

Ronald and Nancy Rae

Former Anaconda worker Ronald Rae and wife Nancy, interviewed in their home in Elko, Nevada, by Teresa Jordan, June 21, 1986. Notes taken from tape; not a transcript except where noted.

Both born and raised in Butte. Ron's father retired from Anaconda; about 30 years. Started off in the underground, then went to central heating plant. R had one brother, two sisters. Brother worked about five years for Company, diesel mechanic. Then went to Spokane. He left during one of the long strikes. Can't remember what year.

Q: Attitude in your family growing up about your working for the Co? Encouraged or discouraged?

No, just whatever we wanted to do. In those years, the Co was strong and making money.

Q: Nancy, were you born and raised in Butte?

Yes. Not from a mining family. Father self employed; did a lot of salvage work for the Company. He was not still doing that when the Co shut down, so he was not affected.

Q: R, what was your capacity w/ the company?

Started off in the parts dept, parts runner. Then laid off, then rehired in Anaconda in the smelter. Started the first time in 1972. Then rehired in '75. N notes that he was only laid off for six months. Then rehired at smelter. Started as sampler in lab, then worked into chemical analyst, in the lab as well. It was separate from the smelter. Worked there four years. N notes that he had 10 years in with the company. Probably two years in the parts depart, then six years in the lab. Transferred to Tucson, spent a year and a half there.

Q: Were you salaried in the lab?

Yes. Didn't start off that way. When he was a parts man, he was in the Miners Union.

Q: Did you have any indication that the Smelter was going to shut down?

The rumours started about a year before. But we didn't believe it. The question was whether they'd build a new smelter or shut it down. We knew something was going to happen. Just after we bought our house in Anaconda, we started hearing rumours. We bought the house in '80. A year later, it was all shut down. Moved to Anaconda in '80 when bought the house. Had been commuting from Butte. Ron worked at the smelter a year after the announcement of closure.

Q: Aside from the rumours, did you have a sense from things going on in the lab that big changes were afoot?

Just the rumours. N says that we might have been kind of blind to it. R says, the writing was on the wall, but we didn't see it. It was totally shocking when we heard it on the radio that day. N says that that is how they learned about it; they said, tune in to your radio, there is going to be an announcement. It was like the end of the world.

Q: Did you think there was hope?

R says that he thought someone might step in and help, something else would happen -- the government, or that Anaconda would change their mind. N points out that they were on strike when the smelter closed; she thought it might be scare tactics. R didn't think that.

Q: Even though you had been salaried, you got the news the same as day's pay?

Yes.

Q: what were you then told about the security of your job? Were you actually working at the time since the smelter was on strike?

R was working -- fire duty.

Q: Did they tell you at that time that you would stay on for awhile?

No. You just went from day to day. What it was, they had work to do, but it was older guys retiring, so there were people leaving.

N says, they were just hanging around until something opened up for us.

Q: Were you [N] working outside the home?

N says no.

Q: How did you deal with the information of the smelter closing? What were you thinking in terms of your future, job security.

N: "The end (laughs). It was really frightening. We had a house we had just bought. We had a new baby. We were really scared."

R: "Plus, I didn't have a degree or anything, so it would be harder for me to find work."

N: "But we knew we would have to leave Anaconda. There was no doubt in our mind that we wouldn't be able to stay in Anaconda, so we put our house on the market immediately. The people around us, our friends, said we were nuts, that something around was going to open and we would be sorry. As time tells us, we did the right thing."

Q: You didn't think that Butte was a possibility either?

R & N: No. R: It's a one horse town.

Q: Once the smelter closed, what did you think that meant in terms of long term outlook for the pit?

R: "I figured that Butte wouldn't last much longer. They'd talked that they'd ship the concentrate to Japan, but I figured with the price of copper and the price of shipping the ores, it wouldn't last much longer, and it didn't. Lasted another year."

Q: What was your experience with selling your house?

We were fairly lucky. But we weren't greedy, either. We decided right at the beginning that we were going to take a loss. N: If we could get out with what our down was, if we could walk away with that cash, we'd be happy. And we pretty much did. We took a loss -- we had fenced the property, we had put some drapes up and had laid some carpeting, so we took a loss on our improvements. But we weren't greedy. R: I think that's what the difference was.

Q: How long did it take?

