

This guy rambles on!

NORTHERN MICHIGAN ORAL HISTORY

ITALIAN-AMERICAN COLLECTION

OH-15 Index

VALELA, Frank (Interview conducted in Ishpeming)

Indexed by: Faye Oja

Indexed May 19, 1983

Summary: Life of an Italian immigrant

Index

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NORTHERN MICHIGAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ITALIAN-AMERICAN COLLECTION

very hard to follow. Accent thick

OH- 16 Index

VALELA, Frank (interview conducted in Ishpeming)

Indexed by: Faye Oja

Indexed May 20, 1983

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OH-76 Index

VALELA, Frank (Interview conducted 10/29/82 in Ishpeming, MI)

Indexed by: Faye A. Oja

Indexed on May 23, 1983

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Interview with Frank Valela
Ishpeming, Michigan
October 29, 1982
Interviewer: Dr. Russell Magnaghi
Transcribed: June 15, 2001

FV: At that time the train came. Every train had a bell and I never knew what train was coming. At 6:00 in the morning comes train 101. I come to this country. When I come to Gwinn...what's the name

?: Austin? Princeton? Little Lake?

FV: Little Lake. When I came there one was coming up. He said come with me. Where you go? He talk Italian. I said I'm going to Ishpeming. I asked where he was going. He said I go to Negaunee. Then we shake hands. I said who you are? He said I'm Joe Russo. I tell him I'm Frank Valela. He said you go down to next depot office and that's Ishpeming. She will help you. The train used to go so far over here and it don't go no more. I don't see no policeman to tell the people where to go. The depot was between this street and the next street by the tracks. I stayed there about half an hour and nobody come. The train only went so far. I took my suitcase from the depot and walked on this street. People were going by, but I didn't know how to ask them. The sun was shining. After a while one fellow come to me. He said where you going? I said I no capeesh. He turned around and spoke Italian to me. He was a great big guy. I said I go to Carp Street where my sister and brother-in-law live. He took me to where they know my sister. We went to Pill Street where Louis Tassen is. The father who was there before you know, he was there a few years before I come and the son and wife were coming. The son was Mike. He knew my sister because she was a waitress. He hitched up the horse and wagon and brought me to my sister. My sister used to live with my brother-in-law. Dominick Savela and my sister. They had two kids at that time. The first time they saw me, they told my sister ??? and she said that's my brother. The men were working. He went out at 6:00 in the morning to see if I come. Here I come at 4:00. I shake hands with him and it was a big house.

RM: Why don't you tell us about your feelings when you went to work here. Did you know you were going to work in a mine?

FV: I didn't go to the mine first. I was digging a ditch for \$13. There was a playground and they were working on it. They sent me across the street to Bruno Nardi. They said you want to work?

RM: Was Bruno Nardi a friendly person?

FV: Yes. He was the saloonkeeper. He helped the Italians out. He would find you a job. He said come in the morning and I talk to the boss. I went there the next day and the boss gave me the job on the playground. The boss was Irish and I never knew how to talk. A dozen men worked on Sunday. He said to another guy tell that kid tomorrow to come to work on Sunday. I went to work. He wanted me to come at 8:00 and I said I might as well not go. He asked me on Monday what's the matter you don't come, not to me to the other guy. Next time come whether the car comes at 7:00 or 9:00, you come to work. I went the next Sunday. Five men were working. I worked until dinnertime. Then they left. I took my lunch and was going to eat. They turned around and said come on. They used to go from the playground to the boarding house. They made me go with them. I go there and there was a sink to wash in. They gave me soap. Then they gave me a comb. Then they bring me to the table. He said eat. He said it in English. I was ashamed to eat with them, people I didn't know. They made me eat and then we went to work again. It went like that for 4 Sundays without a penny. Then I stopped at the playground and he said I want you to come with me. We have a job at Humbolt and you come with us. I said when winter comes I won't have no clothes. He said tomorrow you come over here and we'll take the wagon.

