

Find Shattered Bodies of 11 Men Trapped in Mine Blast

No Survivors as Explosion Rips Through Shaft of Blue Blaze Mine 2 Near Herrin

By SAMUEL O. HANCOCK
United Press International
HERRIN, Ill. (UPI)—Rescuers today found the bodies of 11 men trapped in an explosion that left no survivors but efforts to remove them were delayed because deadly fumes still lingered in the shaft.

Fresh rescue teams were called from Du Quoin and Eldorado when officials decided hours of work might be required before the bodies could be brought out.

The explosion apparently was caused by methane gas. Carbon monoxide was left in the mine, and this had to be removed before the rescuers could bring out the bodies.

Relatives of the victims were informed of the outcome of the tragedy by William Orlandi, Illinois director of mines and minerals, in a terse announcement. Wives of two of the dead broke into sobs. The crowd of friends and relatives gradually dispersed into the 4 below cold.

Cause Not Known

Orlandi declined to discuss possible causes of the blast. Mine owner Claude Gentry who was attending his own 45th birthday party when news of the blast came Wednesday night, said he had "no idea" as to the cause.

Miss Ismet Sanli To Address Dinner Club Saturday

Miss Ismet Sanli, a former member of the Turkish delegation to the United Nations, will be the guest speaker at the meeting of the Southern Illinois Dinner Club Saturday at 6:30 p. m. at the Lantern House in Harrisburg.

Because of her unrivaled family connections, Miss Sanli is an authority on the political developments in the Middle East where she knows just about everybody who is anybody in that turbulent and unsettled section of the world.

She now lives in the United States but goes to Turkey regularly and returned only recently from a trip to the Middle and Near East Countries.

Dinner club members are reminded by Herbert Reynolds of El-

But the state mine inspector, Ray McCluskey, theorized the workmen at the coal face may have cut into a trapped pocket of Methane.

The gas could have been touched off by a spark from a machine or an electric short.

The body of the cage operator was found a few feet from the shaft. That of the motorman lay about 40 feet away. Bodies of the remaining nine were strewn about the coal face, some 750 feet to the east of the shaft.

Gentry said the rescue teams told him the blast tumbled coal cars and timbers askew. Damage to the mine was said to be extensive.

Never Had Chance

The men of the second shift apparently never had a chance when the mighty blast, which could be heard and felt two miles away, rumbled through the tunnel.

There was no indication that any of the men had survived the force of the blast, only to succumb later to fumes or burns.

The explosion site was 2½ miles northwest of Herrin and a mile from the smaller community of Carterville. Herrin is 90 miles southeast of St. Louis.

The Blue Blaze mine had been called a blessing when it opened in the economically depressed Illinois region called "Little Egypt" six months ago. But shortly after 6 p.m., CST, Wednesday, a choking ball of hot, black smoke welled from the mine shaft.

Pieces of shredded timber and mangled steel fell from the smoke. The window of an auto 30 yards from the pithead was shattered.

Death underground was no stranger to the people who waited above.

At West Frankfort, Ill., scarcely 20 miles away from the Blue Blaze mine, 119 men died when the New Orient Coal Mine blew up on Dec. 22, 1951. At nearby Centralia, Ill., 111 miners died in another coal mine explosion.

One of the first teams to venture into the blasted Blue Blaze shaft reported shortly after mid-

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Zero Temperatures Extend to Louisiana

Death Toll from Cold Wave Hits 123

By United Press International
Cold stretched from the Arctic Circle to old Mexico today. It iced beaches along the Gulf Coast and brought below freezing temperatures to 44 states.

The cold wave, one of the most severe in 60 years, dropped thermometers below zero as far south as Louisiana.

Wind gusts up to 50 miles an hour began carrying the cold toward Southern California, hit by a heat wave earlier this week. The temperature was scheduled to drop below freezing tonight in California's interior valleys. The cold was scheduled to reach Florida's everglades farming district, near Miami, Friday.

