

Chris and Paula Schirmer

Beth: All right, this is Beth Smith. I'm over here at the home of Chris and Paula Schirmer this morning, 1 Thirty... no, that's downtown isn't it. 1015 I Street is where they live. They are the owners of Master Electric. And they are going to talk to us today about what they see in Salida and Christmas Mountain, which they were both so active in putting up there. Good morning Chris, how are you?

Chris: Good morning Beth, I'm just fine. I'm just looking out, watching the snow this morning.

Beth: Oh, yes. I should say too, this is November 20, 2004. We've got a good snowstorm going.

[laughter]

Beth: How are you, Paula?

Paula: Just fine.

Beth: Well, good. Who gets to start?

Chris: I guess I'll start, talk about Paula and I. We met in high school in Denison, Texas. Denison-Sherman, Texas in 1967. And we lived down there a few years. Tried to get married in 1969, and succeeded in 1970, and moved to Denver, Colorado at that time. And I went to college for a couple of years, Paula supported me like she has through all the years like that. And, excuse me, that's a pretty soft spot.

[laughter]

Chris: And she's just been my strength through all the years and we moved here in '73 and I was going to become an electrician at that time. So, went to work for a local outfit and we had a baby on the way, it was born in May that year. We got here, and supposed to make a certain amount of money and ended up being we made a little bit less than what we were supposed to make. So, we would have left but we were too broke to leave at that time so we never made any more money to get out of town at that point.

Beth: Did you start business down there on First Street?

Chris: Not on First Street, we had a music store that we started, a record store we started up in, what was it, 1977? '76? '75? Somewhere in there.

Paula: 1975.

Chris: Yeah, yes, we lived in town a couple of years. We were, I'd worked for, like I said, another electrical contractor. You have to put so many years in as an electrician before you can get your master's license and then become a company, get in business like that. So, we had a music store for about 8 years and I worked with various different electrical outfits. I was building

inspector and electrical inspector for the county for a couple years. Back in first of '78, '79, yes, 1978, 1979, and then in 1985 we closed up the music store in '83 I think it was and then we decided it was time to open up a business and start Master Electric at that point. Through the years, we had a couple babies, couple kids born and raised. Went through the Salida School District. We've seen good times and bad times, you know from when we were here, when we first moved here and North F Street or Lower F Street is what it was called at that time, buildings being torn down and all the plate glass windows were being boarded up and town was in need of paint. It was just a poor time. The railroad had just pulled out and the city was reeling from the extra income from that. The only thing that was really surviving for it was Climax (Molybdenum Mine) at that time.

Beth: But that quit soon too.

Chris: That quit soon too. Yeah, that was back when, that was when we closed the music store when Climax closed up. There was just no, any luxury money around then at that point. Everybody was, it was really hard, just trying to make a living at that time, so it was real tough. But in '85 it was still tough times but I figured I could start just as well on my own than starving, working for these other electrical outfits because it was always a slow time through the winter time and stuff. I got my favorite, best partner to partner up with me again, to do Master Electric at that time. And that started a whole new thing. 30 years ago, 31 years ago I guess.

Beth: And were you down on 1<sup>st</sup> Street then?

Chris: We were down on 1<sup>st</sup> Street at that time. We moved from North F Street where we had our first music store to the store on First Street. That's where Master Electric started in '85 and went from there. We were living upstairs and had the business downstairs at that time.

Beth: 132 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, right?

Chris: 132 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

Beth: All right.

Chris: And we lived at 128, that's one of the few buildings downtown that doesn't have a half address. Most of the places have a 128 ½ or 132 ½ for the upstairs apartment, but it had a whole number for its upstairs apartment.

Beth: And you did a nice job of redecorating this spring.

Chris: Yes, we did a lot of stuff and actually what we're trying to do, we're trying to rent the upstairs now as office suites and things like that upstairs, kind of keep the commercial character of the town downtown down there so we're turning it back to the early 1900s look there.

Beth: Good. We need more of that.

Chris: Yes, I think so too. We need to revitalize the downtown. It's really hurting right at this point. It's just another down time. It's very cyclical in nature as far as Salida goes, downtown.

4:55

Beth: I can understand that. What do you do for Master Electric, Paula?

Paula: I'm the office manager, so I do all that. Insurance, financial planning, payroll, pay the bills, accounts payable, anything that needs to be done. Hiring and firing and everything that goes along with being office manager and I've done that, well, we've hit our 20<sup>th</sup> year, going on our 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Chris: Yeah, right. Yeah, July 4<sup>th</sup>. We opened up the first of July but we always claimed July 4<sup>th</sup> as our date of independence.

