

MAN ENTOMBED FIRST DAY IN BOOTLEG MINE

Schuylkill County Farmer
Rescued Alive After
7 1-2 Hours.

SLIGHTLY INJURED

Entombed eight and one-half hours his first day in a bootleg coal hole operated by his three sons, Steven Koperna, 57, was rescued alive at 4:40 yesterday afternoon from his underground prison near Pine Knot colliery in the Heckscherville Valley.

Koperna, who resides on a farm near Schuylkill Haven, was walled in when the workings collapsed about 9:00 in the morning. He is reported slightly injured.

Taken immediately to the Good Samaritan Hospital, Pottsville, to be treated for shock and exposure, Koperna said:

"From the time I was trapped until I was rescued I prayed to God to save me and I promised Him I would never work another day in a bootleg coal hole. Now that I'm rescued alive I thank God for my rescue and I'm going to keep my promise."

Koperna's three sons, Paul, Michael and Yunch, had been operating a coal hole in old Pine Knot Colliery strippings for some time. Their operation was in what is known as the "Jugular Vein," a coal measure 30 feet in thickness, but of shale-like formation near the surface.

The sons informed their father Monday night they were short of help at the coal hole and he volunteered assistance. He was inexperienced as a miner. Koperna was

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DemiNick

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Man Entombed His First Day

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working near the face of the shaft workings at a time his son, Paul, was ascending the shaft on a mission to the surface.

Hearing the collapse of the workings and his father's cry of alarm, the youth returned to the bottom of the shaft. He found the entire workings had collapsed, but was able to communicate with his entombed father.

Koperna informed his son and later other rescuers, that he was tightly wedged between a heavy plank and the rib of the workings, covered to his chin with debris, but believed he was safe from falling rock.

Independent miners from other workings rushed to the rescue and found themselves handicapped because of the narrow entry to the place where Koperna was entombed. To remove the debris the men had to resort to the filling and passing of small cans back and forth through the narrow aperture.

The rescue thus became a most tedious task. As they proceeded in relays, the rescuers kept in constant communication with the inexperienced Koperna, advising him to remain quiet so as to prevent another fall or slide. The man obeyed these orders and when he was reached late yesterday afternoon it was found that only his head and face were above the fallen debris.

The task of removing the fine coal and rock from the protecting plank to prevent another fall required delicate precaution, but was achieved with success. Koperna was unable to move when rescued, and had to be assisted along the narrow passageway to the shaft and then aided to the surface, where an ambulance was in waiting.

1937 Koperna Rescued after 7 1/2 hrs

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