We put it on the market in September, sold it in November. Moved back to Butte Thanksgiving weekend. Ron was still working. Commuted. It seemed like every time the day he was to be laid off, when he would be next to go, somebody

over him would find employment elsewhere and they'd say, OK, hang on for another week or so. In the meantime, we were told they were looking for someone in Tucson, and would we be interested in transferring to Tucson.

Q: That went on for about a year -- did you ever have the feeling you just wished they'd make the decision for you. . .

We were looking elsewhere. If we'd have found a job, we'd have left. Ron sent out maybe 150 resumes to all over the United States, frantically shipping resumes out.

Q: Did you have any nibbles?

No. Didn't have a one. That was a bad time. Inflation was at it's highest. Unemployment was high. Two little kids. Scared to death.

Q: Were you looking primarily in smelting?

No. Anything that was in R's line of work -- any kind of lab work. Coors, Clorox, we had newspapers, we talked to people. And then the Company had that big manual, all their holdings or properties. R had that book and was mailing out resumes left and right.

Q: did ARCO do anything to help you?

Yes. They had seminars on resumes, on writing resumes. They worked with us in trying to place us. R had an interview with Grants, New Mexico and then Tonopah (sp?) Nevada, at Aluminum plant near Kalispell, MT.

Q: Nancy, were you looking for work at that time?

No. Rochelle was just a baby. She came May 10, the smelter had already closed when she was born. We had moved back to Butte then and had rented an apartment, waiting for something to come along. We had kind of hoped for Tucson all along.

Q: Did you get any severance when the smelter closed down?

No, because R was transferred, was never laid off.

Smelter closed in September and they moved to Tucson in March, '82. (Dates are unclear here. Smelter actually closed in September, 1980. Discussion says it closed in '81, they moved in '82. They don't think they were in MT over a year after the

smelter closed, but their daughter was born in May, in Montana, so they must have been).

ARCO used to have research in Tucson. R did about the same kind of lab work he did in Anaconda. Actually in geo-analytical research, looking for gold properties. For about a year and three months, then got laid off there. Geologists sent them samples, R would run samples for gold and arsenic, anything that correlates with gold. Essentially, assay work.

Q: When were you laid off?

We were laid off March 1 of 1983 or 1984. 1983, they think.

Q: Did ARCO give you help in finding work with some other arm of ARCO?

They had the same program as had had in the smelter, but R had already had it, so didn't go through with it.

Q: Did they have anything set up for inter-company transfer? ARCO has lots of properties.

Yes, they did. They had people come in. But when you are working in research, they'd send somebody looking for degreed people. N points out that Ron worked in the research department and a lot of them had their doctorates and their PhD's, so w/ no degree, there wasn't much room for him. But, R points out, they did send people from other branches to come and interview people.

Q: What happened then?

N: "We had just gotten into our new home we had built. We rented for a year until we felt we were secure. Our attitude -- and there again, maybe we had our head in the sand, especially me, I was ancy to have our own home again. I said, they will never close the research up. what else will they have if they don't have research to look. Ron wasn't quite as optimistic as I was, but went along with me and we moved into our house the end of December and March 1, we got the axe again. (Laughs)."

R: As far as I know, there is no Anaconda Company anymore. At one time, there was six or seven thousand employees (in the Anaconda Minerals Division of ARCO.) Now, there's maybe 50.

Q: What then?

Started looking again. Put the house on the market right away. And again we weren't greedy. Tucson is a low-paid town. Tucson is built on copper. Again, they had had massive, massive layoffs in copper. We knew we were sunk trying to get into any kind of mining in that area. Then R began looking at IBM, Hughes Missiles, in their labs and environmental labs. Got some interviews. But still thought they'd never get the pay they were getting with the Company, to keep their house. R says that they had these big huge labor markets, a company that hires people and they are like a middle man, they sell their employees to these big huge companies like IBM and you work for Goldstar, Intermountain, there were a bunch of them. they hired you as temporary employees, and therefore they didn't have to give you benefits and it was real low pay. So, out went the resumes by the truckload again. We sent out 150 I bet. Got one interview with Hughes, one with IBM. Had some friends from Reno who got us an interview up here, heard that Carlin was opening up, expanding. "So it was friends that got us a job here." N: "That told you. They didn't get you the interview, but they told you." So R flew up here in May, had an interview, they offered him a job, they moved here. Moved here in May of 1983. Went to work the first of June. Have been here ever since.

Q: Did Carlin (now Newmont Mining) pay to have you come up for the interview?

