

Joe Roberts, head of Roberts Equipment, interviewed in his office about Our Lady of the Rockies, by Teresa Jordan, January 28, 1986

Notes taken at time of interview, not audited against tape.

Originally, Bob O'Bill thought he wanted to make a five or six foot statue. He always wanted to place it on the East Ridge. He contacted a group of fellows he worked with. One of the ladies at the Berkeley Pit suggested he should call Joe Roberts. He did. Got together with a group of men, had a meeting, discussed putting the statue on the mountain. Agreed that we would help. But Joe didn't think a five or six foot statue would last up there; kids would throw it off. But he said, if we build a big one, they will never get rid of it. We thought 30, somebody suggested 60, then 90, then to 120. But that was beyond our capabilities. One engineer thought we should go to 1200 feet-- but we knew there weren't enough lifetimes left to build something that size.

Another fellow built a model, 90 inch statue.

Q: This was Mazzola?

"We just forget that name. We just drop it." He built the model, but it was too complicated to build. The face was too old; there was no way we could figure to light it. It didn't fit in with our ideas. He is a fine metal sculptor, but we wanted it simple.

From here on, is a rough transcript; not re-audited against tape.

Q: This was one person's quest but it became a huge project, so many involved.

When we first started out, it was Bob's idea, and the more we talked, the more we realized--he was the guy who put it into words, but we all started analysing our own lives. We all had made so many promises to God over the years, oh God, if you do this for me, I'll do this for you. But when the day is past, we forget the promises we've made. We got to thinking about this, realized we were all bankrupt as far as promises were concerned. We had never kept any, though we'd made thousands. So we thought we'd roll them all into one ball and go ahead of it.

There were not that many people involved at the beginning. At the end, we had such fantastic support, people think it was like that all the way. But at the beginning, no one would come near us--for two or three years. We had no money. People didn't think we'd go through with us. The first realization that we were really going to do it was when we finished the face and welded it to a pillar out there. The hand had come first, but people thought it was just an oddity. But when we finished the face, and then we finished the head and shoulders, they began to know

we would get the statue built, but they thought we would NEVER get it up on the mountain. That was the consensus of opinion all the time. Leroy Lee didn't even think we were going to do it. Bob O'Bill--they thought we would do it someday, but they didn't think we'd get it so soon. But I tried to explain that people were hyped up; if it didn't go in December, it would never get on top of the mountain. They'd have lost enthusiasm. But I had my mind made up it was going up. That was my part in the thing, was to see there was no falling by the wayside. Bob was taking care of everything on the mountain, hauling what they needed up there. It was push push push every day to get it up there.

Q: How did you find taking that much time away from your business?

Truthfully, it did more damage than I like to talk about. But I'd have done it again, so it doesn't make any difference. But it took a tremendous amount of time away--five years.

Q: What is the relationship you see between hard times for Butte and this action which is hopeful and shows a community at work.

We had started long before any of the trouble, but the reason it was finished was because of the feeling the people had that helped us after the city started to slump. And there was just as big a need for the statue as there was for the men and the women who helped us. It became a need. They had to have something to believe in, some hope, something that proved that they were human beings also, that they could still do things, no matter how far down they were. And that's the thing about Butte Mt--no other city on the world, there is no other place on earth where this could have happened than this city. We had 23 unions I believe it was, that couldn't even say hello to each other in the daytime but when they started working on this statue, we had people from every union there was, there was no such thing as an argument. Bill Barth was assumed, immediately, to be the boss. And he was. No matter what he said, the guys all just dived right in. John Shea from the Ironworkers, Ron James, the head of the Ironworkers, Tommy Holter, Jimmie Keen, a whole group of guys that would normally look to the head of the Ironworkers, they all went together. They were friends, they knew they were part of this community, each one of them had their own reasons. Many were Catholic, but we had Mormons, we had Methodists, we had Assembly of God people. The churches themselves were maybe not behind us, but the people did. That statue was really built for love, and I think that when it got into the showdown, that's the way it was.

