

### Penn Hills Cave-in Probe Begins

By BETH CRIDER

A Penn Hills rescue probe today to determine the cause of a cave-in of the Newfield Mine from 1976, which left one mining licensee dead and another severely injured.

Andrew Skopac, 51, of 3815 University St., Penn Hills, was fatally injured when a 20-ton section of the roof of the Newfield Mine's No. 1 shaft collapsed shortly after 7 a.m. yesterday.

Donald McCully, 46, of Chesham, before County, remains in critical condition in Children's General Hospital, New Kensington, with serious rib and multiple fractures.

McCully, operator of the coal dig-ger, probably was pinned under a 20-ton roof beam for about one hour before a rescue crew could reach him.

"It was a very large roof fall and we're not really sure what caused it," Robert Foley, director of mining for Republic Steel Corp., owner of the mine, said. "There is not a going to cover down like this there usually were before, but there was very little warning this time."

"The miners usually were aware of things like this and that's why he shouldn't have been there," Foley said.

When the roof beam fell, the 40-ton section passed to back back for the operator, then roof further and he would have made it out safely.

Foley said officials of the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration began the investigation, but first of the mine's safety committee.

"The men were interested, but terrified," Foley recalled. "They had no more than a 10 min of time to get to the operator."

McCully was pinned between a wooden roof beam, which fell across his chest, and the corner of the shaft close to the operator. "I could not breathe during that time," he said.

"He did not die when he was dug out," he said. "He died when he was dug out."

"I thought he was just working, and I don't know if he was or not," he said. "I just said there was some way I could help all the men who helped dig him out."

Foley explained that the miners created an alert system and dug a tunnel toward the mine with three shafts.

"They had to dig the shaft out from under his body to get him out," he said.

The collapse occurred in the No. 1 shaft, the first shaft to reach the mine.

There was a lot of tension about the mine but no could hear or see to save his life, he said.

"When I got to the top, I reported a hole in the floor and then the personnel started to dig and get him out," he said.

Another miner, Russ Graham of Duquesne Light Co., said the mine was in a state of emergency.

The power failure left hundreds of homes in the Pittsburgh area without electricity yesterday for brief periods of time.

In spite of the three shafts, the mine was not safe to operate.

McCully, who was rescued from the mine, was taken to Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh.

McCully's wife said he had only recovered from a back injury after the accident in 1976.

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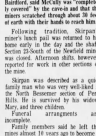
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Father of mine collapse



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# 1977 Donald McCully rescued from Newfield mine cave-in



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