

Victims Keep Morale Up

Tense Final Hours of Mine Rescue

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men, it was decided to use a parachute-type harness. They were to wear helmets as well as special collars around their necks to protect the rest of their bodies.

"We ask you to say a prayer," State Mine Secretary H. B. Charnbury said to reporters.

12:25 A. M.: While the light is being used to study the hole, Fellin is asked what he is doing.

"Waiting to get my wings," he answers. "Is it OK if I leave my boots here?" He is told to leave them on. The harnesses were to be used because the hole had drifted at a point 90 feet from the bottom.

12:50 A. M.: Harnesses for both men are lowered. Coveralls were sewn to the harnesses and the men are instructed how to help each other into them. A bucket of grease also is lowered.

12:56 A. M.: "The suits are here," the trapped miners yell. Fellin was to wear a blue helmet and Throné an orange one.

1:15 A. M.: Throné, first man to come up, was to begin his journey in minutes. State Police order everyone back from the escape hole and call for quiet.

Rescuers tell the men: "Now there are two suits. You're supposed to get into the coveralls and at the same time you help

each other. You open that buckle and when you get it back around, you fasten it the same way. Now there are two straps that fasten around your legs.

"Are you sure your legs are through the straps?" Elwood Tito, communications chief asks anxiously.

"We haven't put them on yet," is the reply.

1:16 A. M.: The men are told to grease their coveralls and the exposed portions of their bodies against friction. The pulling will be done by hand, not by a power winch.

1:35 A. M.: The men are still getting into their suits and instructions have been repeated until they are thoroughly familiar with the intricacies of the special harness.

1:36 A. M.: Throné reports he's in his harness and says he has helped Fellin into his.

1:40 A. M.: "I'm all set now," says Throné from his chamber 368 feet down. Rescuers remind him to keep his boots on so his feet won't be cut.

1:45 A. M.: "How's it coming," Throné is asked, "OK," he answers. "I'm putting my gloves on now. I'll be ready in a second."

He is asked to check his communications mike.

"Make sure both ropes are

fastened to the rings," Throné is told.

"Take a little up," he orders. "That's it. Now I've got the red strap around my elbows. He repeats the instructions given to him. "That's fine," the miner is told.

1:50 A. M.: "Pull up more," says Throné as he asks that slack be taken up on the two lines.

1:52 A. M.: "It's OK," he calls. "You're picking me up with the second rope. Now I'm swinging. I'm coming up. I'm coming up. All right boys, my shoulders are rubbing. Keep me coming. I'm still coming up."

1:53 A. M.: "We may have to stop for a minute," Throné is told as he dangles in space. There is a brief halt to straightening out the communications line.

1:54 A. M.: "Are we turning you around?" Throné asks.

1:55 A. M.: "All right, I'm coming up," he yells. I feel like a banana." Laughter is heard from below.

1:56 A. M.: "I don't see any moonlight," Throné says. "That don't matter," Fellin calls up from the chamber.

1:58 A. M.: It is decided that if Fellin becomes stuck, some

one will go down to help with lines.

2 A. M.: "Oh brother, this is like shooting the shoot at Coney Island. How far am I up?"

"Oh, you're way up," is the answer.

2:02 A. M.: Fellin is spinning around like a top.

2:06 A. M.: THRONÉ SURFACES FROM HIS TWO-WEEK IMPRISONMENT AND IS WHISKED VIA HELICOPTER TO THE HOSPITAL FOR A CHECK-UP.

2:10 A. M.: "Hello, Davey," Charnbury calls to Fellin. "Hello to you," comes the cheerful reply. "I just heard a lot of hollering."

"There are lots of people up anxious to see you, Davey,"

2:15 A. M.: "Do you remember how to hook up," Fellin is asked.

"Yeah, I'm doing it now," he answers, and coughs.

2:16 A. M.: "I feel like a greased pig," Fellin says. "Have you ever seen them catch one... as long as this stuff doesn't get in my hair."

2:15 A. M.: Fellin is told to be patient as the lines are straightened. When he is told the time, Fellin says, "I will be up there by 2:30."

2:20 A. M.: "Hey, Dave," Tito calls. "How about a song before you leave—like 'I'll be down to get you in a harness, Honey.' Fellin laughs.

2:21 A. M.: Tito goes through the harness check list with Fellin, who assures everyone that the suit and lines are on properly.

2:22 A. M.: "Davey, are you ready to go?"

"PULL," he answers and the ascent begins.

2:25 A. M.: "I'm coming up OK. Keep on." Fellin breaks into a chorus of "She'll be Coming Around the Mountain."

2:27 A. M.: "This sure is beautiful," says Fellin. "I must have lost a lot of weight coming up so easy."

2:28 A. M.: "This is a beautiful ride... real nice down here... just like the tunnel of love. What kind of a night is it out?"

"A beautiful night in Chicago and New York," Tito replies.

Fellin's line is fouled momentarily. Rescuers straighten it out in seconds. "You're damn near the top," Tito calls.

