

Tripp Shaft Survivor Dramatic in Testimony

"The Lord help me, the carriage jerk, jerk, jerk, when we left the surface, and we go down a little, and then, Oh my God, the carriage fell, bottom fall out and the men fall down into the mine. I heard them go. The noise it was awful."

Martin Boleski, the one survivor of the mine tragedy in which thirteen men lost their lives in the Tripp shaft several weeks ago, offered his testimony at the adjourned session of the coroner's inquest in the court house last night. As he told of the terrible experience when the bottom of the carriage which contained fourteen men gave way, Boleski, on the verge of a nervous collapse and showing in his every movement and action the acute mental and nervous suffering he has undergone since the tragedy, covered his eyes with his hands as though he would shut out from view the scene constantly rising before him. He spoke scarcely above a whisper, and at the conclusion of his testimony had to be assisted from the stand.

Dramatic in the extreme was the presence and testimony of the one survivor at the inquest. When his name was called all eyes centered on a medium-sized, haggard appearing man, who rose from his seat, and, half staggering and half walking, made his way down the aisle to the witness chair, assisted by his wife.

"Take the stand, Martin," said Coroner Lynch in a kindly voice, and as the man sat down he looked about him in a bewildered fashion and then stood up as though he would again take a seat in the audience. He was unable to raise his right hand to have the oath administered, the member being sore, and looked appealingly at all as though beseeching them to save him as much as possible from the ordeal of relating his experience while going down the cage.

Offers Prayer on Stand.

When Coroner Lynch asked him if he was on the carriage at the time of the accident, Boleski stood up and dramatically lifting his arms above his head, indicated how he held on to the bars and saved himself while the other thirteen men plunged to their death.

"The Lord help me," the man

moaned, putting his hands together as if in prayer. Then his eyes flashed, and, looking straight at the coroner, he said: "The carriage jerk, jerk, jerk when we left the surface, and we go down a little, and then, oh, the carriage fell, bottom fall out and the men fall down into the mine."

He could hear them hitting the sides of the shaft as they tumbled to their deaths, he said. It was a whirring sound and "was terrible." He was holding onto the side of the carriage, and after what appeared an age after the bottom of the carriage gave way he noticed an electric light, the cage came to a stop, and for the first time he realized that he was saved, he said.

"I crawl out carefully and go into the vein," the witness declared.

At this point his voice seemed to fail him almost entirely and he was asked to step over to the jury box so that the jurors could hear what he had to say. His actions became somewhat erratic and he was forced to grasp the rail of the jury box to steady himself.

Heard No Explosion.

Under examination Boleskie said that he saw a man come on the carriage that morning with a box of dynamite under his arm, but as far as he knew there was no explosion, thus dispelling the theory first advanced that the accident was due to an explosion of dynamite. He said he was not exactly clear what else happened, but on that point seemed quite positive.

He was asked if there was a report of any kind, and answered in the negative and also that there was no smell of powder. The witness declared that he was familiar with the odor of powder, as he had used it many years. Boleskie said that he did not know he was holding on to the carriage bars until he saw the other men drop through the bottom, and then he tightened his grip and prayed:

"God help me."

He again described the jerking and swaying of the carriage from the time of the descent until the bottom was reached; then arising from the witness chair he exclaimed:

"Jesus, He saved me!"

At this stage of the inquest the witness

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TRIPP SHAFT SURVIVOR IS DRAMATIC

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was greatly excited, and it was with considerable difficulty that the examination was continued. Major Everett Warren, counsel for the Lackawanna Coal company, asked the witness if he had not been sick since the time of the accident, and he replied that he had, saying that he had been suspended between life and death on the carriage and that the experience had completely unnerved him.

He was asked if he remembered talking to Col. R. A. Phillips the day of the accident, and he said he did not remember as he was excited and did not know to whom he spoke. He said he remembered meeting Peter Nescavage in the Clark vein, and when Peter asked him what was the matter he said the men fell down the shaft. He said Peter Gallagher was there also and asked him what was the trouble in the shaft, and he said he did not know what was the trouble. He said that Gallagher asked him if giant powder did not explode, and he said he did not know.

