

# Duthie Mine Story - The lower mine

In the late 1920s the operation moved to the lower level. Ernie Hann and his crew slept in a tent while they built a big bunkhouse. The men couldn't leave their beds when the mercury dropped, so Ernie, in long underwear and cussing a little, would get up and throw some logs on the heater. "Those lazy guys would rather freeze."

In 1930, during the depression, the mine closed, cutting off one of the area's biggest payrolls. Bill Hansen and Mike Mesich stored equipment in the mine shafts. Rails were stored in tunnels. The two men stayed all winter and were the last to leave. Much of the equipment was stolen in the 30s until a caretaker, Jack McEwen, was hired.

Between 1936 and 1940 J.J. Herman

from Grandforks gold mine tried to lease the mine. Duthie finally gave in and the Herman family came to the valley. J.J. could not use the machinery for such a small outfit so jiggered the ore using a gravity system (high grade ruby silver 2000 ounces per ton). The crew (7 to 21 men) single-jacked at first, then started the compressor and drilled by air.

David Dennis was trammer — Jim Capling and Dad Arnold hauled the ore to the railway. When Les Oulton and family Verna, Dave, Gwen and Betty joined the Herman's, Jean Pat, Jim, Sonny, Ruth and cousin Stan Kelly, there were 10 pupils, just enough for a school. Miss Atrill was hired and was a heck of a good teacher according to

pupil, Jim.

Pat reports that the teacher lived on apples which she ate for vitamins and fish which she claimed was brain food. When the kids needed extra help the teacher kept them after school and insisted they eat an apple first. Pat asked her why she wasn't married and she told her that she preferred being a cultured lady!

The families lived in houses previously built at the 500' level — fairly modern with plumbing. There was no shortage of wood — stockpiled along the road since the mine closed. On Saturday night everyone came to town.

Jean tells about a Christmas at the mine. There had been a heavy snow and the road was closed — they were waiting for the plow that didn't appear.

The shopping wasn't done and the food supply was low — worse still, there would be ten for dinner. She remembers her mother looking at the shelves — a few tins of food — mostly green beans but they tasted good — everyone was hungry.

A friend, Paddy, finally snowshoed out with a grocery list for Watson's. At New Year's, a sleigh load of food and Christmas mail arrived, so they had a real celebration.

When World War II broke out the miners were called up and J.J. was forced to close. He had made some money so was able to buy a house in Smithers where he started his plumbing business.

Duthie sold the mine several times, it is now owned by Silver Standard.



Canvas-roofed home on the mountain.

Photo courtesy Phil. Davidson



Bill Lewis, Jim Bovill and Ernie Hann at the bunkhouse door.

Photo courtesy John Bovill



Loon Lake showing new powerhouse which burned 20 cords of wood per day to supply power for the lower mine.

Photo courtesy Phil. Davidson



"The Loon Lake Sweepstake" - The miners bet on when the ice would go out of the lake. The winner actually lost- he had to buy beer for the losers.

Photo courtesy Duncan MacDonald



Tom Williams at right below the mill at the lower mine.

Photo courtesy Gordon Williams

## Part one - opps

Corrections for Part One of the Duthie Mine story which appeared in the March 29 issue of The Interior News.

Jim Adams played the piano — not "Doc".

Jimmy Love instead of Jimmy Live. Jim Beauman instead of Jim Beaumont, and Mrs. George Haggart of Houston informed us it was George Haggart who played the Jew's harp.

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