[laughter]

Chris: So, it was all right there close together. Of course, I'm not sure what we're independent from, we still have a boss, you know. It doesn't really matter.

Beth: Sometimes you don't want to ask those kind of questions.

[laughter]

Paula: We think the government's our boss.

Chris: Yeah, the government's our boss.

Paula: And our customers!

Beth: Well, there was a mountain there, north of town, or east of town. This town is on an odd angle you know. And all of a sudden it's got a Christmas Mountain on it. I know you did a lot for that. Can you give us a story about what happened?

Chris: Well, it's a little bit hazy in our mind. And it's been through some very long and tough times. It's quite the mountain now. It started out in the summer of 1989, I think it was. And a few of the founding fathers, movers and shakers of the town, Jim Gable, John Bayuk, Joe Michaud from the chamber, a lot of the downtown merchants came up with an idea help the town get back on its feet a little bit, they wanted to do something to kick off the Christmas season, to help keep people downtown, to increase the amount, to increase financial gains through the Christmas time period. So they said well, let's take this mountain then, and you know the city always put a star up at the top at Christmas time and so let's make it a little bit more than that and it was a draw to bring more people to town. You know, catch some of the big city money out here in the small town, instead of all the small town money going to the big city. And that was the whole reason behind lighting the mountain at that point, you know. It'd be nice to say we wanted to do

something nice, but the first and foremost thing was trying to increase the money flow downtown.

Beth: Now, who had the idea? Who originated that?

Chris: Boy, that's a good question. Paula and I were talking about that this morning. It's, I think it's going to a toss up between Jim Gable and John Bayuk. Jim Gable was the manager of the cable company back at the time. It was called, what was it called? Salida Cable, or something like that. Salida something, but it was the TV cable company, and between the two of them, they were both really hard pushers at it, you know. But I think, between the two of them, it was Jim Gable who had the first idea. Even though he moved on and John Bayuk became the real pusher, money raiser and stuff for it. But it was kind of a shared start between those two guys.

Beth: So, what was the first thing you put up there?

Chris: First thing we put up there was, we tried a lot of different ideas. Nobody had ever lit a mountain before, and depending on where you look at it, how you view the mountain is you got the best view from it. So we thought that we, meaning Paula and I and Ty, my journeyman electrician's been with me for eighteen years now.

Beth: What's his name?

Chris: Ty Hood. Yeah, Ty's been with me since almost the start of the business. But, we were sitting, brainstorming through the evenings and we thought that we could reflect light from some banks of light back off the mountain back into town. Nobody wanted to see the light bulbs, well, we just want to see the mountain lit up, we don't really want to see the light bulbs which made sense, and made it a little bit harder to light at that point, but we figured we'd get plenty of reflection. We had 120 thousand watts of light up there. In this first year that we try to light it, uh, it didn't turn out so well, you know, we thought we did a pretty good job, but if we had a little more snow and 3-4 more months to build it would have been a good thing. Our first dabble at lighting the mountain started probably September of '89 and we worked on it fairly diligently until November 1, you know, tried to light it before Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving, lighting time.

Paula: The town had originally had gotten \$3,500 together and Christmas Mountain has always been donations and for commercial lighting, \$3,500 might buy you a pole and a light, so what we did is built the base of lights, to save a lot of money in order to put them on these poles and I noticed in the book there, the inmate [crew] had put in the time, digging the ground to put these poles in. There was one original pole on the mountain that lit up the star and I think one thing that makes it so controversial in this area is I think that mountain has stood for a lot of, I think it resembles and is the emblem of Salida. And I think that's why, through the years, that, I think it was the W.P.A. had handpicked and shoveled the road to go up there and then also there was a class group that got together, that put in the 'S' and ...

Beth: That was class of 1932, wasn't it?

Chris: Something like that.

10:17

Paula: Also, at some time, and I don't know when, somebody had put up the cupola that was up on top, and I think that's why there was so much controversy about this being put on the mountain. Because it is the emblem of Salida. We really pushed to make that is was a Christmas tree and nothing religious because then the controversy would really start.

[laughter]

Chris: The church and state and all that other stuff.

Paula: And there were people that wanted to do that and we really pushed to make it stay as a Christmas tree instead of something else. I know through the years organizations had wanted to put advertising up there, and Mr. Bevington wanted to put a tramway?

