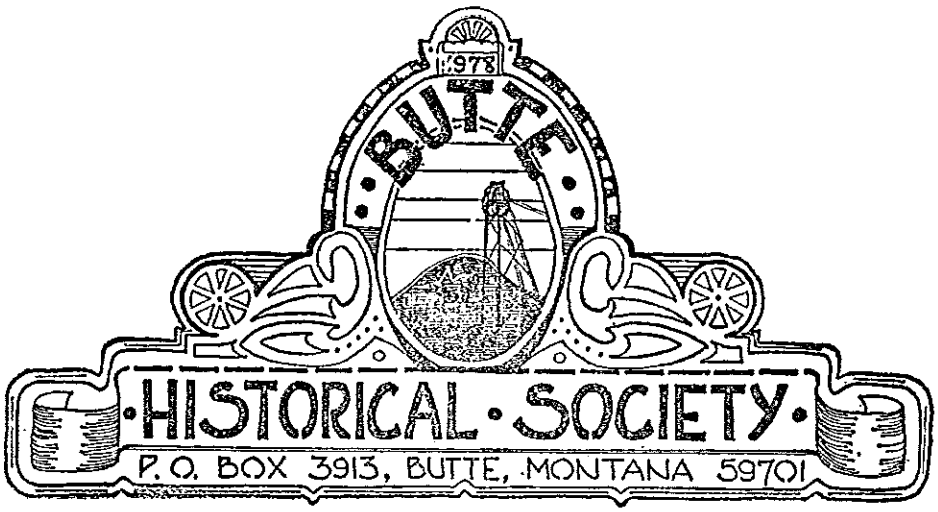

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Restrictions:

4/7/86
Date of Agreement

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Ron Garbarino, director of programs for disabled workers, AFL CIO in Butte, interviewed at his office by Teresa Jordan, April 7, 1986. Boilermaker

Notes taken at time of interview; not audited against tape; not a transcript.

Ron was born and raised in Butte. His grandfather was from Italy, a woodchopper for the mines. His father and uncles were all miners; his uncles were contract, his father was days' pay. Ron was a boilermaker--welding and frabrication.

Q: Were you encouraged or discouraged from working for the Company when you were growing up?

He was discouraged; the Company didn't have the best reputation. Ron worked as a clerk out of school, but he could make better money in the mines. He went to work for the Company in 1966.

He had one year of college. Education was not pushed too much. He went to college in 1959 for a year; there was a six or nine month strike at that time, times were hard, he dropped out.

Q: Were any of your uncles or your father sick from work in the mines?

Ron's father's oldest brother had a heart condition, but Ron doesn't know if it was the bad air or not. He retired in his late '40's, and retired to welfare because pension was almost non-existent at that time. His father retired at 62 years of age; worked underground 33 years.

Ron was a fabricator, welder. He started as a helper in the Operating Engineers union, worked at that for five or six months. Then he had a chance to go as a helper in the Boilermaker's Union; helped a journeyman. He was a helper for a year and nine months, then got his journeyman card. Apprenticeships started just when Ron went in, but he went the helper route; it was quicker.

He spent about 2 and a half years underground, a 'car knocker,' repairing cars. Sometimes he repaired chutes, etc, but mostly he repaired cars. He stayed pretty much at one mine; He worked the Mountain Con, the Stewartt, and some at the Leonard, some at the Kelly. There was enough work at one mine to keep you busy. The Mt. Con had about 800 or 900 men then; the Stewartt 400 or 500.

The arc welders would be on each level, or were brought there. Steel, etc. was handled by the station tender. He just welded; didn't haul the stuff around.

Q: Some people have complained about the cumbersome nature of divided work duties among unions.

Ron says that the problem of work duties was blown out of proportion. As long as plenty of men were working and there was lots of work to do, there were the people to do it. If someone from a different union held you up waiting for him to get there to do his job, it was not for more than a half an hour. It was just a matter of assigning the right people for the job, of planning in advance. In the end, however, there were not many people working so waits could be longer. But it was blown out of proportion.

