

Randy and Sylvia Beavis

Randy and Sylvia Beavis, interviewed in their home in Wright, Wyoming by Teresa Jordan, June 10, 1986. Randy worked for Anaconda/ARCO in Butte; is now working for ARCO's Black Thunder Mine in Wright.

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

R grew up in Walkerville; father (Al) worked for Company. He was a supervisor in the underground, and then went to the Berkeley Pit as a supervisor. R didn't think, as he grew up, that he would work for the Company, but he did. Earlier, he kind of wanted to go into fish and wildlife management, but the cost of college was too high. He thought if he went in the service he could get the GI bill, but it didn't work out that way. He was in the Navy; four years. Got out in November of '77; was married in '76. When he got out, he and Sylvia went back to Maryland because there weren't any jobs in Butte at that time; but no jobs in Maryland. R's father called, said there was a possibility of a surveying job at the mine, so they moved back to Butte. R went to work at the hospital for awhile; then position as surveyor came up at Berkeley; he interviewed for it and got it. R was a medic in the service. He learned the surveying on the job at the Berk. About a year before they shut down the pit, Anaconda sent him to school at Montana Tech; he took a graduate course in surveying which was required for mining engineers. It was two or three months, 8 hours a day; a hard course because R didn't have a lot of the math background. Then they had a big layoff; only R and about three other surveyors were left. That was the layoff in April of '82. R made it to June of '83.

Surveyor was salaried hourly, so got overtime if they stayed extra; classified non-exempt salary. Same benefits as salaried, but in a transfer the Co. wouldn't buy your house or things like that. R didn't belong to a union.

Sylvia grew up in Elkton, MD, 60 miles east of Baltimore. She was a nurse; met Randy on a blind date. [Randy's nickname is Stu.] They met in '75, married in June '76. Sylvia had to find Montana on the map. Her folks knew -- "Elk hunting!" But S didn't know anything about MT or Butte. R told her Butte was a small town; but she came from a town of 10 or 12,000 -- didn't get to Philadelphia, Baltimore, etc much. When they dropped over the hill into Butte she said, "You call this small?" She didn't think it was bad when she first saw it. She had heard pros and cons. They had moved so many times since they had been married. Some of the homes in Butte looked rough on the outside; but inside they were beautiful. She decided that it must just be because of the severe weather.

Q: Sylvia, how did you find living in Butte compared to Maryland?

S didn't grow up with the outdoor activities like they had in MT. But she believed, to have a happy marriage, you needed to learn to enjoy your spouse's activities. Stu taught her to fish and hunt; she enjoyed it and misses it now. At times, she thought Butte was a little rough; Dirty Mouthed Jean Soresen shot two guys. But S liked the outdoor activities.

R had worked for the hospital for about a year before he started for Anaconda; started for Anaconda in October of '79. Sylvia worked at St. James Hospital; is an RN. R was equivalent to EMT - Emergency Medical Tech, but didn't pursue it once he was out of the service.

S hadn't heard anything about the Anaconda Co except that R's father worked there, and that it was good paying. When they moved to Butte, they hoped somebody would retire so R could get a job there. It was one of the best places to work in Butte or the surrounding area. When he got the job, R thought it was secure. He told Sylvia that "Maybe now we can start looking around to buy a house. Now we can start our family. I thought it was one of those cradle to grave jobs, and I wasn't told any differently. So I just assumed that once you got hired, and you did a good job for them, that you were going to remain hired." S adds that the Co would say, in their meetings, that the life expectancy of the mine is not until 2 thousand something -- so you thought you were safe until you retired. R adds that, being salaried, you had security that you weren't going to be involved in the strikes and the layoffs. As salaried, you felt more secure that you would as day's pay.

R's father worked for the Company; so did his grandfather, but R didn't know him; he died when R's father was only 7 or 8 years old. He died of miner's con.

Q: When did you start having an inkling that the job might not be long term?

Probably after they shut down the main Berkeley and they had the mass layoffs. Rumours really started then that it might not be long.

ARCO was good to work for, a really good place. The bad thing about the Berkeley, compared to here, was that you had the distinction between salaried and union and it will probably remain that way in Butte forever. "Salaried people kind of stuck with the salaried people and the union people kind of stuck with the union people, and that part bothered me. But as far as getting along with other salaried, it was just like one big family. Everybody went on a first name basis, and if you needed something, you could just say hey Pat, or hey Buck, or somebody that you knew

that could get it done, and it was done. There was good cooperation between all the departments'.

S adds that that cooperation was outside of the Company, too -- like Bob O'Bill, when he started building the statue [Our Lady of the Rockies], he'd call up R, and they didn't really know Bob that much before that; R did through work, but they didn't socialize with him. But Bob would call R up, and next thing they knew, R and S were up on the mountain surveying. The Company would let R borrow instruments. Randy was up there before the road was even in, they said, we have to get the road from here to there somehow, how steep a grade do we have? Randy says, 'When we first started, I used to come home from there and I'd tell Sylvia, if he ever gets that up there, it will sure be a miracle.' ... I mean, I'd go up and help the guy, but I really didn't foresee it the way he did. I figured, well, we'll get this road in, and maybe we'll get started on it, but ...' R surveyed, also helped his friend Butch, worked on the Cat, surveyed the supports for the inside of the statue. When they went back the first of the year, they saw her up on the hill. [more about statue.]

Q: That was an example of an intense community project. Sylvia, in Maryland, had you seen that sort of cooperation?

