The South Cumberland Chapter

From a National Guard victory . . .

. . . to a tough Strip Mine Fight

The South Cumberland SOCM chapter, in its first full year of existence, received welcome news early in 1986. In a personal call from Tennessee Congressman Jim Cooper, chapter chair Laura Dees, was told that the plan for a proposed 119,000 acre National Guard Training Center, known as the Spencer Range, was dead. The South Cumberland Chapter formed to fight the planned training range and, after only one year of hard fighting, tasted sweet victory. A dinner fundraiser celebrated the accomplishment with cake walks, banjo music and a salute to all who worked so persistently.

Since the chapter had already designated SOCM's Surface Rights campaign and the statewide fight to stop plans for a Monitored Retrievable Storage unit as two other issues of concern, their victory was followed by new work.

As the year drew to a close, attention was drawn back to one of SOCM's oldest and toughest issues. Two new permit applications have been submitted to mine land originally leased by AMAX Corporation. During the late '70's, AMAX had planned to mine over 20,000 acres on the plateau, but was stopped in a long hard battle fought by SOCM members in the area. South Cumberland Chapter members will remember the successful protection of their homes in the National Guard fight as they face this new threat in what promises to be one of the largest strip mines ever planned in Tennessee.

The Campbell Chapter

Members fight to protect homes and water

During 1986, Campbell County SOCM members addressed stripmine problems in the Lick Creek area, where a new company, Taywood Mining, bought out Spradlin Coal Company and proceeded to apply for two new permit areas during the year. Residents hope to prevent damage to their well water and homes. Mine blasts near homes have caused shaken windows and dropped pictures and have kept residents on edge throughout the year. When the blasts were especially bad, phone calls to federal enforcement officials followed — but usually brought little relief. Members concerned about proposed new mining that would be closer yet to homes, are asking the Office of Surface Mining to carefully review the permit applications in the light of problems already faced with existing mining.

Campbell County members were pleased to hear that funds to reclaim abandoned mine lands were to become available from the State of Tennessee and the U.S. Office of Surface Mining. Six abandoned mine areas within the county are sited for partial reclamation.

One hundred washed cars brought in over $880 in pledges in the very successful chapter furndraiser — a "Wash-a-thon."

"The land around my home is owned by Koppers Corporation, a multi-million dollar company in Pittsburgh. Koppers leases the land to local miners. The entire area surrounding my home is either stripped, being stripped right now, or is planned for a strip mine in the future. My husband and I own our own home and have a good well. If we lose our well or have damage to our home from blasting, we'll have to start from scratch. My husband works two full time minimum wage jobs and with two sons, we just have enough to get by on. If we lost our well or our home foundation was cracked, we'd have to go to the bank. We don't have money saved up for something like that. I've done a lot of things for the first time while I've been fighting to protect our home and well."

— MELISSA SMIDDY —