

Coal Company, and where possible in the subject town, tends to undermine these stereotypes.

The author concludes that Helvetia's company store was not generally seen as unfair in its dealings. Furthermore, the company did install concrete sidewalks and running water in the 1930s, pretty much at the same time as many rural routes and urban communities received these amenities. Residents received electricity from the company's power plant prior to much rural electrification across the nation. These improvements were not a reflection of control and abuse by a mining company, rather of improving living conditions at the same time in many places across America as the country worked through the Depression. The same might be said of topics such as women's daily chores or the lack of refrigeration.

A number of the company's rules for mine safety and the town's residents, presented negatively as examples of company control, have since been codified in the Federal Coal Mine Safety Law, or in local zoning regulations or homeowners' agreements in many communities. Why does the author present as bad a company's rules against smoking underground, drinking with respect to mining, or to require minimum aesthetic standards for the housing it provides for its workers?

The point is that the landscape of the town improved over time, both from the mining company's investment of resources and maintenance and from the sweat equity residents applied to their living spaces. This latter was made possible by increased disposable income and leisure time from the early 1900s through the 1940s. Residents added amenities and personal touches, housing additions, flowerbeds, and more sidewalks. Those who worked hard and applied themselves benefitted, and the company allowed them to do so. Other miners and their families were not able to function as well in the mine or community and moved on to other places.

This eastern coal mining town is difficult to compare with many western metal mining towns unless one considers the life of the extractive re-

source. It would be informative to compare this study with similar studies that might be conducted in other mining company towns, East or West. Nevertheless, Helvetia's residents clearly had a positive impact on the landscape of their town, in some sense negotiating with the company as they established their sense of place. Because it appears to have been one of the better coal mining towns in which to live, this negotiation was evidently more of a dialogue than a discourse of resistance or violence.

From the Miners' Doublehouse is well organized, with plenty of illustrations, figures, and tables that add to the reader's comprehension. Albeit printed in a small font and seemingly repetitive or redundant, this work is unique in its combined approach and subject matter and may provide a model for other researchers to follow.

Johnny Johnsson

Finksburg, Maryland

Doug Brugge, Timothy Benally, and Esther Yazzie-Lewis (eds.). *The Navajo People and Uranium Mining*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006; 210 pp., 13 photos, 1 map, cloth, \$29.95. ISBN: 0826337783.

The Navajo People and Uranium Mining is a book with the explicit, activist goal to raise awareness of the legacy of uranium mining among the Navajo people, who mined in the American Southwest beginning in the 1950s. While the uranium industry created new financial opportunities for the Navajo, many miners were exposed to high levels of radiation in poorly ventilated or unventilated mines and later developed a range of pulmonary pathologies, including in some cases fatal lung cancers. In addition to these health outcomes, uranium mining's adverse environmental impact on Navajo land was significant.

Framed by an emotional foreword by Stewart Udall, former secretary of the Interior and the primary attorney in the uranium miners' long legal

battle for compensation, the book announces its intent early and clearly. This is effectively the story, we are told, of a cold war tragedy perpetrated on innocent people by an unfeeling federal government more interested in national security than in the health of some of its most vulnerable citizens.

The latest product of the decade-long Navajo Uranium Miner Oral History and Photography Project—headed by Doug Brugge, a professor of public health and medicine at Tufts University, and by Navajo activist Timothy Benally—the volume features transcripts of seven oral histories conducted as part of the project. These oral histories, in which Navajo miners and their family members speak directly about their experiences with uranium mining and its health and environmental effects, form the emotional core of the book. The particularity of these narratives is effective in evoking concern, sympathy, and even outrage.

As a record of voices rarely heard, these oral histories also potentially have immense historical value. But the political commitment of the interviewers sometimes creates an uncomfortable, leading quality to the questioning. In one interview with a former miner, for example, Benally frames his question in this manner: “The people from Washindoon [*sic*] knew the health effects, but did not want the people [workers] to know about the health effects. This is what we know today. So, there were lies; we were used in that way. The way the Navajos were treated in that way, what do you think about that? This is the question. Did they do the right thing by not telling people about the hazards, or was it wrong?” Not surprisingly, the interviewee agrees that it was, indeed, wrong. We cannot know how these oral histories would read had these methodological indiscretions not occurred, but it is surely the case that much was lost through this approach.

The rest of the volume is devoted to cultural interpretations and scholarly articles, many of

them reprinted, representing a variety of disciplines—history, psychology, public policy, public health, and social work. Interspersed with the oral histories, these chapters offer a valuable and textured social, political, and cultural framework within which to situate the individual stories. The book is organized this way, the editors explicitly contend, because they are not trying to “present the experience wrapped up in a tidy package with a single internally consistent conclusion.”

Regrettably, the insistent narrative framing of these events in the introductory pages of the book undercuts this goal. Atomic power is a “monster,” the Navajo were the victims of a “death industry,” and the events were a “tragedy.” Indeed, in an unfortunate over-extension of a word whose powerful meaning should be guarded through careful use, the text on the dust jacket reads: “Genocide. There is no other word for what happened to Navajo uranium miners.”

While most readers will agree emphatically that uranium mining has damaged the health and land of the Navajo, and that attention must be paid to that, the framing material of this book suggests certitudes where other, subtler interpretations could quite legitimately be made. This threatens to force overly simplistic historical conclusions onto extremely complex events, and, most disturbingly, to present a caricature of the Navajo people. This is particularly unfortunate because the subject is of great importance, the damage is real, and the book is the product of genuine commitment to the well-being of the Navajo.

Ellen Bales

University of California, Berkeley

James M. Day. *The Price of Silver: The Story of the Sunshine Silver Mine Disaster*. Carson City, NV: Bridger House Publishers, 2007; 267 pp., b&w ill., maps, 6 append., gloss., notes, paper, \$16.95. ISBN: 1893157210

Having both worked at the Sunshine and par-