Something like that was new to S. It's a farming town where S is from; she lived 20 minutes outside of town; got together with people to play cards, picnic, etc. You go to work, then come home, take care of your garden. Not something like that project. Not many people have time to take on such projects back on the East Coast.

R says that Our Lady got a light start -- at the beginning, probably only about six people were involved. 'Right there at the end, which kind of upset me at the end, there was a lot of people who put that up who didn't have a heck of a lot to do with it. When they put it up on the hill they needed a lot of people just to set her into place. But the actual getting her going and finished like that didn't involve a whole lot of people, except right at the very end.' S says, look at the fight he had, people against him. R adds that there were bad articles, people badmouthed him, he couldn't get any financial support. R and S even bought jackets -- there were 20 made originally; they have the originals; they haven't worn them.

Q: Sylvia, were you working outside the home at the time of the layoff?

No, she hadn't gone back to work after she had Charlie -- took a six months leave of absence in October of 1980 and they decided that R was at such a good income -- they had already bought the house -- they decided that R would rather have S home watching Charlie than going back to work, and S felt the same way. She

wanted to get out of the O.R. for a little bit; she never went back because they decided they wanted two kids close together. Pam came along about 18 months after Charlie.

R learned in January that he would be laid off. He was out working in the pit; "a guy come up to me and he says, 'you're supposed to report to the office right away,' and usually when you got that kind of news you knew you were going to be laid off. I looked at Gary who was my partner, and I said, 'well, I'll go ahead and take the pickup in, and then if I am laid off, I'll just bring it back out to you and you can run me in, but I've got to go find out what they want. Then they announced it over the radio that everybody was to come in. So then we all got in there and they set us down and they more or less put the cards on the table and said, 'we're not making a profit, so we're not going to run it.' It really wasn't a surprise because they had heard rumours; they were just waiting for it to happen. They had heard rumours probably a week in advance; people were coming in from Denver and they were meeting in Helena, and usually when they heard that kind of news it wasn't any good for the labor force.

Q: How did you take the news?

R: Well, I don't know, what are you supposed to do? They tell you that you are no longer going to have work, but you are going to be working, so I don't think it really bothers you because you know you are still working. I worked all the way up until June...

S: "There's always a little inkling of hope, too, though..."

R: "I think everybody was there thinking 'well, they will change their mind between now and June,' and even if they don't change their mind, I figured at the most, it would be down the year. That's really what I felt like. I thought, well, I can stay out of work for a year, and I can come back because I figured, well, they'll hire back everybody that was there at the end. If we were good enough to keep it open to the end, we ought to be good enough to start it back up. But after it got to be over a year, then they were talking about selling it and the 819 Shovel came down to Black Thunder and I think they shipped down maybe 12 trucks, then you could kind of see the writing on the wall that hey, this place isn't going to go, you know, they have taken all your trucks, they have taken your biggest shovel..." The 819 shovel was the biggest shovel. "When you see that big shovel leaving, you kind of think, they've got other plans for this place and they are not good."

Q: In terms of reopening, what had they told you from the beginning? Was there a sense that it would reopen quickly?

R says that they were given the impression that it would be maybe six months, or a year. "They didn't come out and say, hey, we're going to open up in six months or a year, but they pretty much said to us, we don't know if we're gonna be down six months or a year, so that kind of gave you the impression it was only going to be six months or a year. I think that was everybody's impression. But I think that as time went on, like Tommy Mullaney (sp?), I seen him out at the carnival one day, and he was trying to get on to work down there about that time, and I was also, and it's like Tommy was saying, he would sit there and worry so much about his financial status, that he would watch a tv show, and when it was over, he couldn't tell you what he had watched, because he was thinking of other things ... he just wasn't relaxed. And he did end up having a heart attack."

S: "Yeah, it was only like a week later that we had talked to him that he had the massive heart attack and was shipped to Billings."

R: "I think everybody was going through that, at the end -- your money was beginning to run out..."

S: "Like us, two small children, Charlie wasn't quite three, and Pam was only a little over a year."

R was the youngest person at the Berkeley when they were laid off, he thinks he was the youngest person working for the company at that time.

Q: Sylvia, what was it like for you when you found out R was going to be laid off?

S says that at first, to relax, they did a lot of camping. They just wanted to get away from town. They were hopeful that three months would go by and they'd open it back up.

R: "And you'd hear rumours all the time, well, they are going to open it up in September. No, they are going to wait until after the first of the year," "No, they are not going to open until May, you know."

S says that they had tried to pay off most of their major bills except the house. They had figured what money it would take to live. The toughest thing was that they couldn't buy the special little things that they had before for the kids. "Christmas was a tough time -- we quit swapping Christmas presents with anybody. We didn't spend much on that year on Christmas for the kids. I think I spent \$20 apiece for the kids that year."

R: "We'd take the kids to the store, and if they wanted something, I'd just say yeah, throw it in the cart. After I got unemployed, no, you can't have it."

S: "It was different. My folks sent us money. We had paid off our little camping trailer because we didn't want to lose that. We paid off our Visa, things like that. My folks said, well, whatever you do, keep your insurance up, and we said, well, that's easy to do... but we kept cashing all our stock -- luckily, we had set money aside through a stock program for Atlantic Richfield, and it was two for one, and we had to cash some of it when he was laid off, and then they mailed us the rest -- I'm trying to think of how many shares we cashed..."

R: "I went through all my stock."