Chris: Yeah, he wanted to put a tramway up there at some time, had big balloons...

Paula: And the people feel that's that their mountain and they want it to stay their mountain. So, I think that's why there was so much controversy about it. People were for it, some people were against it. Nobody knew how it was going to turn out, or even how to do it. The electrical engineer that was supposed to come in, and said it's never been done, so they didn't know. That was as much as we were offered in how to do it. So, it was trial and error. I was on the back of the deck while Chris and Ty were up on the poles aiming the lights and what they couldn't believe when they got down from the hill, I was telling them "Yes, it was reflecting on the mountain," and they were aimed up in the air. That's how odd light is, on reflection and distance, and so it really surprised them when they got down because when we coordinated together on when I was seeing it and when you could see the light it was pointed straight up in the air. So, it was real trial and error. Certain colors aren't viewed at a certain distance. And so we were trying to do a kind of wash of an outline of a tree, with reflective light ...

Chris: And just because of the immensity of the mountain, it just didn't work out. We were really counting on the snow cover, you know to help reflect the light, the color of the light and things. As you know, in Salida even though it's snowing today, it's really hit or miss if we ever get much snow up on Tenderfoot up there. But that was a real learning experience you know, you could see ... We could read books up there it was so bright up there when you were up there on the hill, but from down in Salida you just couldn't see it. The angle and the reflection of the light was completely wrong for seeing that. So, just because people were going overhead and jets had a great view of the mountain. It probably looked really nice. Public Service took a picture from Methodist Mountain when we had some snow cover on the hill and it was really a nice picture. They put on the front page of their magazine at the time, when it was Public Service. So, it really did what we wanted it to, up to a point. It just wasn't, couldn't be viewed from the city center like we wanted, hoped it would be.

So, through that, everybody is real sharp with their pencils around town here, and letters to the editor were very happy for a while. There were some good and some bad, you know. I got interviewed by some TV station in Colorado Springs about it, so I got my 15 minutes of fame out from it, so I guess that was okay. It wasn't quite the 15 minutes I wanted but it was still 15 minutes!

[laughter]

Chris: But we could have just as easily threw up our hands after that first year and said 'Heck with it!' But Ty and Paula just wouldn't let me back down from it so we just, we're going to see it through to the end.

14:00

Beth: Good.

Chris: And so then it started at that point, and once we saw what we could do, what our limitations were, I think it made us change our whole idea as to how we wanted to do the tree. Instead of trying to reflect light, we decided it was time to outline a tree and go back with Christmas lights and stuff. So, that started the planning. We brought in the surveyors and Biglow did quite a bit of surveying for us. Mr. Biglow and his surveying outfit to help lay out the scalloped edges of the tree, the garland. The city moved the star which was on top of the building over to the left a little bit so the star was on top of the tree, because the tree, the top of the hill is a little bit to the left side of the building that's up there. And Walmart helped us out a bunch at first, they donated tons and tons of Christmas tree lights and stuff like that. We were just doing it with conventional Christmas lights at first. Used to have time clocks on each pole that was up there to turn the lights on. We had to have seven people up there, freezing night, the night after Thanksgiving to turn them on. We could hear the people singing songs down at the ... not the Building and Loan but ... High Country Bank. Not High Country Bank, Pueblo Bank and Trust parking lot, [serving] chocolate and stuff. And it was really neat to be up there and hear the singing and stuff like that and then turn the lights on. But it was very cold and dark up there and there was one of year it started where it was really nice and then it came in and blizzarded on us. Probably was '92 or '93? I can't remember exactly. Had a blizzard come in that night. It chased everybody out from downtown, but it was really cold up on the hill that night. But through the years we changed, added more garland to it, put decorations on it. It wasn't just Ty and I that did it, we had a really good mountain crew of people up there that helped out quite a bit. Mr. Bement was up there, he was the one really in charge of all the decorations and things ...

Paula: The Stevens.

Chris: The Stevens, yeah, Stevington, that's what it was. Stevingtons. Gosh, I can't remember all the people.

Paula: Listen, we had about twenty people that came up just about yearly.

