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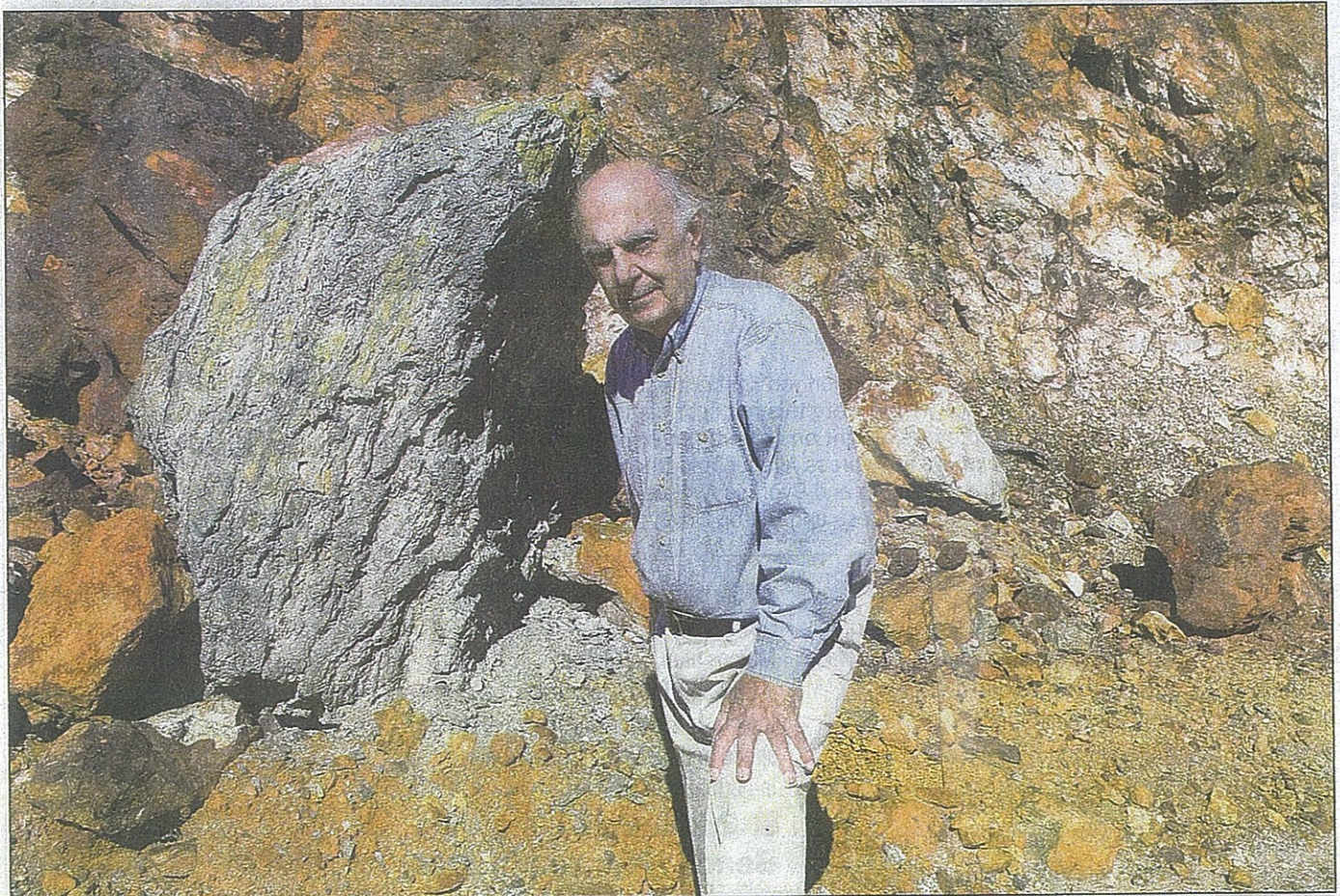
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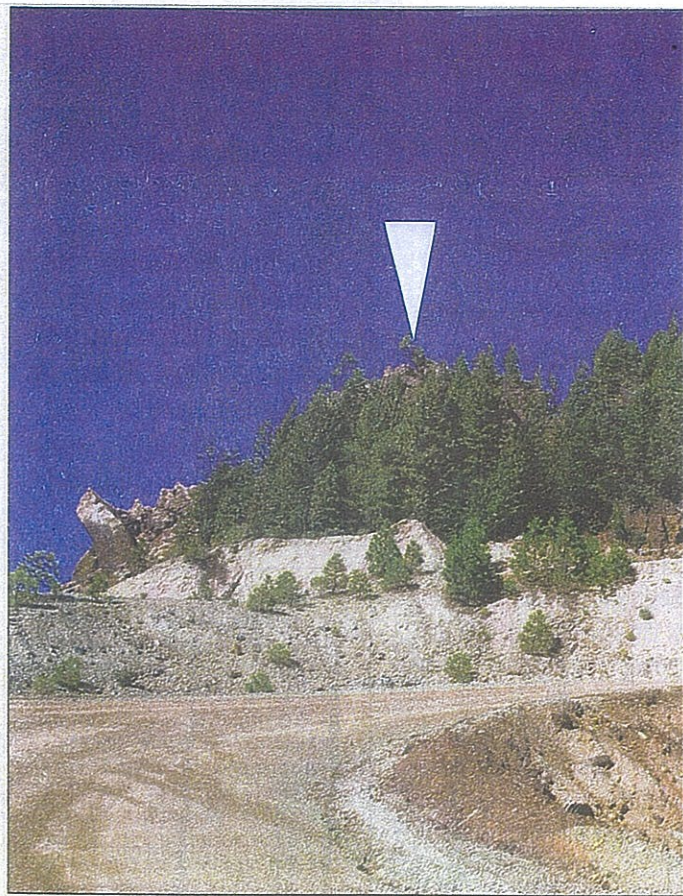
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Owner has big Iron plans