S: "And it made us sick because when we sold it, sometimes we were lucky if we got \$40 a share and a lot of it we had bought at \$60 a share, and every time we'd cash it, we'd think, ohhhh, \$20 for each one of these, and we're cashing 25 of them, look at the lost money. And it doesn't really help that much on your income tax. Like people say, 'oh, you can claim a loss,' but that doesn't help. And then it seemed like if one thing would happen, ten would happen. I had fallen out fishing and threw a chip into my elbow and had to have surgery for that. Charlie, the following week, he had fallen wrestling with another boy and he had to go to the emergency room, and we got that unemployment insurance -- it covers very little. We had to pay for it, like \$75 a month, and it would cover like 50% [of medical bills.] I'm still paying St. James for the medical bills. Very stressful. It was a tense time, the first three months weren't bad, but as it got longer and longer and we thought, oh my. Then we couldn't sell the house. We had put it on the market in '83, before he even got laid off"

R: Because I figured, if I could dump it before I got laid off, I'd be a lot better off. You know, the economy...

Tape 1, Side B

The VA "took" them on the house. R had a guaranteed loan because he was a veteran. They had guaranteed the loan for \$12,000 -- they had borrowed \$30,000. House sold for \$35,000, they borrowed \$30,000, put \$5,000 down. They made a few improvements, but not a heck of a lot -- built a new chimney. Kept the payments up until R came down here: he came down in November of '84, paid through January of '85. But R told S that he couldn't pay \$500 rent down here and \$400 on the house up there: he told her they were going to have to let it go back. He contacted the VA long before he missed a payment and he told them to just take the house back. They said no, you had to miss so many payments before they could take it back. R said that he was going to start missing them right then. It was about March or April when the the VA started sending nasty letters. The VA said it would take deed in lieu of foreclosure and R said fine. The VA said they

would have to have it appraised; they sent an appraiser; did an outside appraisal because Sheila Realty, who had the keys, had lost them. They appraised the house at \$22,000 on an outside appraisal. R said, you have to go into the house because it's got a fireplace, woodstove, sauna, fully carpeted, Jennaire range, dishwasher, the whole bit. So they went into the house and they still appraised it at \$22,000. They said it was because of the depressed economy. The house had appraised at \$36,000 in 1980; R said, how can you come back five years later and say it's only worth \$22,000? R thought property values were supposed to appreciate, not depreciate. The VA told him that because of the depressed economy in Butte, the house was worth only \$22,000; R would have to make an offer against the debt. R said that his debt was only what he was behind on payments. They had had the loan down when they quit making payments to \$27,900. They had paid on the house for five years. The VA said that in order for them to take the house for deed in lieu of foreclosure, they would have to come up with \$13,000. R said he didn't have \$13,000. They said, you make us an offer, we will make a counter offer, you can make a counter offer. So R sat down with a piece of paper, told them that he felt he was behind approximately \$4000 in house payments; said he would offer them \$4000 and that was it, they weren't going to get any more than that because if they needed more than that, he would have to file bankruptcy anyway. R talked to a lawyer in Cheyenne, WY who said he wouldn't have to file bankruptcy, but he might have to give back the Suburban [truck] and R didn't want to go through that hassle. The lawyer said, if you can get out of it for the \$4000, you will be better off. So R sent off the letter; in the meantime, he had received foreclosure papers from the lawyer out of Great Falls. So the VA took the \$4000 and the house and they were out from under it. They didn't go through foreclosure. If had gone through foreclosure, his wages would have been garnisheed because it was a Federal loan. They probably lost nine or 10 thousand dollars on the house in the five years they had it; but at least they are out from underneath it. The VA still hasn't sold it. [more talk about the house]. If they ever want another loan through the VA, they will have to pay the amount remaining, which, with costs, is about \$10,000. What bothered them the most was that the VA sent them a form for their taxes to show they sold the house at a loss; the VA said on their form that the house then had reappraised at \$32,000 in July. R and S can't understand why, when the VA took the house over in November, it jumped \$10,000 in value. R and S think they could challenge it, but they don't want to go through the hassle.

R says that the bad thing is, if he had been unemployed in Butte when they came after him, they would have gotten nothing but the house. But because he was working, they took more. They threatened to take 25% of R's wages at Black Thunder. They were getting nasty. [more about house.]

Inlaws loaned them the \$4000; the VA wanted to know where they got the money; that made them mad. [More about house]

S: "Last year was a bad year for us, just getting everything back to normal again."

When they moved down here, they were living in the apartments, and they couldn't keep their dog, so they had to take him to the humane society. When R got the job in Black Thunder, he worked for six weeks; returned to Butte for three days, hired a mover, etc. While R had been out of work in Butte, had taken some jobs from Butch, his brother, for \$5/hr. Normally, he would have done it for free, but he had to charge for it because they needed the money. That was hard. He had to start charging friends he knew for his services -- \$50 to tar a friend's roof. Normally, if he needed his roof tarred and I had a free Saturday, I'd say sure, I'll come down and help you, or my brother and I'll do it, or something like that. I was pretty good at building mason chimneys. Normally, I'd just go out and give somebody a hand, get them started, but I had to start charging. I had to say hey, my services are now worth \$5 an hour, and that's about the least I can take. And I have to be paid now for my services."

