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then he'd operate. Sometimes it'd be broken bones, a deep abscess that he couldn't get at otherwise. They'd chloroform the horse. It was very humane. They had a way one time, when a horse had a broken leg in the mine, they'd destroy him. Because a horse with a broken leg is no more good to the company, he's no good to anyone. The head stableman would destroy that horse. The way they were doing it, they were killing them with the axe, pounding in the head, knocking them out. So Dr. Sullivan got all the stablemen together one day. There was a horse in the hospital that was going to be destroyed. He was incurable for some reason or other, worn out, general debility. He showed them how to destroy a horse. You'd put your hand up the rectum with a knife between your fingers. And there's a big vein runs right along the inside, and you just give it a good cut. There'd be no blood would come out of the horse. He would bleed internally, and he'd just go out in a faint. Perhaps 3 or 4 minutes, and he'd drop right out. No suffering or anything. That was quite a thing, helping the horse. And how they get a broken leg, mostly, would be--the coal was hauled on rails, the box was on rails. Well, sometimes the management in a hurry to get the coal out, they wouldn't ballast those tracks. The horse would be tramping through those sleepers, sleeper holes, and they'd get their foot caught. (The sleepers are the blocks going across, and the rails sit on the sleepers?) That's right. They'd just ballast it a little, but it's quite often they didn't make it smooth for the horse. And the horse's feet were going down in that, maybe a foot down, or 6 or 8 inches, and the feet would get caught and the box would come on top and he'd break a leg. And then there were steep headways. Sometimes the driver wouldn't put enough sprags in, or the sprags wouldn't hold. The horse was kind of light, not heavy enough, and the box would come down onto him, push him down the grade, and he would turn off into the timber--it's only a narrow space they were travelling--break his neck. Well, a horse would have to be destroyed right there. And then Dr. Sullivan had an ambulance made, over the yard there. It was sloven, they call them; you know, a low axle, drop axle, a low heavy wooden structure. And it was drawn by two horses. Now if there was a horse injured in the mine and it was very lame or crippled up, the ambulance would be at the pithead when they'd get him to the surface, and take him into the veterinary hospital. There were a lot of horses came in that otherwise wouldn't have got in. And they had a peculiar thing--at the back of the hospital there was a big smokestack from some old colliery back of the Sterling Mine, And way back in the years, it was closed. They left the big flue up and they built an incinerator there, and any horses that were destroyed or died, they would just take them down there and hoisted up and put in this incinerator and burned. There was no need of digging holes and burying them out in the ground; just burn them right up and there'd only be an ash left. They'd burn them with old wood. But they never took a horse's life if he would be useful to someone. If a horse kicked a fellow, he was chased out of the mine right away--they wouldn't have a horse who kicked. Now that horse would come to the surface, and we'd sell him probably to a farmer or any person buying,



and that horse would never lift a leg. Whether the driver would be tormenting that horse, or what. Well, they were pretty strict on safety first in the mine, you know, there were so many people getting compensation. Get a little bump on the leg, or--well, some of them'd get hurt pretty bad, probably, from a bad horse. We always had a ready market for horses. Young fellows were always looking for a wild horse, mostly, so that they could fool around with him, tame him down. And there were a lot of horse traders in those days, Sydney and Waterford and everywhere. They were at the door over there at the hospital every day. Pit horses on vacation. Number 20 Colliery, 1952. Photo by Shedden. L'