He said when you go to Ishpeming buy the clothes. Make a wagon stop and buy what you want and we'll continue. There was a French boarding house. I didn't know anything about it. There were 2 Italians in there. They said to me, you want to live with us? They said they had a 3 room house. I was happy because they were Piedmontese. They took me with them. They said you go to the hill there and carry the water. It took care of the clothes and whatever. We bought socks in Ishpeming. One guy stayed a month. ??? came to pay me and he didn't want to pay me. At that time it was \$2.10. He said I'll wait til the boss comes and see what he says. When the boss come he says how much you pay this kid? He can work like men like that. The boss moved away and said if you don't like the kid come back tomorrow and look. If he deserves it pay him what you want if not I'll fire him. After a while he turned around and talked to me in Italian. He said if I don't like you tomorrow to fire you. I was grateful he talked Italian to me. He said we used to cut lumber in Umbruno. I tried to cut lumber. They wanted to take me to copper country. I said I had to go to Ishpeming. They said you go there for a week and then see if you want to come with us. I come to Ishpeming and saw my brother-in-law and he said ah, the Copper Country. My sister said don't go there somebody will kill you. There was a big strike. They didn't want me to go to the mine, they wanted me to cut lumber. I told them I worked in the lumber camp in the old country. She said you're too young to go. I asked my boss and he said it was up to me. They told me I could get a job in Ishpeming in the mine with everyone I used to know. Then I didn't get a job in the mine. I told my brother-in-law's friend to find a job for me. He refused me. I went myself in the morning and saw that fella with some other men. They called him Dominick Calluchi. The men got a job and I didn't get a job. Then I passed by Bruno Nardi's and he said what's the matter? I said I didn't get a job. He said come by tomorrow morning. I came by the next day and he gave me a job. They used to pay a dollar and a half every ten hours. I was glad to take the job making \$30-40 a month. That was pretty good pay. I worked there for three or four months and next spring they fired me. Then they got me again. I worked through '13 and '14 and part of '15. September was always when they laid me off. I went to Dorite and found a job there underground. They had a lot of Italians in the mine and an Italian boss. They liked me. The mine was wet. At the beginning of 16 they called me to work in Ishpeming, section 16. I worked there from 1916 until 1929.

RM: How did you find working underground? How did you like it?

FV: I used to like it. I was used to the long hours. I liked it better underground than on the surface. If you got wet, you were wet for quite a while. If it was a hot day it was good. I used to like it underground. It was the same temperature until you finished the job.

RM: Were there Italians in North Lake? Do you remember any of the history of North Lake?

FV: I never worked on that lake.

RM: Today, do you know any Italians up at North Lake?

FV: They have a lot of Italians, but I don't know them. One worked at Baldine, that's all I know.

RM: Joe, do you know any Italians up at North Lake?

J: All the old ones are dead up there. I don't know if anyone's up there now.

FV: Baldine's

J: Bosio was up there. Joe Sardini's father and mother used to be there.

****SKIP IN TAPE****

FV: The boss at Dorite, Sammy Phillipe, he was the boss on the lake from about 1915. He wanted me to leave 16 and come to North Lake. I told him I wanted to stay where I was. A few months after, he was killed.

RM: It's a good thing you didn't change jobs.

FV: He was a good boss. He was Italian. He was a policeman in Italy and then he came over here. He was a smart guy.

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J: Every year you've been on the flag, they charge you \$125 to carry the flag...the banner on St. Rocco's birthday. This has been going on since day one.

FV: My father paid \$125 in those days. Over here too. This year I paid \$25 but nobody went against it.

J: Last year it cost \$100. \$75 for the St. Anthony's and \$25 to carry the Italian flag.

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RM: Frank could you tell us a little about the development of the Italian lodges?

