

0024

Sun Advocate, Price, Utah -- Tuesday, September 8, 1998 1B

file ACT/007/038 #2

Cyprus Plateau Mining, advancing into the 21st century

By Jackie Anderson
 Staff reporter

Tuesday afternoon Kevin Ashby and I were afforded a look at the new longwall, up and running, in the Willow Creek Mine. Our guide was Menco Copinga, construction foreman.

Rumors in the community indicate that there are problems with the new longwall, and that Willow Creek Mine may be in trouble. We wanted to see for ourselves. What we saw was extremely encouraging.

We traveled 40 cross cuts into the mine to reach the longwall. Copinga pointed out the lack of refuge in the tunnels, expressing the pride the company feels in the cleanliness of their mine environment.

We arrived at shift change, and witnessed the smooth transition from one crew to another. We were also able to witness the sheer make a full cut and down the 750 foot face of the wall. The new longwall is 250 feet longer than the old one at Star Point. Kevin and I were both immediately struck with the relative quiet of the new longwall.

The mine officials with whom we talked do not deny there have been set backs. It took longer than expected to mine through rock and reach a point where the longwall could be installed and begin production. There have also been bugs to work out with the new, computerized, highly technical longwall.

"This is our first run, and naturally there are going to be problems," states Copinga. He pointed out that we were not the only visiting hard hats in the mine. The longwall was engineered and built in England, and purchased through Joy Manufacturing. Both had teams present during our visit, working together with Cyprus Plateau to iron out problems.

"We are dedicated to getting the longwall running at capacity," Copinga assured us. The wall is currently running at only 40 percent capacity. Meantime, the mine at Star Point continues to make up the production difference.

The most productive shift to date produced 11 thousand tons in ten hours. At full capacity, the wall should produce 20 thousand tons in a day, according to John Boylen, vice president and general manager.

Budgeted production should

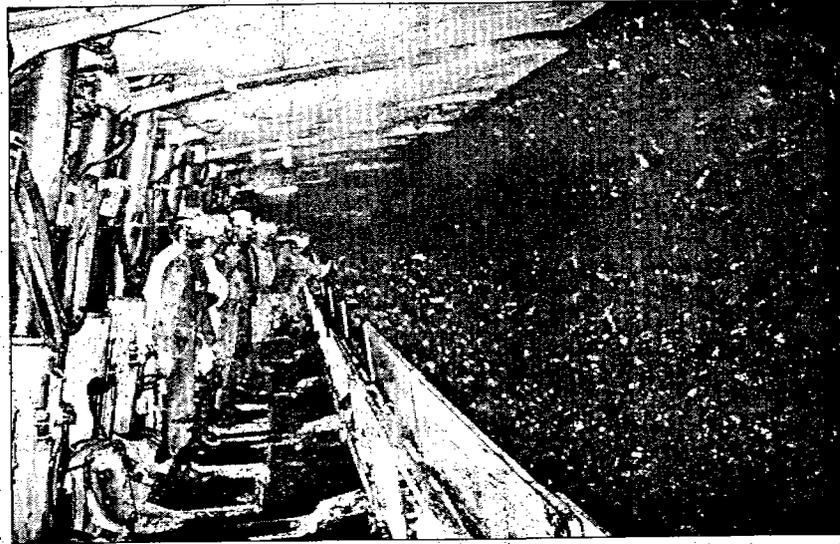
average five million tons per year with a designed annual maximum capacity of seven million tons.

Other challenges unique to the Willow Creek mine include the steep lift, extensive belt line, high levels of methane gas and heavy overburden, up to two thousand feet in some places, according to Copinga.

While we were there, we had the privilege of experiencing several light "bounces," the pressure of the overburden compressing seams of coal into the open space of mine shafts where resistance no longer exists. We were assured by crew members that the bounces we experienced were minor, which may account for the comment by Copinga that longwall miners are a special breed.

Projected plant recovery at full production (longwall and continuous miner) should average 95 percent. The shipped product quality will have a heating value of 12,200 BTU, 9.0 percent ash, 8.5 percent moisture, and 0.5 percent sulfur.

The mine currently operates three continuous mining units. They are expected to produce approximately 1.5 million tons. The new Joy longwall system is expected to produce 3.5 million tons per year.