No.

Q: How about the move.

R & N paid for their own move. The Company did move them to Tucson (ARCO). And they got severance when they were laid off. Lump sum. Plus, they paid us for three months with pay to seek other employment. N: "So we've been really fortunate that we've never went without a paycheck through all these layoffs."

Q: How did you come out on your house?

Lousy. We lost everything we had in it. They more or less paid our closing costs and took our payments over. R: "We just saved our credit, basically." N: "And our realtor, who was Ron's wife's boss, if she had taken her commission, we would have ended up paying. So we lost."

Q: N, how did you feel about picking up the family and moving again, to Elko?

N: I was devastated. I was really happy in Tucson. When we came up here for Ron's job interview, it was hard to leave Tucson.

Q: How had you found moving to Tucson and finding a whole new group of friends. Had that been fairly easy?

(From here on, a rough transcript.)

N: Yeah. All the men that Ron worked with, a lot were from Butte, we had a lot in common with them, they were a really nice group of people. In fact, the house we bought in Anaconda, the man that Ron worked with in Anaconda was renting it, and he moved from there to Yerington, Nevada, or Tonapah with the Company, and then to Tucson with the Company, and then we met him in Tucson, and then we moved to Elko, and he called Ron saying that he'd lost his job and they were going to have to relocate, so we knew a friend who got him a job out at a different mine here. So our paths just keep crossing. But he left and went back to Tucson. So we said it's our turn to follow him again.

Q: R, how did you feel about moving from Tucson?

R: I adjusted to it faster than Nancy did. N: You came with a real positive attitude. R: Yeah.

Q: How do you like Elko now?

R: I like it. Nancy isn't too crazy about it.

Q: Do you own this house?

N: We are buying it. Aren't we bright?

R: We've been in this house quite awhile.

N: Nine months -- (laughs) -- that's a long time for us!

R: I am paranoid, though. I'm working for a very stable company right now, and they are making money left and right, but I'm still paranoid. I still watch the price of gold, and it's just something that will probably always be with me.

Q: If you think back at the plans you made at one point of your life, are you sort of surprised that you have moved so often, that . . .

Tape 1, Side B:

N: "When we bought our house in Anaconda, we thought that house would be the house we'd live in forever. We never ever dreamt of leaving that house in Anaconda."

R: In fact, I remember we went on vacation once and we drove through Elko and Winnemucca and we were making fun of it.

N: Yeah, thinking people really live in this isolated place? (Laughs).

R: And, here we are.

Q: Had you thought when you went to the Anconda Company . . .

R: That it was lifetime. Like my dad.

N: Like three fourths of the other people in Butte.

R: Like all my dad's friends.

N: I used to tease Ron. I'm a little bit more adventurous than he, and I used to say, Ron, you're just going to become a person like all these old Butte folks, we'll go into a bar uptown and they'll say, Oh yeah, I know you, you're so and so's brother, we'll just be oldtime Butte people, you know. Well, I guess not.

Q: How do you feel about the way the Company dealt with the shutdown and the layoffs?

R: I don't really think they had any choice. I heard the figures once. I'm not really sure, but it was something like a million dollars a week or something [they were losing] and with all the environmental problems they had, I don't really feel they had a choice. If ARCO wouldn't have bought it, it would have shut down in '72 when they took over.

N: No, a lot of people badmouthed it, but we never complained about it. They were good to us, they paid us well.

R: Really, the company is out to make money, and if they can't make it . . .

N: No, we've never badmouthed them. They were good to us as long as they could be.

Q: How did you feel about the severance?

Both: It was fair. N: I don't remember what it was, but it was fair, I remember.

Q: I think it was \$3500 for the smelter. Was it about that in Tucson?

R: Yeah, it was about that, wasn't it?

N: I don't remember, Ron. I really don't. I thought that was really something for them to go ahead and give us three months to seek employment with full pay.

R: I'm sure, if they were making money or even breaking even, they would have kept it going, even with the environmental problems they would have found a way. When I look back, I think at the time, most people blamed the environmentalists for the shutdown. But now, I don't.

Q: What do you think were the factors involved?

N: The price of copper is the first.

R: Yeah. Competition with other countries, they can produce it cheaper.

N: And salaries were very very high.

R: The unions were too powerful. There's a place for the union, and I'm glad there was unions, but I do think they were a little bit too powerful. The environmental problems, too.

Q: Is Carlin unionized?

