

# Death Toll In Sayreton Mine Blast Reaches 21; Hospitals Treat 23 More

## Safety Instructor Of U. S. Bureau And State Chief Inspector McCrossin Among Fatalities

With the death toll at 21, doctors at three Birmingham hospitals Monday fought to save the lives of 23 other persons who were injured in two terrific explosions Saturday night and early Sunday in a section of the No. 2 Sayreton mine of Republic Steel Corporation, three miles west of North Birmingham.

William Neal, a miner who was injured in the first explosion, died at Norwood Hospital at 6:50 a. m. Monday, raising the death toll to 21.

C. E. Saxon, principal safety instructor for the U. S. Bureau of Mines here, who was a member of the rescue crew which courageously made the 3,000-foot trip into the mine shortly after the first explosion at 10:20 p. m. Saturday, died at Jefferson Hospital at 1:20 a. m. Monday. He was the 20th man to die.

Precious blood plasma was being administered the injured at Norwood, Hillman and St. Vincent's Hospitals. Of the 21 men at Norwood, 20 were injured critically.

Sixteen men were killed and 19 were injured out of a total of 101 men at work in the ninth left sec-

### REPAIR WORK BEGUN

Looking toward early resumption of actual mining operations in their No. 2 Sayreton mine, Republic Steel Corporation officials Monday announced repair work has begun.

tion of the No. 2 Sayreton mine in the first explosion, cause of which has not yet been determined.

The second blast, which occurred at 12:40 a. m. Sunday, took the lives of five members of the rescue crews. Four other members of the rescue party were injured.

AMONG THE DEAD WERE E. J. McCrossin, director of the Division of Safety and Inspection, State Department of Industrial Relations; George Ferguson, Sayreton night superintendent, and William Goodwin, chief mine inspector here for Republic.

Staples Bailey, safety inspector for Woodward Iron Company, was taken to St. Vincent's Hospital. His condition was described as "fair" Monday. Deputy Sheriff Milton Ferguson is at Hillman Hospital, where attaches said his condition also was "fair." Both men were members of the rescue party.

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## School Bells Sounding Summons For 35,000 County System Pupils

### Classes Dismissed 40 Minutes Early During First Week Due To Heat

Students in schools in the Jefferson County system, 35,000 of them, answered the summons of school bells Monday morning, reporting for registration and assignment to classrooms, after which they were dismissed before noon.

A full-day schedule is expected to be in effect Tuesday, though all county schools will dismiss 40 minutes early during the first week because of extreme heat. A quick holiday, too, was in store for youngsters as schools will be dismissed Monday in observance of Labor Day.

Dr. John E. Bryan, county superintendent, stated that 10,000 children living at points distant from schools, will use school buses this year. He praised cooperation of the Office of Defense Transportation for its assistance in having the buses ready for operation Monday morning and urged parents and students to cooperate with drivers and school officials in their increased load quotas this year.

DR. BRYAN, BACK AT HIS DESK after an illness of several weeks, glanced out his office window Monday morning commenting on the "perfect day" for school opening and said that attendance reports that had thus far come in showed youngsters and parents were cooperating with school officials in getting the year off to a good start.

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## F.D.R. Back In Capital, Conclaves With High Officials Are Slated

### Soong, Marshall, Arnold And Hull Are On Rosier; Churchill Expected Soon

WASHINGTON —(P)— President Roosevelt returned to Washington Monday and, as a direct follow-up on the Quebec war conference, scheduled appointments with diplomatic, state and military officials.

The list included Dr. T. V. Soong, Chinese foreign minister; Secretary of State Hull; Gen. George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff, and Gen. H. H. Arnold, commanding Army Air Forces.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Britain is expected here within a week to pick up some of the loose threads of the Quebec meeting. There was reason to believe that this forthcoming meeting would center mostly on political aspects of the war and on a postwar program.

Hull went to Quebec principally to consider such problems in cross-the-table conversations with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden.

An official announcement at Quebec said that the war against Jaapn played an important part in the Anglo-American deliberations, and Soong went from Washington to sit in on the latter stages of these conferences. Presumably his engagement at the White House Monday was for a continuation of talks of strategy against Japan.

After seeing Mr. Roosevelt, Soong told reporters he had been "just rounding up my talks with him" which began in Quebec. Asked what the general nature of the discussion was, he replied: "You can guess it."

Marshall and Arnold also were at Quebec.

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## Vaudeville Performer Kills Wife During Act

MARIETTA, Ill. —(P)— Without

### Death Toll From Blast At Sayreton Now 21, With 23 In Hospitals

Bureau Safety Instructor, State Chief Inspector Are Among Fatalities

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Twenty-one men were killed and 23 others were injured. But the heart of the tragedy lay in the dull eyes, the tense faces of the women and children who gathered at the mouth of the mine waiting for word of their loved ones.

Tragedy was an awe story to them. They knew the dangers faced daily by the men who sit down into the bowels of the earth to dig the coal that fires the furnaces that make the sinews of war for America's fighting machine.

Families living along the road that leads to the mine followed the siren blast of ambulances racing to the scene of the tragedy. A number of women, fearfully seeking some word about their men who were in the mine at the time of the explosion, were halted at the crossroad a half-mile east of the No. 2 Sayreton mine. They were not to be stopped, though. They skirted the road and cut across unpatrolled fields far to one side.

