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GI Home News Edition

The Messenger

Madisonville, Ky.
42431
Tuesday, August 27, 1968

News For Our Servicemen Everywhere

Serving Hopkins County Daily Since 1917

GI News NOTES

LANCE CPL. JAMES W. BARBER, Madisonville Route 4, is recuperating in the U.S. Naval Hospital in Memphis from serious wounds received in the Vietnam war. He was wounded June 23 while fighting with the 1st Bn. of the 7th Marines at Da Nang, but his condition is now said to be satisfactory. He is the son of Simpson Barber, Earlington, and Mrs. Mervene Barber, Madisonville Route 4.

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DRAYTON H. HATCHER, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Hatcher, 904 Pride Ave., was promoted to Army master sergeant June 27 at Ft. Campbell, where he is serving with the 6th Infantry Division. A communications chief in the Headquarters Company of the division's 3rd Brigade, Sgt. Hatcher entered the Army in September, 1954, and was stationed in Vietnam prior to his arrival at Ft. Campbell. He has received two awards of the Bronze Star Medal and the Army commendation medal. He attended Madisonville High School. His wife, Linda, lives at 16 Bond St., Clarksville, Tenn.

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ARLIE K. MEREDITH, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Meridith, Dawson Springs Route 2, re-enlisted for six years in the Regular Army June 14 while serving with the 21st Aviation Battalion at Ft. Riley, Kan. Meridith, a technical inspector at the battalion's Headquarters Company, entered the Army in June, 1954, completed basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., and was last stationed in Vietnam.

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KENNETH K. GILL, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth M. Gill of 206 E. Farrer, Earlington, and husband of the former Miss Dianne F. Havprich of New York, is serving aboard the nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser USS Long Beach in the Gulf of Tonkin.

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PVT. CLARENCE DAVIS JR., 433 E. Noel Ave., was assigned July 9 as an equipment storage specialist in the 1st Infantry Division near Di An, Vietnam. His mother Mrs. Lucille Davis, lives at 306 Carver Court, Madisonville.

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GARY C. GENTRY, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jasper C. Gentry, 404 Hayes St., Dawson Springs, has arrived for duty at Loring Air Force Base, Maine. Sgt. Gentry, a security police supervisor, is assigned to a unit of the Strategic Air Command. He previously served at McCoy AFB, Fla. His wife, Carolyn, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C.P. Gregory, 655 Lincoln Ave., Madisonville.

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LANCE CPL. EDWARD R. NICHOLS, Madisonville Route 2, is serving with the Third Tank Battalion in Vietnam. As a member of the battalion he helps support units of the division with fire support. In some cases, he helps cut roads through the dense Vietnamese jungle to provide support to the infantry units.

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SGT. WILLIAM A. WELCH, son of Mrs. Ida B. Welch, 226 Day St., Earlington, has arrived for duty at Johnston Island Air Force Base. A communications equipment repairman, he is assigned to a unit of the Air Force Communications Service. Sgt. Welch is a 1965 graduate of Earlington High School.

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CAPT. WILLIAM A. BRINKLEY, 25, son of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Brinkley, 651 Echo Lane, Madisonville, assumed command of Troop C, 1st Squadron, of the 4th Infantry Division's 10th Cavalry near Pleiku, Vietnam, July 13. His wife, Priscilla, lives at the Wildwood Terrace Apts., Florence, Ala.

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KENNETH CLAYTON, 21, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Ruby Clayton, 210 Murray St., was recently home on leave from a 6-month tour with the Air Force in Vietnam. A 1966 graduate of Madisonville High School, he entered service in October of that year. He took basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, and underwent further training at Myrtle Beach AFB as a jet plane fuel specialist. Airman Clayton is currently on a 40-day leave, residing at the home of his wife's parents, Rev. and Mrs. Malin Parkest, 619 Sharp Ave. He will rejoin the 355 Tactical Fighter Squadron for another six months in Vietnam Sept. 7. His wife, Mrs. Patsy M. Clayton, will remain with her parents until he returns from the tour.

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LEON TOWNSELL, of Mortons Gap, son of Mr. and Mrs. Opal Townsell, is scheduled to ship out Aug. 15 for a tour of duty with the Navy in Korea. A 1962 graduate of South Hopkins High School, he is also a graduate of the Navy's School of Preventive Medicine. His Korean tour will involve duties in this field in supervisory capacity. Mrs. Townsell, a native of Okinawa, will accompany her husband to Korea.

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PVT. CARY WAYNE PHILLIPS, son of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne M. Phillips, Nebo Route 1, was home on leave recently. A 1966 graduate of West Hopkins High School, he took basic training at Ft. Knox and further training at Ft. Leonard Wood. After a 17-day leave, he was scheduled to report for duty at Ft. Dix, N.J.

