



*Highsplint miners gather July 20, 1974 outside meeting hall at the Multi Purpose Center in Evarts, Ky., where a funding-raising rally took place for strike benefits for them. John Lewis is in center wearing glasses. With his back to camera is Bob Davis, a worker fired for being on the UMW picket line and a leader of the Highsplint strikers.*

*Photo: United Labor Action*

had taken things into their own hands. They knew if there was going to be protection for them, they had to provide it themselves.

I had heard how Duke Power would catch the strikers out on the road at night and beat them up with clubs and gun butts. I knew how they used hired killers to shoot into the miners' houses late at night and many of the people had taken to sleeping on the floor, as a result. I personally saw the bullet-ridden house of Mickey Messer, president of the Brookside UMW local. On Thursday night, August 1, the thugs had fired a .45 caliber sub-machine gun at his house. There were bullet holes in the out-buildings as well as the house, and one old tree must have had 50 to 75 lead slugs in it. I couldn't help thinking to myself what would have happened if that tree had been a human being—and that's what Duke Power wanted everybody to think about.

But anyway, it was daylight now. The pickets were leaning against the cars, talking. Some were pitching pennies. Another group was up by the car that was going to be used to block the road. A group of the women armed with their switches (some of these "switches" were one or two inches thick) were also by the car. There was a lookout posted down the road to give the signal to let us know when the scab caravan was coming.

It wasn't long after 6:30 when the word was given. The gang of people around the old car heaved to and pushed it out onto the road. Someone locked the doors. Some of the women climbed up on the hood and sat there as if it were the most natural thing to do.

As the scabs came around the bend in the road and saw the car and the pickets, they slowed down, and then stopped about a hundred yards from the barricade.

So there we were in the tiny village of Shields (about a dozen houses). The scabs and gun thugs lined up there on the road sitting in their trucks and cars on one side of the