# Jim and Cheryl Ballard

Jim and Cheryl Ballard, interviewed in their home in Wright, Wyoming by Teresa Jordan. Jim worked in employee relations for ARCO in Butte; now works for ARCO in Wright at the Black Thunder mine. Notes taken from tape. Latter part of notes is a rough transcript.

J was from 4th generation mining family. Father's family was from 'rockbound coast of Maine.' Doesn't know too much about father's background. His father's father had background in Salt Lake, part of the Mormon church, split from that, came to Butte. On mother's side, J thinks they came from a town in Idaho that is no longer in existence. Both sides of Jim's family mined. His grandfather on his mother's side was a miner. Jim's father was a mining engineer; before that, he worked as a contract miner; then in various levels of management; eventually a superintendant underground. At the end of his career, he was superintendant of leach and precip. His father, J's grandfather, worked for the Company, but as an abstractor rather than a miner. Jim's father would have preferred him not to work in mine, but it was a tradition in Butte that if you worked for the Company, your sons and daughters also worked for the Co.

Q: Why do you think he would have preferred you do something else?

"In retrospect, I think Butte kind of traps you. It's like no other place on earth. You live in Butte and you think if you leave it, the world is flat and you will fall off the edge. I think he always wanted to leave Butte but because my mother's roots were so firmly entrenched there, they just never could. But a lot of people just never think of leaving."

Cheryl's family, both sides, worked for ACM. Her father and his father both did; her grandfather was an underground miner, can't remember what mine. She doesn't think he was contract; rather, day's pay. Her father was never underground. He worked in the ore bins and at the crusher. On her mother's side, her grandmother worked for the ACM as a telephone operator. Her mother's father, as far as she knows, never worked for the ACM. Cheryl's ethnic background is totally mixed--Scotch, Irish, German, French, and Swede. Both sides are diverse. The melting pot. "We match Butte quite well."

Jim's background is Cousin Jack and German. He says he has never had the strong ties to his national origin; Cheryl can spit off what she is. Jim always says "I'm three quarters Scotch and one quarter soda."

Jim went to work for ACM full time in 1970; had worked at Columbia Gardens for two years, and had worked two summers as day's pay laborer. Got out of high school in 1965. Married in 1969. Jim started as a leach technician, under father. Did that for about 8 months, then became production foreman at Leach and Precip. He was salaried from the beginning. Was production foreman until September of 1973; then went to the concentrator as maintenance. Then, in June of '74, became Employee Relations Field Representative (tape bad here). That was the first year in the history of his career that they didn't have a strike. That was the only year he was not involved in labor negotiations. Copper prices were up; that's the reason they didn't have a strike.
He was field rep from '74 until '77; then Labor Relations Coordinator from '77 to '83. He was on the diciplinary committe, followed grievances from the 2nd step up through and including arbitation. There could be as few as 3 or as many as 5 steps in grievance. He helped negotiate contracts in '77, '80, and '83.

Q: Do you know how there came to be 13 unions?

J knows some of the historical background. Butte originated as an underground mining camp; for a good number of years, the predominate union was the Miner's Union which eventually evolved into the Steelworkers Local AI. Thinks orginally it was Mine, Mill and Smeltermen. There were a smattering of crafts unions-- boilermaker, machinists, etc. The underground mines were supported by what we called our main shop complex. But pretty much when Butte was primarily underground, Steelworkers did all the work. As Butte evolved into an open pit operation, the other unions -- 'I think, and I couldn't give you the exact historical background on it. but I think that most of the unions were there pretty much throughout the history of Butte, but the craft unions weren t that strong or important until we went into the open pit operation. The craft unions became a stronger influence once we went into the open pit. Also, two other predominant unions in the open pit were the teamsters, they were the folks that drove the trucks; and the Operating Engineers, who were the folks who operated the equipment, the shovels, etc.

Q: Had there been Teamsters and O. E. in Butte prior to the open pit?

They were there, but they were not near as numerous as they became in later years.

[Notes are a rough transcript from here on]

Q: How did you find it to work with so many unions?

Extremely frustrating, because I think in general the people in Butte have a very strong work ethic and I think a lot of that arises out of the underground mining, and the union, pretty much, tied your hands, well, tied their own hands. I think one of the single biggest things you'll find with the unions, common terminology, is "That's not my job." And it's not your job and it's not his job. Part of it's his, part of it's his, part of it's his and part of it's his. To give you an example of the absurdity it could reach, we had to take a sump pump out of the pit. In order to remove that pump, you had to disconnect it electrically, so you had to have an electrician. That was his sole jurisdiction, to disconnect power. Next thing you had to have was a pipefitter, he had to disconnect the pipe, nobody else could disconnect the pipe. Then you had to get a machinist to unbolt the pump. Then, depending on how you hauled it-- if you used a crane, then you had to have an Operating Engineer, and in order to do the rigging, you had to have an Ironworker. And then when you hauled it, you had to put it on a Teamsters' truck, who in turn had a Steelworker swamper, and then when he got up to the shops, then it had to be unloaded by whatever craft was going to work on the pump. So you're looking at-- what was that? About 8 people?"

Q: A swamper is essentially what a nipper was underground?

No, a swamper was basically like a helper on the truck. He was the guy that hooked the rigging to the arm in a boom truck; the teamster ran the boom.

Q: It sounds real clumsy.

Yeah, real clumsy.

Q: What does that do to morale?

I think it was so engrained in Butte, that, to a large extent, I think it didn't affect it at all. It was just kind of a way of life.

Q: I've talked to a lot of people who worked all their life in the pit, and I've talked to people who made the switch from underground to the pit, and for those who worked underground, almost to a man, they've experienced frustration with that. When they are talking about working underground, they will have excitement in their voice...and then switching over to the pit, they didn't have the same excitement about their job anymore. You could get things done underground but aboveground ...

