one man and it's interesting that somebody came into their camp and a got em all excited and somebody at the meeting made a motion that the local pay the mens transportation and they were all going to go join<sup>58:00</sup> the men Marmett and he remembered Mother Jones speaking from the back of the truck and she was opposed to this march. Says you don't have a chance. They'll bring the army in turn around and go home. You got contracts. You should honor your contracts and then he said that they went they went to Montgomery and they were going to rob a hardware store for guns and that a man with them was killed.<sup>58:30</sup> Somebody spotted them and so they left the body on the door on the porch of the undertakers parlor. I don't know whether the man was ever identified. He didn't give me the mans name and after that incident this man said they went back home that this Mother Jones was right and they probably and then alot of em and then after thought said you know we should have listened to Mother Jones.<sup>59:00</sup> She told us not to go and she really tried to warn em. I think we were discussing earlier this alleged telegram was it from President Harding at the time and a she said that she had this telegram from President Harding. Well, it's interesting. She was friendly with Harding because there are pictures of her taken with Teddy Roosevelt Jr. and President and Mrs. Harding in front of the White House and a but she said that this this telegram said that there would be federal troops coming in. Well, they had had federal troops and I think it was a bluff. She you know the story of where she confronted the machine the guard with the machine gun and marched by it and said they were five hundred miners on the hill side. If you try to stop me and marched on by the machine gun. This is the same type of thing she pulled and I never did understand why they thought it was she was being deceitful or anything. She'd a but it was a question leadership. She was getting old and a I think Frank Keeney

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said that a Mother had lost her fighting spirit. Well, she was a schrud  
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 campaigner and part of it was she knew when to make a move and when not  
 to make a move and she was right. This was not the time to confront the  
 federal troops and have people killed. I don't know how many were killed.  
 No one does but it's a sense a timing that she had which made her an  
 exceptional leader. This was very well demonstrated in the Anthrisite  
 Strike in 1900.

1:01:00  
 Ferraro: One more time very briefly I want you to just give me a statement of what  
 do you think her motivation was for a for fabricating the telegram in Harding?

Lois: Well, the the obvious prupose was to a sway the miners to not make the march.

Ferraro: Why?

Lois: Well, because she knew they would be killed. It would ruin the union and  
 she had spent twenty years trying to build the union and had been very  
 1:01:30  
 successful back again in Fairmont and this section of the state she had  
 really helped organize Mingo County and a it was going to be a loosing battle  
 cause it was going to be in plus it was dangerous you know physically. You'll  
 be killed.

Ferraro: What was Mother Jones' attitude toward mine guards?

Lois: Well, if I used the language she did well, I just don't do that. A there  
 1:02:00  
 was one story and a this was a mine guard on Cabin Creek and this old man I  
 interviewed told the story and the a mine guard was evicting this family  
 and Mother Jones was there. Mother Jones called him a redneck son of a bitch  
 1:02:30  
 cause he was and a this a other fellow that was interviewing with us said

why did she call him that. He says well, he was and that was just they were the slum of the earth and a plus they were violating peoples constitutional rights you know. Immigrants have a stronger sence of the advantages and responsibilities of citizenship as we see in many of the elections now. <sup>1:03:00</sup> A what your constitutional rights are freedom of speech. Freedom of essembly and miners rights constitutional rights were terribly abused. The operator was as one called himself the high sheriff. He was the law on his property and that's not that all of em were bad in their relations with their miners were you know Simon the Greed of the slaves but a they were in absolute control and <sup>1:03:30</sup> that's what they wanted.

Ferraro: What do you think was Mother Jones' overall impact or influence on the labor movement?

Lois: Well, probably symbolic. A she was a pioneer. She was Debbs called her a front line fighter and a she was an intelectual although she was intellegent. <sup>1:04:00</sup> She was a physically active person and I think hers would be an indirect incluce. A you can read her correspondence. A one man was debating about running for a office for the President of the UMW challenging the thing and he didn't he wanted to get her opinion first if she knew whether he would have a good chance to oppose this man and win. <sup>1:04:30</sup> The man was popular and a and then when a men were running for political office they would want Mother Jones to come in. Well, this Watson from Fairmont wanted Mother Jones' indorsement from her <sup>1:05:00</sup> because the miners respected her opinion. She was experienced. She was knowledgeable. They knew that and so would be an indirect thing and you know it's hard to evaluate that. A word said here and a word said there. People move one way and not another.

Ferraro: How did she die? When she died what kind of reaction was there from the union people?