R: Yeah, but nothing like Butte.

Q: Is there one union?

R: Yeah, just one.

Q: Does everyone belong to it, all the wage workers?

R: No, they have -- I'm not sure -- they have hourly and then they have union and then they have salaried. I really don't know that much about it.

Q: You're salaried as a lab technician?

R: Yeah.

Q: Do you work with a lot of other Butte people?

R: I work with Bruce [Chamberlain], [Bert] Skinner -- not in the lab, but they are up there.

N: There are quite a few, really.

Q: Do you tend to socialize with them?

R: Yeah, there is a bond there. We had some other friends, working for Freeport (?), that's the only reason we got together with them, was that they were from Butte.

Q: This isn't what you planned; it turned your life around. Were there any benefits from it?

N: Yes. We grew. We saw that there was another world out there besides Butte. We were very sheltered living in Butte.

Q: Very sheltered from what?

N: From reality (laughs). From life.

R: In Tucson, you see just about everything down there.

N: I think we both really grew a lot.

R: We were sheltered by our parents. When you live around your parents, they make some of your decisions. When you are on your own, you make your own decisions.

N: A real big thing is, both of us being raised in Butte, we were never forced to go out and meet people.

R: You had your own clicque of friends.

N: You had your friends that you went through grade school with and high school with and you were never -- in Butte, this is an awful thing to say, but I didn't care who lived next door to me. Not that I didn't care, but I didn't take time to know

who lived next door to me. But when you move away and you've got to meet new friends and other people are more transient -- Butte people are not very transient people.

R: They are now.

N: They are now, they never used to be.

Q: You were saying that your family used to make decisions that now you make for yourself. Can you give me an example?

R: Buying a house. If they are there while you are looking at it, they will come over and look and make their opinions. But if you are 1200 miles away, you pretty much do it on your own, like we did in the house in Tucson. You don't call them up on the phone and ask them what you think.

Q: How has that affected the way you look at yourself or your family, if it has?

R: If you move yourself clear across the country and you find yourself another job, I think your opinion of yourself goes up a little bit [from what it would have been if] we were always living in Anaconda.

Q: In other words, you know you can do things you didn't know you could do before?

R: Yeah.

N: Or how about, you have to do things you never thought you had the guts to do.

R: It took a lot of guts to move to Tucson, home town Butte kids just taking off in a Rider truck.

Q: Were you surprised at how easy it was, or how hard it was?

R: Easy.

N: Easy to Tucson but hard to here. But now, Ron, my folks went with us to Tucson (laughs). And helped us find an apartment, got us all set up.

R: Yeah. But still, they left three days later.

N: But there again, in Tucson, I thought we were set for life. I guess I really like security. I thought, this is it. We're in this house now, we're all settled, we are just going to live happily ever after.

R: But you know, from all that, I don't feel secure anymore. I always have. I feel that what happened at Butte, what happened at Tucson, could happen here. It's always there. Gold could fall to nothing, and we'd be in the same boat.

Q: How secure do you feel, Nancy?

R: You don't think about it.

N: Yeah, I feel pretty secure with the company we are with.

R: But you still feel it could happen, right?

N: Yeah. It seems there are so many new gold mines popping up all over, you wonder if there is going to be an overabundance of it produced. But I still feel we are secure because they are a large. . .

R: So was Anaconda.

N: But it wouldn't bother me to move (Laughs). This time. One more move.

Q: How about the kids. How have they reacted to moving?

R: They were so small.

N: It bothered Ronnie because he liked our house in Tucson and it was new and he was at an age that it was hard to explain that Daddy was laid off and lost his job and now we have to put our house up for sale, and he was a little nervous with the thought, not knowing where we were going, and he kept saying, where are we moving and "well, Ron, I don't know." But after he got over that, they are fine.

R: If they were older, it would probably be different. But he wasn't in school then.

N: But that did bother him, seeing the for-sale sign go up.

Q: Do you see yourself here, if the company keeps going, for 10 years? 20?

R: Possibly. Yeah.

Q: Nancy?

N: If that's what he says, I guess (laughs).

R: You like it here.

N: You keep telling me that. (Laughs).

Q: Have you found it pretty easy to meet other people outside of the Butte people?

N: Yes.

Q: Are people as friendly here as they are in Butte?

N: No.

R: I don't think so. I feel the same way.

N: It's a very cliquish town.

Q: Based on where you work or how long you've been here? Or what?