S went back to work. She had always sworn she would never work in a nursing home -- from the day she graduated, her speciality was the operating room, she loved it, and wanted to stay. But the nursing home was the only thing she could find except in Deer Lodge or Boulder, and she didn't want to travel that far everyday. And it was tough on her leaving the two little ones: "Because all of a sudden, I had this terrible complex with the kids. Charlie, when he had fallen and hurt his arm, he didn't come to me for sympathy, he went to his dad. And here my mother instinct was just crushed. Oh my gosh, you know, I'm losing touch with my two little ones and they are all going to Dad now, because dad is, well, Stu was the house father. I was working afternoon shift, three to eleven thirty, so by the time I would get home, unwind from work, go to bed, I wouldn't get up until about 9:00, 9:30 in the morning, I'd fix lunch, and out the door I'd go. And then when Stu was working odd jobs, he would go there at 6:30 in the morning, he'd be home at 1:00 that afternoon, I'd feed him lunch, I'd head out the door about 2:15 to get to work, so he'd be home to watch the kids, because we couldn't pay for a babysitter. And most of the work I could find was just part time-- three on, three off. But I enjoyed the nursing home once I got out there."

R thinks the business community took advantage of the people who were laid off.

I think they knew that people were desperate and would just about do anything for very little money. I worked for an engineering outfit in Butte which normally should have paid \$8, \$9 an hour, minimal, and I was working for \$5 an hour -- Cashell (sp?) Engineering -- he was the type, he wanted my services, but then he didn't want to give in at all, either. He would call the night before, say, 'be there tomorrow.' If he called and I was out fishing, he'd say, well, where were you the other day? I needed somebody. But I couldn't sit by the phone 24 hours a day

for five bucks an hour. And he worked you; he got his five bucks out of you! I think that was true of all the businesses in Butte. They seen an opportunity and they took advantage of it, because they knew that people wouldn't leave, and didn't want to leave.

Q: You were off work for about 18 months; what other job opportunities had you had during that time?

None. He inquired at Bremmerton (sp?) WA, naval shipyard, but he had looked into that before he got laid off. There were apprenticeship positions there. They sent him the literature, and it looked good -- \$10 or \$11 an hour, not great, but comparable to what R was making. Finally, they sent him a letter to come up there and take the test. Went up there -- there were about 600 guys there to take the test. R had thought it would be one on one. He just took the test, drove home that night, figured he might as well forget about it. R helped a man build a house -- did the masonry, did the plumbing (hadn't done it before; got a book, read up on it); did the electrical (read up on it) -- "I just did whatever come along. Somebody needed insulation in a basement, I would go do that. I'd shovel sidewalks, I'd tar roofs, I needed the money. There wasn't any real prospects." R had been calling down to Black Thunder for six months, trying to get on as a surveyor. Then he found out they were hiring all these equipment operators. He knew the employee relations people out there on a first name basis, and they would not tell him at that point they were hiring equipment operators. Then Jim Ballard called him one day and asked him if he would like to come down and learn to drive truck. R said he would do anything; he'd never driven one, but he'd come down and give it a try.

Q: why do you think they didn't tell you before? You knew Ballard from Butte...

Ballard was employee relations from Butte. Frank Castle was the very first labor person that they hired down here; he had been a maintenance supervisor in Butte -- he had a good position in Butte, he wasn't just your average truck driver." When he got down here and started driving truck, they asked him if he would like to take over the maintenance department; Frank decided he didn't want the hassle, and kept driving truck. Then they started hiring a few people -- and I think what they found is that people that came down here from Butte did a good job for them, and never caused them a minute's grief, and they got good work performance out of them, and they never got any back lip or any trouble. I don't think anybody from Butte caused any trouble. It's non-union, and they were afraid of the union.

That's the first thing they asked me -- what do you think about unions?' I told them, I've worked both sides of the fence and I says, as long as I'm being treated fairly and I've got good wages and nobody is bothering me, I don't see any reason to have a union. And they pretty much told me that this is a non union company and we are going to keep it that way. S notes that they had had a hard time

getting papers sent through the Company to places like Tonopah. R went down one time to the employee relations department (in Butte) and asked for an application for Black Thunder. He asked if Frank Gardner could call down there and put in a good word for him -- because R knew Frank personally. R had letters of recommendation from his other supervisors, but he thought maybe a phone call would make a difference. "And she looked at me and she said, you were laid off, weren't you." -- you were severed, is what she said to me, she said 'you were severed, weren't you.' I said, yes, I was severed. She said, 'you don't have any recall rights or preferential treatment then. You were paid.' And I felt like jumping over that counter and killing her! I thought gees, you know, we all work for the same company. I shouldn't be treated like this. She did get hers, though. She got laid off, too. But I thought that was pretty rotten. And here she's still working -- I've got a wife and two kids at home starving.

S: "Looking back at it, we thought, oh those poor surveyors who got laid off a year previously, and all those people who were the first bunch to get laid off, who we felt so bad for them, and we thought gees, we are so lucky, we got to work a year and three months longer than them. Now, when we look back at it, we think, gees, those people all got out in the job force, got all the jobs, we stayed for a year, but we can't find work now. Because they had all gotten out there and gotten all the positions, taken everything that was available. And then when we got out there, there was just nothing. Stu did have a chance to go to Tonopah, but they filled the position for a flagman."

R thought he was going to get sent to Tonopah, but he wasn't. And then they shut down Tonopah when he was in Black Thunder, so he would probably have only worked there three or four months before he would have been laid off, and then he would have been stuck in Tonopah. "And it takes a lot of money to move and get yourself established."