FV: When I came over here it was 1913. When I talk now it was a little before that. This is only what I have heard. They started the lodge because at that time the Italians were poor. So they started the society. Mucho Sintorsa was the society. They kept it going and in 1902, the guys would get jealous over who was president and all that so they pulled apart into two. One side always tried to steal members from the other side or the other. Umberto Primo had about 100 or so men and this one had between 40-50 all the time. In 1916 the Agreno started up. I took more interest and I stayed all the time on one side. My brother-in-law and cousin were always on the other side. Every time I went home we argued about the society.

RM: Which one did you belong to?

FV: Mucho Sintorsa. Every time I went there we argued. They didn't have enough money to pay their debts and to pay their members. Always, they had a little money to pay a member. They would collect a dollar from every member. In that time if you were behind, a dollar a day...some members had a few people in the society. They'd stay home and give \$2-3 and they were some kind of crook. If you find people at work you don't pay them no more. I used to go from here over there. I got in the wagon around the lake to find the men. I tell the truth and report which way I seen them. Sometimes they had to collect some money to pay a member of the society. If they found work or do something they don't get paid no more by the society. I would go with Louis Tassen to find some men by the lake and if I find them doing something, I tell the truth. I started in 1916 and by 1918 Rocca was coming in. I was mixed up with them.

RM: Why don't you tell how the St. Rocca Society started.

FV: The St. Rocca Society was a bunch of people that wanted to bring a priest over here. The ??? and Louis Tassen Store we got the feast of ??? and wanted to bring it here. They had Louis Tassen, Dominick Cangriac, John Leon, Bruno Nardi, anyway, 5 people. The Italians wanted to bring the feast and everybody put some money in and they brought the feast in. It was in September. In our country you

celebrated it on the liturgical Sunday in September. We kept it going in September. One time in 1922 they asked our lodge to go in a parade for St. Rocco for the kids.

****SKIP IN TAPE****

FV: The way it started is they would go out and collect money, then they make a committee of five men, that was Louis Tassen, Dominick Cangriac, John Leon, Bruno Nardi. They charge for the first year. Then they have the men that build the bandstand. Dominick Cangriac was in charge to make that. Then it was me and some Italian and we helped with that one too.

RM: Where did they build the bandstand?

FV: Between the church and they had a popple tree and between that they built the bandstand, the first one. Then they decorated it with pine branches and lights around it...

RM: Lanterns? Japanese Lanterns?

FV: Yes, because at that time they did not have everything electricity. They had a spotlight from the church. They celebrated all day. There was a feast and marching, and a dinner. At night there was a benediction at 7:00. The band would play even in the church at that time. Then they would go outside and jump on the bandstand and play the concert. That was for 4-5 years. Our society was too much like the Rocca. We used to march with them. The women would dress up their children and everybody was marching in the street for the society. They marched in front and we marched behind. We had a pretty good turnout every time. The Rocca had a ribbon. They had a lot of money in that. Then in '22 they decided we would go together.

RM: When did they have this big celebration that you were just describing?

FV: From 1918 to 1922. We had them for the society and then the society took over. From '18 to '22 we had them in the church, but then the society had a modern fund and they had the feast there. They had everything but we put up the bandstand. Before the bandstand they went around the street 3 or 4 times. After they connected the Rocca and St. Anthony. They liked all the time to have one man in charge of the feast. I have been in charge because first I built the bandstand. We had a nice feast and we kept it going and all of that. Then in 1942 they decided St. Anthony was coming in with us. They only had 10-15 members then because they all dropped out.

RM: The St. Anthony Society was formed earlier?

FV: The St. Anthony Society was started in Unberto Primo first. Then in 1936 they changed their name to St. Anthony. I was president at that time. We talked about joining the society and we connected. We kept it going. We celebrated pretty good on the feasts. The chairman figured out how many members we had and they divided it up so many men in the morning to work and so many in the afternoon to work. Everybody worked. If you refused you had to pay a fine. In 1922-1966, then in '66 they decided it was too much to work. Before then I kept all the equipment in the yard. We had to put the pole in for electricity and you had to tell them a month before what day they could come. A couple days before they were supposed to come they called and said they couldn't come and had to do it another day. In 1942 we moved to another place called Al Dine. They built everything as the same thing. There was a shack. We put electricity to the barn because at 11 or 11:30 we put everything away in the barn. Every year we did the same thing. In 1966 they decided to stop it all. Nobody talks no more about it. We don't have dinners. Then they wanted the feast again and want to start doing it, but we don't have the equipment anymore. It was mostly given to the church. The kids destroyed everything.

