

Interview with Mr. Jacob (Jake) Weiler, April 21, 1975, by Judy Reich.

JR: We're speaking with Mr. Jake Weiler. Mr. Weiler, you're 85 years old, you say? JW: Yes. JR; Where were you born.....in Lafayette? JW: Germany. JR: And when did you come to Colorado? JW: In 1911. I came from Pennsylvania. JR: That's the first place you came after Germany was Pennsylvania? JW: Yeah, I came from Germany and we landed in Pennsylvania, see. I stayed in Pennsylvania until I came here. Of course, I went through Illinois, Iowa, and then Texas before I came to Colorado. JR: But you came to Colorado in 1911? JW: Yeah. JR: Was Lafayette the first place you lived in Colorado? JW: Yeah, I started working at the Standard Mine. JR: Had you been a miner before or did you just learn. JW: Yeah, I mined in Pennsylvania, Iowa, Illinois. JR: What brought you to Lafayette? JW: Well, me and my partner went to Texas and from Texas we,....we didn't like it down there so we came to Colorado. JR: Was your mother and father with you. JW: Oh, no, just the two of us....me and a friend of mine, a partner, see. I said to him, "Let's go to Denver" and we came to Denver. And then after we were in Denver I said "Let's see if we can get a job". We drove mules in the mines, you see, we were coal miners, both of us, and they had signs up,....it was during the strike, you know, and they had a sign out MULE DRIVERS WANTED. So we went in and asked about the job driving mules and they asked if we were mule drivers and when we said "Yes," he gave us the job. We paid him \$1.00 for the job. JR: You paid him? JW: Yeah. So we'd get on the train and instead of coming on into Lafayette we'd get off at the switch down below there. There used to be a switch there that went straight on up past the old Capital Mine. They told us to get off at that switch and we wouldn't get into any trouble. And he told us we could find the Standard Mine there and we went to work for the Standard Mine driving mules, JR: How do you drive a muel and what kind of job is that? JW: We pulled the cars, you see, they had small cars.....well, you'd hook the mule onto these cars and the mule would pull them on. You had to take care of the mules, you had to take care of the cars, and you

had so many men to pull the cars to, you know, and so many cars, you know, JR: Was it hard work? JW: Oh, yes. You had to be awful careful, you know, so you didn't cripple the mule, or cripple yourself, or cripple anybody else. JR: Did that ever happen while you were working there? JW: No, it didn't. We got along pretty good. No one got hurt in that mine like that. JR: Were you inside the mine? JW: Down in the mine. JR: What is it like in a mine? JW: The Standard was 280 feet, I think. But over at Lydon, that was 800 and some feet deep straight down and then you'd go a mile inside. JR: How did you get down 800+ feet? JW: Oh, you get down on a cage. They had a regular elevator with a cage and they'd let the men down and then after they got all the men down they'd start putting on the cars with the coal in them and they'd heist them up and dump it into the railroad cars. Yeah, that was a job. JR: Do you remember anything about the Standard Mine, any stories or anything that happened to you while you were there? JW: Oh, there was lots of things that happened. Some of the got killed, you know. JR: Oh, really? How did that happen? JW: Well, maybe a rock would fall, you know, or something like that or they'd get caught in a trip of coal, you know, in a car. Some mines would have an explosion, you know, a gas explosion in there and kill the whole works. JR: It must have been pretty scarey. JW: Yeah. JR: Were you friends with everyone in the mine? Did you do things after work together? JW: Oh, yes. The men worked down there with me, you know, and then I got to be foreman and one thing and another, you know. Oh, there's lots there to talk about. JR: Anything that comes to your mind, we'd love to hear. How did you become foreman? JW: Well, I took the examination down there in Denver from the State Inspector, see, and I passed the examination for mine foreman. You had to be a certified man, you know, to be a mine foreman. JR: Was that still at the Standard Mine? JW: Yeah. JR: And what was your job as foreman? JW: Foreman? The job? JR: Yes, what did you do? JW: Well, you'd tell all the men that you were over them, see, I was boss over the whole works underground. And I'd tell them what to do and where to go, JR: Did you enjoy that?

JW: Oh, I had to like it because there was more money in it at that time. JR: How much, for instance, would a regular coal miner be paid then? JW: Well, now they get all the way from \$40 to \$50 a day. But when I was working in the mines I think I got about \$100 a month and I thought that was pretty good wages at that time. JR: How much did it cost to live then? JW: Oh, at that time it didn't cost much for a living. JR: So on a hundred dollars a month you were doing pretty well? JW: Yeah, I raised a family.. JR: How many children? JW: Eight. Two died. A girl and a boy died, they were twins. We raised four girls and four boys. They are still living. And they've got children of their own. JR: And you did that on \$100 a month. Where did you meet your wife? JW: She was from Lafayette. The Superintendent of the Standard Mine had a daughter then and his daughter and my wife used to chum around together. And that's how I got acquainted with her and then I married her while I was at the Standard Mine. JR: What is your wife's first name? JW: Lillie. JR: What was it like raising a family here in Lafayette? JW: Ohhhhhhhh, God, that's hard to tell. JR: Were there a lot of people here then? JW: Yeah, there were quite a few here. JR: Did they all go to school in Lafayette? JW: Yes, they all went to school here----four boys and four girls. JR: And did they go to school right here in Lafayette or did they have to walk somewhere else to school? JW: No, right here. Now, the youngest boy and the next-to-the-youngest boy are in California and one daughter is in California--the youngest daughter. The rest of them are still here.

