

# **MEDIA KIT FOR** *Memory of a Miner*

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**Title of Book: *Memory of a Miner***

### **AN OLD-SCHOOL MINER RECREATES HIS COMPELLING ACCOUNT OF LIFE IN A SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN MINING TOWN IN THE EARLY TO MID 1900S**

**Knoxville, TN-2014** – Dr. Michael Ruth, author of *Memory of a Miner*, is delighted to share this memoir of his father, an old-school miner who experienced firsthand the most volatile period in “bloody Harlan’s” history – when miners put their lives on the line and won against the powerful coal magnates of that day.

Dr. Ruth was inspired to write *Memory of a Miner* not only to honor and preserve his own heritage but the legacy of all miners who risk their lives every day for their families.

What makes this particular account unique is the fact that it is first and foremost a recorded oral history, told through the miner’s eyes, in his own words and endearing dialect, with the same energy and vigor as when he first lived it. As such, it is an invitation for the reader to share intimately in the life of a man full of courage, strength and wit who only knew one way to live – **all in**.

*Memory of a Miner* successfully highlights the fact that despite the coal wars at home and the World War abroad, the fun times shared and friendships formed among the miners and their families made this the most treasured time of life for many.

There are stories of fun and good times...and stories of intense grief and pain. But they come together to tell the tale of a time and place that only remains in the memories of those who lived it and in recorded histories such as this.

A reader comments:

*“Memory of a Miner weaves first-hand accounts with historical facts to tell a story of bygone days, the way a grandfather does on the back porch on a lazy Sunday afternoon. If you come from mining roots, or you simply want to enjoy a truly compelling account about life in a southern Appalachian mining town, then you should read this book.”*

**About the Author:** In addition to his 25-year writing career, Dr. Ruth is a counselor/psychotherapist in private practice for more than 23 years. He is a history buff to boot, so the extensive research required for this project was right up his alley!

Visit [www.MemoryofaMiner.com](http://www.MemoryofaMiner.com) for contact details, review copies, photos, author bio and information on how to get your own copy of *Memory of a Miner*.

###

## AUTHOR BIO



Dr. Michael Ruth is an author, counselor, and psychotherapist in East Tennessee, where he grew up. He and his wife, Susan, returned there some 25 years ago to raise their children and to make that area their home. They are thrilled to have their now-grown children and grandson close by.

Dr. Ruth holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in history, theology, and counseling. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy in religion and society - with a counseling concentration.

His doctoral dissertation - *Virulent Personality Disorder: A Proposal for the Clinical Classification of Pathological Evil as a Psychiatric Disorder*, received an award of excellence from Oxford Graduate School. He went on to publish his first book, *Shadow Work: A New Guide to Spiritual and Psychological Growth*, in 1999. Since then he has written on the subject of personal growth as well as the developmental stages of childhood. He is also on the book review board for *The Family*, a professional family therapy journal.

The inspiration for *Memory of a Miner* began in seed form a full twenty years ago when Michael approached his aging dad with the idea of writing a book about his days as an old-school miner in Harlan County, Kentucky, during the time of the coal wars.

Michael, the last of four children, was born in Harlan County right about the time his dad's mining days were coming to an end, so he doesn't have any personal memory of those days himself.

However, because his dad had a captivating knack for telling stories, and his favorite pastime happened to be talking about his mining years, Dr. Ruth was well supplied with the material he needed to put this oral history to paper.

And thus the journey began.

Countless hours were shared with his dad and mother in conversation, recording story after story. Dr. Ruth then visited places of relevance in Harlan County, speaking with others who also experienced that volatile time firsthand. Lastly, several more years of research would serve to fortify and build out the context of the story.

*Memory of a Miner* was written not only to honor his own dad but all miners who put their life on the line every day for their family, and to preserve a cherished slice of Southern Appalachian history for his readers.