Greg Barnette / Record Searchlight

Ted Arman stands near the top of Iron Mountain west of Redding. Arman plans to build a 200-foot Italian marble statue of Jesus Christ atop the 3,500-foot peak that is on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Superfund, or major environmental cleanup, site.



Ted Arman plans to build a 200-foot Italian marble statue of Jesus Christ here atop the 3,500-foot peak that is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Superfund, or major environmental, cleanup site.

Ted Arman seeks Jesus statue, metal recovery

By **Dylan Darling**

Record Searchlight

IRON MOUNTAIN MINE — Driving his signature 1989 Lincoln along the gravel road that winds through his 2,800-acre property overlooking Redding, Ted Arman has to regularly radio in his location.

“This is kind of ridiculous to treat an owner this way,” said Arman, an 86 year-old self-made millionaire who lives in Shasta Lake.

On the other end of the two-way radio are contractors working for the federal government to clean up the old Iron Mountain Mine and prevent its toxic water — considered to be the world’s worst — from getting into the Sacramento River.

They tell him the radio check-ins are for his safety, so they can warn those driving large trucks that he’s on the roadway, Arman

said. But he sees it as another way that the government, the Environmental Protection Agency in particular, is suppressing what he wants to do.

“They’ve restricted my business for 28 years,” Arman said.

Arman has fantastic plans for Iron Mountain Mine. They include extracting valuable metals from the water seeping from the mine to erecting the largest statue of Jesus Christ on the globe atop its namesake peak.

But before anything happens in the mine shafts or on the mountain top, decades worth of dispute in the courtroom will likely need to be settled.

In the latest legal rounds, Arman contends that the EPA is guilty of fraud, malice and deceit and he said he’s asking for \$7.9 billion in damages from the govern-

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ment. Countering his action, the EPA continues to pursue about \$60 million it says Arman owes the government for the mine's cleanup since it started in the 1980s, said Rick Sugarek, project manager for the EPA.

