

Jim and Delores Sullivan

Jim and Delores Sullivan, interviewed in their home in Wright, Wyoming, by Teresa Jordan, June 9, 1986.

Notes taken from tape. Not a transcript except where noted.

J was born and raised in Butte. His grandfather was a miner, contract. He came from Ireland. J's father worked in the mine at one time, but later, he worked in the payroll department for the Anaconda Company. J has one sister, still in Butte. Feeling when he grew up -- if you had a job with the Anaconda Company, you had a job for life and then you can retire. His whole family worked for the Anaconda Company, including two aunts.

D went to school in Butte for a few years, but was born in South Dakota. Came to Butte in 1946 or 47. D was born 1933; J was born 1932. D went Jr High and High School in Butte. Her father was not w/ the Anaconda Company. D lived with her sister and bro in law in Butte, and he worked for the Milwaukee Railroad. She was awed at the size of Butte, the activity, because she came from a small town. She made new friends at school -- 'But I enjoyed it, I enjoyed my life there.'

J and D met in 1958, married in 1960. J went to work for the Co in 1951. Laid off in 1983, in July. He was an inventory analyst; at that time he was working at the warehouse at the concentrator and it included all the duties that went with working in the warehouse -- ordering item, checking them in, etc. He had worked as a foreman's clerk at the Mountain Con Mine for 8 years; worked in the main warehouse in the office for 13 years; then went to the Berkeley Garage as a clerk and then became the warehouse foreman down there; when they had the start of the shakeups in the Company he got moved to the Concentrator warehouse -- January of 1982. Didn't belong to a union; was salaried right from the beginning. Jim had 32 years at the time he was laid off. He tried to take retirement, but he is not old enough. If you are on salary, the Co requires you to be at least 55 years old. 51 at the time. As termination benefit -- had a formula, but it couldn't be more than a year's salary; Jim's figured out to significantly more than that, but he couldn't get more than a year's salary; they paid it out in monthly checks.

Jim didn't think it would come to a complete shutdown. When they first announced that they were going to shut down, Jim doesn't think anyone believed it.

They thought it was maybe a scare tactic to get the unions to sign the contract to give the Co more flexibility on what they could have the union men do. Jim thought that, at least.

D says she was like Jim, she thought they would postpone the shutdown, that it was just one of these things that they had said before. But when it did close, she didn't think it would ever open again; Jim thought it would. "He couldn't get it through his head. [He kept saying,] "Well, another month or two," and I kept saying, "It's never going to open." Hopefully, it will. But it isn't under ARCO, that's for certain."

Q: What did the Company lead you to believe along that line -- of course, they are still calling it a suspension rather than a shutdown.

J says that some Company officials said that they might reopen around Christmas of 1983 if the price of Copper improved, if they could get these concessions from the unions as far as productivity and flexibility. "They hinted, or even said, that they would reopen. And I don't think that anybody else that really worked for the Company ever thought that it would shut down completely. Then the rumours started that they were going to open in January of 1984, and so on and so forth. A lot of rumours going on.

Q: what was your first response when they told you they were going to shut down and you with 32 years were soon to be laid off?

J says, "Utter shock. I figured that since I had worked for them that long, they owed me more than that. And I'm not alone. There are a lot of other people that worked that long that felt the same way. And you were hurt, and you were mad at the Company and so on and so forth."

They announced in December of 1982 that they were gong to shut down in June of 1983, and that the people who were still going to be working for them would be notified by March of 1983, which they did. That day, they came down to where Jim worked and told him he would be terminated at the end of July. He would get one more month past June to clean up whatever had to be done in the office. When he came home, I guess I was in shock. You know, you really can't believe it when it happens to you. And I don't know what I said. Well, I called her as soon as I found out, when they had given me the date.

D says that they were probably in shock, but you think you have a year to go, with unemployment, you can look for something, something will pop up. J says, you also think that maybe they will open it up in three months or six months -- you always had it in the back of your mind that they would reopen it. D says that the one thing in their favor was that they had a home that was paid for. And your

expenses aren't that much, really, if your home is paid for, and we didn't have any bills [except a new truck which they had bought in September].

They had no kids at home: they were all married and didn't live at home. Kids:

Thomas Hardesty

John Hardesty

Sally Willoughby

All in Butte. They are D's children from a previous marriage.

