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Horses in the Coal Mines Pafirick McNeil: I was born in Glace Bay, and of course I resided here all my life. I spent most of my life working around horses--the Veterinary Horse Hospital in the Sterling Yard. I had done some other local work for the coal company, like team? ing. That would be the construction--driv? ing a horse and wagon, delivering material, before the trucks really came in. They had horses on the surface doing the work. I never worked in the mine, more or less, any more than I went down in the mine on some business connected with horses. And I was never a veterinarian. I was just an as? sistant. I worked with Dr. John L. Sulli? van, the first veterinarian. (No special training?) When you work with a vet, you learn from day to day what he's doing, and you're assisting him, and you get a pretty fair knowledge, like any other job. If he was doing any operating or any work on a horse, I was there with the instru? ments, getting them prepared, and prepared the animal for him so he'd just come in and do his work. And if he was out of town, and minor things, I would do it myself. And he would prescribe treatment for this horse--"We'll do this for him this day," and that--well, I would go ahead after and do that work. Most of the accidents they were having in the mines, the horse would run into a low boom. The horse was too high or he didn't put his head down. Well, he would scruff the top of his head, it would like scalp him. When that horse would come in, that piece of flesh would be hanging like a flap over the top of his head. Well, that would have to be removed. Sometimes that would be scraped right to the bone. I saw Dr. Sullivan put a plate in there one time, and it covered right over. It was remarka? ble how the head of a horse seemed to heal ??nEi.flBHiiH%.i immmm- mmms'mi'. much quicker than any other part • It was very, very interesting work. And then, the top of the withers--that's like at your shoulder bones--call it the withers. In a low place--a big horse, they shouldn't go into a low place, fault of the mine management sometimes, they wouldn't brush the mine--and this horse would jam in there. Be going in and out, and the top of the withers would get fes- tered--we used to call it a fistula with? ers. The infection would go down in be? tween the two shoulder blades. If we would get the horse out of the mine in time, we could treat it. But if it got down too far in between the shoulder blades, it was just next to impossible. (How would you treat something like that?) We used to g't a lot of drugs from differ? ent veterinary pharmacies through Canada. I remember one time we got a solution, and you'd inject it in with a syringe. We'd o- pen a hole and put it in. And you'd have to wear gloves--the stuff would burn the hands off you. Used to drive the horse foolish. There was no way to drain that out. After one or two treatments, the horse would go foolish, see you coming near him--it was that sore, painful. And you'd have to vaseline all where that stuff would overflow, because it would take the hide right off the horse. Well, that was too drastic a treatment. It was unsuccessful. So eventually we came across some idea of trying kerosene oil--that's coal oil--and that proved very, very successful. It cured quite a few horses that otherwise we were condemning. Just a simple thing with a syringe. Put that in but once a day, and it seemed to absorb all that pus and dis?



charge . We had very good luck on that.