J: You couldn t.

Q: What s your reaction to that?

J: I think that the good people, and especially the contract miners, because they did everything underground -- when I bossed, we did a lot of, for lack of a better term, scabbing. I had a lot of old contract miners working for me and although we had to have a pipefitter, machinist, whatever, to do something, we'd just go ahead and do it. And quite often we got caught, and if you got caught, you had to pay for it.

Q: A lot of people I've talked to, including not union leaders, but good union men, found this pretty frustrating. On the other hand, how do you change something that is that old and that engrained. Could it be changed in an ongoing operation under the same management?

J: I think it could be, and we actually negotiated in 1983 a flexibility agreement. Unfortunately, we never got to implement it.

Q: Would that have made real, substantial difference? Was more involved there than just being able to carry a torch?

J: Yeah. It essentially blurred lines to the extent that, in the example I gave you, pulling out a pump, instead of taking 8 men to perform all these incidental tasks, you'd get it down to maybe 2. Because it's recognized throughout industry that the electrical field is pretty specialized. You don't want just any person going over and fooling w/ electricity. But the other functions, they finally came to realize, could in fact be performed by anybody.
Q: Do you think Washington will get that operation going again?

J: Ahhh, I'm not privy to all the concessions he got. But he's got a hard core of management that I think, if anybody can do it, they can. But as far as the economic outlook goes, it's no better for Washington than it was for Anaconda. Hopefully he will get enough concessions, tax break from the state, wages, that he can make it pay. But the only thing I can say is I wish him luck. I wouldn t sign back on.

Q: What do you think you'll see there in terms of union?

J: You have the right to start out non union. The unions can t force them to go union initially. But, the national labor relations act gives people the right to form a union. And, as amended by Taft Hartley, people have the right to not form unions. I would hope that they would be judicious enough to start

out with a work force that would not want to be union. However, that's easier said than done.

Q: Some peope say that Butte's labor history and labor attitude hurts it in bringing new industry in or possibly working w/ reorganization of the mining there...

J: Having left it, I think it definitely does. Working down here for two and a half years. I've tried to put unions behind me. I just feel that they are no longer necessary. If as management we treat people w/ dignity and respect, you don't need a union. And that is why unions were formed in the first place, going way back prior to 1935. And there is one gentleman, and I can't remember his name, he said that if you don't treat your people properly, you'll get a union, and you'll get the type of union that you deserve.

Q: I've heard that ARCO in Butte, once they shut down in Butte, was not very agressive in placing people in other ARCO operations. For instance, in making knowledge of jobs here available to people in Butte who were looking. They didn't do much to place Butte people. And I've also heard that that was because they were worried about the union.

J: Yeah, it wasn't until I came down here, and I feel it was a personal effort on my part that we got very many people a look in the door because believe me, people who are non union are just totally so paranoid about people who are union. It's a real hurdle to overcome. I can remember being in Butte and I'd have a few people come in, and at that time I was only vaguely aware of what Thunder Basin was and I'd try and write them personal letters of reference and if you got any response at all, it was a thanks but no thanks.

Q: Do you think that [fear of unions] has hurt Butte people in looking for jobs elsewhere?

J: I don t think so, because if you are a good worker, you can get a good job and if you re not, you can't. Because a lot of times, during strikes, people would go out and find jobs other places. And the people who were good workers had a strong work ethic and would get work, and the ones that weren't, wouldn t.

Tape 1, Side B

Q: You were saying that Butte had been handicapped because of the jurisdictional lines.

J: Yeah, people didn't have the skills that people in the general population would. A machinist in the general population could do a variety of things, they could weld, they could cut. But in Butte, the jurisdiction confined them so far down that when they went out into the general population, they just didn't have the skills to do that type of thing. Another classic example is the ironworker. Ironworkers anywhere outside of Butte, they had to be able to weld and cut. In Butte, by jurisdiction, they were not allowed to do that until the latter, dying days. Which you never got to implement. Even operating engineers, a lot of them, although not all, depending on what seniority list they were on, they could maybe only work on one piece of equipment. It makes a world of difference.

Q: Were you the first Butte person to come down here?

J: No, there was a gentleman by the name of Carl Maddox came down as a safety engineer, and a gentleman by the name of Ron Benton came down as a, I don't know his exact title, he was like warehouse superintendant.

Q: He s just left?

J: Yeah, going back to Butte.

Q: What has the experience of Butte people been here?

J: The experience of the Company with the people? Well, I'm actually quite proud of the people that we did bring down from Butte. As a matter of fact, one of the shifters(?) who has recently left and quit, when they did his exit interview, he said that the people he worked with from Butte, and who worked for him, were some of the finest miners and people that he had ever worked with. However I attribute that, to a large extent, to myself, because I was very selective about who I brought down here. There are a number of people, quite a number of people in Butte as a matter of fact -- I wear a sack on my head whenever I go back -- that wanted to work down here and I wouldn't, in a sense, let them across the Wyoming border because to me, you make your own bed and you lie in it. If you are a good worker and a strong work ethic, you have proved yourself in my mind, you got down here. If you didn't, you didn t.

Q: How many people from Butte have come down here?

J: I believe, all total, we've hired -- I used to know this, too.

C: between forty and fifty, isn t it?

J: Yeah, I think 47.

Q: Have most of them stayed on?

J: No, sadly, a lot of them have moved on.

Q: Other than the recent layoffs?

J: No, actually, most of those who have left were because of the recent layoff.

Q: Did they take the package then?

J: Yeah, and I was kind of disappointed. A lot of them were laid off initially and because a lot of people volunteered [to take the package] they could have come back to work but chose to take the package.

