

2 Sun Advocate, Price, Utah—Friday, December 28, 1984

Nearly 2,000 attend

## Memorial service honors lost miners

By LARRY DAVIS  
Emery County Progress editor

CASTLE DALE — A memorial service Wednesday morning in the Emery County High School auditorium brought families and friends together to honor 27 miners who died in the Wilberg mine fire last week near Orangeville.

President Gordon B. Hinkley, second counselor of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, joined local LDS leaders in conducting the service where over 1,700 people attended. Also present were Governor-elect Norm Bangter, Salt Lake City Mayor Ted Wilson, State Representative Tom

Christensen and Utah Power and Light and Emery Mining officials.

Those attending came from throughout Carbon and Emery counties as well as from areas out-of-state. Children, parents, and grandparents filled the auditorium to form one of the largest gatherings ever in Southeastern Utah. The program lasted about 90 minutes.

"It's cold and grey outside," President Hinkley said from a stage decorated with floral arrangements, "but there is a spirit of peace and love in this auditorium today." Calling the memorial service a sacred and solemn occasion, President Hinkley said, "I have only one desire and this to bring some

measure of comfort to those who have suffered from this tragic loss."

The church official then referred to earlier remarks by Ann Bell, mother of fire victim Phillip Bell of Orangeville, and said, "I think the depth of the loss has been re-emphasized through the quiet words of Sister Bell and what she said about the loneliness that grips her heart and the hearts of her children and her faith which transcends, which rises above that loneliness. I'm confident that there isn't a woman here today whose heart doesn't reach out with love and tenderness for those women who have been left widows. There isn't a man whose heart it doesn't affect, and there isn't a parent who doesn't think of the little boys and the little girls who will have to grow up without their fathers at their sides."

Speaking about the loss of those killed, he said, "No man can understand why such catastrophes occur. In the history of the race there have been many such: in mines, in storms at sea, in earthquakes, in volcanic eruptions, in air-plane accidents and in the tragedy of war. They are always overwhelming and their after-effects are felt for years and years by those most intimately affected."

"For generations, those who have mined coal have been familiar with darkness and danger," he continued. "From the mines of England and Wales, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and the mountains of the west, have sketched the history of tragedy."

President Hinkley reminded those present about the necessity of mining and how often those who work in producing energy are forgotten. "How few of us, as we touch the switch to light our homes or move the thermostat to warm them, realize that in this area,

in the area where we live, electricity we employ is breathing energy converted from coal. There is relatively little that comes from other sources. Men such as those who died the other night, work round the clock to make possible the comforts we take for granted. All of us should pause now and again to reflect on the source of our comfort and the dangers endured by those who make it possible."

He went on to say that when such tragedies occur, that is when we become aware of these sacrifices, "and we are subdued in our hearts by the knowledge that sacrifice of comforts by others is required that we may be comforted."

The LDS leader said that while we cannot bring back those who have died, "We can and must pay respect to their memories. Extend the hand of comfort and succor to those they loved so dearly. The pain that has come with their passing will not be in vain. There will be loneliness, but for those who believe in the mercy of our eternal Father, there will also be comfort. They are as much individuals today as they were a week ago. To deny this is to deny the very essence of Christmas which we celebrated just yesterday."

The services were conducted by President Wesley R. Law of the Castle Dale Stake who said in introductory remarks, "It would be our prayer as leaders that the special spirit of our heavenly Father might be here; that whatever is said or done by music or through the spoken word might in some way lighten each of your hearts, especially those special wives and children and close family members."

In recalling the events of the last week, Mrs. George (Ann) Bell of Orangeville, whose son, Phillip, died in the mine, said, "I feel tremendously honored to be among this group of won-



Gordon B. Hinkley, second counselor of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, was the featured speaker at the 90-minute memorial service attended by more than 1,700 persons.

derful people and I testify to you that God lives; that He hears and answers our prayers. And I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ and how grateful I am for the knowledge."