After the layoff, J kind of laid around until October, then he started looking for work. He went to the Golden Sunlight outside of Whitehall, applied for every job he could get a line on, sent resumes to every job he could get a line on. Most of the resumes were sent through the Employment Office -- they would call him up and tell him there was a job somewhere. He was getting unemployment at that time.

Q: what were your thoughts about relocating at that point?

They didn't want to leave Butte, so he looked for jobs in and around Butte. Then there was a job in Polson, which wasn't too far from Butte, so he applied for it. In all the jobs he applied for, none of the applications asked him for a birth date. But he feels he wasn't given a job because of his age. He put down how long he worked for the Company; all they had to do was do simple math and they knew how old he was. That's his opinion. He had a line on a couple of jobs where he's sure they hired young girls, because the jobs were secretarial jobs -- "Because I was getting desperate then, for anything."

D was not working outside the home at that time. She had worked for 17 years before that. She had an opportunity to go back to work, but she decided not to.

Q: What was it like to have Jim home?

D: (laughs) "It drove me bananas! I think there was a little too much togetherness. It wasn't gradual -- probably like a retiree -- it wasn't gradual, it was bang. And he'd say, what can I do now?"

J: "Because you can only do so much around the house and then pretty soon you have it all done. Then my son offered me a job, he owns a taxidermy shop, and he offered me a job in the taxidermy shop, so I took it -- shaving hides (laughs)... So I worked there from December of '83 right up until August of '84 when I got a call for an interview down here."

Q: When you've worked 32 years at one job, and you've been a steady worker and a good income source, it must be almost inconceivable to be unemployed and dangling ...

J: Exactly, exactly.

D: "And you know, this part about coming down here was really, really hard. We'd never been away from the kids, they'd never been away from us. Close family. We did so much together. And the grand kids -- we have eight grandchildren. And there wasn't a day that they weren't over to the house. Jim's mother, his aunt, you know, he'd stop there every night to do things, to empty her garbage or whatever, you know, errands. And to leave them -- I think we had to cut the apron strings as well as they. That was the hardest part, wasn't it? [Jim agrees] And now it isn't too bad, although we made quite a few trips back to Butte [laughs]."

Q: Did you consider not taking this job, not relocating?

No. J: From the time they called me for the interview, even though we didn't want to move, I always knew we were going to have to take the job, because it's with the same company. I'm building up my retirement benefits, and I had to go with them.

D: It would be pretty tough to live four or five years, and your pension is so reduced. Even at 55 -- unless they retire you. But for you to get it, you see what I mean, what is it? It's almost 50%.

J: "And see, I wasn't having any luck in Butte getting a job. Like I say, I applied for every job that I could get a line on, and I wasn't having any replies. And the unemployment ran out, and the job I was working at the taxidermy shop, it wasn't really paying that much money. It was something for me to do, more or less. So eventually, we were going to have to start going into our savings. We weren't covered by any hospital plan -- well, I got one through the shop, but it was nothing like the hospital plan they have down here. But everything led to us moving down here once I got the job.

D: But even when he got the interview we were hoping -- even though we knew we had to leave -- that it would be a job.

Q: Did you have to go into your savings during that time?

No. We were one of the fortunate ones. The severance pay was paid on a monthly basis, so it was just like having a job. They didn't have the house to pay

for or any other big bills like medical bills. The insurance also continued for a year -- both hospital and life.

Q: Did you think that the treatment and severance you got from ARCO was fair?

Yes. They didn't have to give any severance pay -- J didn't belong to a union, but it was their policy to give it. One of the things that he didn't like was that his severance pay figured out, in the formula they had, to \$45,000 and he didn't get that. He got \$13,000 less because you couldn't get more than your yearly salary. He feels that they should have given you the full amount if that's what their policy for the formula was. But other than that, he was satisfied with the severance benefits. One thing I'm going to say is that I don't think that ARCO and Anaconda Minerals helped the people they laid off get a job. There were jobs down here that nobody knew about until January or February of 1984. And I mean, whoever hears this, I tell this to the ARCO, I've told them out here, too, I've told it to everybody. I think when a Company lays people off, they should make every effort to employ those people first if there are jobs around -- if you are qualified for the job. Which, there were jobs down here that I was qualified for before I got the interview in August. But that is probably communications between the employee relations departments. But that's one gripe I do have against ARCO."