2:41 A. M.: FELLIN COMES OVER THE TOP AND HIS ORDEAL IS ENDED. FAMILY AND FRIENDS CROWD AROUND HIM, ALONG WITH SCORES OF WELL-WISHERS.

HIS REMARKS ARE DROWNED OUT IN A SHOUT OF VOICES.

2:55 A. M.: Fellin is flown by the second helicopter to Hazelton State Hospital where, like Throné, he received a thorough physical.

3:13 A. M.: The copper touches and two minutes later the plucky miner is being carried in on a stretcher.

3:23 A. M.: A nurse reports that Throné is sitting up in bed eating a hamburger with mustard and relish.

Beginning at dawn Monday, the chronology of rescue activities unfolded, with heightened tempo. The big job of reaming out the escape hole was well under way as dawn broke over the anthracite country. This is the minute by minute story:

MONDAY
6:20 A. M.: The drill had hit the 215-foot mark and was moving steadily downward. Workers told Fellin to get some sleep.

"Nothing doing," Fellin answered. "I'm playing poker



Faces of wives of trapped miners reflect their emotions on learning drill had reached underground chamber. They are (from left) Mrs. Davey Fellin, Mrs. Henry Throné and Mrs. Louis Bova.

'Happy ... So Happy,' Mrs. Fellin Sobs as Husband Is Rescued

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relatives and her parish priest rushed to hug her.

"For the last few minutes, I folded my hands," she added. "It's one week and six days and a half. I said he'd be up Sunday but I'm not going to holler at him because he was a day late."

Mrs. Throné, also wiping tears from her eyes, said, "We'll even feel better tomorrow when we can hold their hands and I'll be getting the best bartender back into my tavern." The Thronés own a Hazleton bar.

Mrs. Bova, whose husband is separated at the bottom of the 331-foot shaft from Throné and Fellin, held back the tears and bowed her head. Hope is fading here for Louis Bova.

MRS. BOVA COLLAPSES
Mrs. Bova, wandered away from the rescue site at about 7 P. M. Monday. She was finally traced to her nearby Pottsville home by Red Cross workers.

At 10 P. M., Mrs. Bova collapsed there and was taken to Lehigh Valley Hospital, in Shenandoah Heights, about two miles from her home. Friends reported that she had suffered a nervous breakdown.

"HOW CAN YOU FEEL?"
Fellin's brother, Joseph, 61, a retired miner, had trouble expressing joy. He was seated near Mrs. Fellin.

"How can you feel?" he asked. "It's wonderful. How do you find words to say how you feel?"

Fellin predicted his brother's first request when brought to the surface would probably be for a "stogie."

"No more doubt. Now I feel different all over," the elder Fellin brother said.

Mrs. Della Skurka, Fellin's sister, wept unashamedly as David shouted once, "Everything seems OK."

Standing behind Mrs. Fellin was the Rev. Michael Sverchek, pastor of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in nearby Shepleton and priest for the Fellin family.

Mrs. Bova, who came a bit later than the other two wives, just stared straight ahead. Her husband hasn't been heard from the surface since the cave-in. Aug. 13, Fellin said Bova just tapped to his coworkers underground on his 20th birthday.

Profiles Bravery, Wit--Silence



DAVID FELLIN, from his precarious station beside a downed microphone, became almost a master of ceremonies at the mine rescue site near Hazelton.

Although trapped more than 300 feet beneath the surface of the earth, the 58-year-old mining veteran established himself as a sharp quipster and an aggressively courageous man.

"We have enough food and supplies down here to open a shopping center," Fellin said gaily at one point, "but I don't think the location would be too good." The remark was typical.

Fellin has been a miner for 43 years. A slender, wiry man, he is described as a natural leader. He started digging coal at 14 cents-an-hour, and now is co-owner, with Eugene Gibbons, of the mine that has almost stole his life.

Fellin once had another long session in a mine, but that one was voluntary. He and 60 other miners staged a sit-in in 1939 against the Wolfe Collieries, Inc., at Oneida, protesting nonpayment of wages according to schedule. The miners were 'down in the mine there for a week before the company relented and sent pay envelopes down the shaft.

HENRY THRONÉ may not be the equal of David Fellin, when it comes to jokes but he unquestionably shares the virtue of selfless courage with his comrade in danger.

The muscular, 28-year-old former GI is not afraid of anything, colleagues and friends say. That would seem to be borne out by an incident last Saturday.

While those on the surface were wringing their hands over the possibility of a cave-in at the mine site, Throné, who also runs a bar in Hazelton, insisted on singing a duet with a friend at the surface. At the conclusion, the rescue crews applauded and cheered.

On Sunday, Throné confidently predicted, "We're gonna be like John Glenn and come shooting out of this hole." One of Throné's regrets was that he was forbidden to light the Italian cigars passed to him through the communications shaft.

Most of the time, while Fellin manned the microphone, Throné had chewed his cigars, consumed some of the other delicacies lowered into their chamber or slept. From time to time, he had talked with members of his family.