Nine Killed In River Queen Explosion; Officials Blame Illegal Transportation Of Explosives

AUG. 10

By LAURA McGREW
Messenger Staff Writer

Practices in direct violation of federal mining codes and Kentucky mining laws caused the explosion which killed nine men Wednesday at Peabody Coal Company's River Queen mine near Greenville, according to a board of inquiry held here Friday.

Following a five-hour inspection of the disaster-stricken mine in Muhlenberg County by a 16-man team of inspectors and an open meeting at which 11 River Queen underground miners testified, state, federal union and Peabody officials agreed that permissible explosives being transported on a drilling machine in the number five entry of Main North of River Queen mine were detonated by flying coal from a freshly shot face (the working area of the coal).

"We feel the explosives were on the drilling machine parked 40 to 50 feet back from and in direct line with the face," said J. H. Mosgrove, director of the Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals, speaking for all members of the inspection team.

"These explosives should not have been there and it was in direct violation of federal mine codes and Kentucky mining laws," he went on. "All evidence indicated the permissible explosives were on the machine and were detonated by the impact of flying coal upon the explosives during blasting," he said.

William Russell, one of the 10 miners to testify, said he has been a drill operator at the River Queen mine for the last 13 months but has worked in underground mines 23 years. "I have transported explosives on the drill—sometimes two or three times a day, sometimes more. I have been told not to haul explosives on the drill by the mine foreman," he said.

Russell said he could only answer for himself and was not aware if this was common practice. He said he was not aware of the safety code. "No inspector, state or federal, ever saw any 'powder' on my drill — I got rid of it if an inspector was on the property," he answered when asked if an inspector had ever seen explosives being transported by him.

Russell said he had seen the drill too close to the face when shooting. "I just didn't think about it being that dangerous," he said.

Cecil Ledford, superintendent at River Queen mine, explained that the foremen instruct new men on how to handle explosives. "There are no written rules on the proper procedure — at least I have never seen any," he said. Ledford said he has been employed by Peabody since 1944. He holds a first class mine certificate.

The mine superintendent said he has seen the permissible explosives being transported on mobile electrical machines, mostly drills, and each time has had it removed, although he imposed no penalty for the offense.

"I was quite concerned and talked to the foremen and the men on the units about this being a dangerous practice — and they all agreed, it was," he said. "We do discuss safety with the men," he added.

George Siria, a section foreman at River Queen for the last 11 months but with 17 years experience in underground mining, told the board of inquiry he had seen explosives being transported on electrically operated equipment. "I didn't think it was really unsafe until now. I don't know that happened for sure this time," he said.

Siria, who said he holds a first class mine foreman certificate, said he is familiar with the coal mine safety code and knows it prohibits the hauling of explosives on mobile equipment. Siria, who was 3,400 feet from the blast in the unit closest to the blast area, said he had on occasion transported explosives on machines "to make it easier on the shot foreman."

Wendell Griffith, assistant to superintendent Ledford, explained the correct procedure for transporting explosives to the face.

"The explosives are kept in a wooden storage magazine a safe distance from the working "face," he said. The powder is carried, by the shot foreman, in a powder bag, on his back, to the face. The powder is carried in a powder bag and detonating caps in a separate "cap" bag."

Harmon Stubblefield, a loader operator and chairman of the River Queen safety committee for the last 30 days, said a loader operator seldom catches up with the shooting crew but he has seen explosives hauled on a drill, "Five or six times since April, 1967."

Stubblefield, who accompanied the team of inspectors into the mine Friday, said he saw the drill, the one being used by the ill-fated crew, "I saw the drill in No. 5 entry, it was extensively damaged and was about 45 feet from the face. It isn't customary to leave a drill this close to the face," he said.

It had been explained earlier that the drill is customarily parked in a cross-cut possibly two cuts back when the powder is detonated.

Harold W. Pointer, a shot firer, said he had been instructed to keep the caps and powder separate and has been told by the foreman not to carry explosives on the drill. "But it slows down production if you don't carry them on the drill," he said. "If an inspector is on a section, explosives wouldn't be on the drill," he pointed out. "Everyone keeps a watch, all of us including the section foreman, for an inspector."

Those testifying included:

Cecil Ledford, George Siria, Wendell Griffith, Harman Stubblefield, Lemus Moore, John Hignett, Hubert Boyken, James H. Jackson, William Russell and Harold W. Pointer.

Present for and or directing the meeting were Merritt Deitz, an administrative assistant to Gov. Louie B. Nunn; A.H. Mandt, commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals; J. H. Mosgrove, director of the Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals; Fred Bullard, president of Kentucky Coal Association; H. A. Schreecongost, director U. S. Bureau of Mines, Vincennes, Ind., district; Lewis Evans, international safety director UMWA; Rex Lauck, UMWA international director of public relations; Louis Austin, president District 23 UMWA; Frank Memmott, associate director health and safety, U.S. Bureau of Mines; Foster Siler, general superintendent of underground mines for Peabody Coal Company, Fred Rice, assistant to the vice president of Peabody Coal Company, and E.E. Queen, safety director for Peabody Coal Company.