S says it was a hard decision about whether or not to move the family when R got hired in Black Thunder. They had told him that they were only hiring to get through the overburden, and that he might only be here a year, or he might be here ten years. So then the question was whether or not they should spend the \$1600 it would cost to move the family when they might be out looking in a year. But R says there it was really no decision for him; the family was coming and that was all there was to it. And then the layoff was a year later. R got laid off in January, but he got hired back because others took the package. Relatives said that S and the kids should stay in Butte and take care of the house, not lose the house, and then if he was only down in Wright a year, he would have someplace to come back to. And then S could still be working. But S wanted to be down here with her husband. For the six weeks that R was gone, S had to pay somebody to come up and split wood for her -- their house was heated by wood: friends, Ernie and

Pricilla offered to babysit the kids for the six weeks on afternoon shift. S would get to Pricilla's house at midnight, pick the kids up in the dead of winter -- it would be 2:00 before she went to bed because she would have to stoke the stove, etc. "We were kind of torn. On one side, I'd have people saying, oh go down there with your husband. On the other hand, people were saying, no-- you stay here and work. And I didn't want any part of that. I'd look at them and say hey! I'm married. I wanted to be with my husband when I got married, and I want him around the kids, and I'm going, and that's it. So we decided to come."

There had been a position in 1983 to go to Coal Creek (close by to Black Thunder?) as a surveyor -- "and I came down and looked at this God forsaken country and I said no. I'm not going to live down here. And at that time, they were offering me \$30,000 a year to come down here as a surveyor and houses were \$100,000. And there wasn't a doctor here. This trailer park is really nice compared to -- they had trailers in here just whatever way they'd fit... there was just nothing here in Wright. ...I figured, something has just got to come up in Butte, or in Helena, or somewhere in Montana. At that time -- I probably could have got hired at Coal Creek if I'd have had a better attitude. ... In fact, I was the only surveyor that came down from Butte. They called Butte, knowing that we were closing, and wanted surveyors to come down. I was still working -- in fact, the Company paid for my interview to come down. And then when they called me for this interview to come down to Black Thunder, they reimbursed me. And they did have a hotel room ready for us up here at the Cedar Inn. ..." Got \$400 or 500 to help with moving expenses.

Q: How about other expenses looking for a job?

R never got in the car and took off looking. He talked to guys who did that, but he didn't think that was the way to go. He mailed out a lot of resumes, did a lot of inquiring, but he never really went on job search outside the state. S had the opportunity to work in Miles City; R was thinking of maybe going to school; there is a good college in Miles City; R could use his VA because it runs out in 1987 for schooling benefits. They would have done that if he hadn't gotten the job here. But about the only place R really went was Bremerton, and then sent resumes all over the place.

Tape 2, Side A

S tries to calculate what they pulled out of savings. Basically cost them \$10,000 here and \$1,000 here. The medical bills were a little over a thousand. Randy says, "Everytime you pull out of that savings or cash that stock, it's never replaced." They were making enough to pay the house bills and the regular bills, and not much more than that. They had to cash stock every two months. When they were

on unemployment, they were staying ahead of the game or at least even. But once that ran out, there were no extensions. The job service would "flat tell you there is just no work, don't even come back." R & S cashed about \$4000 in stock, depleted their savings. It took the six weeks R was working in Black Thunder and S was working in Butte to save up enough to let the S and the kids move down -- \$1600, they didn't have that much in savings.

Q: What was your experience with Job Service?

They were poor at best. Even when R got hired at the Berkeley, Job Service wasn't any help. When R got out of the service, he went to Job Service, saw the Veterans Counselor and was told that just because he was in the service -- and R was a Vietnam era veteran -- that didn't mean that he got any preferential treatment. R thought there was no use trying there; he'd just go out and get his own job. He knew he could get hired in the hospital because he had medical training. He got hired that afternoon. It paid about \$9000 a year. Randy says, "It was tough. Even in 1978, time weren't real great in Butte as far as work went."

When Randy was unemployed after the layoff in '83, they thought about re-enlisting in the Navy again. The Navy had been sending them letters, saying R could re-enlist and still be an E-4. "But I'd had enough of that life."

Q: How did you react to the idea of relocating?

R says that he doubts they could have kept their house another winter. When he was offered the job here, "I don't think I even really thought about it. It was just a matter of -- you have to go." He came back from his interview on a Wednesday; they called on Friday morning and told him to be there on Monday. R had already made up his mind if he was offered the job he would take it. They were tickled to death to get the job. R: "It was just to the point that it was a matter of need. You couldn't really decide whether or not you didn't want to go."

Q: do you think it was easier for you to consider relocating because you had lived in other places?

Yes. R's brother would never move. "You couldn't dynamite my brother out of Butte. R had lived in Maryland, in California, in Pennsylvania. He has been to Florida, Maine, lived in Washington. So to me, moving didn't really bother us." S says that this is the 6th time they've packed up, so they are kind of used to it. But R's mother has hardly been out of Montana -- she's been to Idaho. R notes that there are certain individuals that, no matter what, are going to stay in Butte. And there are individuals down here that would kill to go back to Butte. And for me, if I were to be laid off here, Butte would probably be my third or fourth or fifth

choice to go back to. Because there is no work there. I'd love to go back if there was a job there, but I wouldn't even consider going back to Butte for employment." Their main consideration if they did go back would be for the outdoor recreation. It's the one thing they enjoyed about Butte the most. A lot of their friends have either left or divorced. [Talk about divorces -- the last married couple in America. (No talk about relationship between divorce and job loss.) More talk about recreation.]

Q: How do you think you are doing in comparison with other friends who worked for the Anaconda Company?