## SYNOPSIS OF *Memory of a Miner*

***Memory of a Miner*** opens the door for the reader to listen in as Carl Ruth recounts his personal experiences and the miner/mine operator conflicts he and his brother miners faced in Harlan County, Kentucky, between the rough and tumble years of 1931 to 1959.

The book consists of three main sections, divided geographically. These regional locations provide the backdrop and context for his journey:

**Part One:** Washburn to Coxton

**Part Two:** Coxton to Black Mountain

**Part Three:** Black Mountain to Harlan

**Part One** opens with the story of Carl's near-death experience as a baby, living with his family in Washburn, Tennessee. Here's where the reader becomes acquainted with Carl as a boy, growing up hard scrabble, the youngest of five children. Not only is this section entertaining and endearing, it also provides insight into aspects of his character that come together later in the book to make up Carl, the man.

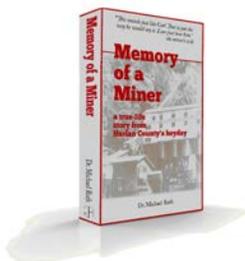
His wife Della is also introduced in this section, and together they share some of the challenges and significant losses they suffered as a young couple and how they managed them.

**Part Two** finds Carl first in Coxton and then Black Mountain, Kentucky, where he spends his prime adult years completely devoted to what he loved most – digging coal out of the heart of a mountain and working for miner rights.

Although this includes secretly joining the union, setting up UMWA pickets and being a direct target of gun thugs at the Battle of Crummies Creek, this section also clearly demonstrates why Carl and Della considered these to be the best years of their life together. The latter – the pleasure these people knew in those turbulent days – is often left out of the stories about this era in Harlan County.

Here's where Carl really shines – his love for mining and his love for storytelling all come together in this section of the book. The friendships, the camaraderie, the “good times”.....as well as the bad.....are recalled with all the vigor and vitality present when they were first experienced. His personal story is flushed out in its lively historic context. There is a trove of Harlan County history in general and its mining history particularly.

**Part Three** follows Carl to Harlan, Kentucky, and the event which led him to close the door on his mining career of 28 years. This section is a testament to a life lived to the hilt...where Carl recounts the gains and losses he got from spending the best years of his life doing what he loved most – digging coal from the earth.



***Memory of a Miner*** by Dr. Michael Ruth

Published by *Growth Resources*

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Both Print & eBook available @ [www.memoryofaminer.com](http://www.memoryofaminer.com)

## What Makes *Memory of a Miner* Relevant?

*Memory of a Miner* is a true account – the recording of an oral history – of one man’s journey as an old-school miner in the southern Appalachian coal mining region of Harlan County, Kentucky, between 1931 to 1959.

This is the same period that “Bloody Harlan” gained its reputation as the battleground for some of the most volatile and insidious conflicts over worker’s rights this country has ever known.

And although volumes have been written about the struggles and sacrifices that defined this time and place in American history, an important reality is usually missing in those accounts...

*...the fact that despite the coal wars at home and a World War abroad, the fun times shared and the friendships made make this the most treasured time of life for most of those who lived it.*

That was certainly true for my dad and the brotherhood of miners who were his contemporaries. And he has the stories to prove it! *Memory of a Miner* revisits his journey – told from his perspective – of the bad *and* the good.

Dad not only loved mining, but he was a crack storyteller to boot! Anyone who enjoys a good story will be delighted to find this book chocked full of hilarious, one-of-a-kind real-life adventures recreated by this world-class storyteller.

Those with mining in their roots will certainly identify with the day-to-day challenges, risks and victories revisited in *Memory of a Miner*. Even though it is the recording of one miner’s experience, in essence it documents the life and times of all miners of that day. In doing so, this book will be appreciated by all who share a connection to this world.

In addition, *Memory of a Miner* retains the historical integrity of the period by weaving facts of record with first-hand accounts of a miner right in the thick of it. Students of southern Appalachian history will appreciate not only the accuracy of the chronicle but also the personal perspective *Memory of a Miner* affords.