C: There were a lot of them whose wives never did move down with them and that was a personal choice of theirs, but I think that had a lot to do with it. If the wives were here, the people who have the wives here, I think most of them stayed.

Q: I think there would be a lot of personal satisfaction if the family was there.

C: There is.

Q: For most of those 47 people, Jim, were you involved in their hiring?

J: Yeah, I'd say all with the exception of about two.

Q: What has their experience been with working non-union?

J: I would say, probably, 95% positive. There was one gentlemen that we hired as what we call a millwright here, he was a machinist up in Butte and he almost didn t get the job because he didn't have the wide range of skills that we require of a mill wright down here, but he picked up a lot of those skills on his own, independent of the company. He was extrememly well thought of down here; he d probably still be working down here, but the seniority thing, he didn t have an option to come back. But when he left he said, just the range of experience and the things I can do down here -- as a mill wright he would do not only machinists work but what in Butte would be a welder's work, an Ironfitter s work, a Pipefitters work. Down here, if you say a pipefitter in

Wyoming, they look at you like you got two heads. Nobody even heard of a pipefitter.

Q: And he was saying that because of that broad range of experience...

J: That he had totally enjoyed working down here. And like I say, I'm sure he'd still be working down here.

Q: He was cut in this layoff and couldn't come back because he had just started working?

J: He'd been here about a year and a half I guess.

Q: But not enough seniority to carry him over?

J: Yes.

Q: How do you find the camaraderie, esprit de corps, compared to Butte?

J: You don't have near the adversarial relationship. When you work in a union environment, it's management and union. Down here, it's much freer, much more open. I think, to a large extent, it's becuase of the people we selected; I think they are more individualistic, they want to think for themselves. They are not afraid to voice a complaint or talk to somebody.

Q: You were saying that when you went back to Butte, you had to wear a hood -- and of course some people would say that there was blackballing within ARCO because of union activities. What s your response to that?

J: I wouldn t say that it's so much of union activity; it's because of work ethic. I was very fortunate when I first come down here, we were in a very upswing mode of the operation. I was probably personally involved in interviewing and hiring 180 to 200 people. And depending on what your position is, you interview from a different perspective. But the thing I keyed in on was attitude, work ethic, ability to get along with people. Because I always thought you could take a person with average intelligence, average motor skills and perhaps a bent towards a particular occupation -- and this would be more so with equipment operation than craft work because we did require a certain skill level in craft work -- but you could take that individual and teach them, and they would be a much better, productive employee than the guy with 20 years experience. Because I found that, at least in a few cases, and it's not just people from Butte, it's people from background in mining, some of them 16 or 20 years, and on paper they are a 20-year truck driver. But in reality they

are a one year truck driver with the one year repeated 20 years over. One of our most productive truck drivers has been here about 2 years, and they have actually pulled him out of the ranks and he s actually writing a manual for other truck drivers. And the only thing he knew about a truck when he saw it was boy, that s one big son of a bitch.

Q: How do the women do driving truck?

J: Excellent. I have just been so pleased. In Butte, because of the seniority situation, back in '72, '73, I had a chance to work with a few women, there were a few women in the workforce, but down here, we've hired a lot of women, we still have a lot of women working. I feel somewhat disappointed, we lost one of our real good female employees during the reduction; a lot because of seniority, but some of those had a chance to come back, could have come back and didn't. And they not only make good truck drivers, we lost one woman shovel operator, we have quite a number of female equipment operators, we have them in the plant, we have them, to a lesser extent, in maintenance.

Q: Do you think that ARCO could have been more aggressive, with all the operations they had around the country, in job placement for those people laid off in Butte?

J: It depends on how you define ARCO. I would blame Butte management at the time for not seeking out. I mean, nobody pushed. And there has always been a stigma. See, Thunder Basin Coal started out as a separate entity and then all the mish mash, it eventually became a part of Anaconda Minerals Division. And ARCO Coal, they were associated with Anaconda Minerals. There was always that stigma there. One of the earlier managers that come down here, I guess he didn t get thrown out of Butte, but he left, and he come down here, and I think he had kind of a stigma about Butte people. Because you get union stamped on your head, and if you are not used to union and you've never been around unions, you think that people who belong to unions have two heads. Well, having worked in both, they don t. It was a fact of life, if you worked, you belonged to the union. You didn't really have a choice. I'd say that 90 percent of the people in Butte, they only belonged because they had to, and they never took much active interest in it, and when there was a strike in Butte they went along with it because it was a fact of life. But as far as being ra - ra, and vocal, they weren't.

Q: Were you laid off in June of '83?

J: I actually left in October of 83. I was scheduled to be laid off, I got a temporary assignment to Tonopah, Nevada, where I spent about two and a half

months, writing a supervisors' manual, from October '83 to January '84. And then I came up to Thunder Basin and interviewed, initially, for a payroll supervisor's job. Didn't get that, and then about a month later, they had another opening for employee relations field representative. Which I came up and interviewed for. [And got.]

Q: Cheryl, what was your feeling when the Butte operation closed and Jim got the position in Tonapah, was looking for work here, and it became apparent that you might have to move.

C: I was glad that I didn't have to move to Tonapah. (Laughs). I went with him on both interviews. They took the wives down; I did go to Tonapah and on his first interview down here I came. And at that time I said that Wright looked fine with me. The one thing they did, I assume that it was the position Jim was interviewing for, but there was a man who used to work in the housing service, and he took me through the town, what town there was to see, but since our children were school age, he took me through the grade school, mainly because if they are going to have someone down here, the family has to be happy, was their attitude at that time. And to me, it was very impressive, the way they handled our particular situation. And by the time he was through with the interview, I would have moved because of the way they presented the town. And of course, there was no push where you had to live in Wright. You could live in Gillette. We were told, we didn't have that much time because Jim had to be back and work in Tonapah and I had to get back and work in Butte, and we were told just to drive through Gillette and see that there was shopping available, etc. fairly close. The way it was done, I think that it was no big shock for us, or at least me, to move down. As far as the children, we left our families behind, but what we have down here, they have a lot more friends and whatever down here, in this area.