I said that we would dedicate the statue to women, especially to all the mothers who have ever lived, and we built it in the likeness of Mary the mother of Jesus. Now nobody alive can refute the fact that Jesus had a mother. You can take any religion you want and twist it any way you want to do it. But the Moslems revere Mary even though they accept her as the mother of the prophet. How they feel is their business. How any people in the world feel, that is also their business. Doesn't make any

difference what religion it is, it's how you feel within yourself that really counts. I have yet to find anybody who hated their mother. And so many many times some woman will come up to me and say, it's so wonderful that you built the statue. I say to them all, we built it for you. Don't make any difference who it is. I've said that to a thousand women I've never even known. But that IS the reason. We built it for women because that's where it starts. Women are the mothers, and without a mother for love, there is no love. That's the way it's always going to be.

No guys on the hill or anywhere else in the deal are too bashful to put their arm around another man and say "you know, I love you." And when they come down off that statue and down out of the center of it when we put the head on, there wasn't a man, and I'm telling you they were all men up there, and the women who came up on the mountain with us, everybody stood in front of that statue and cried. There wasn't one single man who didn't have tears in his eyes. Even some of them I didn't know had tear ducts.

Q: One thing that was outstanding to me watching the project was the tremendous skill it took; it seemed in some ways a natural outcropping of that desire to use what you're good at.

You know, the statue is referred to as a work of art amongst a lot of people and it IS a work of art. But it's not one artist. Leroy Lee had the capability of actually putting together the pieces that he could roll to form the outer skin that everybody sees, and this in itself is a fantastic thing because Leroy had no art education, but he is a fantastic worker, fantastic welder. The things he can do with metal just sort of boggle your mind. But then you see Leroy's artistry. You don't see Al Beavis, mayor of Walkerville, he was also the head of the blasting crews for the Anaconda Company. When they set the charges off, it didn't destroy the whole mountain, they just took off what had to be done. He sheared the wall off just as straight as if you took a butcher knife and sawed it right off. That itself is an artist.

Mike Cirese (sp), Bobby O'Connor, they knew how to run the equipment. Mike punched a hole through that mountain with a dozer that there are very few who could have ever done it. There are a lot of fine cat operators, but most of them have the blasting set ups. We never had that. So Mike just took the cat, punched a hole through. Between him and the rest of the boys, Bob O'Bill. We even had another boy who was only 12 years old when he started. He'd run around, help us on the hill. But they punched a hole through and all the way down the other side of the mountain. It was an art. And when it came to put in the power lines, we didn't have the equipment, so all the volunteer power men from the Montana Power, they came down, they hand-dug the holes, they carried the poles into place by hand, they strung the wires. Each one of these guys was an artist in his own work. And of course one of the artists of all was Loren Reel (sp?). He's the one who designed the structure on the inside of the statue.

Without him, there'd be no statue because it wouldn't stand in the winds we've had. The way we had it, when Loren first came in, we didn't know him, he said, it's a beautiful statue, but it won't stand there ten minutes. We asked him why, he said, it won't withstand the tremendous winds up there. Loren designed the structure, showed us how to brace it, showed us how to attach the skin to the structure, how to put the base in. The base was the most important part. And when we had to blow the holes for the base. Nobody realizes, they look at it, they think it is a piece of concrete poured on the top of the mountain. It isn't. It has four legs on it that go down eleven feet into the solid granite. And that is all lined with rebar. The old miners that actually drilled and blew those four shafts are unbelievable in themselves. They could have set a charge off in there and just blown the whole damn thing up and we wouldn't have had anything. As it is, we have four nice square holes. And when we attach it to all the other rebar and concrete and everything, it will stand forever. So like I say, every man was an artist in his own right.

