

Area mineworkers received Carnegie Medal for heroism

By Bob Wolensky
Guest Writer



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In the aftermath of the Knox Mine disaster of Jan. 22, 1959, Amadeo Pancotti, of Pittston, received the Carnegie Medal for Heroism for his 50-foot climb up the Eagle Air Shaft to the surface. His efforts resulted in the rescue of 32 other men who comprised the last group of survivors following the Susquehanna River's inundation of the Knox company's River Slope operation in Pittston. A total of 69 workers made it out, but 12 did not.

The mine had been illegally dug under the river in order to access the thick anthracite in the Pittston Vein. Several persons associated with the Knox Coal Co., the Pennsylvania Coal Co., and the United Mine Workers of America were indicted for crimes associated with the catastrophe, which ended deep mining in most of the Wyoming Valley. Four coal company owners and three union members were eventually convicted.

While Pancotti's courageous efforts have been widely recognized, dozens of other area mineworkers also received the Carnegie Medal over the years. Here is a partial list of those heroes:

John T. Brown, mine foreman, Pittston, helped save Joseph Lucas, James E. Dougher, and Anthony Gowrey, miners; and also saved Frank Kleisch, laborer, from suffo-

cation following a mine explosion, in Sebastopol, Jenkins Township, Jan. 10, 1911.

David A. Cadwalader, laborer, Luzerne, died attempting to save LeRoy D. Winters, laborer, from suffocation following a mine explosion, Wilkes-Barre, Oct. 17, 1917.

Frank J. DiAndriole, Avoca, helped rescue Peter A. Byczkowski from a mine cave-in, Wilkes-Barre, Dec. 21, 1964.

James M. Flanigan, Pittston, mine car tender, rescued William Derrig, laborer, and John W. Mul- lery, mine car tender, after a mine explosion, Inkerman, Jenkins Township, May 7, 1909.

William Paul Holena, Forty Fort, helped rescue Peter A. Byczkowski from a mine cave-in, Wilkes-Barre, Dec. 21, 1964.

Robert Hughes, miner, helped rescue Thomas A. Coleman, miner, and Louis J. Doran, laborer, from a mine cave-in, Avoca, Nov. 8, 1932.

Thomas Huntley, outside mine foreman, helped rescue John R. Eustice, timberman, from a mine cave-in, Inkerman, Aug. 22, 1907.

George R. Jopling, miner, helped rescue John R. Eustice, timberman, from a mine cave-in, Inkerman, Aug. 22, 1907.

John Kuchinsky, miner, helped rescue Frank Chas from a mine cave-in, Inkerman, March 30, 1943.

Martin F. Mangan, mine foot- man, helped save Joseph Lucas, James E. Dougher, and Anthony Gowrey, miners, from suffocation following an explosion, Sebastopol, Jan. 10, 1911.

Edward F. Norton, laborer,

helped save Sylvester W. McKeon from a mine cave-in, Pittston, May 8, 1917.

Joseph P. Riley, mine track- man, rescued Chester Stavinski (who was only 12 years old) from a mine cave-in, Sugar Notch, Aug. 4, 1924.

Clair S. Sigworth, mine inspec- tor, helped rescue Peter A. Bycz- kowski, miner, from a mine cave- in, Wilkes-Barre, Dec. 21, 1964.

Joseph P. Tigue, miner, helped rescue Thomas A. Coleman, min- er, and Louis J. Doran, laborer, from a mine cave-in, Avoca, Nov. 8, 1932.

Patrick F. Walsh, miner, helped rescue John R. Eustice, timber- man, from a mine cave-in, Inker- man, Aug. 22, 1907.

William Watkins, miner, res- cued Brinley R. Davis, mine car tender; Rees J. Williams, driver; and Joseph Winchent, 45, miner, following an underground explo- sion, Kingston, Sept. 3, 1904.

As these awards clearly show, coal mining was (and is) one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. But these Carnegie Medal recipients also remind us that bravery was often part of mine-working. As we recently commemorated the 58th anniver- sary of the infamous Knox Mine Disaster, let us pause to remem- ber both the dangers endured and the heroism displayed by so many of our mine-working ancestors, including Amadeo Pancotti.

BOB WOLENSKY is a professor in the Department of History at King's College.

Pennsylvania Anthracite Mining Carnegie Award Recipients

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- Carnegie Hero Fund Commission
- News or other documents
- USMRA Calendar description

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- [Carnegie Hero Fund Commission](#)
- [News or other documents](#)
- [USMRA Calendar description](#)

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- [USMRA Calendar description](#)

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