Q: What was your attitude, Jim, toward relocating?

J: Initially -- course, you got to appreciate that I was born and raised and except for when I went to college, I never left Butte, so I was extremely frightened. Like I say, I thought if I left Silver Box County, the world was flat and you fell off the edge. I was extremely apprehensive, because when I went to Tonopah it was a six month temporary assignment and then at the end of that I was going to be gone. So the whole time I was there I was looking. I had some pretty good contacts, different people I'd worked with my years in Butte who had moved on in Denver, and they were instrumental in at least giving me the interviews. When you work at the same job for 13 years, you are not really that polished in interviewing. And when I come up here and interviewed for the job initially, it was very frightening. And it

seems like, if you are not used to interviewing and you do interview, the people you have to impress most you talk to first, and you are extremely nervous and you don t come across too well, which is what I thought my experience was here initially. And when I didn t get the job I was somewhat crestfallen. You know, my God, my God, what am I going to do. And then a month later they called up and said come on back up for the interview. [To Cheryl] Did I come up alone the second time? Yeah. But I treated it a little bit different the second time, more casually, and I think I interviewed better. And I thought, if they call me, fine; if they don't, they don't. And by God, they called me and the rest is history.

Q: Did you go through a period of being unemployed at any time?

J: No, I was never unemployed. But when you get on the brink, I think sometimes it's harder, and I have a lot of good friends that were kind of the last of the last of the last in Butte. And I think really, it was harder on them than it was on the people that actually got forced out or that left on their own. That hanging on the edge by your fingernails was ... Course in Butte, pretty near my whole career, you always lived with the sword of Democoles hanging over your head, waiting to get your head chopped off. We would never do anything, we wouldn t take vacations, wouldn t buy cars, wouldn't do this, do that, for fear we were going to be laid off. Finally, in '82, we said well, to hell with it, and we went to Disneyland. And then in January of '83 they called me in and said, guess what. Come October, you don't have a job. And then, I didn't really believe it. Just like there will always be an England, there will always be a Butte. I didn't think they'd close it down. And in my particular position, we d been talking to the unions about flexibility even prior to the opening of the labor contract and I thought well, if we go in, we can negotiate a good contract, get the concessions we need, it won t shut down. And we did in fact go in and we negotiated a good contract, got the concessions, I think, which would have made Butte a lot more productive camp, and they still shut down. And they never did open back up.

Q: Cheryl, you were working outside the home at that time?

C: Part time. At the stock yards. Office work. General office.

Q: Did you have a sense at that time of financial insecurity?

C: I think, when the idea of the breadwinner, which is what Jim is because we could have afforded to bought food stamps on what I made, make the down payment on food stamps, about all the money I made. It is a strain. You are used to the paycheck every two weeks and all of a sudden, if it is not coming

in, you have enough saved to last possibly, if you really stretched it, six months. But then after the end of six months, there is nothing. So I think a lot of it, like Jim said, if you are laid off -- there is a difference between being laid off and being told you are going to be. Because when you are told you are going to be, to be quite truthful, I think the pressure, there is more because you keep thinking about it. Instead of it actually happening, you have more time to think about it, which does no one any good.

Q: And perhaps it's harder to make those real decisions to take action because there is that hope?

J: Yeah, I found that, because I found myself hoping against hope...

C: There is always going to be a tomorrow. But if tomorrow happens today, you have to do something about it. But as long as tomorrow hasn't come yet, you can procrastinate a little longer.

Q: Did you get a severance from ARCO, or SUB?

J: I would have, but being as I was never laid off, I didn't.

Q: There are a surprising number still out of work in Butte. Something like 1200 have applied at MRI, I heard something like 700 applications at McDonalds...there are still a lot of people who haven't found permanent, real employment. What do you think the causes of that are?

j: I think part of that is history. If you look at the long term history of Butte, it is probably more instilled in the children of the people who are left. Butte has been up and down and up and down and up and down. And there are people there who just cling to the fact that hey, Butte is down, but it's going to be back up. I'm going to get back on.

C: And also, there are a lot of people in Butte, very similar to Jim and I. We were both born there. Our parents were born there, and our grandparents were born there, or part of our grandparents were born there. And you start going back to where your family has lived in Butte for over 100 years, well why aren't I going to live there forever? Or why can't I? And there are a lot of people who, simply because of that... and it would be nice to say well, this is where I'm going to live the rest of my life, but I think, in our case, you've got to be a little practical. We could easily be one of the fifteen hundred people up there. But it wouldn't be doing us any good, it wouldn't be doing our children any good just to sit and wait for something to happen. And of course we were also lucky that Jim was able to relocate. That is, you know, not everyone has been

as fortunate as we have been. But I think that you have to be able or willing to make the move if the opportunity comes.

Tape 2, Side B

Q: Jim, what do you think could have made it easier for Anaconda workers to make a transition, possibly consider relocating. Do you think there is anything Arco could have done, or Job Service, or Job Retraining Act, or that any Goverment agency should have or could have done that would have made transition easier?