N: Job position.

R: I don't really know what the cliques are.

N: Trust me.

R: I guess you're probably right.

Q: How about raising kids?

N: I think OK. We're very impressed with the school system.

R: Not that much crime here. One thing I like about here that bothered me in Tucson -- in Tucson, you constantly heard sirens. I've never heard a siren here.

N: Not in our house, but when we lived in downtown Tucson.

R: It was a constant ring.

N: You know, it bothers me. I lived there [Butte] all my life, and people would say, oh my gosh, it's so gorgeous and I would think, I don't know -- I mean, the mountains around it and stuff, the East Ridge and the Highlands. And I used to see them every day and think, oh, I don't know. But now, being away from it, and seeing sagebrush covered hills all over the place, you know, I go home and think, my gosh, this is *gorgeous*. You know, it's kind of sad that I had to be pulled away from there to see the beauty.

R: It is pretty. We have some friends that live up the street, and their lifetime goal is to move to Montana.

N: They are from Nevada. When we first met them, they said, we'll love you if you're from Montana. They would just kill to get up there.

Q: Montana is one of the best kept secrets.

R: But what's up there to bring people, as far as employment? There is nothing.

[Talk about Colorado.]

Q: What else do you miss about Butte?

N: Family. The fishing. R: hunting. N: Camping. Here, in Elko R: You have to travel a hundred miles. N: A hundred miles and there is nothing, just a big yucking hole, you can't swim in it 'cause it's so gross, I mean there is nothing. R: As far as camping and fishing, no.

Q: The recreation around Butte is so close and so diverse.

R: There's skiing, fishing, hunting, backpacking . . .

Q: We were talking earlier about the very different sense of security now than you had before -- do you find that affecting decisions, for instance, in terms of buying a new car or how much you put into savings or insurance programs? Do you make different decisions than you did before?

N: Probably not different, but a lot more cautious. I think I'm more cautious than you are, Ron. I'm always saying, we've got to have money to get out of town on, Ron. We've got to have money to go to a new job with.

R: Yeah, but she's saying, is it easier to buy stuff now that we are with a more secure company, than it was before. We really don't make that many buys.

Q: Actually, what I meant was that now that you have a different sense of security -- when you worked for Anaconda you thought you would be there for the rest of your life; now you know that it can end tomorrow. Do you find that you save more now than you did before . . .

R: No, we don't. We'd like to.

N: (laughs) Wouldn't everybody. I'll tell you, our cost of living here is outrageous. The cost of living here is just awful. I think Butte's groceries and stuff are very high and then we went to Tucson to where they were way, way cheaper. Then we come here, and oh, housing here is outrageous, our groceries are outrageous, and look at our price of gas. Gas is always high here. I kept in touch with my Dad -- we were like 20 c higher for months and months and months.

Q: Do you have a sense of housing here, how it relates to Butte?

N: Pricewise? What shocks me to death is our good friends -- they weren't our good friends in Butte, we didn't know them then, but they moved here and they were working with Ron out at Carlin, and he just went back to Butte to work for Denny Washington, and he called to say that housing is not what we all have it pictured in Butte. We all think giveaways and real cheap, he was real surprised at how high it was. Not high compared to here, but what they got for their house a year ago, it had not dropped at all. And he said that he was really surprised that there weren't more homes on the market.

R: How does Butte stay together like it does?

N: And everytime we go home, there is more stuff, new motels, new restaurants.

R: What is that one outfit, that power -- MHD.

R: Don't you think that like 80% of the people are retired?

Q: People there are young and people are old. People starting up families, or very old people. I'd like to get the demographic profile.

R: A lot of people talked that way, when they lost their jobs, they were going to start a little business.

N: Look at the new franchises.

[Talk about new businesses in Butte, skating rink, etc.]

R: I'd like to go back someday. If I could find a job like with what I'm doing, I would, I'd love to go back. Wouldn't you?

N: Yeah! (laughs)

Q: Would you work for [Dinny] Washington?

R: No.

N: Now, don't say that. If they offered you. . .

R: No, I don't think I would.

N: Yes you would. He would (laughs).

R: No, I wouldn't.

Q: Why not?

R: I've been through that, and I don't care to go through that again.

N: Ron doesn't feel real optimistic about it at this point.

R: I don't feel real good about copper. It's not anything against this guy's effort or anything, or who he is. I just don't feel that copper will ever be what it was. There are too many replacements for it, too much foreign competition. I might be wrong.

