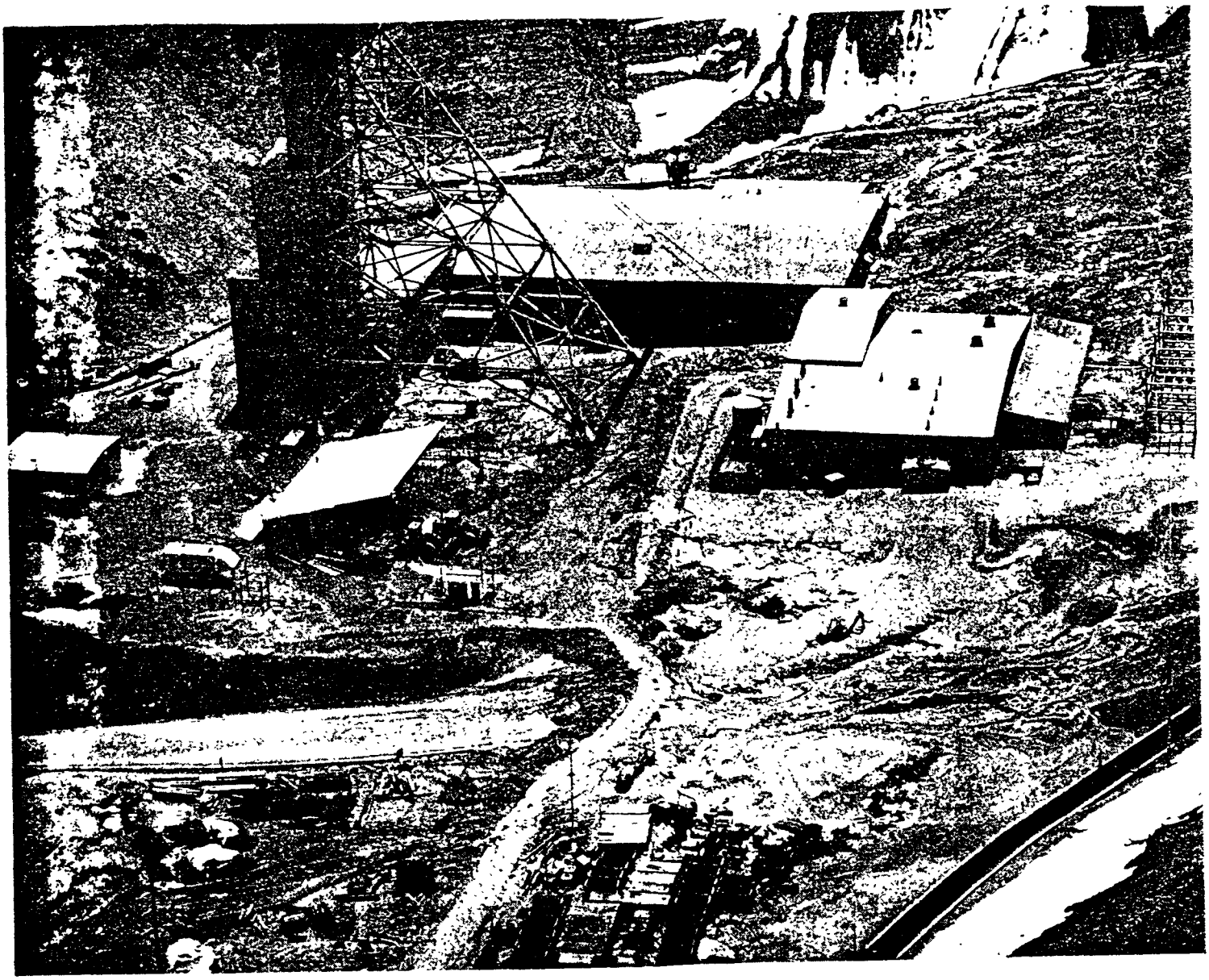

Another angle of the terrible mess created by the mudslide is shown here the morning after with water still draining from the mass of earth that came in from the upper right. The body of the man killed by the slide lies still buried in the area beyond the building on the right. Note level of mud on right sides of both buildings. Note half-buried heavy equipment at near right corner of right-hand building and backhoe between the building and stored mine cars in foreground. (Photo courtesy Anaconda.)