RM: Years ago did St. Anthony's Society celebrate the feast of St. Anthony?

FV: No. They didn't celebrate it. After they got together maybe 4-5 years we got a banner that said St. Anthony. We bought another banner in 1930 or so. The other one was too big and if the wind got it... Peter Andriachi bought the other banner. When they started the society they had an order and a sash for the president, vice president, secretary, and all that. I don't know what happened to that. It's not the flag like now.

RM: Oh, the Italian flag. But then it had written on it St. Rocco's Society.

FV: It said St. Rocco's Society on the flag. Somebody asked if had that banner and they came over here and they were a member. They wanted to celebrate and show the Italian flag. I never saw it again. I don't know who took it.

RM: Didn't they have some games for St. Rocco's Day?

FV: Most of the games were ourselves. Bingo, the pots hiding the prize and they switch them around and you never know where the prize is, maybe 2-3 dollars. They always enjoyed the kids.

RM: Did you have a greased pole?

FV: Yes. We put maybe \$15-20 on it. Then you turn it around. They would put pen on a wire with \$0.50 or a \$1.00 and you grease the pen too. The kids liked to come ride the horse. We had a pretty good feast.

RM: So it stopped and you restarted it again in 1972.

FV: No the feast never stopped. Outside the club it stopped, but we still have a dinner which we call the feast. In '75 or so it started again. Now the young fellas want to do it again. To them, they're doing pretty good. We've got about 66 or 67 members.

RM: So the club's going smoothly.

FV: The club is in good condition.

J: Financially sound.

FV: We've got a good financial heritage. We've got our dinners on Friday night because the hall is occupied. On Sunday we have a march.

J: The march never stopped even in the years that we cut the feast out.

RM: So that was from 1918?

FV: 1918 Yes.

RM: 64 years. Next year it will be 65 years.

FV: I married in 1917 and the feast was in 1918, I'll never forget. I don't know what I can say about it. We used to have a raffle. There was a pretty good crowd in the night and afternoon. We spent a lot of money.

RM: So you just used the money for the next feast the next year.

FV: Yes. If there was any leftover it went to the treasurer. When we first started we didn't pay by check. Everything was in cash. At that time if the secretary or treasurer made a mistake, we have another man look at the columns during the year. The president, vice president, secretary, trustee, and he'd count every Sunday. After the secretary or treasurer counts it if there's a mistake he would know. In those days they used to do it. It might be short \$0.13 or \$0.14. In those days it was a lot, today it doesn't make a difference. I have more morality than that. When they started the band I never worked. I come when I was 13 and I never worked. Kids told me join up in the band. I didn't not compare to the \$5-6 a week they were making He was a good man. They would buy the instrument if I would be in the band.

RM: Vampa Band had two bands didn't he?

FV: That was the same band all the time. We started in 1914.

RM Did you play an instrument?

FV: I have to learn. We started in 1914 and on June 1 we went to this professor. He was good. I found him from reading the paper. He was from Canada. He came over here.

RM: This is Vampa.

FV: Vampa. He did not want to sign a contract from June to June. He wanted to come at the first of the year and wanted to be free. They had a contract for June to December and January to December. We studied for 18 months before the instrument even came. Then the instrument came in. After that we studied from June to November. It was 18 months before real playing. In November we had our first concert at the Ishpeming Theater. It was full. We had lots of engagements with the State Fair and County Fair. We have more this spring. The professor wants to do them or we have to pay the fine. He wanted to take us to Chicago one time and pay for the train and everything. He wanted to take best drummer and neither could go. One was sick and the other couldn't come. So we didn't go. He wanted to pay everything for us to go to Chicago. Then in 1918 he decided to leave us and he went to Chicago.