N: Don't you say that (laughs).

R: I might be wrong.

N: He would, I'm telling you.

R: Is your dad going to support us?

Q: How often do you get back to Butte?

R: At least once a year, don't we?

N: Last year, I was home six times in three months.

R: I'm only home once a year.

N: Yeah, Ron's home once a year. But I'm usually home two or three times.

Q: Have your families visited you here?

N: Oh, yes.

Q: If you were travelling, say you took a vacation in California and someone asked you where you were from, what would be your response?

R: Butte. (laughs).

N: I would probably say Elko, but from Butte originally.

R: That's probably what I'd say, I was born and raised in Butte. But I'm living in Elko. (laughs).

N: Hanging out in Elko for awhile.

Q: During that time when you didn't know what would happen with the smelter, with the upheaval there, and then moving which is very stressful -- psychologists put it right up there with death and divorce -- did you find that that affected your marriage at all, or your relationship at that time?

N: No. If anything, it grew, it made us a little closer. And I think when we first got to Tucson, it was the first time in my life I didn't have my mother around, and I had to rely completely on Ron, I think we were closer. Now the move here -- (laughs) -- do you have an hour?

R: Yeah, that was really stressful.

N: That was stressful. Now, when we moved to Tucson, you've got to think of these two little Butte people, you know, and then we were living to this nice big city, no experience, and like I said, I've always kind of wanted to adventure something, so it was kind of neat.

R: Yeah, it was an adventure.

N: It was an adventure.

R: This one was not an adventure.

N: This one was not an adventure. (laughs) This one was right up there with death and divorce. Went right over the top of death and divorce. I didn't know who would die, you or I. And to be real honest, when we first got here, Ron's job wasn't as peachy as we had pictured.

R: No, that was kind of stressful, too.

N: A little bit, Ron! (laughs). We left our nice home in Tucson, and there was nothing in Elko to rent but one apartment, and I am not kidding you, my folks came from Butte two weeks ahead of us and looked and looked and looked and I kept saying, I'm not moving into those apartments, and my dad kept saying, you won't have to, I promise I'll find something. Then he started shopping for a mobile home, he said, we'll get you set up in a mobile home, you won't have to move into that apartment.

Tape 2, Side A

N: It was awful. We moved into that dirty little two-bedroom apartment. It was an experience that first year in Elko. And Ron would have went to work for Washington that year!

R: Yeah, I would have.

N: He even thought of Burger King, MacDonalds.

Q: What was the problem with the job?

R: People.

N: Remember those cliques we talked about.

Q: It was primarily that this was a hard place to move to?

N: And we are so isolated here. We were bringing my little boy into Reno, that's almost a five hour drive to the orthodontist. We don't have an orthodontist. Our medical care here is very, very poor. We have no ear nose and throat doctor. If your kid has ear problems, you bring him to Reno or Salt Lake. Finally, an orthodontist is coming here, so that's helped some. But we're just so totally 100% isolated.

Q: Where do you go for shopping?

R: We do some shopping in Salt Lake.

N: Or on our way to Butte we stop in at Pocatello.

R: But 90% of our shopping is done here.

N: Or from the catalogues.

Q: There are a lot of people in Butte still who have not had a steady job since the layoff.

R: That are still trying to stay there, no matter what? I don't know if that's healthy either, do you? The stress of being out of work isn't worth staying, to me.

Q: It's real hard.

R: I think we did the right thing. As much as I like Butte and the area, I think we always did the right thing.

N: When we came to Elko and I was so extremely unhappy here and Ron was unhappy and I would talk to my friends in Butte, and my mother and father, Ron's family, and I'd go, we're so unhappy here, Ron's not happy with his job, I hate this place, I can't stand it, and they'd say, "Thank God Ron's working." I thought, if one more person tells me that . . . and then they'd go into horror stories, my dad would, "I had coffee at such and such a place and that little gal, her husband hasn't worked since . . ." and he'd go on and on in these detailed stories, and my other girlfriend would say, "well, you know, Dennis's brother, he hasn't found a job . . ." I just wanted to scream, didn't I Ron? If one more person tells me -- you know. They could work, too, if they wanted to come to this hole! (Laughs). I did, I'd tell Mom, tell them to get out of Butte, we didn't want to leave, either. And I just would get irate at people who would say, well, at least Ron's working, and I'd think, if you want to move around like Ron and I have moved around, you can work, too.

