

WRECKED MINE IS PLACE OF HORROR

Exploration of Shaft Following Fatal Explosion Reveals Many Bodies of Dead And Wreckage of Blast

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DEGNAN-McCONNELL MINE, WILBURTON, Okla., Jan. 14.—The interior of Degnan-McConnell mine No. 21 is a place of horror.

I went into the mine early last night with a rescue party and stayed until John Almond, deputy state mine inspector, ordered everyone out, shortly before midnight.

A falling wall of slate almost blocked our exit. A former A. E. F. sergeant and old time miner stifled a panic by sheer personality.

We went 198 feet straight down into the earth, thence a distance said to have been 1600 feet deeper down a slope to the interior of the mine.

Find 31 Dead

At the end of this slope, just outside a mine chamber door, were 31 miners—all dead.

The first man we found was Barney Daley, one of the mine's fire bosses, the men who test the mine for gas.

Daley apparently had discovered the danger and was leading the men out when the explosion occurred.

A short distance away lay a man known as "Big Aleck," the other fire boss.

There were no marks visible on Daley. He apparently had been killed by internal injuries caused by the force of the explosion or by effects of the deadly gas.

Engineer Killed

He was crumpled up in the center of the slope a few feet in advance of the others. Nearby lay A. B. Thomas, of Hartshorn, a civil engineer who had been doing some surveying in the mine.

The explosion had thrown him against the ground with terrific force.

Falling rocks had struck him and he was not recognizable, but was identified by his watch and surveying instruments, one of which still was clasped in his hand.

All the rest were negroes—all dead.

Three of them were in sitting position with backs against the wall, as if they had been overcome by gas after having been stunned.

Ordered Out

Suddenly a flickering light ap-

peared up the slope as rescuers prepared to take some of the bodies to the bottom of the shaft on improvised stretchers.

"Everybody out," the man with the flickering light ordered. "Fourteenth level entrance is on fire!"

Visions of smouldering fire at the entrance of mine chambers on the thirteenth and fourteenth levels came up to mind.

"Who ordered you out?" Henry Reed, former old time miner and A. E. F. Sergeant, who had assumed leadership of the party, asked.

"John Almond," the man shouted.

Everyone hastily started back up the tortuous slope back to the bottom of the 198-foot stairway.

Reed Saves Situation

There were places up this slope where a persons could walk upright, other places where it was necessary to crawl on hands and knees, still others where it was necessary to wriggle through, caused by rock and slate falling in the passageway.

"Don't stampede, men," shouted Reed. "Take it slow."

As we hurriedly fled toward the stairway a bunch of slate which had been propped up in one of the narrow places, fell. Someone in the rush to get out had struck the prop.

Most of the dozen men in the party became panic stricken.

"Steady, don't stampede or none of us will get out," shouted Reed. "You fellows are going the wrong way."

Reed saved the situation, all the men calmed down, came back and took the right turn which was plainly marked with chalk.