Financially, they are doing much better -- no comparison with how they are doing if they were to compare themselves today to friends in Butte. R is probably two or three times better off financially than they are.

Q: Of your friends in Butte you worked with, how many of them are still in Butte without permanent employment?

Gary has full time employment for the BLM, but not making nearly the wages he did before. His wife had to go back to work where she didn't have to work before. Skip went into business for himself, a Clover Club franchise; he's not making a go of it, but his wife worked all the time, full time for Westinghouse. Nevin is on and off. A lot of their friends didn't work for the Company. R was the youngest person there. He was 27 or 28 at the Berkeley, and then it went from 27 to 40. They had a lot of years w/ Anaconda; they had their houses paid for, they were established, their kids were grown. Some of them had kids as old as R. R graduated with Art Braach's daughter. Buck Morgan retired. Paddy Reagan had kids 15 or 16 years old. So they didn't socialize with a lot of the fellows. Gary and Skip were about the only ones he was close to. R can't say how he compares to the older ones, because they were pretty well set up, well off. But people in R's age group, no matter what they are doing, whether they are working in mining or in goods and services or whatever -- R feels that their standard of living in Wright is probably one of the better ones in the country because of the money they are making. And they just got a \$9,000 pay cut this year, and they still have a good standard of living. Even in Butte, at \$27,000, they would just window shop for new cars because with diapers and formula and housepayments and money for camping, etc. there was no way they could afford a new vehicle. Here, they can do that. You compare wages at Black Thunder with wages in Casper or Gillette, and there is no comparison. R has talked to people making \$6 or 7 an hour who think they are financially secure. R is making \$18 an hour. Still, they say, it's just payday to payday. "You just spend it. Instead of having an old beater car, I've got a new suburban. I don't have a charcoal barbecue, I've got a gas barbecue. We just went and got a power mower. I mean, you spend the money." S says, it would be hard to go back to

\$27,000. They would have to both go to work to maintain what they want. \$9000 payout because they cut out the overtime. They used to pay doubletime on Sunday, time and a half on Saturday; and they worked a 7-2 schedule, seven days on, two days off. So he was working so much he didn't have the time to spend the money he was making. No they are on a 12 hour schedule. It's nice until the kids are in school. He gets three days off, then gets one day off, then gets three days off, then gets seven days off. But it will be hard once the kids are in school.

S says they just aren't the kind of people who could collect food stamps and say sooner or later something is going to open up. They have friends who can. And R says that he has to be working -- "whether it's for \$3 an hour or \$18 I have to be doing something because I go stir crazy if I didn't have some kind of a job to get me away from the house."

Q: How was it to have Randy at home when he was first laid off and suddenly home during the day?

S says that it wasn't bad at first; they weren't home much, they were gone fishing. The first three months, they lived their normal life. They didn't go out to eat nearly as much, but mainly they camped. They'd cash his unemployment check, buy groceries, and head to Seymour (sp?) and stay out in the trailer for five or six days -- just as cheap or cheaper to do that than to stay in town and walk through the mall everyday. R says, they stayed out of each other's hair. You are staying busy when you're camping. Then hunting season rolled around; R wouldn't be around then. And then later, R would come home for lunch and S would head out to work. R: "So we never just set around the house and stared at each other, or went to fisticuffs, choking each other." They say they did drink more beer than they had before-- and drank cheaper beer.

Q: The lay off threw a wrench in the works: looking back, were there any benefits to that?

R says there was one real one -- the realization that no job is forever. "You have to prepare yourself for that. No matter where you work, I think an individual in this day and age has got to think that it's only for today, not tomorrow, and you've got to be setting aside. Like with this, I could have come down to Wright here and bought a home, on a permanent foundation, just like Jim and Delores [Sullivan] did. But I thought, what if I'm unemployed? At least this thing has got some wheels on it. I can get it out of town. And you've got to have a place to stay. So we can just come in with a truck and off I go. I'm never going to lose another house. As long as I stay in this mining game, I'm going to be in one of these [mobile home]."

S: "It might be a doublewide when we're 40, it might be a little bit bigger and a little bit nicer. But whatever we have from now on is going to have wheels. Until we retire."

R: "But no job is forever, and I think that was a valuable lesson to learn. As long as you are going to stay in mining -- and maybe in any type of job -- then you are going to have to remain flexible. You are going to have to basically go where the work is. And make a living that way." Talks about a friend who worked at Safeway in Butte for 12 years. He got divorced; his life really got messed up. He thought that job was forever. "You just can't go around thinking that anymore. I thought that job in Butte was forever, and I sure got a rude awakening. And one of the lessons down here, you can't be bothered by the rumours, either. I used to sweat out here, I mean, literally come home ...

S: "Yesterday was supposed to be a layoff."

R: "I'd think, boy, they are going to lay me off. It still bothers you, but you can't let it bother you. Because if you let it get to you, then you can't work under the conditions of the constant threat of being laid off."

Talk about how hard it had been in January with the layoffs at Black Thunder; they were laid off. They were always the type to save money though, so at least they had that to lay back on. They spent it all, but at least they had it. S has a good career as a nurse, can always get a job. If they get laid off again, may go just as far as Gillette, or may go to Casper, may go to Helena; they don't know. But at least Sylvia could find work until R could get a job, and a lot of people don't have that advantage.

Q: Do you think that most people in Butte have accepted that you have to be flexible, that you have to go to the job?