R: I'd rather be living here employed than in Butte unemployed.

N: Yeah, I would too. But when you're that miserable in a place and that's all you hear people say is their sad tales of woe because they don't want to leave Butte, you think, well, if you want to move all over the countryside, you can have a job, too.

Q: Why do you think people have been so reluctant to move, even after two or three years without employment?

R: I think we were fortunate to find work, even moving. But I really feel that there are some people that, depending on what career they are in, can't find work.

N: I disagree.

R: Depends on what you are.

N: I think that anybody that worked at the Anaconda Company besides maybe parts men, they might have a hard time, but any kind of heavy equipment operator or mechanic, or whatever, could find work.

R: Oh yeah. Highly skilled persons. But say you were a laborer or something.

N: A laborer might have a hard time.

R: And we had a hard time. It wasn't easy to move. Once you make that step and you move, it's easier after that.

N: I think we were both raised, you know, you don't take govt funds, you don't get help, you don't rely on your folks to help you, you are married, you're adults, and now go deal with it. I know that there were many nights that my father laid awake and worried and wondered if maybe he should try to set us up in a business or something to keep us there. There was a real concern on his part, too. But we just. . . Now, a lot of people who lived in Anaconda lived on false, false hope.

R: Yes, that was the biggest. . .

N: The day they were going to do demolition work on the smelter, there was a rumour out, come down and watch the big trucks going up there. They are going to reopen, they are working up there. And Ron told them, that's demolition, they are tearing it down. "No it's not, no it's not."

R: Oh yes, that was . . . the rumours were terrible. False hope.

N: We had many many people call us and say, listen, the government or something, there is something so big coming into Anaconda, it's going to hire thousands, you guys are going to be so, so sorry that you sold out and left, because it's so big . . . our attitude was great, I hope it comes, and we'll be the first ones back. But

R: There was a lot of false hope.

N: Then the Co gave them all that money to get business in and oh, they just really had false hope.

R: We got awfully tired of hearing it.

N: Yes, we did.

R: Like I know my friend would see a guy holding a map, he might be deer hunting or something, he'd say, that's some guy putting in some business or something.

N: Or gold, there was a big mine opening up. Lots of false hope and rumours.

Q: What would make it easier? An awful lot of people who worked for the company are doing fine; they've moved away and gotten jobs, or they started businesses in Butte, or they started working in some other field than what they were working for in Butte. But there is still a core of people who still don't have work -- they are doing odd jobs, perhaps, but they don't have steady jobs. A lot of people have had real tough lives -- they've lost a house or a marriage or whatever. What would make it easier for those people? Is it just something where they'd have to make those decisions themselves and act on it, or was there something that the Company or city govt or state govt or the unions or some organization could have done that would have made the transition easier?

R: I think it might have been that particular person.

N: And my idea is that it's not up to the government or an agency. It's your life. We can't all rely on government. That was my attitude when the smelter closed. I kept saying, we're not going to lose our house, the government can't let Anaconda, Montana just close up and shut up. And Ron kept saying, well, what's the government supposed to do? Go, well, you guys aren't gonna lose your house, just sit and live in them and we'll provide for you for the rest of your life? And I thought, well, that's true. I don't think it was up to . . . I think the Anaconda Company did pretty much what they could do to help us get started.

R: It might be fear, too. A lot of people are just downright afraid to move.

N: And I realize, Ron, you take your brother-in-law, he's stuck. They are in their 50's, and he's had the milk business all his life in Anaconda, and the man knows. . .

R: Some people have more to lose by leaving. You have your home paid for, you have kids in high school.

N: And Darlene and Ed Berry, their home is almost paid for, he's a heavy equipment operator. . .

R: If I was in that situtaion, I wouldn't have left either. If I'd been 40 years old, our house was paid for and our kids were in high school, I probably would have stayed.

N: He'd have tried to take odds and ends, too. But when you're young and you have small children . . .

R: You go. And I think personality, I think some people are maybe not that amibitous or something.

N: Although we know one person in Anaconda that, when we were leaving, said, "I would rather go on Welfare than have to move away from these gorgeous mountains. As long as I can see those mountains, I'm happy." Well now, those people are practically on welfare, and I think he ate some words. I don't know. I don't mean to sound so judgmental.

Q: Has this experience affected at all what you tell your kids about their futures.

R: Yeah, I think so.