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FV: This other professor came, he was good and he directed the band. He stayed 2 years. Then he decided to come back out here, Vampa. We fired that one because he was always drinking. Then he came over here from 1920 to '24 or '25. It was always called the same band. We had another leader between. It was always Vampa's band. He left, he was getting older and his wife didn't like it here. He was Piedmontese.

RM: After that, the Vampa's band ended in 1924. After that did they have the Negaunee City Band?

FV: W would play for St. Rocco once in a while. A few of us would get together and play.

RM: I have a question about the societies. Did the societies ever buy plots out at the cemetery to bury members?

FV: No. Everybody bought their own lots. We used to go to the cemetery rain or shine hot or cold. We used to go get them out of their house. We'd go to the hall, call a meeting, and call roll and see who all was there. Then we'd go out the to cemetery and when we came back they'd call roll again. If anybody left the march they were fined \$5.

RM: So they would fine them even if they missed part of a parade.

FV: Yes. When they say be at the hall at 8:30 you better be there at 8:30. If you're not...

J: If you were caught smoking or talking during a parade, you got fined \$0.50 or a dollar.

FV: There was no smoking during the parade. They had the American flag, sashes, and badges.

****SKIP IN TAPE****

RM: Did you belong to the League of Chita Dina?

FV: Yes.

RM: Do you want to say something about that?

FV: There isn't much to say about that. It started in 1920 for about 7 years. There were lots of members when it started. That was in Negaunee. I don't know what happened, but they broke up in 7-8 years.

RM: You weren't a real active member

FV: No. It was in Negaunee.

RM: They were interested in getting people to become citizens and to vote.

FV: That meant becoming American-Italian. There must have been a disagreement with the members of the society. They wanted to start a move.

RM: Why did you leave the old country?

FV: My sister was over here. Somebody was coming to this country and I told my mother I wanted to go to America. You can go when you're 18. I was born in 1895 and I came in 1913. I wasn't 18 yet because my birthday was in September. I went to one of the priests who sent people off to America. He arranged everything. I didn't have a passport when I came over here. It was May 26 in the afternoon when we left with the ox and wagon to go to the train station. The agent called my number and was telling us where we were to go. Then they took us to the train and everybody went to France or Germany. We stayed another 6 days because the boat went and come back. Before the boat got into port somebody from Canada came and somebody got on the boat and told me to go to New York. The boat went to Canada first. They made us all shower before we got on board. There was one fellow on the boat who was a barber from Chicago. He said we've got to get out of here. There was a Greek who spoke 6 or 7 languages. He could talk with us like I could talk to my brother, like any Italian. Then he could talk to other nationalities and talk to them. We were in Quebec for a night. I knew nothing. They come and get us to go on the train to Montreal. So we went for Montreal in the morning and it was lucky if you saw an Italian in a day. Another guy took me and the next day we had to get American coins for Italian coins. He asked me why I come to this country and where I was going. He said you're too young to go to the United States, who's going to take care of you? I said I've got my sister and brother-in-law. He said they

needed a paper to guarantee it because you are too young to work. The guy see me at the depot and I told him to write a letter to my sister for what I need. I told her she had kids and boarders. I used to take the kids outside and take care of them all day long. Washing clothes with the scrub board. There was a guy who every night told me to go with him. We'd go in this room and buy one glass of beer for him and one glass for me. I was so tired from helping the woman wash her clothes. I found a man who was the boss of a factory. I asked if he had any job for me and he said to come tomorrow at 7:00. I went to work for him and he told me you do this job. They used to for \$0.10 a day. Then the papers came from my sister and \$25. When they came I didn't go to work anymore. I found another guy. Montreal is pretty big. I asked if he knew where the post office was. He said yes. I asked if he could bring me to the post office to bring me these papers. He said yes buy you have to pay me. So he took me by street car. He did a good job. I went home and saw work and asked for my money and he said I would have to wait til payday. I said I was going home tonight. The woman there charged me \$0.15 a night. The other one charged me nothing because I washed her clothes and took care of her kids. So I left from there.

