

Interview by a miner at Aliveri lignite mine

At what age did you get a job at the lignite mine and when did you retire?

I got the job in 1965 at the age of twenty-three and retired at the age of fifty.

What was your youngest age and who was your oldest co worker?

Usually, those who had completed their military service of about twenty-five were employed. Personally, because I had volunteered in the army, I got a job earlier, around twenty-three. Today I am sixty years old and as far back as I can remember I was one of the youngest.

What were the working conditions like in the basement?

It was considered one of the harshest and most unhealthy working conditions in the country.

Were you afraid of working there?

I can't say I was scared. Nevertheless, my work required a lot of attention and concentration.

Why did you decide to do this job?

The main reason was the daily wage. The difficulty of finding another job in our place and mainly because it was in our area and I did not have to emigrate.

Were you or a colleague in danger there? Do you remember an accident?

I have a lot to tell you about that. The fact that you went down 200m. perpendicular to the ground and another 23m. in these galleries it causes you awe. Danger lurked everywhere. You have to be careful where you step and where you touch. No electricity. Do not protrude wood or various other objects in the galleries. Do not drop pieces from the roof. Especially my job as a miner, which means the first person to enter the gallery to do the work of opening the gallery and extracting the deposit. There, all your senses must be alert. You didn't notice much, there was a risk of an accident. Nevertheless, thank God, I succeeded and came out strong. However, the same did not happen to many of my colleagues who left their lives there and a large number of injured people who are still living with the signs of the accident and with all their consequences.

There were also accidents due to carelessness. I remember the great accident of 1967. I was one of the luckiest. I was in the same workplace with the eight dead. My good fortune a small accident on my finger forced me ten minutes before the accident to climb up to tie my hand. About 50 others were taken to various hospitals. In general, during my work as a lignite miner, the death toll was one a year. More than ten people were injured.

Another major accident was the eruption of groundwater that then caused a large area of the mine to be blocked and to cause the lignite mine to close very early.

Were there any health effects from your work?

Yes. As a result of poor nutrition, poor sleep and overweight during work, I had some broken blood vessels in my stomach and I often had gastroenteritis until I had surgery.

What substances were considered harmful to human health in the basement?

Our most insidious enemy was carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas. Fortunately, the canary saved us. It is ten times more sensitive than humans and when we saw the canary suffer it we left.

Were you given any information about the effects on your health? Have you thought about it before?

Of course we were informed of all the consequences. When we got a job, there was "THE BOOK OF LIGNITORYCHOS" from the company that informed us about everything that was happening in the basement.

Describe a daily working day at the lignite mine.

At the beginning of the schedule, going down the well and after a long walk we arrived at work. There, each of us, depending on the specialty, undertook his duties. My job was to mine the coal. This was done by digging with dynamite. The protection was carried out by discarding the bosses from the other collaborators of the gallery. When the coal ran out and was transported to its destination, the lignite miner continued the same work because the company wanted production and security.

What was your schedule? How long was the breakfast break?

We worked eight hours in shifts. The first shift started at midnight until 8:00 am. The second from 8:00 am. - 16:00 pm. and the third from 16:00pm. until midnight. We took a half-hour break to eat around noon. But when the temperature rose above 28°C then we worked six hours.

How the workers were transported to the lignite mine?

At the beginning of the project, most people walked. Later, however, the workers were transported in the company's cars.

What was your fee? Was the money you received satisfactory? Could they meet the needs of your family?

In the early years, the wages of the lignite mine were the worst in the country. With the persistence and struggles of our Association, of which I had the honor of being vice-president, the gradual improvement of our salaries began. Towards the end of my service I can say that the salary was enough to cover the needs of the family. But not that the work we did could be paid for.

Would you work there again if you were young?

Not even to think about it!

Would you encourage or prevent your child from doing the same job?

I would never let him become a lignite miner.

Do you think that the lignite mine has damaged or benefited our country?

He benefited the place a lot. But not us, the lignite miners.

In your opinion, should it have stopped operating or not?

Not for the good of the place. But for us, it was our salvation. If working conditions had improved, I wish the operation would continue to this day.