N: Yeah, it has. Education is extremely important. I think, had Ron had a degree, he had 13 years of excellent experience, but you go to IBM and Hughes and all those major corporations, and if you are not degreed, they don't care what experience you have. And we've really stressed to our kids education is really important.

Q: Anything you would add to that, Ron?

R: No, I feel the same.

Q: What have I missed? What haven't we talked about. What stands out in your mind?

N: I don't think we appreciated Butte until we came to Elko, quite as much. And I'll tell you something else, we did not appreciate the Anaconda Company until you work for another company.

R: Yeah.

Q: What in particular?

N: I think they were real fair, the Anaconda Company, in a lot of ways. Their salaries for one. [Ron agrees.] What else, Ron? I don't know, we just all kind of have a joke, Butte people, not necessarily with our gold company, but with all of them, "This ain't no Anaconda Company," you know. Which may be why they are profitable, too. I don't know. Having a month's vacation, having these benefits, the Anaconda Company had really good benefits. I know that the people that work at Freeport Gold Mine have over an hour commute one way; Ron was commuting an hour, but since they built the new mill, he's commuting a half hour.

R: One thing I miss about Butte is the history. Any place we've lived or have been in, it just don't seem that it has the background and the history. You just think of the old buildings and the people. Like Elko, you don't see that here, or in Tucson. I guess you do maybe some in Tucson.

Q: It's surprising in Butte, everybody knows the basic history of the town, the War of the Copper Kings. . .

R: There really is a lot of history.

Q: You really don't know that about other towns, like Elko was formed, who the primary people were.

R: I didn't know any of the Tucson people, though I'm sure there's a lot there. I like history, anyway, but Butte has a lot of history. And a lot of our folks were part of it.

N: I just think it's so neat to hear older Butte people talk. Like my dad, pretty much knew of everybody, at least a relative of theirs or someone. I used to find it so fascinating there to sit there and listen to all these old Butte people talk about people.

Q: what is your ethnic background, Ron?

R: 3/4 Scotch -- I don't know. English.

Q: Nancy?

N: I'm a real mixture. I guess the most Austrian. And Irish. But I'm just Heinze.
[As in Heinze 57 sauce, mixture].

Q: Did either of you have a strong ethnic identity in Butte?

R: You did, didn't you?

N: Not really. More joking, with the bohunks, the Austrians. And my dad came from McQueen, so more just kind of a joke about the Bohunks, living in McQueen.

Q: Do you feel anything like that here? Or in Tucson.

R: Yeah, there is a lot here. Basque is real strong. Not for us.

N: Something else that is kind of strange to me -- Butte is Catholic! We came here, there is one Catholic church in this community, I said, now I know what it feels like to be a minority. Everybody in Butte seems to be Catholic. Lots of Catholic churches.

R: Butte is unique, when you stop to think about it.

Q: Somebody said something to me yesterday which I'd like to bounce off you. He asked me, "have you ever met anyone who has moved away from Butte who hasn't been successful?" I don't know if I have. What do you think about that? Do you think Butte people tend to be successful when they go elsewhere.

N: We don't really know anybody who hasn't.

R: Successful -- how do you mean that?

Q: In terms of doing just fine, landing on their feet, either getting a good job or striking out on their own, but making a good life for themselves.

N: I don't know anyone who hasn't made it. Look at your family that's left, and my family that's left, look at the people we knew in Tucson, Hannifans in Tucson, they both are doing great. No.

Q: Do you think there is something in Butte, that there is a certain self reliance that is bred there, or something that when it's tested it's there?

R: I don't know. It's possible.

N: I don't know. But I don't think that there are very many Butte people that have left Butte that wouldn't kill to go back. I do know some that have no desire, but not that many.

Q: If you had an offer of a good solid job that looked secure in Butte, and were offered the same job in Tucson, which would you take.

R: Butte. Wouldn't you?

N: Yes. Probably.

R: How do you feel about that? About Denny Washington?

Q: I'm going to wait and see. I wouldn't put money on it, but he's a bright man.

R: So you don't think he's into it just for a tax write off or something, you think he's into it to make money?

Q: To be perfectly honest, I don't think he is in it for a tax write off. I also think that he paid so little that he doesn't stand to lose anything.

R: Yeah, he's going to try it and...

N: See, we've heard all kinds of horror stories about for salvage or for scrap.

[Talk about Washington.]

End of interview.