Q: That's one question I wanted to ask, because ARCO employees people all over the country and even in foreign countries and you would think that there could have been more in-house shuffling to get people jobs.

J says that when they were laid off, they were told that they would be made aware of jobs in other places for ARCO. They had a couple of seminars on employment, but he feels that they really didn't do all that they could have done.

J works in the warehouse here. He is no longer on salary; he's on day's pay, or hourly like they say here. In Butte he was a supervisor. Here, he's just one of the workers.

Q: It seems like, since you had so much time with the Company and hopefully will go through to full retirement, it would have been cheaper for them to hire somebody else who hadn't worked for ARCO before; it probably would be cheaper for them not to hire people who had vested years in ARCO from other places. First, am I correct in that, and secondly, do you think that was one reason they didn't communicate better?

J says he really doesn't know what the problem was. This mine has only been going for seven years, and most of the people have been here for four or five. So maybe it would be cheaper; a lot of the people here aren't going to get too good a

pension. If they vest their time at 10 years, a pension based on 10 years is really nothing. A lot of them think they are going to be set for life if they can get ten years, but they won't get much. But J says he is not alone in thinking that ARCO didn't really do their fair share in trying to get them jobs. J: "Eventually, when people got wind of this place down here, a lot of people from Butte did come down here. And they were given jobs. A lot of people from Butte came down and were given interviews and they wouldn't move down here, they wouldn't make the move."

Q: How does your income compare down here with what you were making in Butte?

It's probably about 30% more than what J was making in Butte.

Q: And how about the lifestyle that that can afford you here? How does that compare?

They bought another house down here. The Company gave them 10% of the price of house to buy it because they owned it. The company was in the housing business at the time J and D moved down. As far as lifestyle, they don't do much differently now than they did in Butte. They were always go-ers, and they still are. On days off, they go places. They have a decent life style, but they did the same Butte. Living is a little cheaper in Butte.

Q: Why do you think so many people had so much reluctance to move -- especially in places where they just needed a few more years? Why are the ties to Butte so strong?

Probably family. In J and D's case, it was family and friends. The recreational facilities around Butte -- snowmobiling, camping, fishing. Down here, the opportunities are there, but you have to drive so far to do something. The Big Hole for fishing is 45 minutes away; you can go after work. Here, you have to drive 100 miles to a river. D says that she thinks it was the change -- "with Jim and I -- we've discussed this since we've been down here -- I think that if we had moved once or twice in our married life, it would have been different. But when you get this age, you think, this is home, this is life right here, it will never change. And then it does. But now, after this, we could move tomorrow. It's *doing* it, that's all it is, is just doing it. And it was hard. I think it was harder for me than for Jim, because he had more people contact [with his work]. Here, I didn't, so I did a lot of walking and ... The people that are down here from Butte, it seems like you'd ...

Tape 1, Side B

D: [about people from Butte] Well, you have something in common to talk about, so I think you see one another out. What's so ironic about it is that we really didn't know anyone from Butte that came down here -- we hadn't known them in Butte. It's strange, isn't it. Jim knew a couple fellows, but not very well.

J's boss at the warehouse was from Butte; he came down in October of '83. Also, the uncertainty of a new job is a stress. You don't know what to expect.

Q: And again it must have been exacerbated by the fact that you had been in one job for 32 years.

Yes. It was tough. Another thing that made it tougher for Jim is that the average age of the people who worked in the warehouse was 24 years old. He was 52 and they stuck him in there. One thing they asked him was if he thought he could work alongside a younger person and he said yes. D points out that another thing for Jim was working with females. J agrees. Down here, women work in the warehouse, and that's different for him. He was used to an all-male workforce, which is what Butte had. Very few women worked in the pit. Jim worried about the physical end of working with younger people, worried whether or not he could do his share, but so far he hasn't had any problems. He gets along with everybody who works out there, so he hasn't had any personality problems or physical problems. He guesses he is kind of lucky.

Q: How do you find the workplace here in terms of the camaraderie? When you wake up in the morning, do you feel as much that you want to get to work as you did in Butte, or ...