When you stop and realize what it meant--the only piece out of line was the piece that got hit. That too was evidently meant to be. Because the hands broke on that. We had a little statue just like these [he has a porcelain and a bronze statue of Our Lady on his desk], that's how we made it. But it got knocked over one day and broke four fingers off. And then it got knocked over another day and broke another finger on the other hand. And when the hands were spinning in the air and they dipped and one hand went down inside and hit a girder while all the guys at the top of that statue were diving on the floor--they had built catwalks around each piece, and when they hit the floor and all these ropes were swinging inside and that hand went up into the air and flew out over the side, first it broke the four fingers off on one hand--didn't break them off, it cracked them. We figured we could either leave them or repair them; we decided we were going to leave them the way they are, just re-weld them so that the rust won't get at them. And it also, on the left hand, as it was leaving, hit one finger and bent that back out of place. It also twisted it just a hair. It was off about an inch. We've got it almost pulled together and come springtime, we'll fix the welding on it. But it was quite a thing to see it, to think that it looks exactly like the other one.

Funny thing about the hands, we've had a terrible time getting the hands finished for the statue. We had a hard time on the small statues as we started to make them. This bronze, for instance, we had to do the hands on it twice. And this one here, you can see the hands are cracked. So we had to go back and redo the hands. But the hands are cracked here and here. It seemed there was something wrong with the hands all the way through the statue. Coincidence, but it's there.

Q: Why do you think the hands? Do you think there is some message there?

I wouldn't venture to say. It just happened to be a coincidence. Another coincidence is that nobody seems to be able to make the face the way the statue is. Neither one of those, and those both are done by fine artists, and neither face is exact. They've had pictures to work with, they've had everything. But the pictures don't do it justice.

Q: I hiked up there three weeks ago; it's something to see.

I think it's the most fantastic site as you make that last switchback and pull up onto the top, to see that statue out there, 3- or 400 feet away, it's unbelievable when you realize the immensity. That's why I want so badly to get an aerial gondola up that mountain. It's almost a necessity because people will never really understand the statue until they get up there.

I've never in my life become involved in anything so emotional. I don't know of anybody, for the first 10 days, everytime any of us looked at each other, we had tears in our eyes. And most of us are not that way. I don't think when my mother passed away it was this emotional. But then my mother, I had her for 90 years, I've only had the statue for a couple of weeks.

Q: Did you see people experience changes in their lives as they worked on the statue.

The only things like that--so many of the guys were strangers and I never saw so many of them tied so closely together. Everybody was willing to sit and talk. In the five years, there was never an argument. There were some heated discussions. This one guy would say it should be this way or that way, but when it was finally stated, there were no more further arguments on it. And it seems to be that way still. Everybody is ready to go again. I was with Ron James yesterday and he wanted to know when we'd be starting on the gondola, when we were going to get started on the park. And Barth is the same way. I've had dozens of guys say, we've got to get moving on this.

Q: And you've worked with crews of men all your life.

I've been running this place 40 years. We've had harmony here, I think, all of our lives as far as the unions are concerned and the people. We've had people come and go and we've had disagreements and one thing and another, but nothing terribly bad. And they were still paid people and one thing and another. You take a group of men who volunteer, then you've got something to really talk about.

Q: Have you toted up the volunteer hours involved in this project?

There would be no way to ever put it together. I have so many people ask me what it costs. How could you ever put a cost on it. We could tell you what it cost it dollars and cents, I could go through and look that up, but what good is it going to do

anybody. Take the day of the pouring of the concrete. We had 118 men up there, and they were here at 5 o'clock in the morning and we started pouring at 10 minutes to seven, and they worked constantly, all the way through, eating a sandwich whenever they had a chance. And then we got off the hill at five o'clock that night. That's 1416 hours in one day. That was the crew. Then you got 20 women perhaps and men that were down here and they were feeding them all day long, so you got another 240 hours in time. And then you got the guys who were hauling people up and down the hill. You probably got another 20 people. Almost 2000 hours of time went into that one day.