Chris: Really staunch supporters, yeah. Oh, Bob Delnay, yes as a matter of fact. And those guys were really, they were retired so they had a lot more time to put towards it. And they really took it underneath their wings. They made up all the decorations, they'd spend a lot of time through the summer making decorations up where they're actually driving rebar into the ground to lay these large displays of lights up there. I kind of became just more head of the mountain crew at that point. There was the fundraising crew, there was the parade crew from downtown, and I was the mountain crew. So, I had to get my guys up there all the time. My guys meaning anybody that would volunteer to come up on the Saturday before Thanksgiving to string lights and stuff.

But it's really been a community effort, I kind of got thrust to the forefront because I knew electricity, but there were so many other people who helped out, just who offered their time and their expertise and things. So, it worked.

17:02

Paula: Sylvania donated, or Phillips allowed us to buy lights at a discount.

Chris: Yeah, at factory cost on them for when we first did the first lights up there. I called in a lot of favors at first, you know, from my electrical suppliers down in Canon City and Pueblo at that time. You know they donated a lot of stuff to us and they said, "Well, don't say who we are because then everybody else will be asking for it." But they liked the project and they thought that we were a growing business so they wanted to do that to help us out so we would use them to buy more materials from at a future date so everybody was playing their trump card at that time just to get it off the ground that first time.

Beth: Good. Well, it took money anyway in some places. Where did that come from?

Chris: All the money came from donations. We didn't want to have it where it would be a thing where the city would have to come up with it because then it would become a political ball. So, we wanted to make sure that if we could get it for the city, if the city liked it enough, not the city but the people liked it enough then they would donate money towards it. And then we could see if we were wasting our time doing it or if it was really something that the townsfolk really enjoyed doing, or really enjoyed seeing. And it really blossomed at first, the banks would pay for the electric bill through the year. And then we'd have fundraisers. The advent of the Christmas Mountain decorations would come up, that's the ornaments that they are selling now and stuff. Used to have Christmas cards and things, anything to raise some money for it. But it was all donated money, you know, that went to the hillside. Back in 19, I think it was '97 or '98, we finally had enough money backpiled to go ahead and put all the wiring in the ground, which before we'd have to string out rolls and rolls and rolls of wire and Romex and stuff just to light the hill. And at that time, we had enough money to hire a contractor to go up there and dig ditches in the hill side and vary all these conduits, power lines and stuff, put it all in the ground so that, in preparation for service organizations to take over the project on 'S' Mountain, and bring up volunteers. All they had to do, I don't know what to call it 'plug -n- play', just plug the lights in and set them up. It wasn't so much we had to have an electrician there, to run wires out and stuff.

19:15

Beth: Did you have any trouble with vandals? People going up and tearing out lights?

[laughter]

Chris: Yeah, living downtown like we did, we'd always gaze out at the mountain from our back deck and we could see kids up there fooling around, we'd see lights come on or go off. We were always on the Christmas Mountain watch back there, and we did for a couple years. It just seems like kids don't have enough in town to do other than to get into mischief. I guess we got upset about it because it was like our little baby up there so we didn't want any of that to happen.

Paula: We were going to be the ones up fixing it in the cold and the wind. A lot of it, you know some of it was animal life running through the strands, and sometimes it was wind, and sometimes it was vandals, but just about daily we had to go up there. Sometimes we got a break and went up every other day, but just about daily we had to go up to fix something that either came apart or wasn't working so it was a lot of babysitting once it was up.

Chris: Yeah.

Paula: And we'd go up once, sometimes twice a day or every other day just to fix it. And if something was out, somebody'd give us a call and say "Hey,"...

Chris: "Your mountain's out!"

[laughter]

Paula: Something's not working.

Chris: It was *our* mountain! All of a sudden, "Hey, your mountain's out!" And that was when we were just using residential grade lighting so we found an outfit out of Texas that made commercial grade Christmas lights and stuff. So, working those little strings of light that are now 150 feet long instead of putting 25 foot strings together. The lights are just little 5 watt lights, just regular, they're just used more for Christmas lights, the C7 5 watt lights. And it's just amazing how well you can see them from that distance. But, with 150 foot strings it makes no catch now so we didn't have the problem with all the different connections coming apart. Through the years we've upgraded the material used on the hill, whenever there was money available for it. Nothing seemed to come easy up there on the hill, it was always do something and patch it together, patch it together, 'til you were at your wit's end. Somebody'd come across, "Well, let's do this." But it was, the Christmas Mountain community, I don't know how strong it is now, but before we would have quite a few meetings. Floyd Cummins and his ... Floyd Cummins and Bonnie Bondurant were a big driving force up there. We had, the City of Salida was always a big help. Mr. Delnay.

