

The boys were so weakened as to be scarcely able to follow Hallin over the gangways as he piloted them to the surface.

POWERED BY  
**News**papers™

JUNE 9, 2019

LOCAL HISTORY

THE SUNDAY TIMES A7

## Boys lost in Diamond Mine live to tell tale

*Two city teens spent three days wandering around in the darkness.*

Walter Gilasavage and John Stasko Jr. planned to go to a baseball game after school on May 29, 1934.

But when the game they'd hoped to attend ended up being played at another field, the Scranton teens made a decision they'd come to regret.

John, who lived at 957 Juhler Ave., gathered a handful of candles and matches and, with Walter of 602 Lang staff Place, walked over to Ravine Street. There, they dropped through a small opening leading to the old Diamond Mine, which was owned by the Glen Alden Coal Co.

The Ravine Street entrance was clogged with concrete years before, according to The Scranton Times. But over the years, bootleg miners created a small opening, which the boys used to get into the mine. It didn't take long before things went very wrong, the boys reported after being rescued from the abandoned mine 75 hours later.

"We went along in the mine for a long way until we came to a miner's box, and our candles went out," Walter told The Scranton Times on June 2, 1934, five days after their ordeal began. "I guess it was the black damp that did it, but I don't know. We tried to light the candles with the matches but they wouldn't light. They'd just sizzle and go out. After a while, all our matches got used up."

At first, the boys didn't worry too much about the darkness. But as they walked, they began to realize they were no closer to the Ravine Street opening they came through.



ERIN NISSELEY  
Local History

"We came to a place where there were so many tunnels, we didn't know which one to take," John said told Scranton Times reporters.

As they wandered in the works, "we stuck to the rails all the time," Walter said, describing how they felt along passageways in the dark. "I nearly fell down in a hole and I don't know how deep it was. I saved myself by grabbing hold of the rail and pulling myself back up. We were always bumping into something or falling over something."

They stopped to sleep at least 15 times, the boys told The Scranton Times. At first, they almost couldn't swallow the sulphurous water they found in puddles, but eventually they forced themselves to drink it. They thought they'd been underground for at least a week.

In reality they had been in the old mine for three days before a search party led by John's father, John Sr., found the two huddled in a mine corridor.

The teens described hearing shots a day after they entered the mine and then "more shots three or four hours before they found us," according to the newspaper. "Neighbors hazarded the opinion that the shots the boys heard on the first day were probably reports from blasting taking place in some far off working."

Police got involved on May 30, 1934, a day after the boys entered the mine. The boys' parents reported them missing, but no adults knew where the boys had gone.

John maintained he told

his younger brother, Stephen, he planned to explore the mine. The Scranton Times reported, but the little boy never spoke up, "apparently fearing some dire consequence."

John Stasko Sr. said he searched "all the lakes of the region after learning from companions of John that a fishing trip had been planned for Memorial Day" according to the article. "John likes to go fishing, and he's also a great swimmer. I was afraid he might have drowned, too."

With no sign of his son, John Stasko Sr. said on May 31, he "got the feeling the boys must be in the mines, so I got a permit from the Glen Alden Coal Company to go into the mines."

John's older brother, Joseph, and Fuhrman Ballus of Providence Road, joined the elder Stasko in searching the mine.

Ballus, the newspaper reported, had already searched the mine for the missing boys on May 30. But banding together with the Staskos proved lucky; they located the boys after a few hours.

John Jr. described seeing the rescue party for the first time, saying "Walter was sleeping when they came to find us. I saw them when they were about 50 or 100 yards away and I yelled and they came. You bet we were glad to see them."

When asked by a Scranton Times reporter if he was afraid that he would die in the mines, John Jr. answered, "Sure, anybody would be after they were in the mine as long as we were. We knew our only hope was that someone would come looking for us. I know I'm glad to be alive."

ERIN L. NISSELEY is an assistant metro editor with The Times-Tribune. She has lived in the area for more than a decade.

Contact the writer:  
localhistory@timeshamrock.com



THE SUNDAY TIMES ARCHIVES

Walter Gilasavage, left, and John Stasko Jr. entered the abandoned Diamond Mine in Scranton on May 29, 1934, and were lost for three days before being rescued.

**Spring Specials Happening Now!**

United Methodist Homes  
Winery Village Campus

Spring Specials on select Independent and Personal Care accommodations. Now extended through June 15th! Don't miss out, call 570-655-2891 ext. 5215!

UnitedMethodistHomes.org

## John Francis Stasko lost in mine.

Clipped By:



**ecdormbch6706**  
Fri, Dec 27, 2019