Q: Why do you think that was?

Ron doesn't know; maybe the Compay was looking for cheaper ways to do things.

Letting people cross jurisdictional lines didn't work that well; you have the best productivity when you have people who know the job best doing it; when a craftsman does his craft he will do it better than someone with just a little experience.

Q: How many were in your union?

Ron thinks it was probably around 180 or 190 in 1973, which was the best time. Toward the end, there were only five or six men, and they were not doing anything. When he first started working for the Pit, there were over 100 trucks. At the end, only a handful.

Q: Why did your change from underground?

Ron wanted to learn different aspects of the trade. He spent about three years in the blacksmith shop doing fabrication; worked in the main shop. Every location had different job duties. His favorite was blacksmith. There, they made anything needed for the mine, the mill, the pit.

At one time, everything was done in house--the draftsmen, the engineer, etc, would get together with you and a boss and you would figure out how to do it. But ARCO moved the engineering and draftmen away; then <u>you</u> became the engineer and draftsman, which you were not as good at, and that caused costs to go up. The bosses contracted out more--that was supposedly cheaper because they weren't paying benefits, but often the part was not to your exact specification. Cost more that way.

When the work was all in house, you develop a talent, you work with a group of people and develop an expertise.

Q: When did things start to change? Right when ARCO took over?

No, it took about a year and a half after ARCO took over. Grievances began to take longer; more was contracted out; more grievances were taken to the fifth step. It almost looked like it had been scheduled to move the work away from Butte.

Q: What was your feeling when ARCO first took over? Did you think it would be a good thing?

Yes. ARCO was going to put $400 M into the concentrator; that would make things better; everyone thought it would be great, that it meant a good future. But by about 1979, Ron saw the handwriting on the wall. The Company spent $50 to $80 M on the smelter for environmental modifications; when it shut down after all that work, and even though the state of Montana had given the Company eight more years for compliance, people could see then what was coming.

1973 to 1977 was a good time for the worker. They got cost of living allowances in 1974, copper prices were up. BM Place had sold off timber, the Company was writing off Chile. Ron thinks there was a change in the tax structure in 1980, made it feasible to close the smelter.

Q: Do you think ARCO was sincere about running a mining company for a profit when it first came in, or do you think they bought it as a write off?

Ron doesn't know, but it soon became apparent that it wasn't working. They let go good, experienced mine engineers, brought in people who didn't know the work, had no experience.

Ron was laid off in 1982. He had 16 1/2 years. He got no retirement benefits; if you were 55 with 15 years; or if your age and years added up to 80; or if you had 30 years, you got retirement. But Ron didn't qualify. He was 42 with 16 years; he got nothing.

Q: Did you see it coming?

Not until the smelter shut down.

Q: Then did you think it would go to a complete shutdown?

Yes.

Q: Could you prepare for being laid off?

Ron says that while he was still working, he felt guilty for those who were laid off. No one would work overtime, in the hope that more could keep jobs. He says you can't really prepare. You think you do, but you can't. A few moved out, got different jobs. In 1980 and '81, Colstrip was really running. Many went there, got good money. But by 1982, Colstrip was winding down.

Workers got $7000 over a year. Part was supplenmentary unemployment benefits, which the workers had contributed.

Q: How was the Anaconda Company as an employer?

They were backward as far as benefits. They had good benefits,

but we had to strike for every one. When copper was down in 1967, there was an 11 month strike; in 1974 when copper was up, the Co settled right away. They had no qualms, when copper was down, in using labor to make scarcity of supply and up the price.

Tape 1, Side B

The Co used the legislature to manipulate the mining business, safety laws and compensation. No people Ron worked with had good feelings for Anaconda. They took millions out; they could have had schools, libraries, a hospital; they did nothing for the employees.

