

COAL MINERS *of* ALBERTA

These photographs are part of an exhibition called *Faces Places and Spaces: Five Master Photographers* at the Triangle Gallery in Calgary from Nov. 4 to Dec. 18, 1999.

The songs are from the liner notes in the CD *CoalDust Grins: A Musical Portrait*, a response to the photographs in Lawrence Christmas' book *CoalDust Grins: Portraits of Canadian Coal Miners*. "When I photograph coal miners, I conduct a recorded interview with each of them. Some of the stories told to me by these western miners were so evocative that they suggested lyrics and by extension songs," says Christmas.

Both the book and the CD are available from Cambria Publishing, website <www.cambriapublishing.com>.



Lloyd Laves, Bobby Stewart & Malcolm McNeil
Underground Mechanics, Smoky River Coal Mine, Grande Cache, 1991

PAGE IN TIME

John Campbell

Behold the dark young miners
Captured by the flame
In a portrait to remind us
Of ordinary men
They're from Cape Breton Island
Rovers every one
Been twenty years away
And still they call it home

(Chorus)

There's a hundred years between these men
Whose fathers worked on the line
A face we'll never see again
As the image fades we turn
A page in time

To Grande Cache they came
Searching for the coal
Plenty work, plenty pay
And every belly full

Some men leave their Island
When profits in command
As many left the Highlands
When the clearances began

(Chorus)

You see that young man smiling
A Caper — far from home
Gave twenty years of mining
To McIntyre Coal

It's for that man we grieve
The Ordinary Joe
Whose sere and yellow leaf
Has turned to Autumn Gold.

(Chorus)

SHINY BLACK COAL

Dick Damron

That shiny black coal
Has lost all its glow
And it looks kind of dirty and brown
My daddy and I worked side by side
But I will never go back underground
From the Evansburg Mine to the years in the Coal Branch
Then back where the Pembina flows
For forty-nine years he dug in the ground
Diggin that shiny black coal

(Chorus)

Diggin that shiny black coal
Diggin that shiny black coal
For forty-nine years he dug in the ground
Diggin that shiny black coal

Charlie worked the Pembina Peerless
And lived in old Evansburg Town
For 28 years he worked down the river
One day he just shut her all down
Now his life and his times
Are just words and rhymes
Of the days that he dug in the ground
And he says that old coal ain't shiny and black
It just looks kind of dirty and brown

(Chorus)



Charles Ostertag, Retired Surface Mine Operator, Evansburg, Alberta, 1982

JENKIN EVANS

Robert Burton Hubele

(Chorus)

They closed the mine, and there's coal in the ground
They closed the mine, said "Times are lean"
They closed the mine, and there's coal in the ground
Of the one, and the three, and the Wilson seam

Jenkin Evans, working in a coal mine
With his daddy, side by side
First day out, down from the ceiling
A great rock fell and daddy nearly died.

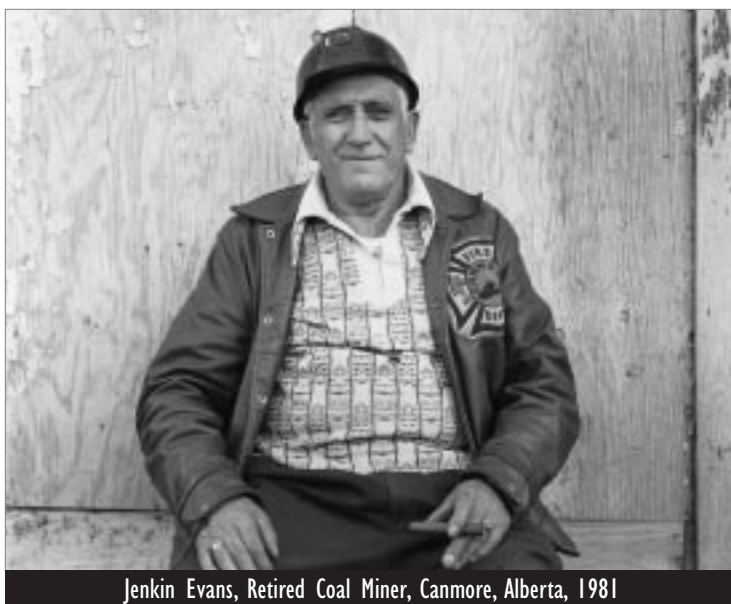
Jenkins said, "I was always lucky
Daddy was saved by a block of coal
He went back to working the long wall
Teaching me how to cut that coal"

(Chorus)

Cathy Evans' daddy was a miner
Working at the Canmore mines
Wrote a letter to Wales, "Jobs are waiting
If you and Jenkins got a mind"

Jenkins said, "I was always lucky
Saved a girl back in thirty-five
Pulled her from the icy river
Got a medal for saving her life"

(Chorus)



Jenkin Evans, Retired Coal Miner, Canmore, Alberta, 1981

Jenkin Evans, down in the coal mine
Good times, bad times, fifty years
Then they made him trade it all for a Napoleon clock
If he had his way, he'd still be here

Jenkins said, "I was always lucky
They shut the mine down and levelled the ground
I still got my house and pension
It's just, my friends are all leaving town"



Frank Zaputil, Retired Fireboss, Cambria, Alberta, 1990

FRANKIE

Tom Wilson

They used to call him Frankie when he worked down at the Jewel
He hit the pits at fifteen, haulin' stoker coal
I often see him sittin' in his straight-back kitchen chair
In the miner's shack next door to mine in Cambria

He always roots for Calgary on the radio
It's another way to fill the days that whisper by so slow
We'll sit and chat for hours over tumblers of rye
And I listen to his tales of days gone by

(Chorus)

And he lives with the weeds and slouching fences
Fallin' on the days that he has left
With any luck I'll find a few more chances
To memorize his stories before he forgets

Many widows in the valley cast their eyes ol' Frankie's way
But Mary's still the one who makes his dinner every day
And since his wife passed on, Mary's tended to his needs
And she calls him "you old bastard" just to tease

(Chorus)

His father was a miner, and Frankie learned his lessons well
He worked his way to fireboss at the Western Gem and Jewel
He blasted rock and coal and kept the safety of his crew
And without the mine there was little else to do
But the Western Gem, the Murray, and the Atlas, and the Crown
The Highgrade and the Aetna, one by one, they all closed down
Frankie sits there at the table and he reads the morning Sun
Three hundred miners lived here once, now he's the only one
Still alive at eighty-five and livin' all alone
With history embedded in his bones

(Chorus)

Photographs by
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