

Theo. Bonawitz Risks Own Life To Rescue Miner From Carbon Gas

That all the heroes are not on the battlefields was proved conclusively last Sunday afternoon by Theodore ("Ted") Bonawitz of Tremont, who risked death by carbon monoxide gas to save the life of a young man who was overcome in a bootleg coal hole.

The rescued youth was Harold Nelson of Reinerton.

Bonawitz and his wife were driving in their truck on Route 209 west of Tremont, going toward Joliett, when they saw a man staggering along the highway. Recognizing him as Raymond Wise of Reinerton, and knowing him to be a sober man and a devout church worker, Bonawitz knew something must have happened to him.

Ted stopped his truck and Mr. Wise cried, "Get my buddy out of the coal hole."

Without stopping to consider the risk to himself, Bonawitz rushed to the opening and descended a distance of 135 feet into the gas filled coal hole without the protection of a mask or the aid of a light.

When he stumbled over the body of the victim of the car-

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bon monoxide fumes, he managed to hoist him over his shoulder and began staggering his way up the slope. Weakened himself by the inhalation of the fumes, Ted soon collapsed under the weight of Nelson's body, but he struggled on, dragging the inert form after him until he came to a point within 25 feet of the surface.

Unable to pull Nelson any further he groped his way to the surface where he lost consciousness. Water revived him in a short time.

While Ted was engaged in his heroic efforts to save Nelson, his wife stood on the highway flagging cars to get help for her husband. After Bonawitz regained his consciousness he was aided by some of the passersby in bringing Nelson up the last 25 feet to the surface.

In the meantime a highway patrolman had been stopped and told of the accident, and he rushed to Tremont for a doctor. He and Dr. Simonis arrived at the scene just as the victim was brought out of the coal hole, still alive but badly affected by the carbon monoxide. The doctor administered an injection and Nelson began to revive.

Mr. Wise, who was able to get out of the coal hole before he was completely overcome, has completely recovered from the effects of the gas and is back at work, but Nelson is still ill from the fumes he inhaled. He is expected to be well soon.

Bonawitz was ill all day Monday from the fumes he inhaled while he was effecting the rescue.

Men who know coal hole mining conditions say that Bonawitz must have possessed an almost super-human strength to withstand the fumes and pull the victim the long distance up the slope. Almost miraculous, too, was the speed with which Ted worked despite the handicaps which hindered him. It was about 3:30 in the afternoon when he met Mr. Wise on the highway and the rescue was effected before 4 o'clock.

Nelson and Wise were pumping water from the coal hole, water that flooded the workings following the heavy rains of the previous week. They had a gasoline engine installed in the hole to pump out the water and a leak in the exhaust pipe caused the carbon monoxide fumes which almost cost the two men their lives.

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