RM: How did you feel when you arrived in Canada, not speaking the language?

FV: You have to try the best. I would have been lost because there was nobody from my own town. I had that guy I recognized from another town. He was good to me too. That was pretty big for me at the depot when I was stranded and couldn't go no place. Then I left from there at about 6:00 in the night on the train. It went to Chicago. We changed at one place. When I went to Chicago it stopped at another station. I gave my ticket to a guy.

****SKIP IN TAPE****

FV: They brought me tot he boarding house and in the morning told me to go to work. You can eat or do whatever you want. There were Italians there. One was from Calabria. They said do you want to leave and go with us? I said I would. They had a house with three rooms. They told me I didn't have to do anything except get the water for washing. They got coal from the mine and go hunting and kill a couple rabbits. They'd go to the store and get a case of crackers and milk. In the morning they'd fill a cup of milk and crackers. I was a pretty good cook. A boss came around one time and asked how much my boss gave me to work. I said \$2.10.

****SKIP IN TAPE****

****CAN'T UNDERSTAND****

FV: He said I was in Calabria in SanBruno. He passed by my farm all the time. He wanted me to go to Copper Country with him to cut logs.

Interviewer: This is after you finished in Humbolt.

FV: Yes. So he took me with him and I cut one tree and said I had to go see my sister. When I come to Ishpeming they said not to go there because there was a strike and it will hurt you. The strike was at the mine but I was working in the woods to cut lumber. I said I had a good job. I went back to Humbolt and told my boss I couldn't come. They had a job for me at the mine. So I come to Ishpeming and stayed 3 weeks and went in the morning to find a job. I went every day. One day my brother-in-law said come with me and we saw Bruno Nardi to see if he had a place that would fit me. We went there and asked him if he knew where I could get a job. He said no. The next morning I went to where the boss was working and asked the boss to give me a job. He gave lots of men there a job, but he did not give me a job. I go back. When I was going home there was another saloonkeeper called Bruno Nardi. He asked me where I was going and I told him I was looking for a job and no one would give it to me. He said come back later.

He got me a job as a playground umpire in Negaunee. He took me to work the next morning. I got along pretty good with him. In September I was off and all winter I didn't do anything. Next spring came and I went there again. In the winter and summer I still asked for a job at the mine. I would go there in the morning and afternoon but they didn't give me a job. My brother-in-law thought for sure they'd give me a job.

FV: On June 15, or maybe that was September, I went to work in the mine with Bruno Nardi. They couldn't give both of us the job. We put the pinning rod together down in the mine. The one thing with the mine, if you drill all year and after you shovel the dirt and they drill on the other side. We went too soon to brush it away and the smoke almost knocked me and Bruno out. Then other Italian men came and said go up for fresh air. The boss come by and asked what was the matter. I told him too much gas was down there and we needed fresh air. He said to go back down. By the time we went back down they were drilling in another mine. I worked so long and then I quit from it.