Afternoon shift unplugs the conveyor belt on the new 32 million dollar longwall at Willow

In addition to being a viable coal operation, the mine provide economic stimulation to the community for at least the next two decades. Since its inception, the mine has boosted the local economy by providing more than 3,100 direct and indirect jobs; more than \$6.8 million in household income; \$35.8 million in equipment, materials and services purchased; more than \$1.7 million in sales tax in Utah; and more than \$2.4 million in federal mineral royalties received by the state of Utah.

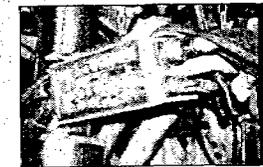
The reserve base of the new operation exceeds 80 million recoverable tons of low sulfur,

high volatile bituminous coal, with an additional 50 million tons under deeper overburden.

The mine is strategically located on the main line of the Union Pacific railroad near Helper. The mine utilizes a redesigned and renovated preparation plant with a capacity of 1,250 to 1,500 tons per hour. The plant is capable of full wash or bypass of the coal allowing varying degrees of quality to meet the customers needs. Washing the coal provides a vital competitive and quality advantage over other local suppliers for the export market.

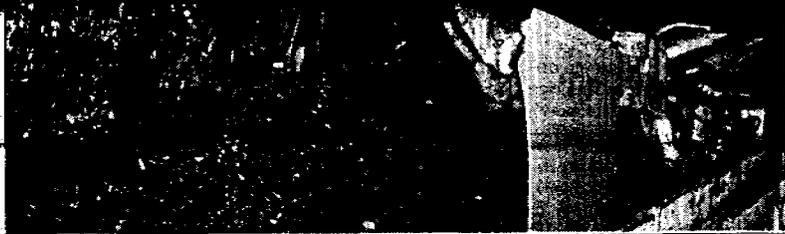
High standards and best

practices have been instituted across the company to make Willow Creek a truly world class operation, the management and employees are committed to meeting the challenge and setting the standard.

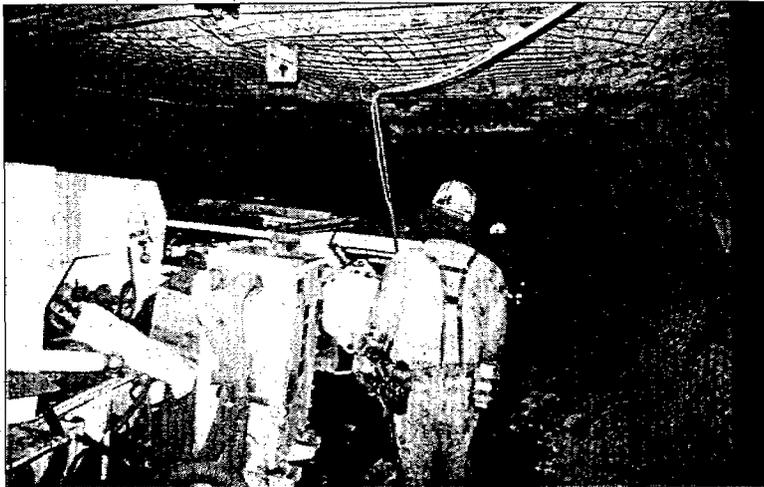


RS20 Sims Control Unit for automated shields.





The new sheer takes 45 minutes to mine 1,100 tons of coal in one complete run.



The crusher reduces coal to six inch to one foot pieces and the stage loader then loads it onto the conveyor belt to be taken to the tipple.



Tail gate shield man, J.R. Wells, (left) heads for the bathhouse after finishing day shift.

Menko Capinga discusses shield performance with visiting Joy Manufacturing representative, (bottom, far left).

Chris Jensen, one of only two women presently employed underground by the Willow Creek mine, takes a breather while Ernest Martinez looks on, (bottom, left).

Ben Bradey and Steve Manzanares hook up the remote controls for the shear to their light batteries in preparation for running the shear, (bottom).

Willow Creek gets ready for long w

By KEVIN ASHBY
Sun Advocate publisher

Yes, Virginia! There really is coal down there!

I was invited to tour the new Willow Creek Mine last week partly to show off the new facility that will cost well over \$150 million and partly to show us that miners are starting to see coal coming out of the conveyor belts rather than huge amounts of rock.

According to John Boylen there was a time when all three continuous miners were mining mostly rock and that was hard on the morale of the miners. There was lots of speculation and rumor and few answers for a time.

What happened?