J: Well, I guess I go back to Butte management. ARCO as a company has been absolutely excellent. I'd be up in Butte picking shit with the chickens if it wasn't for their relocation policy. And I'm not blaming Butte management only in retrospect. I was part of that at that time. But we weren't really aggressive in trying to place our people. For instance, when they closed Tonapah, we went down there -- and this was because, I believe, of Tonapah management -- we actually visited the property and interviewed in excess of 200 people. Which we never did in Butte. And like I say, I blame management, but in the context of only after the fact, because I was part of it then and said, yeah, Thunder Basis, didn t know anything about it, didn't try to find out anything about it. I felt when I came here as an individual that I had a moral obligation to the people in Butte, but in the same sense I very quickly found out that if you're from a union camp, you are viewed as somebody with two heads. And even though I was part of management, they somehow thought you were tainted with the union facade. And I think I was very instrumental in getting Butte people down here. But I was first of all very selective, and second of all, I didn t bring them down in huge hoards. Because the people that were here and in place -- and in Thunder Basin we have a lot of husband-wife, father-son, father-brother, brother-son-daughter, whatever. And those people, although the statistics never bore it out, if you hired 20 people and 2 were from Butte, they would turn it around in their mind that you brought everybody from Butte. When we did bring the great influx of Tonapah people here, they all came virtually en masse, there was a lot of animosity. Because the local people always equate that you bring somebody in from Butte, Tonapah, wherever, that they are actually taking a job away from their son, daughter, whatever.

Q: Along a similar line, there are some bad feelings in Butte when MERDI hires outside of Butte, or when NCAT does...

J: Sure.

Q: In the Butte shutdown, what part of the problems that led to shutdown outside the purely economic, price of cu and moly going down so far, how much was a management problem, looking back.

J: This is just from a personal perpective. I think that the part that the unions played in the ultimate demise of Butte I don t think was that overriding. I think we could have had total flexibility, they could have given us major wage concessions and I think we still would have shut down. Because I think, what a lot of people don't realize, is that even with the restrictive labor practices, Butte was a pretty efficient work force. I think that particularly toward the end, the written-in-concrete jurisdictions were there, but they were overlooked a lot. And a lot depended on the particular individual, too, and the management style of the supervisor. If you were a real ass of a supervisor, they would claim total strict jurisdiction. If you got along well with your men, they all mingled together and helped each other.

Q: Among that camp in Butte that blames all Butte's trouble on unions, there's the idea that the unions developed into a lazy workforce. What's your reaction to that?

J: I would say lazy, no. I think overall, no matter where you go, and it's true here, you are always going to have 10% who are going to be lazy, union or non-union, and you are going to have an equal amount of troublemakers. I think a lot of it's management style. Even though we're non union down here, you can still get a certain amount of pull back from total productivity if people don't think you're treating them right. The practices were prohibitive. And you just couldn t get around some of them. If you rigged from a mobile crane, you had to have an ironworker. And everyone in Butte recognized that, and jobs would wait for a number of hours. But I don t think that was a common thing that occurred everyday. If you are smart enough, if you needed an ironworker, you got an ironworker, and he does his thing and then goes on and does something else.

Q: That s a matter of management.

J: Yes.

Q: Looking back, how efficient was management?

J: I think we were efficient to the extent that -- sometimes we used the jurisdictional thing as an excuse. I bossed for four years, and when I went to the concentrator, it was even more 9 to 5 there because you had a different set of Steelworkers. It was Steelworkers Local 6002, and within the same

jurisdiction, they had kind of sub-jurisdictions. You could use one Steelworker for this but you couldn't use him for something else because one might have been a repairman and another was what they called a rigger and etc, etc. But once you learned who you had to have, and if you had to set up a job, you made sure you had those people there. And yeah, they'd jerk your train to a certain extent, but also, if they finally found out that you knew what they knew, then they wouldn't try and do that to you.

Q: How top heavy was management? That's certainy a complaint that comes up from the labor force.

J: Trying to file back in my memory banks on the different levels of management... I think on the top end at different times, it was top heavy, but when you got down in the relationship of first line supervisors to employees, I don't think it was. That was a ploy of one particular business agent that I can remember in Butte. Supervisors -- we all wore white hats -- and he used to say that you could stand up on the rim of the pit and look down into the pit and it looks like a cotton field with all the white hats down there. But I didn t perceive that we were ever overly top heavy.

[break in taping]

Q: ARCO is so large, that you would almost think they would have some mechanism in place for relocation w/i the company. Was there anything that came down from above that gave Employee Relations any help or guidance or information [in relocation].

J: The program has since been disbanded but for a number of years they had what they called the EPS, Employee Placement System which came out as part of the ARCO Spark. But a good part of the jobs in there were either non-exempt salary-type positions, there weren't that many day's pay positions because, I guess part of ARCO oil and gas is union, but for the larger part, most of ARCO is non union, and there just wasn t a vehicle, so to speak, to place people like that. Now I do know there was some effort to place employees at Tonopah when it opened up. You know, a lot of people wouldn t go, they wouldn t even go interview. Because I had a lot of people that put in applications, I called them up, they wouldn t even come down for an interview. And I had a lot come down for interviews that I offered jobs to and they said no. [At Thunder Basin]

Q: Again, that reluctance to relocate?

J: Yes, to relocate.

Q: There is some irony, because at one point, everybody who came to Butte moved from someplace else to get a job. But then you have two and three and four generations and that feeling, like you were saying before, you should be able to be there for ever... When you look at the turn your life took from the shutdown in Butte, do you see benefits from that? Do you look at that as OK but unfortunate, or on the other hand are there some other, unexpected benefits.