FV: The miners would be on top all the time. They'd take the dirt out and then they'd blast out again. So they stay on top of the pile and drill on the deck. I was beside the car and they would push it to dump. Every car was $\frac{3}{4}$ full. One night they caught him. The next day they sent another Italian over to me, Frank Mudkre. I was 19 or 20 then. He liked me. After a while they said you have to go drive the mule. The mule kicked me. I had never driven a mule before. I didn't know anything about it. The boss told me which way I had to go. I was putting the harness on and reaching underneath for the straps and tie them up for the car. If you want it to go west you say Ha. If you want it to go east you say Hee. I went to the east and he went to the west. I don't know how far I was from the shaft. I wanted to turn them around. A guy down there said to kick him. It took a lot to find somebody to like that job. After a while they hired a melt and he used the mules. The boss never saw him down there. He got along with him. He said no more, I don't want the mule. If it's not too big one mule can make it. If it was a full car I had to get 3 men to help me and they would all pull. Then the boss said you can go to another place. I wanted to go back to ??? and Dominick Serval wanted to open a mine. It was \$1.50 a day... Every one had to get an order. It was so long of a walk so they'd hop on top of the pile. Sometimes they needed the steam engine to pull it out. That was in 1928. We stopped at a mine to fix a shaft for Dominick Serval. At another place we had to shovel. I was there with Bruno. I was the leader of the mine then. I go to another place where we had showers and everything. First it was Bruno and we got along good. Then this ??? was pretty good. It was Bruno and me and another guy. Bruno was much successful. After a year or so they switched us around. Bruno was at Number 7. They sent me all over. I was at ??? again with the gang. We fixed a place up and then they said go fix this other place.

Interviewer: What mining company was this?

FV: It was Oliver Mining Company and then it changed to United States Steel. It was a hot place to work with the fire. We'd go down on the railroad and take our clothes off in the rain and when it was time to go up again and put them on. I went back there to work at the same job I had before... When I came in I was making \$6 and I saved a little chunk of that. Everything came down. They closed.

****SKIP IN TAPE****

FV: There was a Joe Reven boy, Mike, Joe Roberts, Johnny Collichi, when we'd come over there...??? They hauled him out on a stretcher and he was hollering. I put him in the ambulance. They said you can go down to the mine and explain to everybody what happened. I answered their questions. The next morning they put me in another part of the mine.

Interviewer: How long did you work there?

FV: I started in 1916 and worked there until 1929.

Interviewer: How long did you work for US Steel then?

FV: I don't know how much I worked for them. We just changed bosses.

Interviewer: That's where you retired? You went to another mine didn't you?

FV: No. Then I moved to number 7. All of the ??? from 16 we dumped. Then in 1945 the mine stopped. When they stopped the mine ??? got all the men to work for them. When we went to ??? we changed the day. The money was so much different and the people were different. So they took all the men out of this mine and kept them. These men could do anything you want. After a while they took me out and put in special men that did the same thing I did before. They fixed one place and then went to another place and fixed it up. It was what we fixed. They average you in the mine. \$15 or \$20. I used to get good money. After a while they said I want you to teach the miners to mine. I said okay. I was laughing when they said teacher. They sent ??? and me to teach the miners... when to pull the doors and everything. Then they took them out and brought in more miners. In 1952 I got hurt. I broke my arm. At the same time I had a sore back. I don't know what happened to my back. My brother-in-law used to bring me to the hospital and they gave me treatment on the back. I had 32 treatments on the back. One day I went back to work because the doctor released me. The guy said you stay here until the super comes, and I'll go down. I was by myself and I changed. He said no changes. Finally the super came and he said from now on you gonna be boss. I didn't want to be the boss because I couldn't even read or write. I know a bit of Italian but no English. He said that's the job I could have because I had a sore back. I didn't want the boss job I wanted my job. He said that's the only job we've got. We don't have no other job because you got a sore back. He sent me to another boss and in a week if you feel good enough. He taught me how to write a bit and when Sunday come there were three men they had working in the mine all from the school. I went to them and took a typewriter with me. Every place I went I told them to write their name and number. Then could check the men. Then I would go in the office where I was by myself. I started to learn, but I was afraid they didn't like me. The super asked how I was doing and said I was alright. I wanted to watch the men and make sure they were doing what they were supposed to. I didn't want this job. Other wise I would be laid off. A year later the mine stopped altogether. I was laid off because I didn't have much time with the company. The steel, when I got my pension, all the men wanted their pension. The super knew me, but there was a super from another mine. He called me and said I didn't have to worry. He talked good to me. Anyway, that's when I finished with the mining jobs.