Finally, readers who fancy stories about salt-of-the-earth folk who fight for what they believe in...and win...will love *Memory of a Miner*. This narrative fleshes out the robust day-to-day life of real people who knew how to work hard *and* play hard.

As such, *Memory of a Miner* is an inspiring commentary on life which we are all drawn to – a journal of joy and sadness, success and failure, hardship and bounty on an intimate scale. The real-life story of one who faced daunting challenges and not only persevered, but was truly determined to enjoy life.

**What readers are saying:**

*Never have I read anything that carried me through the emotional spectrum between hilariously funny and heart-wrenchingly sad the way this story did. As the majority of this true tale is told in the miner's own words and endearing dialect, by the time I finished the book I felt like he was someone I had known all my life. I can highly recommend Memory of a Miner. It was an amazing ride.* Katie B., South Carolina

*Memory of a Miner weaves first-hand accounts with historical facts to tell a story of bygone days, the way a grandfather does on the back porch on a lazy Sunday afternoon. If you come from mining roots, or you simply want to enjoy a truly compelling account about life in a southern Appalachian mining town, then you should read this book.* Thomas K., Tennessee

*Memory of a Miner* is a chronicle of joy and sadness, success and failure, hardship and bounty on an intimate scale. It is a visitation into the life of a man full of courage, strength, and wit who only knew one way to live - all in.

The heart of this story takes place between 1930 and 1960 in Harlan County, Kentucky - the most volatile time and place in the well-known conflict between the coal miners and the owner/operators of that day.

Although much has been written about this subject - some accurate, some practically fiction - an important reality is usually missing in the telling. Despite coal wars at home and the World War abroad, the fun times enjoyed and the friendships made make this the most treasured time of life for most of those who lived it.

Experience this journey through the eyes of an old-school miner who not only loved mining, but was a crack storyteller to boot!

You're invited to pull up a chair and get ready for some good laughs...and perhaps a few cries...as you listen to him tell his story of this amazing time in Harlan County's history.

Dr. Ruth is an author, counselor, and psychotherapist in private practice. He and his wife Susan are long-time residents of Knoxville, Tennessee, and are very happy to have their grown children and new grandson close by.

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**Memory of a Miner**

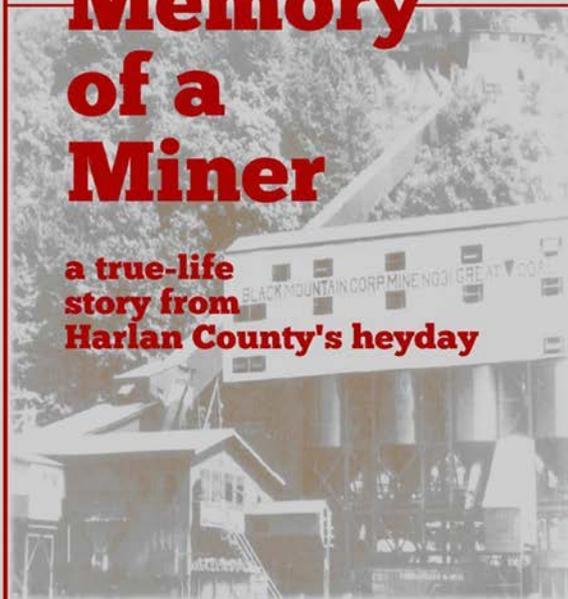
Dr. Michael Ruth



*"This sounds just like Carl. That is just the way he would say it. I can just hear him."*  
the miner's wife

# Memory of a Miner

**a true-life story from Harlan County's heyday**



Dr. Michael Ruth

# MEMORY OF A MINER

A True-Life Story from  
Harlan County's Heyday

Dr. Michael Ruth

 Growth Resources  
Knoxville, Tennessee

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## An excerpt from *Memory of a Miner*

There were two terms thrown about in those days, and to be called either was about the worst label a man could have. The first has been referenced a number of times already and we have just discussed them as being “deputies.” But that’s not the term. Miners never called these men deputies. To them, to do so was an insult to the concept of true law officers everywhere. To the miners and their families everywhere these men were known by the derisive term “gun thugs.” They were despised men to the miners, their families, and to union organizers. The “gun thugs” were the enemy who, as demonstrated above, were bought and paid for by the coal operators.