JR: Maybe you could tell me what an average day was like when you were working in the mines. What time did you wake up in the morning, and go to work? JW: At one time I had a different job, it was called the Fire Boss and I had to examine the whole mine before anybody else when down to see that it was safe and all. JR: How did you check that? JW: I'd check to see if they needed any timber or if there was any loose rock or if there was any gas, that's methane gas, explosive gas, or carbon monoxide gas, you know. If there was anything like that, I'd have

to report it, see, so the men wouldn't go in. JR: So what time did you get up to do that? JW: I used to get up at 2:00 o'clock in the morning and go down in the mine and I would be down in the mine by myself, nobody else but me, see, and I examined the whole mine. No one was allowed to come down in the mine until I came out. JR: And what time did they usually come down? JW: Oh, all the way from 7:00 to 7:30. JR: Then you were down there for about 4 hours all by yourself? JW: Yeah. JR: Then how did the rest of your day go? JW: Oh, I'd just go around for about 3 or 4 more hours and then I'd go on home. JR: Did you have breakfast with your family? JW: Yes, I had breakfast after all the men had gone on down, after everything was all cleared. I used to carry my lunch bucket, you know. JR: Did all the workmen do that? JW: Oh, yeah. Every morning they'd have their lunch buckets with them. JR: Once they went down in the mine, did they stay all day before they came back up? JW: Yeah. If they didn't have anything to do, they would come outn, you see, but as long as they had work to do they would stay all day until 3:30 or 4:00 then they would come out.

JR: What sort of things did you do with your family when they were growing up in Lafayette? Did you go hiking or on picnics? JW: That's pretty hard for me to remember, you know. JR: You mainly remember about the mines? JW: Yeah. JR: When did you stop working in the mines? JW: I was working in the mine over just this side of Dacona and that was in 1966. Then I quit. JR: Are they still mining now? JW: No, I think that's worked out. JR: What did you do after you quit mining? JW: Nothing. I retired. JR: Well, from 1911 to 1966... that's about 50 years. Did you see mining change a lot? JW: Yeah. JR: How did they change? What do you think were some of the big changes? JW: I couldn't say because there's lots of them.....oh, from one year to another mining was changed, you know. JR: What was the hardest way that you mined? JW: The hardest work? Ohhhhhhhhh, digging coal with a hand pick and shoveling it into the cars. You just had a little bit of a light, you know. JR: Was that on you hat, the light? JW:

Yeah. Yeah, that was an awful job. JR: Then what was the best job...foreman?

JW: Oh, foreman was all right. He didn't have to do no hard work, just go around and see that the rest of them do it. JR: About how many people would be in a mine at once? JW: Oh, I had as high as.....over there at the Washington Mine, the Morrison Mine, I had as high as 300 men to look after. JR: Wow!

JW: Well, I don't know. I think that's about all. JR: Do you want to tell me anything just about the town of Lafayette? What it was like to live in then? JW: Oh, it has changed quite a bit. JR: Did you know everyone in town? JW: I knowed quite a few but I didn't know them all. I used to live in that house over here on the corner. That used to be my house. JR: On Baseline? JW: Yeah. JR: What did your wife do? Did she work in Lafayette or did she mainly keep house? JW: She kept house. She had enough to do. JR: What sort of things did she do? JW: She took care of four boys and four girls,...that was enough. Maybe you know some of them here.. Do you know Irene Palizzi? That's the oldest girl. ~~Yvonne~~ Yvonne IVON Satak, that's the second girl. Donna Gaz, that's the third girl. And Nancy ~~Kelbeck~~ <sup>Cratty</sup> Kelbeck, she's the youngest and in California.. Then the boys, there's Wilford in Boulder, Orville in Longmont, and then there's Ray and Jake, Jr. they're in California. And they've all got kids. JR: How many grandchildren do you have? Irene had 2; Wilford and his wife had one, a girl, and she's married; Orville had 2, a boy and a girl, and they are both married. JR: Do you get to see your family often now? JW: No, only those who live right here in Lafayette. JR: Do you live alone here in this house? JW: Yeah, I'm living alone until my wife gets out of that rest home there in Boulder. Yeah, there's Irene Palizzi and her husband, Yvonne Satak and her husband, and there's Donna Gaz and her husband. JR: Is there anything else you can remember about living in Lafayette? JW: Oh, I didn't live in Lafayette altogether. I lived at the State Mine, I was boss there. JR: You lived there? JW: Yeah, I lived there. They had houses there, see. JR: Where was that? JW: It was about 3 miles southeast of Erie, Then I lived in Frederick a little while. JR: What made you decide to settle in Lafayette?

JW: Oh, I'd get a job at a mine and if there was a house close by I'd move there and then I'd move back to Lafayette again.. JR: What did you like about Lafayette?

JW: Well, it was pretty nice, I could go pretty much anywhere I wanted. There used to be lots of mines around here, you know. JR: How did you get to the mines? Did you walk? JW: I used to walk from here to the Standard. The rest of the time I'd either ride with someone or else I'd move there.