And people want me to tell them how much we collected in donations. You multiply them out, give them \$10 an hour. Most of these men were craftsmen. Working Saturdays, they would have been drawing on an ordinary job, say \$20 an hour. \$50-60,000 dollars in labor for that one shift. And that was just one lousy day. The day was beautiful, but when I meant lousy, it was one day out of five years. It's unbelievable. And when people ask me, how much money did you spend on it, I hate to even mention it, I don't even want to talk about it. I can sit down and say we spent this many thousands of dollars on it--but it wouldn't be anything compared to what the men gave. So consequently, I don't ever want to take anything away from what they did.

Q: The amount of donations were amazing--I remember one article said the Anaconda Company had donated \$250,000 worth of equipment.

They got it back. But we had it about three years. (laughs). That was quite a deal. The Anaconda Co gave us more than that. They gave us anything we asked for. Frank Gardner has to be classed right up there in the top with everybody that gave. But then, no matter what we'd go to him with, he'd grunt and groan for a few minutes but then he'd find it for us.

Q: You look at the Anaconda Co during this time, they were in trouble, cutting costs.

Right. They were a good company, ALL the time. People just never realized how great. They can never understand, I think maybe they are beginning to understand now. But the Anaconda Company, you think how many children went to school, to college, and how many people retired in nice homes around this country, all because of Anaconda. They had to run a business. But they took care of a lot of people over the years.

And then on the other hand, a lot of people took care of the Anaconda Company. (laughs). It goes both ways.

Q: They didn't need to do this.

They could have closed the mines down, they could have fought the mines down. They didn't have to do anything for us. But they did. But then there were so many other companies. Lavelle

Powder company--Lavelle couldn't afford it any more than any of the rest. But when it got to the point where we needed powder and drill equipment, they were right there to give it to us. Ideal Cement Corporation. they donated 1100 sacks of cement. That's a lot of concrete. They are in Trident. And through the Automotive Supply Company here in Butte, Dupont gave us the paint for the outer structure. And Columbia Paint Company gave us all the paint for the inside. And one small thing we don't talk about too much is the Bearing Supply Company. They lent us the rolls. If we hadn't had the rolls, we couldn't have started on the statue. The rolls that we rolled the steel with. We couldn't have even got off the ground without them. and we had them for FOUR years! Montana Power couldn't give us an awful lot, except that they would buy things for us at their cost, and that was unbelievable what they did for us by doing that. And they would donate all the used stuff that was going to the junkyard that we needed. And they supported us when we had to go to Washington to get the helicopter.

Q: Will a company like Dupont that donated the 40-year paint use that in advertising?

They have never asked us for that.

Q: You were a major supplier of equipment to Anaconda, so you were hurt badly when the Company shut down?

Oh, very much.

Q: At this point, your commitment would have taken a bigger chunk out of your resources.

It did.

Q: Ever have any second thoughts?

No, I'd do it again, starting in the morning. Once you touch it, there is no backing off. What we intend to do now--the statue in itself was a tremendous undertaking and I believe that truly it was one of the greatest accomplishments that this part of the country will ever see, when you realize how it was done, where it was done at. Then I think it really is a part of construction history.

Q: Aside from the spirit involved, do you think there are many places that would have had the skilled labor force?

Oh yes. Virtually any community has the skill and the labor force. But can you imagine calling on the Ironworkers in Chicago and saying, we'd like you to come out on Saturdays and Sundays, give up your time for a year? Or New York City or Miami or any other part of the world. Things like that aren't done. You might get it done in some little backwoods town in Mexico, or a deeply religious area or something--but even there, they would mostly go for money to build something. That's the unique part

of this. I don't think we have truly asked anybody to donate to it. We've had hundreds of people say, do you need money? Sure we need money. Can I donate? Certainly you can donate. You can always donate, from now until the end of time, because as long as it stands there, it will have to be taken care of. That's why I want to see--and I've had some slight opposition for a gondola set up, but the gondola could pay the maintenance not only of itself, but to pay for that statue, to landscape the top of the mountain the way it should be, to cover up any scars that we've made on the mountain, to make it set right into a setting like it was when God first built it. It will also furnish the money to build and maintain a park, of which we now have 100 acres of ground at the foot. We'll put a park there that will be second to none in the Northwest.