Q: Was ARCO better or worse?

ARCO cared about the workers more; there was a genuine concern for safety throughout ARCO. Morale was no worse under ARCO. You never heard anybody say I wish we had ACM back again. Anaconda paid good benefits at the end; but all had come from strikes.

Ron's uncle started at the Elmer Lou in 1915 when he was 15 years old. He worked seven days a week, no days off.

Q: Strikes through the years had improved conditions; sometimes, looking from the outside, it's hard to see how an 11 month strike could ever pay off.

Ron says that that is something you accept. When you strike, you don't strike for yourself; you have to know that you are striking to improve conditions for people down the line. This administration is letting things slip backwards for labor.

Q: There seems to be little protest against the increase in non-union in Butte....

You take away people's paychecks, they will make compromises. Maybe things have to get back enough again for people to get tough. Nobody ever <u>gave</u> the working man anything.

Q: Many people say that Butte's union reputation hurts it.

McDonald's comes in, non-union, pays $3.33 an hour, doesn't buy anything here. We are better with local restaurants that pay $4 plus an hour, and have some job security, and who buy supplies here. McDonalds doesn't buy any supplies here.

Union workers are good, productive workers. Colstrip had nothing but good to say about the union. Sunlight mine was built by union labor, and was finished way ahead of schedule. It isn't run union, but it was built union.

Q: McDonalds doesn't even buy salt here; why do you think people are so excited about them coming in?

Ron doesn't know. Maybe it's their advertising. They hire 100

people, but only for 12 to 14 hours a week; If somebody has trouble on the job, there is no one to represent them, help them.

But Ron thinks that Butte will do well; it is resilient.

Ron's wife is Bernadine Garbarino; she does office work for MPC. She had been working outside the home for about six years when Ron was laid off. Their son, Ronnie, is 20, is a sophmore at MT Tech in engineering right now. Dennis is 22 and will graduate Tech in May with a degree in Petroleum Engineering. He is worried about a job; may get a business degree at Missoula; Candy is 24 and goes to Western in Business.

Ron wasn't pushed toward education; but he has pushed his kids.

He was out of work for about a year.

Q: What was that experience like?

At first, while he was still working, he had guilt, like he has said before. Then, when he was laid off, it wasn't too bad at first. He remodelled the kitchen, the bathroom. He had some money saved, and he got unemployment. By about April of '83, the union hired a teacher at Tech to teach weld inspection; he took the course and got certified as a weld inspector. In the Spring of '84, he worked for Martin Marietta in Denver; came back in the Fall. He has a sister and brother in law in Denver; his bro in law is an engineer with Martin Marietta. But Ron had been here for 45 years; he wanted to stay here; he decided to try it here again.

Q: Can you explain your sense of rootedness here?

Ron is thrid generation. His grandfather on his mother's side was from Cornwall. He went back there once, then came back here. He worked the mines as a carpenter; would work downtown in the summer, where the wages were better. His last name was Curtis.

Ron came back here. Copper worker training money was available. ACM put in about $5M; the feds put in about $200,000 for a six month training program. Ron was a welding instructor. In August '85, he got on at AFL CIO with their disabled workers program.

Q: How do you like being behind a desk?

The paperwork is terrible. Ron laughs, says that they will throw him out for not doing his paperwork right. But he enjoys working with the people. He likes that a lot. But he doens't like sitting.

Q: What does the job entail?

His work is through Project Challenge; he works to identify disabled workers--does that through vocational rehabilitation, private insurers, doctors. They start with classroom training to

learn how to write resumes, talk to employers. Basically, they sharpen job skills. Project Challenge networks with Job Service, the SRS. They run the Career Futures program for women. They also have some supportive services--help with money for looking for jobs; they can pay 70% of relocation. People can be in the program for up to a year.

Mary Berg [see separate interview] handles 100 people in a year and there are five sites for that program around MT, (each handles 100); Ron handles 60; there are three sites for disable workers. So, the program reaches about 700 a year; that's just a drop in the bucket.