The second term belongs on the other side of the fray – on the miners’ side. In many ways, this name was more despicable to the majority of miners than was “gun thug.” To his dying day, just the mention of the term would raise Dad’s ire. The word, of course, is “scab.”

A scab was an ostracized man, a man without a country. The scab didn’t want his life or his family jeopardized (as if any miner did). He didn’t want the struggle and conflict. He wanted to cross the picket line and continue to work. (Though the union men would say of them, “They shore didn’t mind getting the advantages we fought and died for though!”)

The “scab” has been the recipient of derision for as many years as there have been picket lines to cross. One writer dipped his pen in acid and wrote the following:

When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs, angels weep in heaven, and the Devil shuts the gates of Hell to keep him out...Judas Iscariot was a gentleman compared to a scab. For betraying his master, he had character enough to hang himself. A scab has not.<sup>40</sup>

The tension between the union miners and the scabs was close in intensity to that existing with the operators of nonunion mines and their gun thugs. Dad says, “Lots of them that wouldn’t go on picket lines and support efforts to unionize would get thrown off the nearest bridge and into the river [by union miners].” This wasn’t intended to kill or maim any miner, and didn’t. It was done to send a message and for humiliation.

The strains in relationships caused among these groups: operators, gun thugs, scabs, union miners and union organizers, lasted for decades, for generations, and even existed within families. To this day, wounds are not totally healed in those hills. And though their numbers grow fewer by the year, people still remember. Scars last a lot longer than the wounds which caused them.

---

In the majority, the Coxton years were about working hard to mine coal and working hard to organize nonunion mines. I asked Dad if he could recall the worst picketing experience he ever had:

When we went to Three Point,<sup>41</sup> honey. It's up in a holler off to the right, just before you get to Cawood.

We come out of there that evening, after picketing there that day. You had to come out through a tunnel up there to get out. We had been picketing and the state troopers were up there. It had been a peaceful picket, as pickets go. The troopers let us out but they intended not to let other picketers get in, you see, even though picketing is legal. When we come out of the holler, down through that tunnel, the state troopers was set up there and they intended that nobody else would get in to picket once we got out.

We just doubled back and come up another fork and we crossed one little ol' branch I guess a dozen times a-zigzaggin' around, a-goin' back across that mountain in the night. Man, that was a long haul! We climbed up to the top of the mountain and crossed over and come down in there til [so] we'd be there the next mornin' when they went to work, you see.

What made it so hairy was that if the gun thugs had been roamin' about they'd of just cut us to pieces. We wouldn't a-stood a chance

because we didn't all have guns or nothin'. We was just picketing. And the state troopers were there too and, buddy, they shore wouldn't have helped us!

I said I asked Dad for his worst picketing experience, but that is not quite accurate. In actuality, I was asking him for his second-worst picketing experience. I already knew the worst one. All three of us sitting around the kitchen table that afternoon knew the worst one. We knew instinctively that it wasn't included in the question. Dad called it the saddest day of his life.

(Excerpt from Ch 5, pp. 79-83)

 Give the gift of *Memory of a Miner*  
to family and friends

**YES**, please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of *Memory of a Miner* at \$19.95 each (TN residents add \$1.95 sales tax per book).  
Canadian orders must be accompanied by postal money order in U.S. funds and allow 15 days for delivery.

