

Nine Killed in Gas Blast at Kramer Mine Near DuBois

DUBOIS, Pa., Mar. 29.—(INS)—Rescuers today brought out the last of the bodies of nine men trapped by explosions in the Kramer, Pa., mine of the Northwestern Mining and Exchange Company, near here.

The last body, that of Francis Dixon, 43, of DuBois, was brought out of the gas and flame filled mine early today. He and his buddy, Thomas Heberling, 46, also of DuBois, the section foreman, were believed to have been the first two killed. The other seven victims met their deaths going to their rescue, according to the reconstruction of the tragedy.

The other victims, according to officials of the mine, were:

William Laird, 43, of Big Run, assistant mine foreman; William McCracken, 42, of Stump Creek, general inside mine foreman; Steve Yaschack, 29, stump creek, section foreman; John McHenry, 49, DuBois, section foreman; George Hill, 30, DuBois, section foreman; Andrew O'Connor, 51, Punxsutawney, section foreman and William Lewis, 50, section foreman.

All the victims were married men and several had families.

A few days ago, it was learned, Clyde L. Buhite, superintendent of the mine, and McCracken were given awards by the Coal Mining Institute of America for supervising more than 1,000 men for 100,000 work hours without a single mishap.

A wooden block under the wheel of the car some of the men were pushing indicated they had stopped. Some of the doomed men had pulled their coats over their heads, indicating they possibly foresaw their fate and made a futile attempt at protection.

Buhite said he had been informed by the engineer that the power in "11 North" had suddenly gone dead. He said he knew two men were working on an airway in that section of the mine and that he and McCracken descended to the bottom of the shaft. There, he related, they were joined by two others working in that section, and they started on their rescue mission.

Soon, Buhite related, they "tasted dust," a sign that a blast had occurred, and he returned to obtain supplies for rescue work, a step that probably spared him from the same fate.

When he returned with other rescue workers, he found the second blast had let go, he related. He did not think it was violent until he had proceeded farther back into the mine when he noticed fire, he said. Then he realized tragedy had occurred and he retraced his steps to summon help, he continued.

News of the tragedy was kept from relatives and families, it was learned, that accounting for the delay in spreading news of the disaster to the outside world. No formal

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CROWDS MILL ABOUT ENTRANCE TO MINE

DUBOIS, Pa., Mar. 29.—(INS)—State Police and Highway patrolmen had their hands full today keeping in check the crowds of curious persons who milled around the entrance of the Northwestern Mining and Exchange Company mine at nearby Kramer where two explosions killed nine men Saturday.

In direct contrast with scenes so familiar with mine disasters, only a few persons were on hand for quite some time after the explosions. Word of the blasts did not spread until late Sunday.

AIR DISASTER PROBE STARTS TOMORROW; CLING TO ICE THEORY

PITTSBURGH, Mar. 29.—(INS)—Amid a maze of conflicting theories offered by experts and lay-witnesses, federal officials today prepared to open their investigation into the crash of a TWA skyliner near the City-County airport last Thursday night in which 13 persons died.

B. M. Jacobs, federal airline inspector from Chicago, said eye-witnesses to the crash will be called first and experts after them when the hearing formally gets underway tomorrow morning. Coroner W. J. McGregor was undecided whether to conduct his inquest jointly but probably will hold it separately using the evidence adduced at the hearing.

Two officials grimly held to their publicly announced theory that localized icing conditions rendered the ailerons on the doomed ship useless. They contended the ice froze so quickly and to such a depth that when Capt. Larry Bohnet, the pilot, put the ship into a vertical bank preparatory to landing, he was unable to bring it out of the dip and it crashed head-on into the ground.

Airline officials scoffed at a theory that ice froze on the forward wings and by changing their contour caused the pilot to miscalculate his speed and "lift" and

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REBEL TROOPS MASS FOR FIFTH ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE MANRIN

RECOVER BODIES OF ALL MINE VICTIMS

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notification was made, it was said, until the bodies were actually discovered.

Although the company normally employs about 800 men, only the five victims were in the shaft Saturday night, making routine blasts in preparation for today's work when the explosions occurred, only 35 minutes apart. A fire followed but was immediately extinguished. The recovered bodies were badly burned.

As many as 500 or even 800 workers might have been killed had the blast occurred at a time when the full shift was on.

Yasenshank, Lewis, Laird and McCracken were the rescue workers who died in a vain effort to help their trapped and stricken co-workers.

Attorney General Charles J. Margiotti, who resides at nearby Punxsuawney, began an immediate investigation of the explosions.

Although the blasts occurred early Saturday evening, few residents of Kramer—about 14 miles from DuBois—knew of the accident until late Sunday. Most of them were away over the Easter holidays.

According to officials, the first explosion let go about 5:30 p. m. and the second 45 minutes later. Rescue operations began about midnight when the dangerous mine gas had cleared sufficiently to permit a search. The first body was brought to the surface about 10:30 Sunday morning and by noon five others had been recovered. The United States Bureau of Mines and State mine inspectors supervised the rescue work.

The bodies of the seven recovered victims were found huddled together about a mile from the shaft entrance, according to T. F. Nairn, deputy secretary of the State Bureau of Mines, who rushed to the scene from his home in Carrelltown, Pa.

The rescue workers were caught by the second explosion, apparently after reaching the bodies of the first five deep in the earth's bowels. The mine passageways ramble about four miles underground from a shaft entrance dropping 300 feet down.