

6 West Virginia Coal Miners Are Trapped Mile Underground

Clarksburg, W. Va. (UPI) — Fires and dense smoke yesterday trapped six coal miners a mile underground in a Clinchfield Coal Co. tunnel near this northern West Virginia community.

There appeared to be little hope for four of the men trapped in the Mars No. 2 mine since four blazes broke out in different passages about midnight Saturday.

A seventh coal miner was found alive last night but died en route to the hospital.

The victim, Charles Lantz, 26 years old, Buckhannon, W. Va., was the youngest of seven men trapped in the Mars No. 2 mine of the Clinchfield Co.

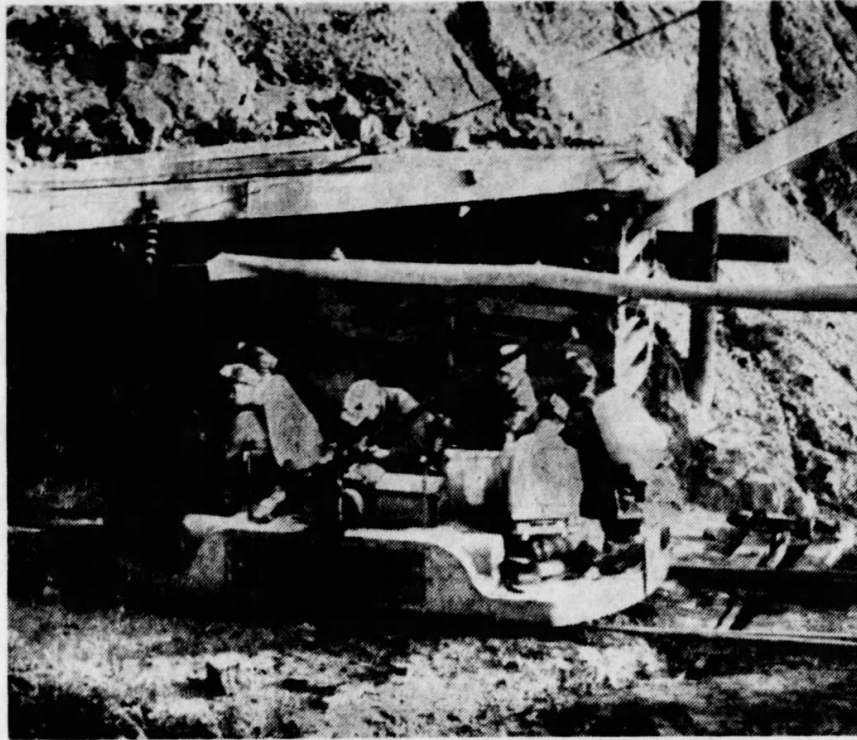
When Lantz was found hope rose the other six would be found alive but his death plunged the miners' families, keeping a vigil at the mine entrance, into despair.

"There's not much hope now," said one woman.

THE MINERS were trapped at midnight Saturday when fires broke out in four separate passages as they were moving a continuous mining machine into the tunnel to prepare for the start of work today.

Six rescue teams, working in relays, fought to reach the trapped men.

"All we can do is pray," said 30-year-old Mrs. Jean Kuruscz whose husband,



(AP Wirephoto)

RESCUE WORKERS SEEK TO REACH TRAPPED MINERS
This Is The Entrance Shaft Of The Mars No. 2 Mine In West Virginia.

Andy, 44, was one of the victims.

RESCUE WORKERS said there were four separate fires in the mine, three of which have been brought under control. The fourth blocked a T-shaped passage in which the men were trapped.

One rescuer said three of the men were on the left side of the tunnel and four, including Lantz, were on the right.

The rescuer said: "It is a real mess in there. Those boys on the right, I don't know. I'm hoping the ones on the

left, if they kept their heads, they are all right."

Clinchfield President George L. Judy said "I still have hope, particularly if they have barricaded themselves." Judy said barricading the passage would keep the fire from eating up available oxygen.

VENTILATION SHAFTS in the mine were pouring out a steady stream of coal dust and smoke.

Still missing in addition to Kuruscz were Clell Leedy, 53, Bluefield; Robert Savage, 57,

Rosemont; Isaac Moats, 39, Moatsville; Kenneth Kerr, 53, Belington, and Carl Danish, 45, Lost Creek.

The mine, about 100 miles south of Pittsburgh, is eight miles from the entrance to Clinchfield's Dola mine where a methane gas explosion claimed 22 lives April 25, 1963.

Like the Dola disaster, the Mars fire was blamed on a spark from a mechanical miner. Three members of the 10 man crew working with the mechanical miner made their escape from the mine's only entrance.

More than 36 men, many from nearby coal mines, were taking part in the rescue operation. The rescuers were sealing up passages as they plunged deeper into the shaft battling the flames.

The mine was choked with smoke.

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