

DitM - Jack Corn - 02 Appalachian Miners, Acceptance and Impact

Transcript of Audio from the Backstory

00:00:03 I went into the mountains and I met some of the Appalachian people who were very kind to me. I don't know if you've ever been in a coal mine, but you couldn't pay me to work in there. I tell you what, it's awful. I've been in one. I was in there for a short time. I wasn't there for all day. I started taking pictures and they started running in the New York Times and Life [magazine] and everywhere else because nobody was photographing them.

00:00:28 And I thought, golly, this is a whole new world. That's the daddy there [gesturing to photograph in his hands]. Yeah, there was a whole bunch of them, and they were real bad off, in real bad shape, really – they had all those kids. Their way of life was leaving them. They were having to come into the city, and they didn't want to come into the city.

00:00:46 I'd go in and they'd want to talk about where I lived and they wanted to know – the fact that I had children, that changed the way they thought about me. And I had pictures, so I started carrying pictures of my kids around and that made a big difference to them. They're really just like anybody else, they're not a different kind of human being, you know.

00:01:07 And one night, I remember it was cold and I was going to have to drive about 60 miles back to my motel, and this man said, 'why don't you spend the night with us?' And so from then on, word went around that this guy is OK. It's not anything I did, it's just what I didn't do, I guess, more than anything else.

00:01:26 He was needing an operation [gesturing to photo of disabled miner in a bed staring out the window]. He'd got hurt in the mines and they [weren't] doing anything about it. And I made that picture, and when it ran, people called their congressman, told them, 'you get something done.'

00:01:38 But he was a big Kennedy fan. And Ethel Kennedy saw this picture – it ran in the New York Times – and she called me and wanted to know about it. And then I told them, 'Yea, they're in pretty desperate shape.' And she and a bunch of women, they got together a bunch of stuff and brought it up to them.* I think I was really blessed to be in Appalachia like I was, and for those people to accept me.

* Ethel Kennedy continued the legacy of her family's commitment to help the people of Appalachia by devoting funding, resources, and even her time through the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial (now Human Rights) Foundation – especially through the RFK Fellows Program – created in October of 1968, following her husband's death. She visited the miner Jack photographed, Ed Marlowe, in the Fall of 1971. See *The Nashville Tennessean*, Sunday, October 10, 1971, page 44: <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-tennessean-ethel-kennedyed-marlowe/148263194/>

00:02:00 He was posing for me [looking at a famous photo of a miner with two children looking toward the window light] and anytime anything comes up the road, they'll stop and look at it. And I snapped it. And from there on I was getting calls from most people. And they were real interested in the Appalachian thing. I'm pretty sure I had an impact.