

Chronology

Day-By-Day Account of Efforts to Free Trapped Miners

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HAZLETON, Pa. Aug. 27 (Tuesday).

**A** DAY-BY-DAY account of the mine disaster that trapped three men more than 300 feet below ground, and of the dramatic efforts to free them:

**Aug. 13**—At 9:30 A. M., tons of coal and rock plummeted into the Independent Coal Mine, at Shepton, 9 miles west of Hazleton. Working underground were David Fellin, a part owner, Henry Throne and Louis Bova. First rescuers at the scene detected deadly carbon monoxide and heard the rumble of falling rock for hours. "There's little hope," said a Federal Bureau of Mines official. Fans failed to clear the gas. State Mines Secretary H. B. Charnbury ordered operations halted just before midnight.

**Aug. 14**—Rock and coal continued falling in the mine sporadically. Rescue workers studied maps and decided there was scant hope for the men, unless they had managed to find a safe area off the steep main slope.

**Aug. 15**—A gush of fresh air from the minehead heightened possibility that the men might have found refuge. A rescue team picked its way 50 feet into the slope and said rock falls continued deep in the earth. Federal and State officials pondered digging a parallel slope, but gave up the idea after figuring it would take

50 days.

**Aug. 16**—Charnbury and aides considered asking Schuylkill County Court to hear testimony on whether the mine should be sealed off permanently because many felt there was no hope for the men. The coal falls continued.

**Aug. 17**—Under prodding of the United Mine Workers, drilling equipment was brought to the mine. Rescuers aimed a bore hole at a "gangway" off the shaft where the men were believed trapped. Families refused to consider the miners lost.

**Aug. 18**—"We're all OK," was the word shouted to the surface when the drill burst into the gangway at 11:25 P. M. Fellin and Throne said they were in good shape, but that Bova, trapped behind rock 25 feet away, had an injured hip. Food and communications equipment were lowered into their 14-by-9-foot chamber.

**Aug. 19**—Fellin and Throne lost contact with Bova. The men asked for heating units, and got them, because of the biting underground cold. A second hole was started in Bova's direction but the drill veered off.

**Aug. 20**—A 12-inch drill was put into operation at 3:45 A. M., and by noon was down to 150 feet. Fellin reported Bova answered his calls with taps. But "cracking noises" heard by Fellin halted drilling of the 12-inch

hole. A new 6-inch shaft got to within a dozen feet or so of Bova's tiny quarters—but missed.

**Aug. 21**—Their first efforts unsuccessful, workers started drilling two new holes—a 12-inch shaft toward Fellin and Throne, a 6-inch shaft towards Bova. Cheerful despite their ordeal, Fellin and Throne ate chicken dinners as they waited.

**Aug. 22**—The second 12-inch hole also went astray. Officials loaded it with radioactive material, but Fellin and Throne couldn't pinpoint its location with Geiger counters lowered to them. A third 12-inch hole started, and Fellin reported again he lost contact with Bova.

**Aug. 23**—The third 12-inch rescue hole penetrated the chamber holding Fellin and Throne. Drillers lost their bit at 37 feet in the new life-line hole to Bova. Gov. and Mrs. William W. Scranton visited the scene and talked to the two men.

**Aug. 24**—Rescuers began reaming the 12-inch hole to 24 inches and readied a steel capsule in which they hoped to bring Fellin and Throne to the surface. Fear of a cave-in halted work at 38 feet, and officials decided to shore up the sides with steel casing and continue drilling a 17-inch hole.

**Aug. 25**—Rescue operations continue without letup. Special steel casing, 38 feet long, is lowered into upper

portion of escape hole, which had been enlarged to 30 inches. Words of Roman Catholic Mass, being televised for shut-ins in region, are piped to trapped men through special communications setup. Two Marine helicopters arrive at scene to take men to hospital. Special airstrip is cleared near mine.

**Aug. 26**—Fellin and Throne coordinate cave operations with surface rescue workers as the 17½-inch drill bites through dirt, rock and coal and bores out wood-concrete plug at bottom of 308-foot escape hole at 3:25 P. M. Frequent changes of pipes and bits made as the widening progresses to the break-through point. Two ambulances move to rescue site to transport miners to Hazleton General Hospital. Helicopters stand by. At 6:22 P. M. Fellin shouts the drill has completed opening hole. The slow, careful raising of drilling equipment from the escape route begins immediately and is completed without mishap by shortly after 11 P. M.

**AUG. 27**—Rescue. Workmen erected the winch that lowered safety harnesses to Fellin and Throne. Fellin decided Throne would go first. At 1:52 A. M. Throne started ascent. He reached the surface at 2:06. Fellin follows up at 2:32. He reached safety at 2:41. Both were flown by helicopter to Hazleton State General Hospital for treatment.

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