Mrs. Bell, her voice filled with emotion, said, "On Wednesday night when we heard of the fire at Wilberg, we knelt and asked the Lord's blessing to be with them and especially with Phillip. And I re-experienced a special feeling, and I have experienced that feeling ever since and I still do, and I know that it is the spirit of the Lord that is with me."

Saying how she often gets upset over little things, Mrs. Bell said, "I have remained strong. And I know without the help of the Lord I couldn't have done that. I know with all my heart that Phillip lives; that he's not dead, and I believe that he's here close with us now." She went on to express her appreciation to her family and

how much she has been comforted by them.

Speaking of her daughter-in-law, and the children of Michelle and Phillip, Mrs. Bell said, "Michelle has been so strong, and I'm so proud of her. We have beautiful little grandchildren, and I know that one day we'll all be together. I do testify that God does live and that He is hearing us and He is helping us and I also testify to you that Jesus is the Christ and it is through this strength that we might all continue on. I don't recall ever having so much love and acts of charity given and we're very grateful to all of you."

The program included the combined chorus of the Castle Dale District. Other speakers were Pat B. Bryant, LDS regional representative; President Hugh Pincock, member of the First Quorum of Seventy; and Michael Bradshaw, president of the Wellington Stake.



Salt Lake City Mayor Ted Wilson and Emery County Mayor Norman Bangter listen as the 27 lost miners are honored at the memorial service.

## Wilberg mine near being sealed today

By CHUCK ZEHNDER  
Managing editor

Air from several portals, some of them very old, fed the fire in the Wilberg mine Christmas Day and saw what some people called explosions on Wednesday. Fire shot from the fan portal at the mine in pulses.

Joe Abbott, a spokesman for Emery Mining Corp. who manages the mining operations for Utah Power and Light, called the phenomenon "burping." It is caused by the fire

being so intense that it begins to manufacture gases and burn them off rapidly. The effect has been likened to a coal furnace which has been fed too much coal and stoked too hot. A pulsating effect is created by the open door (portal) and causes the fire to shoot out and then back in suddenly as it ignites smoke and gases.

"But we're upbeat right now," Abbott said late Thursday afternoon. He reported that the old portal in Cottonwood Canyon on the "backside" of the mountain from the present

Wilberg portal had been sealed on Thursday. "We should have all but two portals sealed by tonight (Thursday)," Abbott said. The

**'But we're upbeat right now. We should have all but two portals sealed by tonight (Thursday).' — Joe Abbott, Emery Mining**

men were meeting with success during the day yesterday in efforts to completely close off

the mine. Abbott said they should have it "buttoned down tomorrow."

"Actually this 'burping' has helped us in getting the portals

aiding the teams in sealing those entrances by narrowing down the openings."

According to Abbott, the Deer Creek mine will be in full operation by Jan. 2. The mine was closed following the Wilberg fire because of smoke in the air outside the mine which officials were afraid might be "sucked in" by the Deer Creek fans. That mine has been monitored by gas and smoke since Wilberg began spewing smoke.

When speaking of the remaining mines in the Emery Mining group near the Wilberg mine, Abbott said there was "no reason to believe these mines won't continue to be viable operations." He was speaking of Deer Creek, Little Dove and Behive mines.

Eventually, the company plans to extend mining operations into another seam of coal above the Wilberg mine known as the Blind Canyon seam. This is the same seam of coal in which the Deer Creek mine is located.

Plans by the mining company were already formulated to operate two longwall miners out of that seam, Abbott said Wednesday. He didn't know the timetable on the plan.

When asked if there would be 800 men laid off in the near future, Abbott said, "No, not unless something unforeseen

happens," like the whole mountain falling in, "and we're certainly not anticipating that."

Abbott did say the company would be working through the weekend to determine what kind of layoffs were going to take place. He said there would be a "good-sized" crew kept on at Wilberg to do the work in sealing and monitoring the mine.