Paula: And Public Service, it was like \$900 a year to run the lights. I don't know what it is now but that's quite a bit of money to just run the lights.



Chris: And actually, we had the banks would take care of the light bill for it and they would pay the electricity bill for the hill. Which is, actually for being a thing, it was actually very expensive the longer it was on. It was like \$900 for maybe 30 days of lights. Because we would turn it on just after Thanksgiving and turn it off the first of the year. And then, of course, we added things to it. The heart and the 'S' weren't necessarily always there to begin with. That was a later on thing. And then we built a control box that would flash the heart and the 'S' all the time. And then we always thought that that would be a thing that the city would use, they could do things with Halloween or Valentine's Day, I always thought was a big day. Something like that they could use that for. You know, bring it out for that time. They liked it well enough, they had enough money at that time to keep it running all year round, which was pretty cool. We're happy to see that.

22:40

Beth: One time I saw a 'B' up there on the mountain.

[laughter]

Chris: Yeah, there was a couple times, we have some pretty rabid Broncos fans here in Salida, and a couple times the little building on the top of the hill turned orange overnight. But the time that the 'S' turned into a 'B' was the last Super Bowl, I guess, or the second to last Super Bowl. And a few of us got together and decided we were going to restring the 'S' make it into a 'B' and turn it orange. It turned out real well. We love our Broncos around here. Yeah, it was great.

Paula: People woke up the next morning and they were wondering what it was supposed to mean because it was the 'B' and then the heart, so they thought 'B' love.

Chris: Yeah, they thought *Be-love!*

[laughter]

Paula: But that's why, I think, that mountain's been so important. The schools have always, at end of graduation they would turn it purple, and everybody'd get mad. And it's like, why does it have to be white? Purple's okay. I think that's one thing that has just been an insignia of the area, you know? The kids, when they draw their pictures for the newspaper, it almost always is Tenderfoot Mountain or Christmas Mountain U.S.A., you know with the heart and the 'S' and so I think it's a very important symbol of the area.

Beth: Where did it get this name, Christmas Mountain U.S.A.?

Chris: They had a, back, I think it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year they were trying to do fundraising and there were several different names and they, like most ways, to get a little bit more support for the mountain they would put an ad in, you could vote for a certain name so, so much money for whichever name got the most money won. There was Salida Borealis, which I really kind of liked, but it didn't do so well in the contest.

Paula: But we liked that because that one was mine.

[laughter]

Chris: But there was Salida Christmas Mountain, anyhow there were three or four different names (talking with Paula). And it was Christmas Mountain that came up with the most.

Paula: Well, can't find it anywhere. That was when Nancy Sanger was quite involved also.

Chris: That's right, yes. Yeah, all the old-timers around town here still were really ...

Paula: And in the end, I think it did wind up doing what people wanted, was to get people downtown, to shop Salida, to keep the money in this area, to ... I mean, just for the economy, once money leaves this area, it's gone threefold, so they try to have a big kickoff for the area, for the retailers that worked so hard. They have two seasons, summer and the Christmas time to make their money so that's not a lot of time for retailers and it gets pretty dry in between spells, between Christmas and summer and that's what worked so nice, is they've got Monarch to keep people here, they've got the rafting, the recreation. That's one of the things that brought us to this area was the beauty and recreation and the hometown feel. And I think the, oh, to raise your kids in this area is pretty incredible. Especially as comparison to coming from a large town, there's no way I'd want to raise a child in a large city these days. You probably wouldn't want to be a teacher in a large city.

[laughter]

Beth: How tall is that Christmas tree on that mountain?

Chris: Oh, I knew you'd ask that.

Paula: 600 feet.

Chris: 600 feet? Okay, is that what it says in here?

Paula: That's what ...

Chris: Yeah, I thought it was 550 feet. It's really tall. It's not so much how the tallness, but how steep it is. And with the loose rock and footing out there, you have to be part mountain goat to really climb on the hill up there. I have to hand it to Steve Borbas and the way he's organized the Christmas Mountain committee at this point for the lighting of the tree and stuff. He's very organized, all the ornaments are put together. You can set people off with bags of ornaments to put them up, put the lights up and stuff. He's really done a wonderful job, continuing on the legacy of the mountain, doing the lights the way he has. He's really to be commended. He has.. They asked me a couple of years before we quit doing it if we were going to do it and I said, "No," and this year's our last. Next year we won't do it, and "This year's our last, next year we

won't do it," and finally I said, "Last year was the last year we're going to do it," and Steve, poor Steve, it kind of got dropped in his lap.

