

Transmission of Interview with Earl Rasmussen.

b.in Springhill, 'right in that house over there'.
mother and father from Denmark.

two or three families of Danes. the other families--one other and his
father's brother.

'When my mother and father started talking Danish, so we would pick it up,
people thought they were talking about them, so they gave it up.'

--lost that part of our heritage.

parents came over 1903.

(his wife corrects him, 1904 or 1906.)

Earl Rasmussen was born in 1908.

'My father followed the sea.'

his trade was shoemaking--him and his brother, in order to get in Canada,
jumped ship in Baltimore. worked there way down through and got a job in
the mine in Springhill. In a year's time they went over and brought his
mother and his grandmother and his father's ?.

'They must have been godd tough stock, what?'

--father at the age of 72 was still working in the coal mine.

he was 83 when he died. the week before he died he was down on the mud flats
watching them dig clams.

musician. he could pick up anything. he could play anything. Early went for
sports--hockey, baseball. tried running.

--from Odense, Denmark--birthplace of Hans Christaan Anderson, both his
mother and father from there.

went to school here. got to grade eight. teacher was giving us our marks, first
exams. she said all the marks down, got right down to 5, hadn't called out his
name. got down to two, "Earl Rasmussen, two." I was pretty down-hearted.

-That was the end of my schooling, I never went back anymore. Started working in
the mine at the age of 15. "That was nothing unusual. Before my time, father
would take their sons to the pit."

Q. that did your father think of you going into the mine? A. Well, they just took
it for granted that you were going to go into the mine. But I didn't take it for
granted that my sons were going to go in. I had two boys. And I was determined to
keep them out of the mine. One of them is in the air force, and one of them...
ended up in a coal mine when he was 35 or 36 years, he ended up in a coal mine
after all. But I kept him out all that time.'

but fisherman has a dangerous life, too.

this house he lives in is the original home of the Iron Dukes. Rasmussen was
its originator.

father and mother bought a p lace with just a kitchen and an upstairs. At that
time, on Drummond Street.

his father was awful handy. made big hand sleighs. coasted down Junction Road.
'Alma, you sit on the trunk and I'll steer you down.' coasted down to their
new house! but his father fell off at the top of the hill--couldn't catch the
sleigh. his mother was sitting on the sleigh, couldn't stop--dropped her off
in a snow drift. she turned around to give him a talking to and he wasn't still
on it.'

--that would be around 1906 or 1907.

father was heere for the big strike. 'In order to keep the home fires going, they had to go down and cut wood.'

--father worked out in Fernie, B.C., for awhile.

worked on building the houses at Macan for awhile during the strike, supplement things.

spent 16 months in Fernie and then came back.

his father was a union man. but not that active in it.

'I was a good union man--I wouldn't stool pigeon on my fellow workers or anything like that....'(But not an active member of union).

[Being a 'good union man' is equivalent to being loyal to fellow workers.]

first job: pushing boxes into the miners--called it "putting".

only other kind of a job would be carrying timber up to the miners. up them long, long shutes--as long as 500 feet.

go up there with booms and props.' I spent fourteen months when I started in the mine--I was the youngest man in the man--and I worked with the oldest man in the mine, and we worked together for fourteen months, and we never seen an official or anything. Nobody working there on night shift. And him and I--we got along great.'

--old Scotch fellow--Mr. Ferguson.

'You'd think, you know, ...they shoved us off to one side and we never seen a boss, he was a wonderful old fellow.'

'You started in the mine, and, for some reason or other, if your brother or somebody went in ahead of you, and he was what they call a good man on getting the coal out, ...you usually ended up the same way.'

I didn't get much time on the coal as a miner, but I was on transportation. My job was getting the coal out of the mine. Getting it out. ~~Start~~ at 2.31 a day.

--name of Noddy crops up, a household ~~word~~ word.

--has beautiful pictures of bootleg mining.

addressed to a "man called Noddy" [pronounced Nuddy], Springhill.

--spent all last summer, looking for coal seams. Rodney is no good--never will be any good. same goes for Saltsprings. complains they won't put the drill where the coal should be.

found two seams of coal in the far north part of the basin, nobody has found coal there before.

intermediate baseball--Iron Dukes. won Maritime Championship three times in a row. not the coach but the fouder. played for awhile with the Fencebusters during the war years.