Ecluded His Wife.

Just at this time Mrs. Boleskie caused a scene by advancing toward the witness chair and gesticulating in a wild fashion, directed a torrent of words at her husband in the Lithuanian tongue. He answered feebly and the interpreter was asked to state what she said. He said she said her husband was a sick man, and calling to Martin said: "You know you had a sick headache all day, so come out of there and come home. You are crazy. You run away from home before and I caught you, and you ran out to night when I wanted to keep you and I had to find you. You are crazy. You come home."

At this point it developed that Martin was asked to attend the hearing and seemed to have the matter on his mind and he dressed himself while his wife was not looking and slipped from the house in North Scranton. She soon discovered that he was away and commenced a search for him. She said she located him moving toward the central city and then took him to the court house. Boleskie was excused from further testifying. As soon as he left the stand Attorney M. J. Martin told Mrs. Boleskie to take him home they hurried from the court room.

Mrs. Boleskie stated that she had a great deal of trouble keeping him in since the accident and she expressed feared to be left alone as he might in an unguarded moment do something that would end in his death.

Mr. Force Testifies.

Chemist H. J. Force, who is in charge of the laboratory for the Lackawanna company here, was called to testify to the character of the iron in the one and one-quarter inch bar that was holding the carriage in place. He said it was in good shape and that there was no flaw in it. He was cross-examined and said that he could easily tell of a flaw in iron as the fibres would indicate it on the end of the break. He said the tensile or breaking strength of iron shown on the strand was 50,000 pounds.

Reese Jones swore that Miner No. 285 was John Pulsia, and it was later learned that dynamite was issued to that number on that morning. He was one of the men killed in the accident.

Andrew Pasynea said he was at the foot of No. 3 vein and detected no odor of powder but heard an explosion.

Board Member Daniel McHugh, of Pittston, an official of the United Mine Workers, was called. He said he was a blacksmith by trade, and that the weld in the iron was defective. He and Major Warren had a jangle over the ends of the iron presented meeting

so as to determine just where the defect and break occurred, and finally they parted without agreeing. McHugh maintained that the pieces submitted were not together and that there was an intervening piece missing.

Col. Phillips said that figuring on the point of the accident as fifty feet above the Clark vein the other carriage was twelve feet below the broken one at the time that that accounted for the pieces of dynamite being found there. The pieces of timber in the carriage floor were presented and the sections sawed from the carriage uprights were also there in bags. The uprights show some black marks which in the opinion of some miners present showed defects, but the company officials claim that it was where the timbers dropped into the sump and became blackened in that manner.

One of the reasons advanced for the accident last night was that admitting the leeway on the guides found to exist there by David Fowler and testified to by him on the stand, the carriage could slide play enough of the shaft, force a breaking strain against the other side and this smashed out the floor and cause the accident. There were few spikes on the floor of the cage offered in evidence and it was said by many examining it to be an easy matter for the timbers to fall into the mine as soon as the floor of the car was tilted as it was found to be after the accident.

The jury, after deliberating for a short time, adjourned until tonight.

NEW ENGLANDERS TO BANQUET TONIGHT

Hotel Casey tonight will be the scene of the annual dinner of the New England society, of Northeastern Pennsylvania, with a large attendance of members from this entire section of the state being expected.

Among the speakers will be: H. Chinda, Japanese ambassador to the United States; Hon. Bainbridge Colby, of New York city; Rt. Rev. Ethelbert Talbot, bishop of the Bethlehem diocese of the Episcopal church and others.

James Blair, Jr., is chairman of the

Polis

BIG HOLIDAY BILL

The Rigolette Bros.
Allan Dinehart
The Farber Sisters
Van Hooen

AND FOUR OTHER ACTS

Souvenir Matinees Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

WONDERS TODAY

Beatrice Michelana
IN PAUL ARMSTRONG PLAY,
"Salomy Jane"

In Five Parts.

COMING TOMORROW,

Kathlyn Williams
In "HEARTS AND MASKS."