1:05:30

Lois: Well, of course by then she had backed the reorganized the United Mine Workers. She had gone with the splinter group and a...but there was just a sense of tremendous loss. Like you've lost a love beloved parent and I'm not necessarily a parent. She was a famous person but she was loved and that was by the common man you know. There were two funeral services. One in DC a Department of Labor. <sup>1:06:00</sup> All these officials came a this was again at her hundredth party. It was a wide segment of the population. A there were thirty thousand attended the funeral at Mount Olive, Illinois and the one in DC area. The train followed Lincolns route you know to a St. Louis to guard the body because they were afraid somebody was going to steal it. <sup>1:06:30</sup> She was buried in the progressive miners cemetary. It wasn't the UMW's and a you see in the the and the ones that were in Illinois that were fighting John L. Lewis you see were the main speakers at this but she was extremely a beloved in Chicago. <sup>1:07:00</sup> The Chicago Federation of Labor and then in the National AFL, William Green had been secretary of threasuer for the UMW was replaced Gompers. She didn't like Gompers. She called him Sammy. She didn't like him at all. I don't know why. She didn't like his type of craft unionism you know.

Ferraro: Tell me about your favorite Mother Jones anecdote.

Lois: <sup>1:07:30</sup> Oh Lord, you better shut that thing off while I think.

Ferraro:

Lois: Oh alright, lets go.

Ferraro: <sup>1:08:00</sup> Alright lets go to one more tape. Stop. Ok, Lois tell me one or two of your favorite Mother Jones anecdote.



Lois: Well, I think one of them and this is she I told you she was politically active and vital interest in politics and this was again 1897 when she was campaigning for Debb New Social Democracy and a she wanted the men to think carefully about who they voted for. She says and she warned em against politicians. She says they hug you better than your wives before elections but after the elections all we have is your wife and then a I think another favorite anecdote is the one Mother Jones was organizing the Mingo County and she recruited this young girl to go with her and the girl really didn't want to go. She says oh Ms. Jones I'm afraid to go with you. She says I might get killed. She says oh no this isn't going to be much and so they, Mother Jones came up to get her and she was driving a cart or a farm wagon with the pony or a horse and Mother Jones was dressed in coveralls and she had a mans hat on and overalls and a so she persuaded this young woman to come with us and they went to this meeting in the woods and there were alot of miners gathering around and a they got out of the wagon and a Mother Jones said wait a minute and she reached underneath the wagon seat and she pulled out this club and the woman said it looked like a baseball bat but wasn't as long and I said Mother Jones what are you going to do with that and she says you ought to know what I'm going to do with that. If anybody bothers you or me. Come on. So they went into the meeting and she said Mother Jones climbed upon the stump. She was short probably 5' - 5'2" and heavy set. As another woman said she had plenty of meat on her and a.....

Ferraro: Stop.

Lois: Yeah (pause) so they walked into this clearing in the woods and Mother Jones climbed upon the stump and pulled this girl up on a log beside her and she started speaking to the miners and this woman recalled she said my I never heard such language in my life. She says it was worse than a drunk mans.

She says and all at once there was a ping and a bullet went right between our heads and I says come on sister I'm getting out of here. I says well, what did Mother Jones do? Nary a thing. She just stood there and she laughed and she looked at those men and says well you SOB you can shoot again. You missed me that time and she says and the men they just laughed. She says they really got tickled and Mother Jones said well they're just laughing cause this bullet didn't catch me between the eyes but she said Mother knew I was scared and she says alright we'll get out of here. I just want to say these last words and then she gives this little speech with this woman had with almost miraculous recall the inflection of the voice and she says you dirty lowdown SOB's you know your doing wrong. Sit down and think about where you are and what you've got. She says I'll bet half of you didn't have breakfast this morning. You don't have any money. She says you go home tonight from this meeting and you sit down and you right what you've got and what you could have if you'd do the right thing. She says and that's my message to you and then she jumped off of this stump with this young woman trailing behind her. Took a few steps and turned around and she you know but I'll get you in the end which meant she would get them in the union but that was that was the first really good clue as to how she projected to the men. Well, you know that she had physical courage you know she didn't turn tail and run and then and typically woman. She had the last word and then made her exit and a and then this woman also said Mother Jones. They admired Mother Jones because the union got a foot-hold in Mingo County then Mother Jones was associating with the higher class people, better educated and a economically better off and this woman says Mother Jones could use those big words with those people. She says but she was as mean as we were and she claimed that the miners people were scared of Mother Jones but that was a but that was the thing is you know here's this bullet and then the men laughing and then Mother Jones laughing but that to

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e is she believed strongly enough in what she was doing. She would do anything to get her message across and wasn't intimidated by anyone.

Ferraro: Ok, one more time a what do you think was the reason she made with that telegram from Harding during the armed march?

Lois: Well, she obviously wanted to keep the miners from getting their heads blown off because she had enough influential friends in Washington that she would know the troops were coming and a she you know had alot of roaring ready cause she says we're going to get our guns and we're going to fight and we're going to do this but when it came right down and this was the same patterns as her old hero Daniel O'Connell the Irish liberator. He had these mass meetings but when it came to a question of really shootouts and blood and slaughter and murder he backed off and a she would do she did the same thing.

1:14:30

1:15:00

Ferraro: Ok stop it.

1:15:28

Lois Mclean- 252-7291 Beckley, W.Va.

Ms. Mclean was contacted concerning the project and she is very interested in helping with it. She is considered an authority, by knowledgable historians, on the life of Mother Jones.