No prejudice against Danes here. 'I don't think half the people know you're Danish after awhile. See, my father's name is Rasmussen....' [got tired of spelling Rasmussen for people, so he changed it. to Anderson. Rasmussen played under the name of Anderson.]

he reverted back to Rasmussen when he got married. trouble at the town hall about it.

we had town leagues, county leagues...and provincial leagues.

--used a fence stake as a baseball bat at first. (birth of the game at Springhill).

47 years in coal mining, in that time, he was point tender--that was like a brakesman, then worked his way onto chainrunner--getting the coal--and trip runner, and timberman, etc.etc. noted for his strength--"Supposed to be one of the strongest fellows in the pit."

'I ended up as a...trouble-shooter, I would call it....'

after disaster, he went into bootleg mining.

started looking for outcroppings so he wouldn't have to go too deep.

we had no idea where to go.

went over in the Aberdeen district and bored a hole. and worked for a whole solid month, couldn't find that seam.

on Thanksgiving Day they finally hit the coal.

five feet from it in the first place.

'The only time I ever had money in the bank--not that I had much money--was in the bootleg mine.'

--they squeezed it out after two years, had they left us alone I'd be spending winters down in Florida now.

--Rasmussen had a permit for his operation--had a temporary lease in his operation. paying royalties on his coal.

[he still has a copy of this paper.]

mines were inspected and everything.

just the same as any other mine.

[not a real 'bootleg' mine but a legitimate one.]

pretty near gassed in the mine.

there was a death--man called Beaton--from gas in the mine that Rasmussen set up. after he was in charge of it.

"We were going into old workings...." (didn't know where they were, they would break into old workings.)

I've had close escapes in the mine, but that's the closest to death I've ever come. [Being gassed in the bootleg mine].

[After telling another tale of a close call]: The Good lord must have been with me that day.

religion: no, not a strong churchgoing family. mother couldn't speak English. Salvation Army was strong then. She told me, they went to the Salvation Army. Got put out on the street because they didn't understand about emotionalism. Confirmed Lutherans. Would argue religion fiercely.

--two Danes arguing about religion. got carried away and got drinking and argued religion. arguing biblical points, collecting bibles all around town. 'Religion is something you can argue about all your life, you'll never get it straightened out.'

father worked with a strong Catholic--he invited his father to see how the Catholic religion worked. his father went--went the once, went to see how it was;

father d. 1968.

33 when he died.

father worked in the mines. Fifty-some years, I know. Rasmussen was too young for the first war and too old for the last war. that's why his service record in the mine is so long. he has 47 years in the mine. his father had over fifty years in the mine.

he was in the five-month strike in 1925. [This is how they refer to it in Springhill: the five-month strike].

got only 35c help from the international union. refers to the Danny Boutilier poem. [He really is a people's poet.]

'At that time, the merchants were good. They would carry you....I dare say a lot of them was holding the bag.'

'They had to go with you or sink with you--that's where there living come from.' [a miner sums up the merchants position].

AMW vs. UMW. running the leaders out of town.

run him right back to England, as far as I know.
Mary Perce's father?

(Columbine?)

mother and father often talked of the big strike.

miners would get their coal out of the duff bank. They kept a watchman on top of Rasmussen's house to see that the provincial police didn't catch them.

old factory track coming up there.

train coming up the factory track with a van and a box car.

warned everybody off the duff bank, but one man and his boy wouldn't move. box car opened up and the provincial police caught the man.

some of the men liked to be arrested--company had to arrest them, take them to the Carlton Hotel, feed them, pay to take them to the Junction, and pay to take them to Amherst--they got three or four good meals a day out of it. They wanted to be arrested.

Heard Tommy Williams talking about that.

'I heard tell of the Provincial Police chasing two fellows, in where our lakes is, at the time of year when the ice...just a skin of ice.

--run across the lake to avoid arrest.

we didn't have too much trouble,

Rasmussen's father all came over--five of them--and three went back to Denmark. his brother went out west.

how many in his family: five in the family.

his brother was first casualty in Springhill in World War Two.

'I'm a true Junction Roader....'

--had midwife who delivered him.

her father was crippled just before the strike. maiden name of Chambers. pension there were seven of them. Lived on \$12.67 a week, for I don't know how many years. Finally pension was \$67 a dollars a month.

father born up near Bathurst, worked in Chignecto before coming to Springhill. mother born on Noel Shore.

her father was French--original name was Chambers or Chamberlain. His mother was a Veinot. father spoke neither French nor English--soup was "Too tick" or "Too tin."

badly smashed up in the pit.