"Hard-luck" Carr Fork digs out from mudslide

One man killed as massive slide adds another chapter to long, sad tale

By Wayne Russell
Staff Reporter

If a prize is ever awarded for "The Hard Luck Mine of the Year," the Carr Fork mine of Anaconda Minerals Company in Utah will certainly be a prime candidate.

Carr Fork has had more than its share of hard luck since Anaconda put it into production in August 1979 after spending many millions of dollars to develop new reserves in the old mining district.

The latest bit of bad news was a mudslide May 14th that claimed one life and dumped more than a million tons of mud at the surface plant at the mine site in the Oquirrh Mountains near Tooele, 25 miles southwest of Salt Lake City.

A spokesman for Anaconda said in late July that pumping operations have now been re-established in the mine and good progress is being made in cleaning up the mess on the surface.

The mine, which has been closed for some time, was in a maintenance and pumping mode when, after heavy snow followed by temperatures in the high 80s, a mass of earth in the canyon above the property gave way.

Carr Fork Manager John Harmon estimated mud on the property covered an area 375 feet wide by 50 feet deep at its crown

The mudslide claimed the life of a Price man as he worked near one of the service buildings.

The victim, Kenneth Forsgren, 31, was working in a crew with three other men when the slide hit the bulldozer he was operating

He was pinned between two machines by the force of the mud slide, which buried him and the two machines. The other crew members escaped with only minor injuries.

Anaconda was forced by the disaster to lay off 35 workers, leaving a skeleton crew of

arr Fork ...

ght to man the property.

However, Nancy Stookey, an administrative supervisor, said July 24th that 33 ›urly and three salaried workers were now orking to return the operation to its standby atus.

The mudslide knocked out the electrical ıbstation on the mine property, cutting ›wer to the pumps used to keep the mine ry.

With the pumps shut down for 11 days, ·ater level in the mine rose by 900 feet, Iarmon said, as an estimated 80 million allons accumulated.

With power restored, pumping began at the ate of 4,200 gallons per minute, gaining on ne natural water inflow by about 500—600 allons per minute.

J.S. Redpath Corporation has about 50 vorkers on the property aiding in the cleanup.

Harmon estimates the crews will work for .t least 90 days to restore the mine to its prelide condition of pumping and maintenance.

"We're still working on getting our service .haft back into commission," Stookey said Iuly 24th.

TROUBLES NOTHING NEW

The mudslide was only the latest in a series ›f ill-fated events to befall Carr Fork since production began in 1979.

Initially, the Carr Fork mine was designed to produce 14,000 tons of ore a day, which would yield about 112 million pounds of copper a year.

However, due to difficult mining conditions and other problems, Carr Fork has never operated above 40 percent of capacity, producing only some 44 million pounds of copper a year, at its peak.

In May 1980, a hoisting accident sent a loaded skip crashing to the bottom of the main production shaft, slingshotting an empty counterweight skip through the headframe.

The loaded skip was returning to the surface carrying around 20 tons of ore, about 5 more than its normal load of 15 tons. The extra ore was from an earlier load that had not completely emptied.

The extra weight apparently caused a circuit breaker to blow, cutting power to the automated system.

Crews reset the circuit breaker, but the skip's brakes couldn't hold the extra load and the skip fell 3,600 feet to the bottom of the production shaft while its counterweight skip was rocketed through the headframe.

Anaconda said the accident was caused by human error.

As a result of the damage, Carr Fork operations were suspended for three months, until August 1980. However, no layoffs resulted from the accident.

Anaconda estimated it lost 10 million pounds of copper production during the three months the hoist was out of operation. Other expenses included equipment replacement costs of about $1.2 million and labor overhead and outside service costs of about $1.4 million, according to Anaconda.

It was only the beginning of hard times at Carr Fork.