R says he doesn't think so. That's why they are there, because they are not willing to move. "Because there was jobs, when I was laid off, in different parts of the country, but I was unwilling to go because I didn't want to go. I wanted to stay in Butte. I figured it was a good place to raise my kids, and everything that I had been brought up with was there for me. I just flat didn't want to leave. And there are still guys who are sitting in Butte who don't want to leave and hope that that Berkeley is going to open up, or Centennial Minerals is going to open up, or Montoro Gold is going to open up -- in hopes that they will be able to stay there. But I figured as long as I've got a family, they demand that I work, period. They don't just say, Dad, could you please go to work. They want the toys and the bicycles and the nice clothes and that. A guy's got to work to provide that."

S: Plus, we want them to have an education.

R: "I'm not going to force it on them. If the kid says, Dad, I've been through 12 years, I don't want anymore, I'll agree with them, because after 12 years I'd had it too, but at least they are going to have the opportunity if at all possible. If they say, OK, I want to go to the University of Wyoming or the University of South Dakota or back to the University of Montana, then I'm going to have the money to send them.

Q: In career advice, what would you advise your kids?

R: "To do something that they like, irregardless of what it pays. And don't be afraid to try something. Just because you hear that so and so has got a job that he hates, you may like that job. You hear that so and so is a truck driver and he hates it, that don't mean that you'll hate it. You may like driving a truck driver or being a nurse. Just whatever you want to be. At least don't be afraid to try it. And then when you do make your decision, make sure that that is exactly what you want to do before you do it. Because I've made several career changes and it wasn't really what I wanted to do." R tried welding and hated it. He surveyed; liked it, would go back to it -- didn't really enjoy it, though. It was more just a job. The best job he's had is driving truck. He enjoys it. He doesn't think he would enjoy it for 20 years, but in a couple years they will start cross training him on pieces of equipment -- road graders and bulldozers and front end loaders and eventually the shovels. When R was laid off, he wrote to the community college in Havre, thought he might go into nursing or the medical field because there is more security there. But he really didn't want to do that -- just thought it would be safe.

Q: How do you like Wright?

They like it. [talk about Wright.] They were outsiders when they first came. When Tonopah families were moved up here -- some 50 families or so -- they were also outsiders: R and S have a lot of friends from that group. The Butte people sort of came one at a time; the Tonopah people were resented.

They talk about how they still miss the mountains; about how treeless the area around Wright is.

Tape 2, Side B

[Talk about Tonopah people being laid off; talk about going back to Montana to fish at Georgetown Lake; talk about Frank Castelloni ('sp?') being down here for two years and hating Wright; talk about how R and S now like Wright; would like to stay here as long as possible; talk about hunting and fishing in the area]

Sylvia says that R won't wear his Thunder Basin Coal Company coat to Gillette because people know that he works for them, makes big money, and then they can't bargain. S says that the same thing happened in Butte. "If you said 'I work for Atlantic Richfield,' [they think] 'Oh boy, he's got a good job, makes good money.'" [Talk about bargaining for furniture, etc.]

Kids have been more spoiled since they've been in Wright. The kids had two slight Christmases, except for what in-laws gave them. So this past one was the first good Christmas the kids had in three years. R and S didn't exchange gifts after R was laid off -- not birthday presents or Christmas gifts. Now, they wanted a VCR, so they just got one -- that was their combination Christmas gift. R: "And you know, you can do that now."

Q: Do you think that the idea that Butte was a suspension rather than a shutdown, that it would reopen in six or nine months, made it harder for you to make the decisions you needed to make to get work.

R says sure. He wanted to go back to work for ARCO, "you are just sitting around, hanging around, waiting for it to open. In a way, it's kind of sad that they gave us that impression. I don't know if it was just one that the workers put together for themselves to satisfy their needs, or if we were actually told that. But everybody felt that, that hey, we're going to open up. And then, a couple of times, it looked pretty good. They were doing some training and there were certain things coming out in the paper that the state was going to give them certain tax breaks, that the county was finally going to back off and give them certain tax breaks, and you know, I thought to myself when all this was going on, why didn't the state and why didn't Don Peoples at that time give them the concessions while we were running? Why wait until we shut down and say well, we made a mistake, we better do this now. Well, then it's too late. Why didn't the state and local level work with that country instead of just trying to bleed them. They had bled that Anaconda Company for years and years and years. It was their mainstay. That's where their tax base came from. They just didn't want to give up one bit. I feel if maybe the state and local gov't would have worked a little bit closer with them instead of being so blood thirsty, that maybe they could have kept it open. Whether or not they could have, I don't know, because other molybdenum mines that were non union and didn't have the taxes, they closed, too. So I'm not so sure that that would have helped, but it sure couldn't have hurt.

Q: Do you think it will reopen with Washington?

R: Sure, it's going to open. But I'm optimistic in saying I don't think it's going to stay open. I wouldn't quit my job here to go back. And if they called me on the phone, I would just have to tell them, no, I'm not going to come back. Washington

Construction, from what I've read in the paper and heard, it sounds like he wants to open it on somebody else's money and not his money. He's trying to get \$14 million from this group, and this many million dollars from that group, and he's trying to open it up on somebody else's money. And if that money falls through, then I think he'll close it again. He's not putting a lot of his own money up front to open that. And the molybdenum market is down. Molybdenum, when we got into it in Butte, you were talking \$30 a pound. I think when we closed, it was \$3 or 2-something a pound. Copper was up over a dollar a pound. Now copper is 55, 56¢ now. Silver ... Course in the expansion that they are opening, there is very little silver. But unless there is a real demand for copper and molybdenum in the future, I don't see how any of these molybdenum mines are going to stay open."