J: Actually, for me, speaking from my own personal standpoint, I think it was the greatest thing that ever happened. I had had several opportunities to leave Butte, go and work in Denver, and it's not true now, but back when I was in Butte, if you were ever going to climb in the hierarchy, you had to go do your tour of duty in Denver. And I had several opportunities to go there, would never take them. One of the individuals that worked under me as an employee, field rep in Butte, went to Denver, got into compensation, later on went out and got in on the ground floor of Tonapah, and eventually became E. R. management there, he was forever after me to come out to Tonapah, and I never would. I guess from a personal aspect, it s opened up whole new horizons for me. I don t ever have any ambitions to go back to Butte. It's not that I look back on my experience there as being bad, I think it was excellent. But I think it's something that's behind me. And I just don't ever want to go back, though I find myself somewhat unique in that situation. With few exceptions, the people that are still down here working, their heart is still in Butte. I think partly because of the work I'm in, I very seldom, I very consciously refrain from referring back to Butte. Everybody draws on their previous experiences, but if I do that, I don't relate it specifically to Butte. Because I've had that done so much with me. Me being in Butte and having somebody from outside to Butte saying, hey, when I worked at Bonner, or when I worked here or when I worked there... And I don t think about Butte that much until I get around Butte people and that's all they can talk about. God, do you remember so and so that worked at the Leonard, remember so and so who was a machinist, etc. And you remember them and you enjoy remembering them, but I don t dwell on it. But boy, there are people that leave Butte, they may leave it, but they never leave it. And I m not saying that s good or bad. Most people don t identify that much with a community. Even from Missoula, Great Falls. You know, so what. But by God, if you're from Butte... But like I say, I don t criticize somebody for doing that.

Q: When you say it's opened up new horizons, do you mean that now you can look at a larger banquet of possibilities than you could look at before?

J: Yeah. We've seen so much more of the country. About the only travelling we did when we lived in Butte was in Montana. We did venture out once and went clear to California. But down here, we've been to Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Nevada.

C: It gives you a different way of thinking of things. Because we live 38 miles from Gillette, so you have to drive to Gillette for some of your basics. Well, before, you drove a mile in Butte. You didn't have to leave. So if you are used to driving 38 miles maybe once a week or once every two weeks, then it's not that big of a deal to drive 180 miles or 300 miles. It gives you just a different way of looking at things. Mileage isn't that important. If you can get there in a day, you're OK.

J: Yeah, that's one of the main things that I've noticed. We used to never even consider in Montana -- well, Missoula is 120 miles -- we'd never consider driving to Missoula for dinner. Down here, get in the car drive over to the Sluice, which is what?

C: First mothers day we lived here, we didn't want to stay home, so we drove over to Spearfish (S.D.) for dinner. Well, that's 160 miles one way. And you just wouldn't do that.

Q: Are there benefits, Cheryl, that you would think of either for yourself or for the family at large?

C: I think that for the 4 of us as a family, in a way it's given us more independence as a family unit. Because we can do things. Just, let's do something. Because we both of us have all our family in Butte. Our sisters and brothers and parents and all that are all there. If you left for the day, you'd say, well, we're going down to Missoula or something, just checking in. Well, [now we] check in once a week or every ten days to say, how are you doing. And just other little things that have changed, I think. Our kids are a lot more independent here. I don't work like I used to, but when I used to work in Butte, we had Jim's parents who would watch the kids for us, and then my mother retired, and she would watch them for us. And down here, if I have to be in Gillette when they get home from school, well they are home by themselves. They have learned to be more independent. I realize it's a lot smaller place, still, the easiest way for them to learn independence is for them to be by themselves for awhile. And if we have to go to dinner, Jim has dinners every once and awhile, and most of the time they are in Gillette, we'll leave them. And it just teaches them a little bit all the time. It's totally different. We didn't live in a neighborhood atmosphere either, in Butte. We lived out in the country.

Q: Where did you live?

C: South of Butte, it wasn't on a -- 40th and Plum. 40 miles from nowhere and plum out in the middle of nowhere. Whatever. That's what Jim used to call it. This way it's easier for them, the schools are closer. The school system down here has been excellent for them.

Q: How about your financial situation here. How does it compare to Butte?

J: Speaking from a basically wage, it's about the same. However, being frightened by the spector of being laid off, we've developed a much better savings habit.

C: It is much more expensive to live here than it is in Butte, housing, utilities, groceries. It is more expensive to live in this area.

Q: Yeah, Montana Power looks better once you've paid for power down here, doesn't it. (laughter).

J: We went essentially from a two income family down to one. Although Cheryl tends to minimize what she did as far as bringing income in, she brought $10 to 12,000 dollars a year in. I don't know yet how we adjusted.

C: I don't have to buy clothes to go to work in anymore. (Laughs) That makes a big difference. And it's not quite as far to drive back and forth, to the grocery store at least.

Q: Any regrets about moving from Butte?

C: From me, personally, I don't have any regret to the point where I would want to move back. We do try to get back -- we don't get back as often as we should -- to see the parents especially because both sets are in their mid-60's. But I wouldn't call it a regret, for me.

Q: Jim?

J: I guess the only regret I have is just location. Obviously Wright, Wyoming, in pure aesthetic scenery ... and I miss the hunting and fishing I did in Montana although the longer I'm down here, the more I'm becoming familiar with the country and it's turning out better...you have to go quite a bit farther for the type of recreation I enjoy.

C: One thing here, with the exception of maybe about 20 people, no one can truthfully say they were born here.

J: Yeah, everybody is from someplace else.

C: So you have a hodge podge. There's an awful lot of Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, Nebraska -- you could name off almost any state and you could find someone here. So a lot of times there aren't the family ties. So a lot of times, friendships can -- it's not someone you went to school with that stays your best friend. And you -- I don't make friends that easily, but the ones I consider my friends are friends. And I think Jim could say the same.

J: Yeah, I think one couple that I think we are probably closest to of anyone in Wright, the spouse, the male is originally from Scotland. Incidentally, named Scottie, alias Dr. Windover. No, you find a lot of broad, varied backgrounds. and the thing in Butte, you were born and raised, and all you ever knew was mining. But so many of the people down here, a lot of the people, well not a lot, but quite a number of the people we've hired, all they ever did all their life was look up a sheep s butt. They are ranchers, farmers, never knew anything about mining equipment, and they are good miners.

