

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.

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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-

ticipated in the rescue efforts, I can attest to the veracity of the account that James Day has written. Of all the books and reports written on the Sunshine fire, *The Price of Silver* is the best account that I have seen of the disaster. And this book goes further, giving perhaps the best account of the formation of MSHA, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, which evolved from the U.S. Bureau of Mines.

The book details the fateful day, from the miners' first entering the mine, to the discovery of the fire, and the subsequent escape and rescue attempts. The book details the fate of each of the ninety-one miners who died, the anguish of their families, and the causes of and responsibility for the disaster. To me, this was a gut-wrenching and, sadly, very factual account of this ten-day tragedy in metal mining history that occurred from 2 to 11 May 1972.

The Price of Silver also gives some background on some of the people who influenced the investigation of this disaster. More importantly, reading this should impress upon metal miners the importance of having a second viable escapeway. Obviously, it is unrealistic to expect people in a deep and hot mine to climb to safety, especially through smoke. However, Sunshine had other safety lapses almost as serious: primitive communications, a lack of someone in command, the time wasted trying to find the fire rather than start the evacuation, and the inability to control its main underground fans by remote control, among other factors.

This book should be required reading for all mining engineering students prior to graduation, and should also be read by everyone interested in the history of mine safety. It is an easy read that also provides a good, brief history of both the Sunshine Mine and the Sunshine Mining Company.

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David R. Berman. *Radicalism in the Mountain West, 1890–1920: Socialists, Populists, Miners and Wobblies*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007; 401 pp., 10 b&w photos, notes, app., ref., ind., cloth, \$39.95. ISBN: 0870818844.

Western states' radicalism of long ago is a problematic, crucial piece of American western and working-class history. Much of the action centered in difficult-to-reach mining districts and small towns. And was the western miners' story mostly about labor or mostly about the West?

David Berman's book is about both. It explains a many-faceted working class activism and politics in dozens of western places. Most of Berman's work is about that portion of the nation's populist and socialist history that occurred in the Rockies, the Great Basin, and on the Colorado Plateau, but he connects local events to national third party struggles. He also writes about hardrock miners' unionism: the "radical" part of it. Radicalism is easier to describe than to define, and Berman wisely avoids the "What is western radicalism?" issue.

Berman examines the Coeur d'Alenes and Cripple Creek, Bisbee and Butte, and much more, during their times of trouble. He remembers all the tunes of glory, situating all the best-known mining district strikes in local context. He specializes in western mining camp politics, from Idaho and Montana down to Arizona and New Mexico. His sketches of the relevant famous characters are generally sad ones, including Ida Crouch Hazlett's polite and unsuccessful socialist recruiting efforts and Butte ex-mayor Lewis Duncan's forced descent into workplace reality.

Vernon Jensen scrapped with Melvyn Dubofsky and both developed major theories about radical unionism; but that was during the last era of heroic labor history, which ended almost half a century ago. Mining workers' historiography needs a fresh synthesis, which would include many kinds of ordinary westerners. New writing cen-