

# Wyoming man saved from death in mine

ROCK SPRINGS, Wyo. (AP)—"You don't know what life is until you almost lose it," said 28-year-old Joe Beaucamp from a hospital bed Thursday after surviving 23½ hours trapped up to his neck in sludge in an underground mine.

"When I was in the mine, they kept telling me I was going to be all right," he said. "When I got to the hospital and asked them what they really thought, they said they didn't think I was going to come out of that shaft alive."

Beaucamp was rescued Wednesday evening from a new trona mine shaft being dug at the Allied Chemical Co. plant west of Green River, Wyo. He was trapped Tuesday evening when he fell 80 feet from a scaffold during a cave-in 1,500 feet underground.

Beaucamp, who was married just two weeks ago, said he was almost completely covered for 45 minutes but managed to get enough air to stay alive. A fellow worker who was among the first to reach Beaucamp, Bud Meakes, said he knew his companion was alive when he heard him yell, "Dammit, get me the hell out of here."

The rescuers had to dig a parallel tunnel to reach Beaucamp. The Centennial Development Corp. was sinking the shaft, and officials have refused to comment on the accident.

But Meakes said the pressure

from the sludge made it difficult for Beaucamp to breathe and fellow workers, including Beaucamp's uncle, Lloyd Bailey, helped alleviate the problem by continuously scooping dirt away from his face and chest.

Meakes said Beaucamp, whose leg was pinned by a large piece of timber, almost was freed 10 hours after he was trapped. But another cave-in covered him again up to his nostrils.

Carl Mayberry, Beaucamp's brother-in-law and another employee who participated in the rescue effort, said at that time a minister was summoned because it was feared Beaucamp was doomed.

Then, Mayberry said, rescuers cut a barrel in half, put it over the Beaucamp's head and forced it down into the sludge to relieve the pressure and allow him to breathe. He finally was brought to the surface at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday and was rushed by ambulance to the hospital here.

Doctors said Beaucamp suffered from exposure and was dehydrated, but otherwise was in good condition. "The thoughts of my wife and my Uncle Bill's presence in the mine kept me going," Beaucamp said. "And a bunch of fine miners got me out."

Asked if he would return to work in the mine, Beaucamp managed a smile and said, "I guess only time will tell."