J says that, for one thing, they are working 12 hour shifts, and that isn't the type of work he'd like to make a 30-year career out of. But as far as the work, it's about the same as in Butte -- the same type of warehousing, so he doesn't mind it. The camaraderie -- you have less in common with the younger people, so it's a different type, even when you are talking about things. Most of the women have small children and are talking about baby sitting and so on. Jim is like the grandpa -- there are a few other guys in their late 50's, but this is a young workforce because it's a relatively new mine. The average age in the town is 27. Yet they are all nice, they talk to you, they make you feel at home. D adds that, for young people she thinks they have accepted them. She feels accepted.

Q: How long did it take you, D, to feel at home here and get over that initial loneliness?

She says she thinks that it was about 14 months. This last January when Jim had his vacation and they went back to Butte, she stayed for two weeks until he got his

days off to come after her. "And I missed Jim, I missed the house, I just missed being in my own home. So I think that was kind of it for me. It took about 14 months. Jim was sooner. He can settle in easier." He agrees. Of course, he goes to work every day and he talks to people everyday; he says it was easier for him.

Q: In Butte, if something happened, you could call on a relative for help. Do you have a sense of support here?

D says not quite that deep yet, but she thinks in time they will. J says they have friends, but the friends they have are mostly from Butte. That's the funny thing about it. Everybody from Butte seems to kind of stick together down here as far as friends are concerned. You do something with your friends and they are from Butte. Even though the people that live on this block are nice enough, we've never gone with them anyplace. Another thing is, unless you are on the same shift with a person, you are never going to be able to do anything with them. If you don't have the same days off as your neighbor, you can't do anything with them. And it just so happens that the people that we do stuff with, go camping with or whatever, they are on the same shift I am and they have the same days off and we get to go places with them... But that's the big thing. If you don't have the same days off, you might see the same person everyday but you'd never be able to do anything with them socially.

D says you also meet people at church -- they go to Blessed Sacrament in Wright.

Talk about Butte picnics in Seattle and San Francisco.

Q: A lot of people in Butte still don't have a full-time job, yet for some people, it's still inconceivable to move away. It's been interesting on this trip to meet people in Colstrip and here who like the towns and find the working conditions good. After talking with people in Butte about these places, it came as a surprise to me to see how nice these places are, because there is a feeling among a lot of people in Butte, I think, that life is much more precarious and the living conditions are much worse elsewhere. Where do you think that comes from? A fear of the unknown or a reluctance to move?

J: It might be, and there might be people who have come down here and didn't like it so they are going back to Butte and say, don't go down to Wyoming, it's a bad place. In fact, one rumour going around Butte was that beer was \$3 a can down here. [D: That would keep people away! laughs] Because you had to bring it in from wherever. And I mean, it's just ... The only thing is you have to travel farther, but yet, if you really stop and think about it, we didn't travel any further on the weekends. We'd go to the Ruby, that was 90 miles, and Casper is 90 miles.

S: "I think it's the fear of the unknown, like us. I think just leaving your home, moving away, we've been all over -- not all over, but we travel a lot -- and we knew what it was like on the other side, but I guess we didn't want it. It's quite an experience, though. I'm really not sorry we came down. Are you?"

J: 'No.'

They kept their house in Butte.

Q: Do you plan to go back there?

D: 'We think so, but we really don't know. We're thinking of going to Arizona.

J: "We didn't want to sell the house, but yet we don't know if we are going to go back to Butte."

They have a good tenant. They might retire in Arizona, "much to the dismay of our kids."

Q: Would that have been a possibility before you had moved here? If everything had continued in Butte, do you think you would be thinking of moving for retirement?

No. They would have stayed. They still may go back to Butte. They don't know. Jim wants to wait until he's 55 and then they'll coast from there.

Q: How about the package that was given to the 150 who were just laid off. Did you consider taking the package at that point?

Yes. Jim was laid off. The package was severance pay and ARCO would have bought the house back. They were ready to move back to Butte. That was on a Friday. Then, because one fellow in the warehouse retired and another girl volunteered for the package, he was rehired on Tuesday. So naturally he went back to work.

Q: If you had taken that, you still would not have gotten your full retirement?

No. Because he is not old enough. He would have to be 55 before they will do anything about pension. For some people they 'bridged the time,' but he had too much time to bridge.