Q: What will that park consist of?

People have a nostalgic feeling for Columbia Gardens. We'd like to put a park back that will do the same thing for the community, give them the same feeling. There is no way that we could build the old pavillion. Conceivably we could build it of concrete and steel. But we can put in flower gardens and lawn and trees into an area that has been bare for many years. And it will be big; it's going to cover a lot of ground. It will supply a lot of happiness, not only for the Butte people, but for people who come to visit the statue. It would generate enough money I know, over the years, between the gondola, the statue, the gift shop, donations that we receive. I know that in time we will be able to put in a research center. And that's, to me, what it's all about.

Q: What sort of research?

I want to see a center for epilepsy and brain related diseases. And I know that this is possible. It would mean that you would have a main medical center here. It would employ people, give them a basis for something other than always waiting for mining. It's a way of doing good. I believe in my own heart that we didn't build that statue just to stick it on the mountain. We built it for some reason. I haven't figured out the whole reason yet, but my son came to me and we were talking and he said, did you ever stop and think, when we get the research center, that we could also--and we talk about WHEN we get it done, not if. We know we will get the center. I may not be here, but they'll do it. And his suggestion was that perhaps we could build a last wish home for children that are sick and are terminally ill. Maybe the funds from this will be able to take care of them. Along with that, we have been highly criticized for wasting our time and money building a statue--my answer to it is, they always feel the money should go toward feeding the poor, but what we've taken in in dollars and cents, you couldn't feed the poor of this community for six months. So you always have to remember that the poor are always going to be with us, and not just for Thanksgiving and Christmas, but they are going to be here 365 days a year. Somebody like Dallas Doyle and his mission up here, we

could be able to help with funds because we're not going to be talking about drawing funds from the City of Butte. I firmly believe that there will be, in the next 10 years, probably 25 to 30 million people will come here, just to see that statue. And I know a lot of people who are smarter than I am who feel the same way.

Our big job now is to make sure that the statue is not destroyed by cheap ideas, capitalizing on selling plastic statues of it by anyone who comes along, or making beer mugs, ashtrays, stuff like this. We know we have to sell certain things, but these statues that you see here on the desk are a work of art. That's the type of things we want in our little gift store that we just started. Another thing is that we'd like to say that we weren't going to sell t-shirts and hats, but in order to raise money to begin with, those are the two items that we sold. We had to do something cheap because we didn't have any money to buy anything. But now we feel that we have put together items of art and various things that we've put together in this shop that people will be proud to own.

Q: How do you prevent people from making plastic statues?

We have copyrighted and trade marked Our Lady of the Rockies. We have now found out that there is another trademark that we have to have, which we applied for yesterday. We have people in Washington D.C. working on it. That is what you call Image Copyright. I ran into a statue yesterday that is made out of plastic and they stand 2 feet high and 3 feet high, and they sell them for \$19.99 and \$9.99, and they are junk. But they are exact duplicates of the statue. Now there are no copyrights on them, and whether some company is capitalizing on them...but I did talk with the people in Butte who are selling them, and I asked them to please refrain. Otherwise, we will just end up with a constant fight with our attorneys. It was my contention that our board, which consists of working guys, could not meet every night to straighten out the problems. So the statue is copyrighted in my name. And that is so that when I see what happened yesterday--and this is only one of a 150 problems that come up--I can say, you can NOT do that, and if you do, the court. And we have succeeded in stopping all this by working with them. If it is a commendable deal, something of beauty, we issue a license allowing them to make it, and we want their exact breakdown on their costs, we want to know what they want as a profit, and each one of us makes 50% of the profits. That gives people an opportunity to make a little money off it and still give us enough money to pay the expenses. On the day that we have overcome 90% of the problems, it has already been set that I reassign it to the foundation.