Q: Have you seen changes in the kids since you've moved?

C: Oh, of course they went from being 9 and 10 to being 11 and ...

J: I think we've seen changes, but it's a function of getting older instead of location.

C: It's just more of a function of age. They

Tape 2, Side B

C: They have had to grow up a little bit more too because like I say, the grandparents aren t watching them like they used to. And if it would have been Butte, even at this stage, they would go to the Grandparents if we had to leave them. And they are at an age where they should know responsibility. And I think they should, much more than before.

Q: Some things seems similar to me here, and it seems there is an emphasis on sports here, there are lots of teams, the school is important -- some of those things similar to Butte.

C: Yeah, Butte always had an excellent

J: They had a real good sports program. I was involved in Butte, coaching particularly basketball. I coached Y ball, kindergarten, first and second grade. I think, due to the realively small size of the community, they are able to participate more and perhaps be a little more outstanding than

C: Than they would be in a larger town. Because they do have all the same sports, it's just that there are fewer trying out for them. Which doesn't make it worse; in fact, it actually makes it better because they want to strive harder and they don't have to fight through fifty million people, they just have to fight through fifty. It makes a difference. At least, we've noticed a difference with ours. They aren t the best ...

J: I'm kind of partial. I think they are the best.

C: I knew you'd say that.

Q: How'd they do in their game last night?

C: It got rained out. The fields were flooded. Of course, down here, it takes two drops of rain for a game to be cancelled.

J: Clay dirt. Bentonite.

C: I know, two games ago, Justin slid into third base and I said don't slide, don t slide. The woman in front of me laughed, said, what, are you afraid you aren t going to get the white pants clean, I said, I know I'm not.

Q: I ve about gone through my questions. What have I missed that's important?

J: Oh, I think one thing that I'd like to expand on a little bit more is women in the workforce. I've been really impressed with the women and how well they ve worked out down here. [Talks more about women working in Thunder Basin] I was very fortunate. It was the only time in my career that I actually got to hire anybody. All I ever did was lay people off.

Q: From what I've heard, the women truck drivers were not well accepted in Butte.

J: No, and I think one of the reasons they weren t is that very few of them got on, and they weren't there very long and then they got laid off.

C: Do you think that would have had anything to do with the old superstition about women underground from way back?

J: Oh. I'm sure it could have been. We're all adult enough to know that there are still a lot of male chauvinist pigs aroung.

C: But wasn't that one of the big superstitions years and years ago.

J: Oh yeah. Years and years and years ago, for all you female types to come out from the house, you would never see a female even thinking of going underground.

Q: Alan Goddard who you may know in Butte, he has a talk show, says that there was a woman who dressed as a man, worked underground for a number of years, and then went into vaudeville as "The Woman Miner."

J: I'll be darn.

C: I never heard of that.

Q: Cheryl, is there anything you can think of that is important that I've missed?

C: I honestly can't think of anything. Butte is a great town. Just because I say I don't want to go back there doesn't mean I don't like it, because I really do. It's a colorful place, very historical, and when we lived there we enjoyed it, we really did. It's just something that you don't look back. You don't go home again, I guess.

J: Yeah, in a way I think it is somewhat sad in that the males would leave Butte, but they would never bring their families. In that sense, I don't think they were ever very happy here. And I think a number of them probably would have stayed if they had made that commitment. But when you're from Butte, you are just so darn shaky about your employment situation

(Tape goes bad here)

So many families, and I guess I was always fortunate enough to be part of management so I was never affected in the pocketbook by a strike, but when you're a day's pay worker, you live from contract to contract, and you build up your war chest in anticipation of the next strike.

Q: Do you think that for big industry and for industry that has had big-table negotiating for a long time, that has gotten so many gains -- I mean, things were

pretty good in Butte at the end, through the union contract -- do you think that in those industries that unions have, for the time being, pretty much outlived their usefulness?

J: I think they have to the extent that they have actually pushed management into being pro-people. Because that was -- you go back to before 1935, people worked 12 or 16 hours a day for 11¢ an hour

Q: God knows, Butte needed unions...

J: Yeah. But I think they have outlived their usefulness to the extent that they are still trying to promote this adversarial relationship. Which is not good for management, for the worker, or ultimately for the Company. And I think that the strike, as witnessed by AT&T, going back to Phelps Dodge, Papco -- it's outlived its usefulness. It's not an effective tool anymore because companies are now willing to bargain to impasse and permanently replace the workers.

Q: Futurists -- Like Robert Reich in *The Next Frontier* -- his main point is that the United States got to where it is by large scale mass manufacturing and mass industry -- manufacturing, mining, etc. But those functions are now very well served by 3rd world countries, and what Japan has done is to move from mass manufacturing into specialty manufacturing, which takes a high degree of flexibility, but we are having a difficult time changing into something that is more flexible, where we can do, for instance, specialty steel or specialty mining. It's much harder for us to move away from mass industry, which takes long term contracts, which, to be effective take a lot of things being stable over a long period of time -- and that's hurting us now, because we don t have the ability to move into more flexible industry. Do you agree with that? Or do you think that has any relation to mining as a separate industry?