Q: How does it work if you take early retirement? You said if you had retired in Butte it would have been about 50% of the full retirement...

You take a reduction in the amount, a certain percentage for each year you retire early. J thinks that in Butte, under their plan, it was 62 down to 55. So if he retired when he was 55, he would have to take 7 years time, whatever percentage they knocked off -- it was 28% less. He thinks you lose less down here. But you still have to take a reduced pension. Unless the Company -- say they closed Black Thunder, he might be able to get a full retirement out of them. Also, they make up Social Security -- although they aren't sure about that. If the pension is there and they can get enough money from it when J turns 55, he will take it. At least they will look at it.

Q: You said earlier that you weren't sorry you had moved down here. If you look back at it now, what are some of the benefits that came from that huge shakeup in your life? Were there any benefits?

From moving down here, the money is better. In '84, he made more money than he had ever made in his working history. And the benefits are fantastic. 100% medical, which is almost unheard of. Dental. But J now thinks that a person should possibly change jobs every ten years. If you are stuck in one job and you have to move, it's really hard. It's something you almost can't cope with -- that's what happened to me. If we had changed jobs, or even worked for the same company and went to different places, which I had a chance to do, and maybe we should have done that. Then the move wouldn't have been so hard. D says that she didn't want to go to Iran, which is where they wanted to send them. But J was talking about the time when the Company was going good and there were a lot of jobs advertised in Alaska and California and all over -- maybe they should have applied for them. J: But it gets back to not wanting to change and not wanting to leave Butte.

D: I think you are too content.

J: Or maybe you could say you are in a rut.

D: Yeah, that too. A contented rut.

J: You know, you are going along good and you have a fairly decent salary and so on. Well, I know now that a person should try and better themselves and apply for some of these jobs. I'm sure -- because we've talked about this before -- the people that have moved many times had an easier time moving down here than we did. That's what it amounts to.

D: But we even notice the difference now after being here. When we first came down here, our kids were down here constantly or we were in Butte. They were

always making an excuse to come down. Our phone bills were atrocious; theirs were atrocious. The tears! Well, my daughter still cries almost every time she hangs up because we are not there. I think Sal the most -- and the grandkids -- we really miss them. But they all made it down last summer. And it isn't that we don't see them often, because we do. And Jim's mother is going to be 81 years old, and it's kind of hard with her.... Well, everything is on his sister now, she has the responsibility, where before they kind of, one would go and the other would be there, so one would be there in case the mom needed something.

Q: What do you think could have made the move easier for you, either in terms of some program that the Company or Job Service might have put on, or something else? Looking back, if you were to make suggestions for other people going through the same thing you did, what would have made it easier?

If they had known somebody that lived down here before they came down so they could have asked them what it was like, that would have made it easier.

D: "We had known people that had to leave Butte, and how they carried on. And I said to Jim, I think they are bananas. I think they are nuts. We did not carry on like that. I know that. Remember Bernice?"

J: "There was this one friend of ours, and they had to leave Butte and I mean it was, to them, the end of the world. But I think if we could have talked to somebody that lived down here... As far as the Company putting on a program, maybe they could have shown movies of the town. I don't know. I don't know if they could do that or not."

D & J had traveled through Wyoming years before, and D only that it was so hot she thought they could never survive it. And it was desolate. 10 years ago, Wright was just an open field. Gillette went from 3500 people to 25,000 in five or six years with the oil and coal boom.

D: "But I think that our family and friends made a point of coming down. We had company I'd say 10 or 11 months in a row, two and three times a month. We even had friends fly from Oregon to come see Wyoming because we were down here, last February. And I think that helped. They'd come and say 'you're doing fine,' and we'd take them here and show them this and that. I think they helped wean us away."

They miss the mountains and the trees. There really aren't any trees unless you go to the Big Horns or the Black Hills, and they have been both places. But they decided that as long as they are here, they are going to see all of Wyoming. They may never come back again, so they are going to see it and enjoy it.

[Talk about travels in Wyoming]

Q: How secure do you feel your job is here now?