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## *Memory of a Miner* READER REVIEWS

*"I'm a wife and a mom, and I couldn't believe what the women in this book went through. To be frank, I couldn't have done it. Not knowing if your husband would come home from work that day? Or in what state he would arrive? Sending off your sons – some not even men, others barely so – into those dark mines. More than a few spending the rest of their days as widows, left to be both mom and dad for a slew of children? In my opinion, these women were the real heroes of this book."* Meredith D., South Carolina



*"I just wanted to let you know, I just finished your book. I didn't want to put it down – I loved it! I laughed, smiled a lot, and even cried some. Pushing 67, I knew all the places you mentioned and about 99 % of the people. I relived most of these events as they were told! Thank you again. This book is very dear to me."*

Bill S., Tennessee (older son of Sine and Dolly S., who are often featured in the book)



*"Never have I read anything that carried me through the emotional spectrum between hilariously funny and heart-wrenchingly sad the way this story did. As the majority of this true tale is told in the miner's own words and endearing dialect, by the time I finished the book I felt like he was someone I had known all my life. I can highly recommend Memory of a Miner. It was an amazing ride."* Katie B., South Carolina



*"Honey, it's him! You captured him. It's cut right out of Dad – it's dug right out of him!"* Pat (Ruth) A., Tennessee (the miner's eldest daughter)



*"I couldn't have felt more at home with this book. I thought I was reading my own family story. I know none of this could be made up cause I've heard these same kinds of stories my whole life! I just want to say a big thanks to Mr. Ruth for writing this book. It sure feels like a gift to all of us who've lived with kin that have been in mining."* Arlo P., Kentucky



*"Memory of a Miner weaves first-hand accounts with historical facts to tell a story of bygone days, the way a grandfather does on the back porch on a lazy Sunday afternoon. If you come from mining roots, or you simply want to enjoy a truly compelling account about life in a southern Appalachian mining town, then you should read this book."* Thomas K., Tennessee



*"I just finished the book. It is amazing. Now, even more than the last few years, I cannot wait to return home to those mountains. No, I have never physically lived there but I have lived there through the memories of my relatives who did. When I go there I feel the warmth of family and belonging. I cannot thank you enough for Memory of a Miner."* Kim F., Tennessee



*"Any individual with an ounce of Appalachian blood in his veins owes a great deal of gratitude to Dr. Ruth and his preservation of oral history in Memory of a Miner. The author has breathed fresh life back into these hollers, into these historic communities, into these complex and lively relationships of long ago to give the reader a glimpse into their attraction. I can't recommend Memory of a Miner enough. For those of us who know truth is stranger than fiction, for those of us longing to remember or relive the simpler, close-knit communities of America's past, put your feet up and take some time to enjoy this book."* Amanda B., Kentucky

## INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

*Interviewer: We're here today with Dr. Michael Ruth, author of the newly-released book Memory of a Miner. Welcome, Dr. Ruth...or shall I call you Michael?*

Dr. Ruth: Oh no...let's disregard the formalities. Please call me "Mike."

*Interviewer: Perfect! To get us started...*

### **1. Can you give us a peek into what the reader can expect to find in Memory of a Miner?**

I'll be happy to. Memory of a Miner is the story of coal mining in Harlan County, Kentucky, in the turbulent years from roughly 1930-1960. More specifically, it is the story of my dad who was a miner in Black Mountain (Harlan County) in those years. So, it's really his story as a miner in those times and those times in general in Harlan County.

### **2. Where did you get the idea for this book?**

I remember a very distinct talk with Mother and Dad, down at their house. It was just the three of us. And, it's funny, because I don't remember what the subject was at all, but I remember, Dad launched in to one of his stories and, you know, it's one I'd heard a hundred times but, for some reason, this time I was just struck with how magnificent the story was in terms of just whatever it was that it dealt with and I don't even remember the story. But I remember thinking "that is such a terrific story."

And the second thing was, I remember thinking "He tells these stories **so** well."

And the third thing, which was the eye opener and something which, of course, I knew, but it just hit me in a very compelling fashion that day and time – I knew I wouldn't be able to hear Dad tell these stories forever. So, I thought, "I've got to get these down." And that turned in to "I've got to tell his story...and tell the story of that time, and place."