Paula: Two weeks before it was supposed to go up and we kept telling everybody, we gave you two year's notice, that we're only going to do this for two more years and nobody believed us.

Chris: And Steve, he's done a wonderful job of it.

Paula: And for the last two weeks, he stepped up and learned how to do it, and got it organized. So he's continued since, and they're up on the hill today.

[laughter]

Chris: Yeah, blizzard today. I feel sorry for them today but it's a real Christmas feeling up there today.

[laughter]

27:50

Beth: How many lights are on that tree?

Chris: How many lights are on that tree, gosh.

Paula: I thought it was something like 50,000.

Chris: It wasn't 50,000. There are probably 3,000-4,000 lights on that tree. And it's been just long enough from the time that I've worked on it up there that I forgot ... I used to be able to rattle off those numbers. But each one of them are like 5-watt lamps, little 5-watt bulbs, and you know there's probably, there's better than 2 miles of lights up there. By the time you get it all stretched end to end. And if you have a 5-watt light every foot, you know that's 10,000, that's 20,000 lights right there. That's probably about right. 20,000 lights. Wow.

Paula: And we've had contests through the years and on and how many and this and that. We used to know all that. You can tell we haven't gone through the books lately to remember all this.

Beth: Details. Is it really the world's largest Christmas tree?

Chris: It really is the world's largest Christmas tree. I don't know of any place else that has a tree that's that large so, as far as one to be lit up and stuff. It's kind of nice like Paula was saying that the way the kids always draw it as their picture of their Christmas tree and stuff. Our daughter won a prize one year as a drawing, they have a Christmas tree drawing competition one year, so she had plenty to look at back there. She won first prize on her thing.

Paula: She was real pleased. In fact, I still have it up at the store with the little ribbon on it that she'd won first place.

Beth: Heard a lot of airplanes going over, looking at it.

Chris: That's what I heard too, that they actually go a little bit out of their way so that the people in the airplane can see it at the time. We went over one time, and it wasn't through the winter time, it was like the spring or the fall or something and we actually saw Salida from the view of the plane and it was like we were coming back from the west coast, I think we went to Las Vegas or something like that, and it wasn't the winter. And you could actually see Tenderfoot when we went over so. You know I thought that that would be quite the thing to see because it would be really small but it would be quite impressive from that high up in the air.

30:00

Beth: The world's biggest Christmas tree might look small from up there.

Chris: At 30,000 feet, yeah.

Paula: It looks big enough to be seen though! [laughter] And some people through the years have asked, "Well, why is the tree not green? Trees are green." Well, green wasn't a color that could be viewed from that distance.

Beth: That wouldn't show up, would it?

Paula: Yeah, that's why it's outlined in red, not green. And blue you can't see it at all. Through the years, we did all this testing with different colors to see what you could see from that distance and height. The colors that are up there were the colors that are more easily viewed. That's why it is the color that it is.

Chris: Then after that, after Christmas Mountain took off for so long, well then Holiday Park came into being, which added more things to the downtown area. And it's kind of nice the way it's taken off and run and then spawned other activities to go along with the two. Even if they're for different ideas, yet it's still all at the same time. It's still more of a thing to keep people downtown, to give them something to do for the Christmas time like that.

Paula: And the parade of lights. Santa.

Chris: Which this year is going to be a big year because HGTV, House & Garden is coming in this week, this Thanksgiving, which is 2004, November whatever, 25<sup>th</sup> or whatever. Keep the dates right. First time we've made the big time with it. It's going to be really exciting to see. I hope the town really does a lot this year to do something different, make it a little bit more enjoyable. I guess we're going to have a real motorized parade this year instead of a stationary parade. That's going to be pretty neat. Hope the weather's good.

Beth: Are there going to be any new ornaments up there?

Chris: I guess there are going to be, as I understand there's supposed to be planning some new ornaments for up there. They've been driving the rebar up there to string the ornaments on, or that's what I've heard anyway. But I haven't seen so ... Being away from it for a couple of years, in the midst of setting it up like that, we're kind of spectators now. It's pretty neat.

Beth: Well, you did your work on it.

Chris: We got our tenures in on it! It's somebody else's turn.

Beth: All right, that's fine. Well, thank you for telling us about Christmas Mountain U.S.A. We'll be there to see it! The day after Thanksgiving, when they turn on the lights.

[laughter]