

## Miners Rescued

DOWNIEVILLE, Calif. (UPI) —Two veteran gold miners were rescued in good condition early today after being trapped in a century-old shaft for 33½ hours when a violent Sierra storm triggered a giant mudslide.

"I know sooner or later they'd get us out. It was just a matter if you could stand the freezing cold," said Erroll Christman, 33, who along with his partner, Richard Brooks, 28, were led to safety shortly after midnight.

Air compressors had been used to pump oxygen into the Brush Creek Mine four miles west of this historic gold mining town in an isolated corner of the Sierra.

Both men were cold, hungry and filthy but in "tip-top" shape, according to Sierra County Sheriff Sam Doyle, who headed a rescue team of 20 deputies, miners and friends of the pair.

The Sierra's first big storm of the season sent tons of rock and mud into the shaft Monday. The miners were working the mine 2,000 feet into the shaft when the slide hit. But their fate was not discovered until mid-Tuesday when a caretaker noticed the miners' cars in front of the shaft and the entrance sealed with mud.

"We thought it was a small earthquake," said Christman.

"Five inch steel rails and timbers were all collapsed. Even big logs on the timbers were crushed. They're the kind like you see on logging trucks— three feet around."

The miners dug 10 feet toward the entrance and kept their eyes on a wristwatch which Christman happened to be wearing for the first time in the shaft. "We just kept watching it," he said.

Christman, a professional gold miner since he was 15, said the slide was the third accident to strike the old shaft. The first occurred in 1881; the latest in 1923, when one person was killed.

Christman, who lives 86 miles away in Grass Valley, and Brooks, from nearby Coyoteville, were preparing the quartz shaft for an all-out gold mining effort in the spring.

Christman said he will take a week off, then head back into the 2,300-foot shaft. "We're going to have to change the whole front of the mine," he said. "We might have to use cement."

## 1973 Two gold miners rescued from Brush Creek Mine mudslide

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