

DOCTOR FALLS 125 FT. DURING MINE RESCUE

Hurt As Cable Snaps;
Iowa Miner Saved.

By Louis Cook, Jr.

(Special Staff Writer)

CENTERVILLE, IA. — A miner trapped 125 feet underground was released by his fellow workers Tuesday afternoon a few hours after a doctor was critically injured in a plunge down the mine shaft.

The miner, Eugene Welch, 40, Mystic, underwent amputation of his right leg below the knee following his rescue by fellow miners about 2 p. m.

Dr. C. L. Richey, 44, was in "very critical condition" from multiple fractures suffered when the cable broke on a cage in which he was being lowered into the mine to aid Welch.

Welch's leg was drawn into the cutting chain on a coal-cutting machine at 10:45 a. m. while he was working in the Blue Flame coal mine a mile south of Plano and about six miles west of here.

Trouser Leg Caught.

Welch was a member of a crew taking out coal about 1200 feet west of the foot of the 125-foot shaft when he was injured.

The men were working in a space 28 inches high when Welch's trouser leg caught in the endless chain which is used to cut into the vein of coal.

The first that his fellow workers knew of his plight was a shout to "shut her off."

One of the mine operators, George Hunt, crawled 25 feet on his hands and knees to the switch operating the electric cutter.

Sent for Doctor.

"Get me out of here," Welch begged. His right leg had been drawn between the cutting teeth on the chain and the coal vein.

Welch asked Hunt to reverse the chain. Hunt refused, fearful that the teeth would cut the leg off.

Hunt called all 15 men working in the mine to the aid of the trapped man and sent a miner to call for a doctor.

Dr. Richey answered the call, arriving at the mine shortly before noon.

He stepped on the platform of

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one of the two cages in the shaft and signaled to be lowered down. In the confusion, nobody noticed that the cage was jammed at the top of the shaft.

Suddenly the cage broke loose and dropped, taking up the slack in the unwinding cable.

The cage dropped about 25 feet, with the cable taking up the slack so rapidly that the bolts holding the cable were jerked out of the top of the cage.

Cage Demolished.

The cage then plunged the remaining 100 feet, and hit with a crash. The suddenly released cable flipped out of the shaft and fell across live wires, blowing the fuses that operated the hoist.

The terrified men at the top of the shaft heard Dr. Richey screaming at the bottom.

The cage was demolished and he lay in the wreckage.

Dr. Richey finally was hoisted back to the surface in the other cage in the shaft while a crew on the surface held the free end of the cable. The shaft cages both operate on the same cable, counterbalancing each other, so the second cage was temporarily out of commission when the cable broke.

Other Doctors Called.

Other doctors were called to the mine. They sent a hypodermic syringe filled with a sedative into the mine to ease Welch's pain.

The sedative was administered by George Bates, a mine worker, who followed instructions given him on the surface by a doctor.

In the meantime, Hunt and other workers were laboring to free Welch, who was lying on his face in the darkness, fully conscious.

He smoked cigarettes passed to him by his friends.

Unhooked cutting bar.

Working by the light of his headlamp, Hunt unhooked part of the machine and cut away coal from the face of the vein to free Welch. Several of the bolts holding the machine together had to be cut loose with acetylene torches.

Welch finally was lifted out at about 2 p.m. and was hoisted to the mine shaft in an empty coal car. He was still unconscious.

A crowd had collected around the opening of the mine shaft as news of the disaster spread through the community.

Wife Waiting.

Welch's wife was among those waiting for him to be brought up. As he was carried out, he looked at the leg and said, "I'm afraid I've lost it."

Leg Amputated.

Welch's leg was amputated at St. Joseph's hospital here about 6 p.m.

Dr. Richey also was at St. Joseph's in a state of "profound shock."

Dr. Charles F. Brummitt, one of Dr. Richey's partners in practice here, said Dr. Richey suffered a compound fracture of his left leg, a fractured right leg and ankle, a broken jaw and nose, and other undetermined injuries.

The Blue Flame mine is operated by three Mosaic men, Earl, Tony Kautzlarich and Fred Dunham.

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