Among these was Lucille Coleman, wife of Miner James Coleman. She hurried to the mine with her 15-year-old daughter. For hours the two stared helplessly at the black hole from which rescue workers shunted back and forth. Her husband finally emerged, unharmed.

ONE OF THE RESCUE WORKERS, Auld M. King, 31-year-old miner, told how he was hurled 30 feet up the passageway by the second explosion.  
With tears in his eyes, his hair singed, the Sayreton miner told how the rescue workers found six bodies streched along the track, "one behind the other, as if they had been running when they died."  
"One fellow farther down—I guess he weighed more than 300 pounds—was buffeted on his hands and knees. He must've died that way."

When the second explosion smashed through the mine, Curtis Vinzard, strapping 47-year-old crew foreman, was among the rescue workers in the mine.

"We were restoring the air lock doors when the second blast struck," he said. "It looked like a curtain of flame. I hit the bottom and began crawling. I didn't stop until I had crawled 500 feet to the ninth left level and felt the fresh air. I'm alive today because of luck, and because I managed to hit the ground in time."

Vinzard's face was dotted with blisters and black burns. His hands and neck bore deep burns.  
He said that although there was no fire visible at the scene of the explosion, "a smoldering ember left in the timbering from the first blast must have caused the second explosion."

E. I. Evans, district manager for Republic, issued a statement which said, in part:

"THE FIRST EXPLOSION seriously interrupted the ventilating system and damaged the stoppings, doors and regulators in the ninth left section area. The second explosion was more violent and extended the damage which already existed and started eight small fires."

"Immediately after this, new rescue crews from neighboring and other mines aided in the rescue work under direction of state inspectors and Bureau of Mines representatives. The fires were extinguished and the crews removed the injured and dead still remaining in the mine."

"Republic is flying a number of nurses in a special plane to Birmingham from Cleveland to aid in the care of the injured. Nurses from Gadsden also are aiding at Norwood Hospital."

Calls for help, for blankets, respirators, more ambulances, more stretchers, more volunteers to risk their lives—all were answered. All neighboring mines were "very generous," Republic officials stated.

Funeral services for Mr. McCrossin, chief state mine inspector who died on a rescue mission in the mine, were held Monday morning at St. Paul's Church, with Father T. J. Flynn officiating. Risdon's directed burial in Elmwood Cemetery.

MANY OF THE MINERS WHO WERE TRAPPED in the mine by the first explosion were led to safety through other outlets than the main entrance and for this reason first official reports released to the press was that some had been killed. This report was circulated for some time before the bodies of the first group dead were found in a certain pocket of the slope. It was first believed these men had escaped and several hours after the first explosion company officials were confident there would be no loss of life.

The bodies of 15 men, however, were found in one pocket of the slope and the report was corrected as soon as the bodies were discovered. Due to the fact the miners were led to safety through more than one outlet, it was almost impossible to make a detailed check on those out of the mine and those in the mine until all were accounted for hours after the explosion happened.

Splendid cooperation on the part of all concerned, company officials and employees of the Republic Steel Corporation, the State Highway Patrol, the Bureau of Mines, the Birmingham Police Department, and all the ambulance companies on hand, enabled the press to expedite the news at the earliest possible moment as soon as developments occurred.

The Birmingham News wishes to express its appreciation in every person and every organization that had any part in the disaster for their cooperation.

Courier Clip M. Evans Monday morning returned a verdict of accidental death in all the cases of the mine casualties.

SHERIFF HOLY McDOWELL'S DEPUTIES Monday received high praise from mine officials and miners for their efforts during the tragedy.

Eight deputies were the first officers on the scene, arriving immediately after the first explosion, and those same county officers



DISASTER VICTIM—Edward James McCrossin (above), 46, director, Division of Safety and Inspection, State Department of Industrial Relations, and widely known in the Alabama mining industry, succumbed early Sunday from burns suffered during the second explosion in the Republic Steel Corporation's Sayreton No. 2 mine. Mr. McCrossin was seeking the cause of the initial blast when fatally injured.

roped off roads and emergency areas to keep away spectators and patrolled those areas throughout the night.

One of those eight deputies—Millton Ferguson—volunteered when a call went out for rescue workers after the first explosion, and that same officer Monday was near death at Hillman Hospital with more than 50 per cent of his body seared by flames during the second blast.

Early Sunday morning 25 deputies submitted to blood transfusions when it appeared that the local plasma supply might be insufficient to care for the needs of the blast victims and in addition persuaded 16 of their friends likewise to donate blood.  
"Sheriff McDowell Monday declared briefly that he was "very proud of my boys."

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In a period of three months, the Hydrographic Office of the Navy printed and distributed 12,900,000 charts.



Our service than a one-man band. Therefore, they'd if you wouldn't a special calls exc of genuine emerge that you call dur working hours. T the best job they present condition rather take the o do a job right th up and "botch" it

I met a WAC week and a little pleasure of talki and a lady Marine the luck to meet. However, I'll say a marrying man I hard time decidin like to marry. A tops. It kind of that I had a floo of my own who cou them. These girl proud as all get-uniforms and enth the part they are war. Their super report that they job. I'd like to about the opportu but the Army, Nav Coast Guard recru can do better thn

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