So – How great the stories were, how terrifically Dad told them, and how I realized that I wasn't going to get to hear those forever from him.

***3. So, I guess you've kind of answered this question already but, when did you know this was a book you just had to write?***

Yep, you guessed it. When I had that experience [1 above] I was like, "I've got to get this down." And I wanted to get it down for me...but I wanted to get it down for a **whole bunch** of people. It was, almost as Jung might say, an archetypical experience. I wanted to get this for...for you, for our kids, for Mother, for my brother and sisters, for our extended family. For those who lived those times and loved those times and knew these men...knew Dad.

And it's a time fading. Every time I would go up in conjunction with the book or do more research or something...you can tell. Not only are the people leaving, which is sad enough, but the places of these stories...the places are leaving as well. And pretty soon, except in written records and fading memories, there will be no account. And that's a very sad thing to me.

***4. I remember in an earlier conversation you said that the book was twenty years in the making. Twenty years is a really long time to keep something alive. So, if you could tell us, what kept you and this book going during all those years?***

Yea, and it's probably good to say, you know, I wasn't putting in six hours a day every day during those twenty years. But the project was with me, and it never left me in those 20 years. And I would be at it feverishly at times and in a more relaxed and distant way at times. You know, there were careers to build and children to raise and this to do and that that to do. But I was with it constantly, more or less, for that entire length of time – doing research, gathering stories, so forth.

*Interviewer: Sure. And another compelling piece of evidence that it was in your soul and you had to get it done. Otherwise, it probably never would have come to completion.*

Yea. I think of Nietzsche's comment about "a long obedience in the same direction." [both laughing!] I think that, uh, it was certainly that! And it was a long trip and a wonderful trip! The trip did more for me than it will probably ever do to honor Dad or tell his story or tell that time or anything else. So...I can't really put into words – and that's an interesting thing for the writer to say – what writing this book did for me. How it impacted me.

*Interviewer: Well it's funny you would even say that because that was going to be my next question, "What did it actually do for you?" So, I guess you've answered that already.*

Well, yea, I guess, but I think I'd like to elaborate on that a little bit.

*Interviewer: Okay.*

### **5. How were you impacted by the writing of this book?**

You know, everything today is transient, if you think about it. Things aren't built to last – they're built not to be repaired but replaced. Statistics show that we move more frequently. We've got instant everything and all of that. I think, if you're not careful, you turn into somebody trying to live with both feet firmly planted in mid-air in that kind of context.

And I think it [writing *Memory of a Miner*] gave me a sense of roots and permanence, and that sort of thing.

### **6. What do you hope your readers will take away from *Memory of a Miner*?**

Man, these are all good questions. I'll be honest with you about something. I don't really write with someone in mind. Now, I did this, obviously [*Memory of a Miner*], obviously, because Dad was in mind; it's his story.

But, I write because I have a story I want to get out. In this case my story happened to be Dad's story. Uh, I think what I would like for the reader to get out of this is first of all is that it was just a cracking read!...that it was an enjoyable journey.

But I think that if they read it...as I wrote it, you might say, that it will play over their emotional spectrum, like an instrument of some kind. I mean, I would laugh to the point to where I couldn't even hardly catch my breath...and these are stories that I had heard my whole life! Uh, and then I'd cry [at other places]. And then I'd feel angry, because of some of the stories of injustice and...just cruelty, really.

So, I was all over the place emotionally, experiencing it as I wrote it. And I guess the short answer is, I'd kind of like the reader to have that same experience as they read it.

*Interviewer: And I'm sure they will. I've actually read it myself and that was my experience. So I can vouch for that!*

Well that's nice. That's maybe an indication that what I was after, I have in some measure reached, maybe.

*Interviewer: Most definitely!*

*Well, Mike, we are so honored that you took the time to stop by and share this journey with us. Thank you so much, and to everyone who reads Memory of a Miner, we sincerely hope you enjoy it!*

It's been my pleasure. Thank you.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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