

Boy, 9, Survives 300-Foot Mine Shaft Plunge

Death Cheated by Bobby
Turley of Commerce,
Who Escapes With a
Broken Leg After an
Hour's Ordeal in Water-
Cushioned Pit, Sequel to
Hunt for Bird Eggs.

A 9-year-old Commerce boy miraculously cheated death today when he plummeted more than 300 feet to the bottom of a mine shaft.

Plucky Bobby Turley, son of Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Turley, 400 North Vine street, Commerce, escaped with a left leg broken at the ankle and shin and, retaining consciousness, said afterwards at Miami Baptist hospital:

"I'm sure glad there was water in the bottom of the shaft."

Backed Into Shaft

Bobby, playing with Howard Jones, 8, son of Mrs. May Jones of Commerce, had backed into the abandoned shaft, one-half mile north of Commerce at the Scammon Hill property, while searching for eggs in bird nests.

From the bottom of the shaft, which must contain 10 feet or more of water, the courageous little fellow cried out to rescuers working desperately above with a winch line that "the water's awfully cold."

Clutched Piece of Timber

Clutching to a heavy piece of timber to keep his head above water, the victim once pleaded for haste. Police Chief Aubert Sidwell said, informing workers above that he couldn't "hold out must longer."

Two miners, Art Bushner and Roy Kelley, both of Miami, were lowered to the bottom on a cable from a truck equipped with a winch line, to effect the rescue.

Recovery Indicated

Dr. W. G. Chesnut, who attended the boy at the local hospital, said he probably will get along all right. Other than the leg fractures, the victim had slight lacerations about the head and scratches to the left arm and right hand.

D. G. Turley, Jr., brother of Bobby, said the Jones boy rushed into Commerce to summon assistance. At first, relatives understood him to say a fire truck was needed. That vehicle found wanting, another truck was summoned, but it didn't have enough length to its winchline.

Mine Truck Rushed There

Police Chief Sidwell said the Eagle-Picher Mining & Smelting company rushed a truck to the scene and with more than 300 feet of cable reached the lad. Kelley and Bushner were lowered to the bottom of the shaft in a mine tub.

Dr. Chesnut said injuries indicated the boy had struck the bottom of the water-covered shaft feet first. Sidwell said the boy apparently fell from a skeleton derrick and struck his hand at the top of the shaft before plunging to the bottom. He said he noted bits of hair and blood spots on a piece of timber. The shaft is 4 by 4 feet at the surface and the boy didn't strike the sides while falling.

No doubt the pool of water at the bottom cushioned the fall, for veteran mining men said they knew of no other cases where a

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person had dropped more than 300 feet and still lived.

Described As "Miracle"

O. L. Saunders, manager of the local Southwestern Bell Telephone company and one of the first to arrive at the accident scene, described the boy's survival as "one of the greatest miracles I ever saw. I don't see how he came out alive."

Neither did the boy's father, mother nor three brothers who went to the hospital after the lad had been rushed here in a Mitchellson ambulance.

"One in a million, I guess," commented Mr. Turley, a miner.

Water Over Head

"The water was well over my head," Bobby told relatives. "I managed to crawl up on a piece of heavy board until they reached me."

Estimates of the depth of the shaft, which has not been used recently, varied from 275 to about 325 feet. At Commerce, several residents said it was more than 300 after extra cable was tied on to the line reaching the boy.

When the ambulance drove up to the hospital, Bobby wanted to know where he was being taken.

Then, in the operating room where his examination was being conducted, he was heard to say:

"I want a drink of water."

Later, in the hallway, as he was being wheeled to his room, Bobby opened his eyes widely as his physician and a reporter leaned over him to ask how he felt.

The boy, in considerable pain but cheerful, didn't complain.

Relatives, standing nearby, tried hard to hold back tears.

The two miners who rescued the boy, Kelley and Bushner, had been working about one-quarter mile north of the Scammon Hill property, idle for months, when the mishap occurred.

Wesley M. Smith, 111 A street northeast, Miami, said the two immediately went to the shaft and were lowered 300 feet in a tub they had brought with them.

The cable failing to reach, they waited until the Eagle-Picher winch truck arrived. It had a 400-foot line and they tied it to their tub, released the other one which was too short, and then went on down to the side of the victim.

Members of the Turley family had gathered at the shaft to watch the boy hoisted to the top. Mr. Turley, who came to the hospital in the ambulance, is employed at the Youngman mine.

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