S: "We bought our house in Walkerville hoping that the Company would extend over towards Walkerville because we sit right on a great big silver bank, so we were hoping that maybe they'd buy the house from us.

R: But Cyprus Mine, down in Challis, Idaho, just closed its doors. It was a big Molybdenum mine. Tonopah was moly, they closed. Climax has laid off. As far as the copper industry goes, Kennecott has gone through massive layoffs. The coal industry, since oil has gone down, is extremely hurting. We had contracts at Black Thunder Mine that were like \$18 or 20 a ton. We are selling our coal now for \$6 a ton. And we've had to renegotiate with the utility companies, because they are threatening to back out of the contracts. We want to sell the coal at \$6 a ton, but they are on contracts for \$20 coal, and Atlantic Richfield wants that \$20 a ton coming in; they also want that \$6 a ton going out. So they are negotiating with the utility companies. [More about coal.]

S: Like my father said when Stu first told him I've got a job, we're going to Wright, Wyoming to work in a coal mine. My dad said, why don't you kids smarten up, you've got a long life yet to live, and get out of the mining industry? Mining is closing down all over the country, and he says 'start a life somewhere else.

R: 'I told him, what is a secure job?' He told me to go get a secure job. I said, 'OK,' I said, you hang up the phone and think about it, and when you've got a secure job for me, call me back up, would you, and I'll go get it.' He never did call back. Because there is no such thing as a secure job. He told me law enforcement, I said, yeah, fine, law enforcement. What if you get a new political regime in there and they want their brother-in-law hired and you're not in with the clique so you're out? Or if they have a shake up in management or whatever? The State of Wyoming, how many did they lay off because their tax base has dropped because of the oil crunch, so they have laid off a bunch of civil servants. So to me, there is no secure job. S. agrees. R: In fact, Campbell County laid off a bunch of nurses.

After the layoff, they laid off school teachers here." [More about insecurity-- business failures, etc in Wright with layoffs.]

S talks about how some people in Wright have gotten themselves deeply in debt, depending on their big paychecks: Between their house payments and their vehicle payments and their luxury items, some of them are lucky after payday, from what I've heard, if they have a hundred dollars for groceries. Where we won't let ourselves get to that point, where other people base their lives on that overtime, that premium pay. Then when they took that away, now the people can't make it. We know five different couples that are still working for Atlantic Richfield, and they've given their houses back and they have bought trailers now, because they just can't afford it."

Q: Do you feel differently about taking on debt now than when you first went to work for Anaconda in Butte?

S: "We *hate* going into debt. That's an easy one. When we bought this trailer, we got a good deal on this trailer ..."

R: "this trailer is 1985, it's 14 X 80, and it's a top of the line Windsor. The people that bought it in 1985 for \$26,000 and after they pulled it into the lot here, they paid a man to build on that porch, had it skirted, had sod laid, and put up the fence and just other little things that go along with setting one of these up, they put \$10,000 down on the trailer, and I come down here after he was laid off in this last layoff, they laid off 150. He wanted \$2500 for his equity, that's what he wanted out of this probably \$12,000 investment. We seen it on the board, and and after we come back the second time after we inquired about it, he wanted nothing down, and the trailer was ready to be pulled into Gillette to go on consignment, and he was just going to walk away from it. So there was a few good buys like that after the lay off."

S: "We hemmed and hawed about purchasing this thing until the hour that the bank called."

R: It was worth \$26,000 in 1985; I inquired into it and at that time, last April, it was worth \$21,000, \$22,000. And I was getting it for \$15,500. But I still didn't want to go into debt for \$15,000. Even for a place to live in. Because I figured, if I get laid off in 6 months, then what do I do with the \$15,000 debt?"

S: But we can take it with us. But no, we don't like going into debt at all."

R: No, in fact the only thing we are in debt for is the trailer and my Suburban. But that's enough. If we can't afford cash, when we go to buy something, we just

don't buy it until we get enough cash set aside to where we feel comfortable that we can just go ahead and buy it."

Q: What have I missed that's important?

R says it might be good to talk with Ernie Tragidgida (sp?), who bought into Len Waters Music, on Main Street. He took his severance pay from Butte and invested it into this business. He was a supervisor. Gary Hertin, R's partner, is still in Butte, on Oregon Avenue. Last R heard, he was working for the BLM as an instructor. His wife Cindy works at the hospital as a secretary.

S says she would have second thoughts about letting her son Charlie go into a field like Mining Engineering; R has pointed out that those engineers are a dime a dozen now.

Q: What do you think the fields will be when your kids are college age? Is there any way we can know that now?

S says that she thinks nursing and the medical field will always be a good field. She thinks mining is going downhill. There are probably too many teachers out there. But there are fewer and fewer people going into nursing -- it doesn't pay anything. "It used to bother me when Stu would come home and he'd show me his paycheck and he was making more money than I was, and he only has a high school education with one year of odd college courses, and he's making double the money that I was making and yet I'm saving people's lives. And that used to bother me. I'm glad, because it was my husband getting the money, but I used to think gees, you know. But I think that's one field where it will always be secure. If Pam ever said to me, gees, Mom, what do you think I should be ... and I enjoy the O.R. That's about the only area that I really enjoy." [talks about other nursing experience; talk about limited medical clinic in Wright.]

End of Interview.