

Body of Fire Boss Found in Monarch

Steve Davis Met Death by Suffocation; Stumbled and Staggered in Deadly Gas to Within Half Mile of Air Shaft

(Associated Press)

Louisville, Jan. 23.—The body of the fire boss, Steve Davis, was recovered from the explosion torn Monarch coal mine today with evidence he met a terrorizing slow death from suffocation.

His was the seventh body removed from the mine since a gas blast demolished sections of it at 6:20 a. m. Monday. The body of the eighth victim, Joe Jaramillo, barn boss, was believed buried under tons of debris.

Rescue crews who searched the mine thoroughly for 60 hours with a faint hope that Davis might be found alive, came upon his body, one and one-half miles from the main shaft and one-half mile from the air shaft through which two miners escaped.

The body was in a sitting position with a safety lamp, extinguished, propped upright between the outspread legs.

Died Slow Death

The position of the body and the dead lamp told the rescue workers the tragic story of how Davis, unhurt by the terrific blast, that knocked down thousands of tons of coal and timber, sat possibly for hours and waited for death.

There were footprints in the dust of the shaft where Davis had struggled frantically to reach the air shaft.

"The tracks showed he walked upright for a short distance, then they faltered," John Nelson, leader of the rescue party said.

Stumbled and Crawled Toward Air
"He stumbled several times. Apparently there was gas in the air that weakened him. He crawled to his feet several times after stumbling. In all he dragged himself about 200 feet along the tunnel, struggling to the air shaft.

"Then he fell and could not arise again. He sat with his back against the tunnel, and propped his lamp between his feet.

"He knew that when that light went out the air was unfit to breathe and death would come to him."

"How long he sat there nobody knows or ever will know; it may have been hours."

Finally the light flickered out, and if he already was not unconscious he knew that death was close."

Duty To Test Mine

It was Davis' duty to go into the mines ahead of the regular day crew and test for gas.

The light he carried was his means of making the test. If the light did not flicker and remained bright there was no gas.

If it did flicker, burned low, or went out, he knew there was gas and it was his duty to order the crew kept out of the mine until the air cleared.

The condition of the body indicated he was uninjured by the explosion and that death was caused by afterdamp, a mixture of deadly carbon dioxide and nitrogen that sometimes follows a mine explosion.

Had he not collapsed, miners said he could have made his way to the air shaft and escaped. Several miners attempted to enter this shaft from above after the explosion but were overcome and were carried out by other rescue workers.

Louisville, Colo., Jan. 22.—Rescue crews still threaded thru the lower levels of the explosion-torn Monarch coal mine tonight, seeking the last two of the eight men trapped in the mine Monday.

Virtually all hope was gone that either of them—Fire Boss Steve Davis or Joe Jaramillo, barn boss—would be discovered alive.

Jaramillo's body was believed buried deep beneath a rock slide into which rescuers dug laboriously.

Deadly gasses are believed to have claimed Davi's life. At first hope was held he might have gained refuge in a sealed room, but as the hunt wore on, this possibility dwindled.

One party struck off at a new tangent in the debris-strewn tunnels late today, but gas forced them to turn back.

Tom Allen, state mine inspector, said he and other officials superintending the search were convinced both men will be found dead. The bodies of the other six have been carried up from the mine.

At 6 p. m. (MST) the search had been under way for about 60 hours.

Coroner George M. Howe of Boulder county said an inquest will be held, with the date set after the last victims are found. Funeral services will be held for two of the miners, Kester Novinger and Leland Ward, cousins, at Boulder, a few miles from here, Friday.