J says that when they had the layoffs, it reminded him so much of Butte. He thought the place was going to fold up. You would hear rumours, but the Co would say they were not going to lay anybody off. In January they laid off 150. But in a meeting the middle of January, they painted a pretty rosy picture. So right now J feels he has as much security as the coal market is going to give him. The Co seems to be doing pretty well on their long term coal contract. But since he has been here only 20 months, if there is another layoff, he will be laid off again. He's second from the bottom in security. Everett, their friend, is on the bottom. They lay off on the basis of seniority, even though there is no union, which, J thinks, is fair.

Q: How are labor management relations?

It seems to be good even though there is no union. Of course, the management has changed because all the people from Tonopah are here, and they have a different idea of how to run it than the people who were here when J first came. Tonopah is completely closed now. About 50 families came from there. [talks about those laid off at Tonopah.]

Starting wage here is \$14.31 an hour. J is making \$17.45 an hour. When J left Butte, base pay was \$96 a day, or \$100 a day. Now they are on 12 hours a day; so base pay is \$143 a day or more.

Tape 2, Side A

When jim first came down here, they worked 8-hour shifts, worked 7 shifts and then were off 2. You got time and a half for Saturday and doubletime for Sunday. So some truck drivers and mechanics with overtime were making \$75,000 a year. That was the year J made more money than he ever had before. Then the new management came and the price of coal started to drop and they eliminated the premium pay for the weekends. J could never see how they could begin to pay it anyway. But they paid that to get people to come here. When this place first started, it wasn't what it is now. It was pretty primitive. But when you are making that much money for four or five years, your life style is different. Everybody has a new car and a new truck and a nice house and they go everywhere. Since they have eliminated the premium pay and overtime, a lot of people have lost their houses because they lost that money. Young people, mostly.

There has been real turnover in real estate. The Co bought back homes from laid off employees -- 33 homes bought back. They have since sold one. The Co felt they had to buy the homes back, because they gave people the incentive to buy them and live in Wright. They want this community to go. Wright just incorporated in January of '85. Before that, the Co ran the town. The Co would give you 10 % of the sale price to get people to move into the homes. So they did volunteer to buy them back. Now, the Co is getting out of the housing market gradually.

There were always Campbell County property taxes. [More talk about settling in Wright.]

Q: Do you talk to people in Butte when you are there, tell them that this isn't as bad as you thought it would be?

J: "Oh yeah. Everytime we went back when we first moved down here, somebody would say, well, how is it down there?' and I'd tell them it isn't that bad. These are guys I knew, that I worked with, that were out of work, I'd say, you should call up and get an application, find out what's going on. Because they were hiring, and they are still hiring out there if you are qualified for the type of job. But there again, unless you make up your mind that you are going to have to leave Butte, there is no sense in coming down here and wasting your time, is what you are doing."

D: "Not one of them came down."

J: "The first three or four months we were down here, we had at least one phone call a week from somebody in Butte wanting to know what the phone number was at the mine, are they hiring and this and that. But not a one of them came down. You just have to be willing to make the break and able to move. That's all there is to it."

D: "They wanted to write for the application, and whether they could afford to come down [I don't know] ... but several, we said, you can stay with us. I mean, we felt we knew them well enough, we knew they couldn't afford a motel."

J: "But not a one of them came."

Q: When you came down and got an interview, did you have to pay for that trip?

No. The Company reimbursed him for all his expenses down and back on the interview. They did that for everybody that their personell department called up to ask to interview. A lot of guys came down on their own and rustled a job; of course, that was just on their own. Some guys got a job that way, too. They just

came down here and went out to the mine and got an application. Dick Thompson was one of them. There are quite a few people in Gillette who are from Butte.

Q: How different is it to work for a company that is not unionized?

J: Like night and day. Out here, anybody can do anything as far as electrical, mechanical, welding or whatever, and in Butte, each union had charge of that particular [jurisdiction]."

Q: If you had to choose between working in this situation non union or a similar situation to Butte with diversified unions, which would you choose.

