

12 Miners Die In Entombed Coal Mine; 6 Survive

Tragedy Strikes Three Point Coal Mine Near Harlan, Ky.

By WILLARD YARBROUGH

HARLAN, Ky., Sept. 17.—(AP)—Six coal-smearing miners emerged alive last midnight from tragedy-struck Three Point mine after a 12-hour entombment caused by an explosion that dealt sudden death to their twelve companions.

The mine early this morning yielded the bodies of the dead, three mangled bodies being discovered at one tunnel entrance and nine others lying closely together not many feet away.

The three were found first more than a mile from the main mine entrance. Beyond this group, almost a mile further back in 12-left tunnel, were the six men who barricaded themselves against the deadly black damp in their fight for life.

The six survivors came out on motor trans, smiling broadly and with moist eyes their unspoken appreciation for their rescue by crews of tireless miners who worked the clock around to fight through the poison gases to their cell.

Those liberated told a story of calmness and silent prayers, intermixed with jests and jokes to keep their spirits soaring. "We knew they'd get to us in time," was the way their spokesman put it upon emergence.

The survivors:

- Harvey Lasley, the only single man in the group, of Three Point.
- Warren Pruitt, father of seven children, Three Point.
- Charles Bailey, father of five, Cawood, Ky.
- Shelley Farley, Three Point.
- Paul Helton, father of three children, Three Point.
- Homer Osborne, with seven children, Cawood.

The dead:

- Merle Blanton, Mulus, Ky.
- Carson Ramsey, Three Point.
- E. M. Morgan, Three Point.
- Albert Bonza, Three Point.
- Fred Irvin, Three Point.
- Leander Cole, Cawood.
- Dave Osborne, Cawood.
- Ed Osborne, Cawood.
- George Helton, Three Point.
- Frank McKenzie, Cawood.
- Lawrence Jordan, Three Point.
- Marion Osborne.

Six members of the rescue squads were overcome by in-seeping fumes into the main channel. Three of them were taken to a Harlan hospital by ambulance, but were said to be in good condition. All were given oxygen and first aid at the mine foreman's office.

Mothers, wives and children who had taken the news calmly most of the night could be heard sobbing as ambulances loosened their sirens after the miners were brought out.

The rescue squads, led by James Bryson who served as a major during the last war with the "Ladies from Hell" Scottish regiment, were hampered by the black damp, which had to be forced out by fans and barricade systems. Bryson is safety director of the Harlan County Coal Operators association.

Relatives from almost everywhere telephoned the mining office, wanting information about the blast which the rescued miners said probably was caused by a charge that ignited gas that may have seeped in during the night. There was no official explanation, other than either gas or dust was to blame.

Three Point Mining Corporation officials said the explosion swooshed through 12-left shaft at 9 a.m. yesterday, two hours after the 200 miners reported for work. Other miners were digging in other channels of the big mine.

Pruitt, one of those saved, doused himself in the dressing room a shower a few minutes after breathing fresh air.

"We all decided to barricade ourselves in the room. The air got pretty bad toward the last, but we held out hope that the rescuers would reach us in time," he said.

Farley, a big strapping miner of 22 years experience in the Kentucky fields, said the blast didn't make much noise.

"Our bunch was about 700 feet away. It just sounded like something had deafened us," Farley said, as a fellow miner rubbed soap on his back.

"We lived on what little air there was, each of us searching around the walls for air pockets."

"We found them too. None of us was scared a bit and shucks, we could have held out 15 hours longer if necessary. Some prayed a little and some said we'd better if we got out of this."

"But we joked too and kept looking for more air pockets."

Farley, who has two sons in the service, looked mighty good to his 18-year-old son, Edward, who lives in the village. Going to the mine