Bova has a great love for the outdoors. Some time ago Bova, who has been married five years and has an eight-month-old son, tried to enroll the boy in a Fish and Game Club. When the club rejected the application, Bova submitted his own resignation.

Bova is not the first member of his family to be trapped underground. In 1928, his brother Peter was caught in a subterranean tunnel by a landslide of rock and coal. Peter was rescued after seven days.

It was only by chance that Bova went down into the mine this time. Usually a night shift worker, he replaced a man who stayed away on the day shift because his wife was ill. The cave-in came an hour after Bova entered the mine.

down here with Hank and I'm not stopping until I get even." Rescuers told the man the drill was two-thirds down. "Let us know if you hear anything as we start to get closer—particularly if you see any dust," they told the trapped pair.

7:24 A. M.: The drill with its 17½-inch bit reached the 230-foot mark.

8:30 A. M.: "Hey Dave," a rescuer shouted, "are you busy down there?"

"Yeah," Fellin called back over the speaker system. "We're working pretty hard. We're putting up shoring."

"We'll keep in touch with you from time to time," the rescuer said. "We'll definitely call you before we start up the rig again."

Asked how much space they had, Fellin said "about six feet in height."

He and Throné had hacked out about a foot of floor to deepen the spot where they were to stand when the capsule was lowered into the cubicle.

10:30 A. M.: The drill was now down to the 253-foot mark.

11:25 A. M.: "I'll be a slow operation from now on," H. B. Charnbury, State Secretary of Mines, said. "But the hole is right on center."

He estimated it would be at least another three hours before the hole was completed.

Charnbury said it hadn't been decided which capsule (three were on hand) to use. The capsule would protect the men in their ascent. If a stone were accidentally dislodged from the top of the shaft, "it would be traveling at 100 miles an hour when it hit bottom," Charnbury said.

1 P. M.: Drilling stopped while the last 32-foot section of bit was being installed in the rig.

"While you fellows out there are considering what to do, can you drop me a container of coffee?" Fellin asked.

"I'll shoot you a turkey if it will make you feel better," replied Gordon Smith, deputy secretary of mines for the anthracite region.

1:40 P. M.: Drilling stopped while dust was blown out of the hole.

"We're going to keep the hole awfully clean from here on down," one rescuer told Fellin. "We're coming right at you."

2:13 P. M.: The rescue crews had only six more feet to go before reaching the trapped men.

2:40 P. M.: Drilling stopped momentarily. Fellin was asked how far along the plug was.

"About four feet," he answered.

3:18 P. M.: THE DRILL BREAKS THROUGH. The plug is through," Fellin reported. "A little corner and

we're free." This was the 300-foot mark.

3:25 P. M.: "Hold it," Fellin shouted. The drilling stopped. The whole area had grown quiet in anticipation.

3:38 P. M.: Fellin told the crews that only one rock remained in the way. The speaker system picked up a sound—like that of an axe against rock.

4:02 P. M.: Drilling stopped again.

4:03 P. M.: "Take it down slow," Fellin ordered. The drill barely began turning at 15 revolutions a minute. Fellin asked the drillers to stop again "so I can do some cribbing." He wanted to work on the roof of his chamber.

Throné continued to remain silent.

4:16 P. M.: The drill started up again and a thin plume of dust drifted away from the rig.

4:55 P. M.: Drilling again halted. Three of the men who had been sitting in the rig's cab jumped down impatiently and walked over to the life line for a check.

"It needs a little more," Fellin called up.

4:58 P. M.: The drill went back to its sluggish pace. A rescue worker placed his hand on it to show how slowly it was moving.

5:30 P. M.: Rescuers estimated that only seven inches are needed to complete the escape tunnel.

6:22 P. M.: The drill broke through the roof of the hole. The escape route is complete.

6:30 P. M.: Dismantling the rig begins.

11:05 P. M.: Removal of the drill rigging was completed. Lights were lowered into the escape shaft to see if the way was clear for the capsule.

How It Began

Silence, Then Dust

Special to The Inquirer
HAZLETON, Pa.,
Aug. 27 (Tuesday).

FOURTEEN days ago (Aug. 13) at 9:30 A. M. the nearby Shepleton mine cave-in story began.

George Walker, 58, early bolted engineer for the Fellin Coal Co., had just finished bringing up a load of coal from the mine in which co-owner David Fellin, Henry Throné and Louis Bova were working.

He attempted to lower the buggy back down the mine tunnel past the 300-foot level. It stopped at 200 feet.

"I thought at first that the buggy had jumped the track," Walker said. "I walked down the slope to the entrance of the shaft and hollered. Then I walked into the shaft about 100 feet."

Walker said he again called to the three men. "There was no answer. And then I saw the later than the other two wives, just stared straight ahead. Her husband hasn't been heard from the surface since the cave-in. Aug. 13, Fellin said Bova just tapped to his coworkers underground on his 20th birthday.