Q: Does that mean that in a court of law that the legal ownership of the statue resides with the foundation?

The foundation owns everything. I own the copyright only. But like I said, the assignments are already drawn up to revert to

the foundation. The guys on the board are working men; I can't ask them to come every day of the week. So I make the decisions--as I have since the first day it started, it's been my problem--nobody asks how we got the money, nobody asked where it come from, and I didn't ask them how they were going to do the work so we complimented each other all the way along. And by so doing, we got the job done. Now, to do all the rest of it, first we have to have all the chisellers out of it. I feel that before the year ends, the biggest proportion of the problems will be wiped out. But the morning after we turned the lights on, they were running around selling pictures. And we were still faced with the cost of the helicopter. We still are faced with it. We have no conception of what it is going to run. But we know it is going to be a LOT of money. We also know that at this time, the gov't moves mightly slow, but within the next six months, they are going to have all their ducks in a row, and they won't even miss the cost of a piece of paper. So we know by that time we have to be prepared to pay that bill. And there is only one way I can see we can pay it--through donations, which are not that great, and also through the sales of small items like these statues. And I feel that when tourist season comes, through our little shop, we will sell enough not only to keep paying the power bills until we get the gondola up and get everything tied together, but the massive job is still ahead of us.

I don't know what we were thinking of when we first started, that we would put the statue on the mountain, but what were we going to do with it then. No one ever attempts to answer that question. But when I talk with them, I say, whatever gave you the idea that we could do it, but not only do it, but take care of it. It wouldn't take many years without a maintenance crew and people to watch over it careful, wouldn't take many years before it would fall down. It will NEVER fall down, I shouldn't say that, but it would rust and deteriorate.

Q: How often do you think you will have to have major maintenance?

Every year. I will be almost constant, every summer.

Q: Have there been any vandalism problems?

Not one bit. We did have a group of kids, when we poured the concrete--it seems to be the greatest desire of any child to go up and scratch their name in wet concrete. Well, we caught them. They had a can of red paint, and on one of the rocks way behind the statue, they painted their initials on that. Well, it was too late in the year to worry about it, but come springtime, they will be up there taking the paint off the rocks--how they are going to do it, we don't know, but they are going to take it off if they have to chisel it out. And they will have to grind it out of the base where they put their initials. And of course they are very faint in there, but still, we have to give them a little lesson.

Q: What about setbacks? There was mention in one article that the Cat broke down while you were building the road, and you had \$14 in the bank.

That was true but it was never a big problem. Anytime we got into a position like that, we just did the problem here in our shop, and we took care of it. Anytime there was no money left, the equipment company kept it going. [Joe Roberts Equipment Company.]

Q: At great cost to you. You have had financial trouble.

Yes, but that didn't have anything to do with it. If we were to charge out for rental, it would have been unbelievable. But so much of that was just sitting idle, anyway. Our problems stemmed from something else entirely, that didn't even begin with the closure of the Anaconda Co; it started before that. And we have a suit at the present time involving what caused 90% of our problems.

Q: 10 years ago, did you think you were a very religious man.

No. I'm still not very religious. I have a deep and abiding faith in Jesus and Mary. I don't spend my time on my hands and knees, saying my prayers. I say them when I feel like parying. I never miss praying, however. And I have never asked for anything that I didn't receive, if it was for my betterment. I can truthfully say, it has been a great life because I have a lot of faith. And that's what it is with most of the guys. There are so few that are what you would call "religious." Most of us talk to God as though he were just a counsellor sitting there listening to us. and I think that's the way we like it. Through that attitude, is why we can speak to people who are Mormons who worked with us, Catholics, Methodists. We even have a Hindu. He came in and asked one day if he could give us a donation. He said, I know what you're talking about, I can feel all of the love among all these people. He said, that's what I believe in, is love. I would like to give a donation, but you know, I'm not Christian. I said, I couldn't care less what religion you are. If you believe in love the same way we do, we'd love to have a donation. He said, I want you to know, I'm a hindu. And he's been a friend of ours ever since.