Q: Did you experience depression when you were laid off?

Yes, you get to thinking that your job skills are no good. Your role in the house is different; you're the housecleaner instead of the main provider. Another big shock comes when you lose your unemployment--that $160/week makes a big difference.

One of the reasons Ron got the weld inspector certification was to remind himself that he was good at his craft. He counsels people to volunteer for things; unemployment is temporrary; you should get out and do something, get away from the isolation of unemployment, being at home. Lots of his friends were good drinkers before they were unemployed; they got better at it with unemployment.

Q: At one time, different ethnic lodges, etc, provided support systems. What sort of support systems were intact or rose up to help when you were laid off.

The only one Ron can think of was the union. They had three classes to upgrade skills, specifically helioarc welding. They filed suits with the International about not being fair with the contract. Project Challenge, which Ron went through, was a great support. The Job Service would work with you. Local unions hang togther. Retraining that Rob was involved in was only for Boilermakers.

Tape 2, Side A

Q: Some people landed on their feet right after the layoffs; others still don't have jobs and their lives are a shambles. What determines a person's experience?

Job skills, education--if you had a lot, you could transfer it to other things. Age. Family support-if you have a brother or sister or wife who can help out and will do it. A lot affected by the first layoffs moved out.

A lot of people are underemployed. [During this interview, Ed, an electrician, came in and told Rob he was working; had started that morning on a road construction job. He was making $5.90 or so an hour. Rob congratulated him, was very positive about the

situation. After Ed left, Rob said, I end up being a cheerleader a lot of the time. He was an electrician, made $14, 15 dollars an hour. Now he's happy to be getting $5.] a lot are making $5, 6, or 7 an hour, working for the city, the county, the hospital. A few are in construction at better wages; that takes extra job skills.

A 52 year old with a heart or back problem is hard to employ, though they did fine at their old job. A lot of people stayed year after year at the same job--didn't learn a lot of skills. It's tough for them to get a job. Personal motivation? Rob is not sure that that makes a lot of difference.

Q: How do we solve the problem?

People are a resource; we need a national consensus to make the most of them. Other countries have it, we don't.

Q: How much does Project Challenge cost, for instance.

Unicom, a program to train people for work in the cable TV industry, costs about $2500 to put peole through a five or six week school. They have to be able and willing to move. They get good jobs, but we lose them; they work in Nevada, the East Coast. Other programs under Project Challenge cost maybe $150. And once people are working, they pay taxes.

Ron was making $28,000 at the pit. He paid a lot of taxes through the year. Every dollar that is spent in training comes back many, many times.

Butte is doing things--they are spending $700,000 on a small business incubator, but it is a good idea. It gets people thinking about what's possible. It will pay back 10-fold. It offers good support. MERDI and NCAT are good benefits to the community. Every doctorate that comes into the community benefits it.

Q: How do you think Butte has done?

Well. It's bottomed out. Lots of things are doing well--the industrial park, the grain terminal. There is a community network here, and so much expertise. Every person with a doctorate or masters that comes into the community generates jobs.

Q: How big a problem is left?

There's a big problem. They are cutting our monies for Project Challenge and retraining; they should be increasing them. Ron says he is not a bureaucrat, or just saying this to protect his own job. It's the truth.

Q: Have there been any benefits to you from being laid off?

He thinks it has been a good thing for him personally. He found out that he had skills, and he upgraded them. It has been interesting and exciting. Maybe that is what makes the community work. "For me, I think there have been benefits. I went through that period where I never thought there would be another job for me, but I kind of found out I had skills and I upgraded those skills and I found that there are a lot of people around here who gave me a chance to do things, and it's been interesting and exciting to me. And I hope it has for other people too. Maybe the day will come that if mining comes or it doesn't come, we can make this community worthwhile, and be as good as it ever was."