"We are really looking for costs that are associated with doing studies and performing construction work," he said.

In 1983 the federal government declared the mine a Superfund site, which the EPA defines as an uncontrolled or abandoned place where hazardous waste is located. Since then a dam has been built on Spring Creek, which flows from the mine site, as well as a water treatment plant. Acidic water seeping out of the mine — which yielded iron, silver, gold, copper, zinc and pyrite from the 1860s until 1963 — carries heavy metals that the EPA says could be a danger to fish and people alike.

Having settled with the company that sold Arman the site in 2000 — which had by then changed its name to Aventis CropScience — the EPA still seeks compensation from Arman, Sugarek said. The litigation started in 1990.

Monday, Arman filed claims in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, alleging the EPA is preventing him from using his mine, its remedy has done nothing but increase the environmental hazard and that the agency is trespassing on his land.

"They've gotten away with these crimes against the environment and us for too long," said John Hutchens, who has served as Arman's spokesman and Web site designer for a year.

While the legal battle continues, Arman peppers his Web site regularly with his latest plans for Iron Mountain Mine. The Web site, www.ironmountainmine.com, touts the mine site as a location for safe, affordable earthquake-and-fire-resistant housing or perhaps a good place to build a giant solar panel factory.

But Arman, who said he found religion in recent years, said the plan dearest to his heart is converting the rugged land into a green parklike sanctuary.

"My whole plan is to make this a garden of Eden," Arman said.

Central to that plan is a 200-foot statue of Jesus Christ that would trump a similar work of art in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as the tallest on the planet.

"Where the statue is going, you'd be able to see it 100 miles away," Arman said.

The statue wouldn't be the only one with a biblical connection to stand sentry over a Superfund site. Atop the Continental Divide — at 8,510 feet above sea level — a 90-foot Mary, mother of Jesus, looks over the Berkeley Pit in Butte, Mont. An old copper mine, the deep pit is now filled with toxic water. The statue itself is not on the land that is part of the cleanup.

A nondenominational landmark in honor of women worldwide, Our Lady of the Rockies draws thousands of visitors each year, said a volunteer at the nonprofit group that maintains the statue.

Arman also envisions his statue drawing visitors to his land.

Along with the statue Arman said he wants to build vista points along the road up to the mountain top, where people could rest and enjoy the view of Redding and nearby mountains. Visitors could be shuttled to the statue, 10 to 15 at a time, in battery driven golf carts.

The 232-foot statue would cost about \$60 million and Arman said he's already getting financial promises from people around the world to build it.

Having made a fortune as a flight instructor and shrewd investor, Arman said he believes anything is possible.

He also holds a love for mountains and mining that started after he moved West from White Plains, N.Y., in the 1960s. There he'd been married for seven years, but he divorced and moved west to start a new life, he said.

He now lives with his girlfriend of 43 years and six cats.

Arman said he'd originally been interested in just a pile of mineral-laden tailings on the Iron Mountain Mine site and not in the mine itself, but bought it all in 1976 when the owner wouldn't sell only the tailings.

Sugarek has said that Arman is free to do what he wants on his property, as long as it doesn't interfere with the EPA's cleanup.

"We spent a lot of money getting this remedy in place and it's been very effective, and we don't want to see it undone," Sugarek said.

When it comes to Iron Mountain Mine, he said the EPA is focused on trying to get the compensation it feels Arman owes. Sugarek said that the EPA tried to work with Arman outside the courtroom, but those efforts were unsuccessful.

Arman said it's the EPA that's been uncooperative.

"If the EPA gets out of our way we could get 2,000 people employed," he said.

Sugarek said that neither Arman nor the firms with which he's associated have submitted firm plans for the site's future to the EPA.

"To date he has never been able to do more than propose ideas," Sugarek said.

Reporter Dylan Darling can be reached at 225-8266 or ddarling@redding.com.