Well, the sample core drilling from up above the mine was increased and the cores showed plenty of coal, but with some unexpected rock formations in the middle. For this reason, tons of rock had to be removed before entering back into the rich 18 foot coal seams that they now were there they just had to be found. So new maps were developed and once again coal is being mined and morale is improving.

In fact, in the prep plant where the coal is washed and prepared for the final delivery into train cars, crews expect a 91 to 92 percent recovery rate this week which is excellent for any mine. In other words, this is coal with very little rock or ash as it is called. In fact, if they can keep it this high much of the prep plant can be bypassed which makes the coal even more affordable.

The mine is a show piece for mines. Everything is new from the clothes that were issued to the new belt delivery system that is a grand total of 72 inches wide. That is a belt that can handle up to 6,000 tons of coal an hour. They will need this kind of capacity when the new long wall is up and running sometime in July. The life of a belt is approximately five to six years depending on the number of revolutions it has to make.

There is an intense computer system that is fed by fiber optic lines from inside the mine. Operators can observe the conditions of almost everything in the mine down to temperature, traffic, air flows and telephone calls.

A new pager system is installed where each miner has a unique pager number. The Personal Emergency Device system is being used where key employees are hooked up with this radio transmitter that makes their head lamp flash when there is a call.

A brand new longwall is starting to be stored near the portal of the mine that is also bringing smiles to the miners as they anticipate mining huge amounts of coal. The longwall will allow the mine to produce an expected 5 million tons of coal a year. That is their goal and right now they are a long way from that goal.

Presently about three trains a week are being loaded with Willow Creek coal. But in a few more months that number will jump to three trains a day.

Willow Creek mine is expected to be in production for the next 20 to 25 years. There is an estimated 80 to 85 million ton of coal left to be mined.

It will take about five years to mine the coal in the seam they

are in now. Next will be the K seam where there is about three years of coal mining. This seam is toward Kennelworth and already dewatering permits are being pursued.

After the K seam will come the A seam and about ten more years of coal mining. That is important when you take into consideration 300 employees and \$22 million in annual payroll and benefits. That breaks down to about \$75,000 per employee.

The cost of construction at well over \$100 million makes the Willow Creek mine the largest underground mine currently under development in the United States.

Cyprus Plateau Mining Corp. consists of the Willow Creek and Start Point underground coal mines. Start Point completed their longwall min-

ing in the third quarter of 1997 and will continue to operate at a reduced production level using continuous miners.

Production from both mines is transported by rail to utility customers primarily in the West and West Coast ports for export to Pacific Rim utility markets, primarily in Japan.

People from all over the world have been on tour of the new facility. While we were touring, two other groups were preparing to enter the mine. There is still a lot of testing going on as stresses on the coal seams are studied to project future safety precautions. Other groups just want to see the progress of what is becoming a very famous mine.

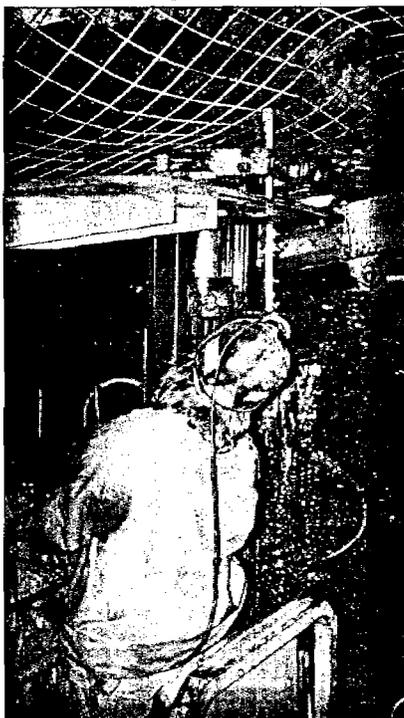
Local groups are also invited to come and see first hand the progress at the mine and especially the coal that is really there.



A constant air flow to the face of the mine is very important. Here, employees extend the air ducts after the roof bolts are secure.



This is the miner bit used on the continuous mining me-



A roof bolt is glued into place by Les Mortensen. Roof bolts mesh allow for safe working conditions in mines. Water is used process. A metal roof bolt is inserted into a glue wrap and the hole. The twisting mixes the two resins that holds the rod



A picture of the 72-inch belt that can deliver up to 6,000 tons. Pictured are John Boylen and Mel Mosier.



This is an underground break and lunch room, not quite tall and but comfortable to eat in.

Act 1002/03 8 #2