The death toll from the week-long weather onslaught reached at least 123. Illinois had 24 deaths. Wisconsin listed 17; Texas 12, Michigan 11, Colorado 10, Iowa 6, Missouri and Arkansas 4 each; California, Oklahoma, Montana, New Hampshire and Massachusetts 3 each; South Carolina, Indiana, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, New York, Ohio and Kansas 2 each; and New Mexico, Mississippi, Tennessee and Louisiana 1 each.

Natural Gas Shortages

Nebraska, New Mexico, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Ohio and Louisiana had serious natural gas shortages, forcing emergency curtailment of supplies to schools and industrial users.

The Southland's spring vegetable crop was all but ruined. Farmers feared for citrus groves in Texas' Rio Grande Valley, where the temperature failed to

The Weather

Southern Illinois: Fair and not so cold tonight. Partly cloudy and warmer Friday. Little or no fall in temperatures tonight. High Friday 30-35.

LOCAL TEMPERATURE (At Register Building)			
Wednesday		Thursday	
3 p. m.	8	3 a. m.	5
6 p. m.	7	6 a. m.	4
9 p. m.	6	9 a. m.	3
12 mid.	5	12 noon	13

climb above freezing for more than 24 hours.

Schools remained closed in 11 states. Alabama battled 14-foot snow drifts. A rash of fires claimed lives from the Midwest to the Cotton Belt. Highway travel was all but paralyzed in the South.

The weather was moderating slightly in the Midwest, but temperature records continued to topple in the southern half of the nation.

The only states reporting above freezing temperatures were portions of California, Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Florida and all of Hawaii.

Freeze To Death

Men were found frozen to death in Mobile, Ala., and Albuquerque, N.M.

At Risco, Mo., a leak in a bottled gas storage tank forced 500

persons to flee their homes. An ice jam on Montana's Madison River drove three ranch families from their homes and flooded a four-mile stretch of road.

Low temperature records were set Wednesday in Ohio, Arkansas, the Florida Panhandle, Indiana, Texas, Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, and Alabama. Mobile, Ala., reported 11 degrees early today.

Temperature Here Drops to Four Below

The official temperature dropped early today to four below zero but it was three degrees warmer than the low of the previous day.

Weather Observer Clyde Pittman, who said the barometer reached the unusual high of 30.80 yesterday, was falling steadily and was 30.70 this morning.

Record Hop By SAC Jet

TORREJON, Spain (UPI) — A giant, eight-jet Strategic Air Command bomber landed here at 2:10 p.m. (7:10 a.m. CST) today after a 12,519-mile hop from Okinawa in the western Pacific. It smashed 11 distance and speed records for non-stop, non-refueled flights.

The gleaming B52H bomber, piloted by Air Force Maj. Robert Carson, 45, Flint, Mich., the alternate aircraft commander, hit the runway of the U. S. Air Force Base here exactly 22 hours and 10 minutes after take-off from the Kadena Air Force Base on Okinawa.

SAC Commander-in-Chief Gen. Thomas S. Power, in a message to the eight-man crew of the "Operation Persian Rug" bomber, hailed the flight as "historic."

He underlined its cold war importance by saying the flight "proved that SAC aircraft have the capability of reaching target destinations in any area of the globe."

today was the previous world record for a non-stop, non-refueled flight by a jet aircraft, set in 1958 by an Air Force KC135 jet tanker which flew 10,299 miles.

Today's plane, tagged a "Combat Operational B52H Jet Strato-Fortress or Missile Platform Bomber" by the Air Force, made the trip from Okinawa by way of Tokyo, Seattle, Wash., Fort Worth, Tex., Washington, D.C., and the Lajes Air Force Base in the Azores.

The plane hit its top speed on the run from Washington, DC., to the Azores, averaging 658 miles an hour.

Maj. Clyde P. Evelyn, 39, Petersburg, Va., the aircraft commander, called it a "real fine flight."