J: When I think of flexibility in my term, the way I understand it, is to get people to do more and varied things, and I believe in that up to a certain point, but with any industrialized, mechanized, big operation, I think in general you don't want, or you can t in practical terms have everybody able to do everything. We argued this long and hard from a philosophical standpoint in Butte about how much flexibility do you really need. And down here, in theory -- and not just in theory. If we really wanted it, we could have everybody do everything. But it is not efficient to have everybody able to do everything. You only need so many shovel operators, you only need so many truck drivers. I think where your flexibility comes in is in cross training between different types of crafts. I think you can blend most crafts almost honogeneously, except for electricians. I think they have to be segregated because of the safety standpoint. But what I'd like to do at our operation, and it would be more in a management decision, would be to let the truck driver operate

more equipment just to relieve the boredom, because you get in the truck and you drive that sucker for 12 hours -- see, we're on the 12 hour shifts down here, and it just kind of gets you to the point where you re bored to tears. Give them a little more experience on the equipment and flop back and forth. But people tend to think, well, I've served my dues in the trucks, now I'm running equipment, I've served my dues in equipment, now I'm running shovel -- what do you mean I'm going to go run truck? The heck with you. I spent four years in those trucks; I don't want to see them again. I think if you can foster more of a rotational type of thing.

Q: One thing in talking to people here and in Colstrip, which is unionized but in the last three or four years there has been just one strike, just a couple days long -- Butte people have really appreciated not going out on strike every three years. They are earning more -- at Colstrip it's about $16 base and here, from what I understand, it's about $18 -- if you are working that, steady, that's a pretty darn good income. It does make you question that standard decision to go out on strike every three years. I've talked with young people in Butte who were young in the union in the time of the [1980] strike who were frustrated by the strike. Older people felt "we aren t striking for ourselves, we re striking for the next guys." But you do look at the raw wage and benefit situation at the end, and it's hard for people outside the union, even when they have a real strong commitment to labor, to see what needed to be struck for. Conditions to people outside that, did look pretty good in [1980], compared to being off work for a number of months. Is it just that, if you are a union leader, you have to justify your position so you have to go into long negotiations so you have something to do? Or is there ...

J: Butte was always industry-wide bargaining. And a lot of times Butte got pulled out and we didn t have any real critical issues on the local level. But we were tied in with Kennecott, Phelps Dodge, etc etc etc. And the unions would try to put economic pressure through a strike on the whole industry so I remember one year -- what was it? 1980. Christ, we even wanted to settle, and the local unions wanted to settle, and the International Business Agent said, Builshit, we're going on strike and you get your ass out there and put up picket lines. And they put up half-hearted picket lines, and by about 8 oclock in the morning we went out and kind of toured the pickets, and there was one lonely picket at the concentrator. We stopped and said, how s it going, and he said, good. We said, "where s all your buddies?" He said, "They went to breakfast, but they ll be back." Well, they never come back, they just left him out there standing with the sign. And I think that a lot of people -- and maybe it s unfair of me to say this -- but I think in a lot of instances, your actual union leadership, particularly on the local level, kind of graduated toward the fringy types, the radicals ... I wouldn t exactly call them unintelligent. But they didn t really have a grasp on what was going on. They

wanted to be union people to be union people, and they wanted to perpetuate this adversarial relationship, this ideological adversarial relationship.

Q: Is there any current here toward union?

J: Right now, there is a -- I don't know how serious a drive it is by the United Mine Workers, but they come and go. That's what they are paid to do. It's hard to get a handle on whether they are just going through the motions or if it's actually a serious attempt.

Q: It seems it would be hard to unionize a labor force making $18 an hour.

J: Yeah, although since I've come here -- when I first came here, we had automatic time and a half for Saturday and doubletime for Sunday and it didn't matter if it was a sixth or seventh shift, which for economic reasons was cut out. When I first came here, because we were pushing to get through the ridge of overburden, there was almost unlimited overtime. Right now, we are working 12 hour shifts, and we do not pay overtime for an excess of 8 hours, which when I first came here, I did. So those are perceived, to put it in the union vernacular, as takeaways. But the people down here still make an absolutely ideal days' pay. The benefits are still about as good as you can get.

Q: what do you figure over the base pay the benefits are worth?

J: We have absolutely the greatest insurance you can get, which is 100% coverage, no deductible, no contribution. The burden here -- of course, the burden varies, too, because in Butte it was anywhere from 30% to, depending on what cycle in the accounting system they were in, it could be as much as 60%, but I think 40% is a good ball park figure as far as what your benefits are on top of wages.

Q: Does management make as much as someone working for wages?

J: In a lot of cases, no. When we had the unlimited overtime, we had some $70,000 a year truck drivers. But believe me, they earned it. They put a lot of long, hard hours into it, and they were much appreciated by the company, because we needed the work done. But in general, when you don t count ovetime, just comparing strictly base wages, yeah, managment does make more. You've got to look at it in the broad context of what you consider management.

Q: With the package, for anyone here who had bought a house, the company would buy the house back from them?

J: Yes, in Wright, but only if you were involuntarily separated. If you volunteered to leave, they wouldn't buy the house.

Q: If you volunteered to take the package?

J: Yeah, there was no house buy-back.

Q: What is the philosophy of the company here in developing Wright.

[talks about creating town out of nothing; support for the community; Wright incorporated last January. Talk about Colstrip.]

End of interview.

Remarks while tape off; not released:

While tape off, J says that Frank Gardner took a hands on approach to relocation, but it was the wrong approach. Jim had been bringing people down to Thunder Basin right along. Then Butte's management, at a critical time of stripping the overburnden at TB, proposed to bring people down and mine through the ridge for Thunder Basin. Jim perceived, and TRB managememt perceived, that it was a counterplay; Butte would come down and "show us how to mine". Jim is partially responsible for throwing cold water on the proposal. He says that these people at TB know how to mine. Here, it was perceived as a play on Frank Gardner's part to feather his own nest. It wasn't a long-term solution; they would be put up in the apartments, etc. That was his only attempt. Could he have done more? Jim blames it more on Employee Relations.

Questions: some O E could only work on one piece of equipment.