Q: What about resistance in the community, the debate.

You'll always have resistance, no matter what you attempt to do. Some people would never been happy under any circumstances. If Jesus Christ came down and walked the streets, there would be people against it. And some of them are so steeped in their own religion and so fanatical that they can't see the bright side of life. Some criticism has called us idolators. I have an answer for that--I ask them if they have a wallet. And if they do, I ask to see the wallet. And in the wallet is usually pictures or money. If you are going to be an idolator, then that picture of George Washington or anybody else, you are certainly not worship-

ping that, but it's a reminder that you've got a buck in your pocket. The pictures could be a reminder that you love your wife, daughter, son, some friend. It's a reminder is what it actually is, a remembrance. Then when you look up at that statue on the hill, you are not worshipping the statue, it's strictly a reminder that maybe you forgot to say that you love somebody today. Maybe you forgot, when you walked out the door today, you forgot to tell your wife or your husband that you loved them, and maybe when you get home they won't be there. You never realize that until it hits home. You wake up some morning in a bed and know that you may not be coming out of that bed. These things--if somebody calls you in the middle of the night if that happens and tell you they love you, that's a real feeling. My way of looking at it is someday somebody will look at it and say, You know I forgot to say something to my wife this morning and they will go find a phone or go back home, or maybe there will be a guy standing there that looks lonesome, and somebody will walk over to him and say you know, I love you, I really love you. And if that happens--when it happens, I'm sure it's happened a hundred times already, but that's when we feel that we really did something. It's being very naive to think you can change people, but supposing we made 1000 people say I love you instead of a 1000 who said I hate you, you so and so--it's worthwhile.

Q: How long do you think it will take to put the gondola up.

We should know very shortly how much one will cost, how long it will take to build it. We still have a few pieces of ground to iron out, but we will get that finished. We have actually got volunteers that would like to put the concrete footings in and erect the steel, which would knock down a tremendous amount of the cost of it. We have no idea what it will cost. It is almost going to have to be a commercial venture. I don't know where we'll find the money, but we'll find the money. We never know where anything is coming from, but it does come.

Q: What liability have you had to take out on this?

We have never had one dollar's worth of liability. Nothing. On the week that we were putting the statue up, I got nervous and I got an insurance policy to cover it. I ran every man through our workman's comp for that week because we knew it was so dangerous. We took care of it. WE insured the statue, but we never bothered to put in a claim for it, and they never bothered to send us a bill.

Q: For volunteer work, how could you run them through your workmen's comp?

We just notified workmen's comp that we wanted them covered. They said well, we'll send you a form and be covered on yours until the minute it's over, notify us.

Q: So that they would have been covered by funds you had already paid into workmen's comp and you would have to make those funds

up?

Yes..

Q: So essentially you self-insured them..

Essentially, yeah. That's more stuff we don't talk about. What I've done for it, I did. I don't want to talk about it. Some of it we had to take back as the time went on. And you can't ask the welders to work every day for nothing for five years, so they were paid welders. But other than that work, nobody was paid. But it got so that, for the past three years, the people in the office here worked 50% of the time that they worked, was on the project. But then there wasn't anything very much left for them to do.

Q: On the other hand, you could have laid them off.

No, not when they are working for you for 30 to 35 years, you don't lay them off.

Q: Yes, but some people would have.

Many places would have. But I made up my mind that when I closed my doors for the last time, that they would all still be here and we would walk out together. Because people have to realize that I didn't build a business alone. I have twelve people here whose work span is over 25 years. Four that's over 30 years. Leroy is 22 years.

Q: How old are you?

66.

Q: Mining family?

No, my dad was a steamfitter, like in all the big buildings, those were steam. Today, you would call him a plumber.

Q: Is Roberts an English name?

Yes, I'm have English and half Irish.