

Mine Shaft Swept By Exploding Gas, Fumes Fatal To 4

Fifth Miner Hospitalized Following Fiery Blast In McDowell Mine

CARETTA, W. Va., June 27 (AP)—A gas explosion last night at the bottom of a 500-foot coal mine air shaft cost the lives of four miners and left a fifth seriously hurt.

The four victims died in hospitals at neighboring Welch several hours after the accident in the Olga Coal Co. operation at this McDowell County community.

The dead were Virgil Christian, 38, of Jolo; Paul Thompson, 28, of Yukon; U. C. Dash, 48, of Warriormine, and Fred Campbell, 30. Doctors said they died as a result of inhaling fumes which ignited in their lungs.

Elmer Campbell, brother of Fred, was in a hospital with lung injuries and burns on the surface of his body. His condition was listed as serious today.

Joseph Bierer, acting chief of the State Mines Department, said in Charleston that inspectors on the scene had not definitely pinned down the cause of the explosion. He added, however, that they found in the air shaft a defective electric light socket which could have caused the spark that set off the gas.

H. E. Mauck, general superintendent of the mine, said the gas was ignited when a light bulb was dropped and broken. Bierer said investigators also considered this a possible cause.

The five men were engaged in building forms for the pouring of concrete in the shaft, which was still under construction. The shaft was being sunk about two miles from the main opening of the company's big No. 2 mine here.

Rescuers pulled the five men—all still living at the time—to the surface one at a time by use of a rope and a large bucket. Jeter Thompson of English lowered himself to the bottom of the shaft to place the men in the bucket for the trips.