"It went just as we had planned—with some 200 pounds of fuel in reserve," he said.

An Air Force spokesman here said the plane could easily have flown on "to Africa or England." (At Frankfurt, Germany, the

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night it had come upon a body in the smoke-shrouded debris.

Carry Oxygen T

As the search continued, a 25-ton crane lowered the rescue workers two at a time, into the pit. The men descended in a yard-wide "bucket," carrying with them oxygen tanks as protection against the carbon monoxide fumes eddying below.

The initial search group consisted of five members of the Benton mine rescue team, plus a state mine inspector who knew the twists and turnings of the new Blue Blaze mine.

Almost blinded by smoke and gas, they passed the first body, ventured 300 feet further, and then made a wrong turn. Two of the team members had to return to the surface to replenish their oxygen supply.

The temperature above was 4 degrees below zero. Bonfires and salamanders glittered in the icy darkness, their light flickering across the set faces of those who watched behind a rope barrier 200 feet from the mine tippie.

Women Wait for Word

There were only two women in the crowd of 100. Other wives and mothers were stopped by company police at the highway entrance to the mine. They waited through the night for word of their men.

The only men below ground at the time of the explosion were miners toiling 168 feet from the surface. They were far from any escape route. Fellow miners said most of them had traveled 500 feet east and then 250 feet north from the main shaft.

The rescue operation was painfully slow. For hours, the wreckage of an elevator blocked entrance into the main shaft. When it was finally removed, two men were sent down in a small elevator called a "bucket." But the "bucket" was so little that it dangled in the shaft and the men could not get into the mine tunnel.

A second team was sent down, with the same results. But it was a member of this team who reported seeing the body.

Down in Relays

Mine company officials decided on a plan for gaining entrance into the tunnel. The men were ordered to go down in relays to the bottom of the shaft, 11 feet below the entrance of the tunnel. They were equipped with a ladder so they could climb back up into the tunnel opening.

Then, so the orders went, they were to form a life line as they ventured into the debris - choked hole.

Meanwhile, the arctic air was pumped into the shaft in hopes that it could save the life of some survivor buried below.

One of the few wives waiting at the tippie was Mrs. Bill Gartner. Her husband was one of the men underground. Mrs. Gartner said little and friends explained "She's cried herself out."

Mrs. Gartner's son, Gary, a Herminopolis policeman, was by his mother's side. He had gotten word of something wrong at the mine through a neighbor.

'Face Was All Black'

"When I got there at the mine everything was quiet," he said. "Two men were throwing wood into a pile. At first I thought somebody had been kidding me about the explosion. Then I saw Everett Yewell. His face was all black. I knew then there had been an explosion."

Yewell had been in the mine tupples when the blast came and the smoke was so thick it took him five minutes to grope his way outdoors. But his thoughts were not of his escape. They were of his brother, Ira, still below ground.

Ira Yewell was from Cartersville and Bill Gartner was from Hermin. The names of the rest of the

Virgil Tanner, Carterville; Howard Himmel; Ira Williams, Carterville; Willie Guiley, West Frankfort; Ralph Branden, Herrin; Melvin Ramsey, Herrin; Roy Woodis, Herrin; John Bakus, Hurst, Ill.; and Alpha Horsley, Carbondale.

People in the towns surrounding the Blue Blaze mine did what they could. For instance, a morgue was being set up in the American Legion home at Carterville.

One of the watchers at the time was James Williams, son of Ira. Like many relatives, he was refused entrance to the mine head. So he took a mile - long round - about route through the woods.

"Dad's really a farmer at heart," Williams said. "He was only going to work at the mine until spring and then go back to the farm."

Lt. Gov. Samuel Shapiro was scheduled to join Williams and the others at the mine.

The Blue Blaze No. 2 is still a small mine. Only 25 men were employed there. The second shift was busy driving entry-ways for ventilation purposes when the blast occurred.