"We're picking up production at Deer Creek and Deshee Dove (Little Dove and Behive mines)," Abbott said. He couldn't speculate on how many additional men might move into those operations.

Nor could he speculate on how long Wilberg might remain closed. "Some who are pessimistic are talking months," he said. But he said he was thinking positively about it.

There are plans now to let it burn a little while to get the oxygen levels way down and then put some kind of inert gas into the mine to smother it quickly, Abbott said.

## Unemployment better than year ago

By MICHAEL DAME  
Staff writer

Except for normal seasonal fluctuations, the employment situation in Carbon County isn't getting any worse, but it's not getting any better either, according to the local Job Service office.

The local unemployment rate was 10.1 percent at the end of November this year in Carbon County. Last year, it was 16 percent, Price Job Service Supervisor Larris Hunting said. Many counties are faring worse than Carbon County, however. Nearby Grand County has a 16 percent unemployment rate and Juab -- the highest in the state -- is 18 percent. During the Great Depression, the local rates fluctuated between 24 percent and 28 percent, among the highest in the nation.

Some counties are much better off. Utah County is 6.1 percent, Weber 5.7 percent, Salt Lake 5.4 percent, Davis only 3.7 percent, Rich 2.6 percent and Daggett a mere 1.1 percent. The average rate for Utah statewide was 6 percent.

Hunting said the local economy is always greatly affected by base industry. "A reduction in a base industry like coal mining results in a reduction of jobs across a broad spectrum of other industries as well, with the exception of government jobs," Hunting said.

workers can be definitely accounted for as unemployed. Utah's Office of State Planning and Budget estimates the current population of Carbon County as 24,300.

The hardest hit city in the county has been East Carbon. Although Job Service does not have figures on unemployment rates by cities in the county, some people feel it may be as high as 50 percent. Hunting said when the Intermountain Power Project comes on line, one phase next year and another in 1986, the coal business generated will help to stabilize the local economy but there may never be a boom again.

If the proposed Sunnyside tar sands project gets underway, the 1,000 to 1,200 construction workers here for the two-year construction phase will help produce several hundred other jobs that result from a base industry. If the project is completed, the 300 to 400 permanent workers in the processing plant and strip mine will probably bring the county back up to full employment.

Hunting said the local economy is always greatly affected by base industry. "A reduction in a base industry like coal mining results in a reduction of jobs across a broad spectrum of other industries as well, with the exception of government jobs," Hunting said.

But by the same token, Hunting said the creation of new jobs in the base industry creates other jobs as well.

"Populations create jobs for themselves because of supply and demand," Hunting said. "Everybody who has a good job wants a car and a boat and to eat in restaurants. All that creates jobs."

The number of people who go to Job Service looking for work has probably not increased, Hunting said. For the nine months ending in June, 400 people a month utilized their services. For the period from June through October, 500 people a month used the services, but the extra 100 people are probably accounted for from a new office opened in Castle Dale.

**THEATERS**  
Show and Time Information—827-1705  
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All King Coal Theaters, Tues. 7pm, Thurs. 7pm, Sat. 7pm  
Copp. Barntown Soft Drinks  
**PRICE**  
NEW TIME 7:30-9:30 P.M. 7:30 P.M. Thurs.  
THE RED FORT  
KING COAL 1  
7:30 & 9:30  
DUNE  
KING COAL 2  
7:30-9:30  
KING COAL 3  
7:30 & 9:30  
RENTING KINGS COAL  
MONTGOMERY KING COAL 1, 2 & 3  
Fri. & Sat. 28 & 29  
All seats only \$2

Many displaced workers have not remained on the unemployment rolls, but have taken advantage of government retraining programs. Workers laid off from the Kaiser and U.S. Steel mines are eligible for job training through the Trade Act Assistance program because their mines fed coal to steel mills which had to reduce production due to foreign steel competition.

Many other unemployed people locally, regardless of the industry they came from, are eligible for college or vocational training, on-the-job training or money to help them move to another job through the Job Training Partnership Act.

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