J says probably non union, although the unions have their points to. They are trying to unionize down here. They say that some of the people who were laid off would not have been laid off if they had had a union. Some of the people that got laid off had more time than other people. The union supporters say that if you had a bad job evaluation or some infraction of the rules, they laid you off. But Jim, overall, thinks they are getting along just as well without a union as they did in Butte. One reason -- the first year J and D were down here, 1984, they got two raises, good raises. The Co just gave it to them. And they were good raises, not just 10¢ an hour like they used to give in Butte. One time it was 50¢ an hour and one time it was 75¢. The last raise we got was \$1 an hour. Which is a lot more than they ever got in Butte. I can remember they went on strike for 9 months and ended up with a nickel an hour. So that's one of the things down here. I think they are getting along good without a union. There has never been a strike here; without a union, they would have to reason to strike. This mine is probably one of the highest if not the highest paying in the Powder River Basin, and there are quite a few mines down here -- 17 or 19. Amax, Mobile Oil, Kerr McGee have mines down here. ARCO's Black Thunder is the biggest open pit coal mine in the continental US.

[Talk about the mine]. It's not a big hole like in Butte. The coal pit is very small compared to that. In depth and diameter and size -- but it's nothing but coal, the coal seam is 100 feet thick, and it's endless. When Jim first saw the pit, he expected something like the Berkeley, and it's not like that at all. It's low sulfur coal.

Q: What have I missed?

J says that they have a St. Patrick's celebration down here that is second to New Year's. The Wright Volunteer Fire Station puts it on and it's a heck of a celebration. Even Gillette has a pretty good Irish population. There are not a lot of Irish here, but everybody wants to be Irish on St. Patrick's day. J & D are the only Sullivan in

the phone book. In Butte, nobody could find their telephone number, there were so many Sullivans.

D: "Now he's telling me he's an endangered species because of his age."

Butte is 502 miles from Wright. They used to go there on J's three days off. D says "Oh, we were nuts. We didn't think we could live for another week if we didn't get back there. Now we're a little more content. We can stay home on a day off once and awhile and mow the lawn."

[Talk about gardening in Wright. Talk about altitude in Wright.

D: "We're here, and we're going to make the best of it."

J: "Yeah, that's our philosophy. We're gonna make the best of it, and just put things behind us and go ahead. That's what has kept us going. You really can't look back. You wish things would have been different, but we're here now and we're going to make the best of it. See what happens in the next year. There are rumours now of another layoff -- it's just like Butte. Every month there is another rumour. If they lay me off this time, I'm going to fight for a pension."

D: "But yet we feel very fortunate to have a job, and a good job. It isn't just *a* job, it's a good job."

J: "Every time we go back to Butte and Butte is busy, there's no doubt about it. I myself don't know how those people that have stayed there and have been without work for three years, how they made out. Maybe they have a secret that we didn't know of. Maybe we could have done the same thing if we stayed there and got odd jobs and this and that, but I could really see that we'd wipe out our savings. And we heard that some people did, that stayed there and picked up odd jobs here and there."

D: "Like we heard in the Butte paper, there were 1500 applications to date for this Washington Construction. That's a lot of applications! 1500! Ron Benton is going back to be employed by Washington. And he asked Jim -- he didn't come right out and ask him. What did he say to you?"

J: "Would I move back to Butte if I got a job with some other company, and I told him at this point that no, I really can't afford it."

D: "55, fine, then he can try and get another job. But all along, Ron had this job."

Q: Has this whole experience affected your marriage?

Both say for the better.

J: "It brought us closer together, because there is just the two of us and we did a lot of things together before, but now we're doing more things together because there is just the two of us. In other words, in Butte, you might be gone uptown with one of the kids or by yourself and now we both go to town because it's something to do."

D: "Which he hates." (laughs)

J: "But I would say it brought us closer together."

D: "I mean, he even goes grocery shopping! And then he's like this -- 'Are you done? Are you done?' He hates for me to look at anything too long. (laughter). But I'd say, closer."

J: "Because there were some guys who came down here that left their families in Butte, and lived down here and commuted on the weekends and on their days off. And how that ever worked is just beyond my way of thinking."

Jim pulled down the trailer and lived in the trailer court for six weeks and D packed, had garage sales, etc. She sold \$2100 worth of junk at a garage sale. They had lived in the house a long time.

D: "I think the house was awful hard to leave, too. It was an older home and we tore that house apart from one end of the house to the other and remodelled, and I don't know. We just had it the way we wanted it and had to leave it. A lot of our sweat and blood was in there. And fights. (laughter)"

J: "If you had it to do over, a house is just a house, but I don't know."

The house is on B Street.

They talk about their house in Wright. They fixed it up.

End of interview