

The obituary of my father appeared in a couple local newspapers after his death in June, 1980. A friend of mine, Barb Pisarchick, was sorting out some old papers and came across this article.

In addition to the information given in the newspaper, he was a self-made man. He went to work in the coal mines around Brockway, Reynoldsville, and nearby mines, at the age of 12. As he told me, his lunch pail was so large it dragged on the ground. The reason for his going to work at such an early age was the fact his father had died and left his mother with five young children to raise. In the early 1900's there was no social security nor welfare. He was the second oldest. His brother Charles was the oldest, then John, Reno, Fred, and Mary.

He worked in the mines for a number of years and knew that there were bigger and better things to do outside the mine.

He became a traveling auditor for District 2 of the United Mine Workers of America, and in 1920 he became a member of the International Executive Board. John L. Lewis, the famous labor leader, became the President of the United Mine Workers soon thereafter. Dad remained as a member of the International Board until his retirement in 1970. As a member of the International Board he traveled throughout the United States as part of a three-man commission to settle miners' grievances.

He had also been appointed President of District 2 (central-western Pennsylvania) by John Lewis in 1955.

For a man with no high school nor college training, he was a superb public speaker. He spoke without notes and could really get the attention of his audiences.

He was an advocate of the welfare and safety of the miners, always seeking agreements with the coal operators for better wages and working conditions, especially safety in the mines.

He had to run for election as a member of the Board and was never defeated. He was a true follower of John Lewis in fighting for many advances in the mining industry.

Just a note about my father and my mother. My mother was a tall stately woman, about 5' 10" tall, and my father was at least six inches shorter. Their difference in height made no difference to either of them. They respected and supported each other over their sixty years of marriage.

*Written by Dorothy Ghizzoni Martino around 2006.*