

The miners knew that if they didn't shut down Highsplint and stop the coal coming out, they would never get a contract from Eastover. It was as simple as that. So the union decided to set up an informational picket line there on July 8. From that day on, a majority of the miners at Highsplint refused to cross the line. On the second day of the picket, Norman Yarbrough, president of Eastover, fired Bob Davis and Herschel McDaniel for being on the picket line (which they weren't).

After these two miners were fired, the Highsplint miners tried to get the Southern Labor Union, a company union that "represented" them, to force Eastover to give the men their jobs back. This "union" refused, and even called the state police on the two fired miners!

The men at Highsplint then walked out. They decided on July 22 to join the UMWA pickets on the line. Not one ton of coal was taken out of that mine from the time the line was set up there on July 8 until the strike was over on August 24.

A miner told me that during the first few days of the Highsplint picket line, things were pretty solid. He told of the violence that Eastover began to use once it saw that the pickets were a pretty determined bunch.

The company keeps a stable of some of the meanest hired killers and gun thugs in Eastern Kentucky. On the second day of the picket, one of these thugs shot down a 66-year-old retired miner in cold blood, but he couldn't kill him.

The miner's name was Minard Turner. He was shot twice in the chest with a .38 pistol at close range. He came back to the picket line the next day, bloody bandages and all, one of the slugs still deep in his chest.

During the first three weeks at Highsplint, things were nip and tuck. First of all it took a lot of guts to even go up there on the line at all. There were about 60 scabs and about an equal number of hired gun thugs. On one day there

would be a couple hundred pickets, and the scabs wouldn't get by. But maybe the next day only 50 pickets or so would show up. Being outnumbered, they couldn't keep the scabs out.

But even when the scabs passed through the line, they didn't work the mines. Most of them weren't even coal miners at all. They just sat around drinking beer, playing cards and taking pot shots at the pickets with guns supplied by Norman Yarbrough.

One of the miners spoke up and said that Eastover Company also had a machine gun up at Highsplint. He said it was kept in the front office and was fired every so often to try to scare the pickets.

Just to hear this kind of talk was enough to send chill bumps up my spine. I had heard of company goons before, but not goons that carried guns and shot people in open daylight. In the Army I had heard and even fired a machine gun. It's a terrible weapon.

More and more cars were filling the parking lot. It looked like the rally held in the community center the night before had been successful in turning out the people. There must have been at least 200 men and women out that morning.

Someone said, "It's 5:30. Guess we ought to be heading on down the road."

We all piled into the more than forty cars that had assembled by that time, and took off. It was still pretty dark, and it was kind of scary going down this narrow country road, with high mountains on either side shutting out what light there was and maybe hiding a lot of enemies. I remembered a story one of the older miners had told me the day before. His uncle had been shot through the head one dark morning during a strike in 1936. But today the people were out in force, I told myself. No scab would even try to stop us.

We were not going to the Highsplint mine itself. We