Despite hopes for economic improvements, copper prices and demand continued to decline. Carr Fork, beset with expensive technical problems it was trying to solve, was caught in a tough squeeze.

In November 1981, Anaconda announced it was shutting down Carr Fork for a year to clean up technical problems that had hindered the mine's production capacity and because of a depressed and uncertain copper market.

The news of the shutdown brought with it the layoff of 100 workers and the idling of milling and concentrating operations at Carr Fork.

At that time, the company said more than 800 workers would remain to do development work at Carr Fork.

More bad news came in May 1982.

Ananconda laid off nearly 700 more workers in what was then the largest layoff in Toole County history.

And still copper market conditions continued to worsen.

Then again in November 1982, Anaconda announced that it was laying off 120 of its remaining 170 workers at Carr Fork, at the time when the one-year shutdown was suppose to have ended.

The layoffs left only about 50 people to keep the mine in the pumping and maintenance mode, before the mudslide, pending a future re-evaluation of its status.

Harmon said the option for production is still available to the company, contingent on a "decent metal price."

Harmon said the crew at the property was approaching two years and 400,000 man-hours without a lost-time accident when the disaster struck.

$217 MILLION PROJECT

It was on August 31, 1979—one day ahead of a schedule that had been set five years before — that Anaconda shipped the first concentrates from its $217 million Carr Fork mine and mill.

When production began, Anaconda said feed to the mill would average 1.84 percent copper, along with "significant" quantities of molybdenum, gold and silver.

Rated capacity called for 14,000 tpd of ore, working three shifts a day, five days per week. Milling capacity was to be 10,000 tpd on a three-shift basis, seven days a week.

Figures on ore reserves were not available, but the company estimated that the life of the mine would exceed 20 years and that it would produce approximately 112 million pounds of copper each year.

The surface plant is a beautiful operation. The concentrator is located in a steep, narrow canyon. Although the location posed some design problems, engineers took advantage of gravity flow to such an extent that only five process pumps were required in the entire plant.

NEW MINE—OLD DISTRICT

Although the Carr Fork mine was a completely new operation producing from new orebodies, the district is an old-time, large-scale producer. The new operation utilizes orebodies deeper and further to the east than previous production.

Anaconda, which acquired the Carr Fork property in 1948, has been active in the Bingham Mining District since 1914 when International Smelting & Refining Company, a subsidiary, built a custom smelter near Tooele.

To establish stable sources of ore and concentrates for its Tooele smelter, Anaconda acquired interests in various properties and companies in the district.

By the mid-1930s, it held a substantial interest in the area west and northwest of the Bingham Canyon mine.

Five of the companies in which Anaconda had interests subsequently consolidated to form National Tunnel & Mines Company, which developed the first underground copper mines in that part of the district.

To transport ore from the Utah-Delaware mine to the International Concentrator and smelter in the rugged country, National Tunnel & Mines drove the 27,000-foot Elton tunnel. It began the project in 1937 and completed it in 1941. The company continued to operate through World War II, until 1947.

During 1948, Anaconda acquired all the land and assets of National Tunnel & Mines, including the Carr Fork claims. A 20-year exploration program on the properties led to an extensive core drilling program that began in 1969. By 1973, drillers had delineated the Yampa and Highland Boy orebodies that are the basis of the Carr Fork mine.

The Carr Fork deposits lie under the western flank of the Oquirrh Mountains at a depth of 2,000 to 6,000 feet. The ore is a skarn formed in two limestone units enclosed by quartzites.

To produce the copper treasure beneath the mountains, Anaconda put together a modern operation featuring the latest in equipment and mining techniques and developed a fine surface plant.

But thus far, thanks to the combination of operating problems, hard times and tough luck, it has been a losing proposition.

What will happen next remains to be seen, but considering present condition of the domestic copper industry and outlook for the future, the forecast for Carr Fork doesn't appear too bright.

Unless there is an unexpected upturn in the near future, the next "hard-luck" story at Carr Fork may be permanent closure and the write-off of hundreds of millions of dollars.