Most of the questioning of the witnesses was conducted by Evans, Mosgrove and Memmott.

Following the hearing Louis Austin asked the assembledge of about 80 persons, "Are we going to continue to sacrifice the lives of coal miners, simply because we are apathetic toward the law?"

"Nine men are in the morgue right now because the law wasn't carried out—that's what it boils down to," he said.

Safety is not a one-way street, the president of District 23 UMWA reminded. It takes cooperation from both sides or the law simply is not worth anything. Austin said 95 percent of the accidents in mining can be eliminated if both the mining companies and the workers will only carry out the law.

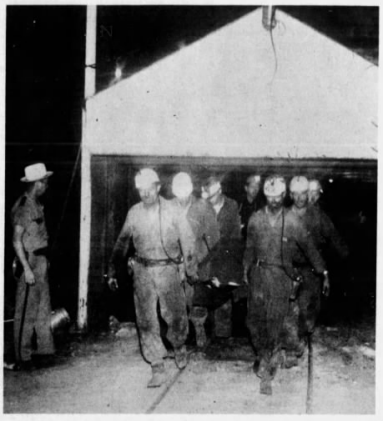
"The general public wants to know why you have to kill people in order to get coal out," he said.

"I hope this is the last time in western Kentucky where lives are sacrificed because laws were violated," Austin added.

E.E. Queen told the meeting his company had adopted the federal and state laws "as our book of rules". He pointed out that he has sent out a great number of memorandums in the interest of safety.

"We all feel very badly about this disaster," he said, and thanked everyone for their help during and following the disaster.

OFFICIALS AT MEET HERE FRIDAY



Messenger Photo

FIRST OF NINE BODIES BROUGHT OUT OF RIVER QUEEN MINE

Weather Cooperates This Time

10,000 Attend Closing Of 'Biggest Fair Ever'

AUG. 8

An estimated 10,000 people attended Hopkins County Fair Saturday, final day of the 20th annual event.

"This was absolutely the biggest and best fair we've ever had," A. H. Wiley, president of the fair board and who has been on the fair's board of directors for 18 years, commented late Saturday night as the fair was being dismantled.

Fair Manager Bill Brinkley, speaking for the fair board and assistant manager Richard Spence said, "I greatly appreciate the support of the people as this year we feel we continued to make Hopkins County Fair 'bigger and better'."

Brinkley attributed this year's success to perfect "fair" weather, the help and support of the people working with and for the fair board and "the dedicated efforts of many, too numerous to mention".

A great crowd was on hand in the closing minutes of the event to see Miss Hopkins County Fair 1968, Alice Duvall, draw the winning ticket from the familiar wooden and screen wire drum for a $1,000 cash prize. You had to be present to win.

The first ticket drawn from the drum, ticket No. 03021, was being held by 13-year-old Charlee Rickard, son of Mrs. Mary Rickard, 241 S. Kentucky Ave.

The nearly speechless youngster came quickly up the steps to the raised platform to compare his ticked stub number with that on the winning ticket. As luck would have it, 13 proved to be his lucky number. Charlee had 13 tickets in the drum.

The Saturday night Talent Show and the $25 first prize were won by a vocal trio, the "Hanson Hunters," from Hanson. A piano trio, Brenda Conner, Kathy Welborn and Mary Johnston, were second for the $15 in prize money and Vicki Conner, a piano soloist.

Also featured on Saturday night's fair program was the English Horse Show in the Arena.

Winners were:

Class 1 — Two-Year-Old Walking Horse, 1-Go Boy Shaker, ridden by Mann Ring for Billy Miller, Clarksville, Tenn, 2-Bombs Boomering, ridden by Luther Hankins for Frank Corum, Madisonville. 3-Billy's Lady Luck, ridden by Charles Massey, Murray. 4- Prince Ebony, ridden by Harold Hayes.

Class 2 — Pleasure Harness Pony, 1-Silver King, driven by Julie Ramage, Dawson Springs. 2-Sonny Boy, driven by Freddie Byrd, Sturgis. 3-Rocket's Glare, driven by Lynn Wilson, Manitou. 4-Prince, driven by Wade Wilson, Manitou. 5-Friesc Gypsy Lee, driven by Sheila Byrd, Sturgis.

Police, Firemen File Welfare Applications

AUG. 1

By LAURA McGREW
Messenger Staff Writer

A number of Madisonville police and firemen filed welfare commodity applications today in their protest for higher pay.

A fire department spokesman said there are no plans for a strike however.

"Even if state and federal laws allowed it," he commented, "we don't want to strike. We don't even plan to use the reporting-in-sick routine that has been used in other areas, for we feel a responsibility to the people of Madisonville. All we're doing now is appealing to the citizens of Madisonville for their help and support in our efforts to obtain a living wage."

About 30 police and firemen appeared at Monday night's city council meeting to request a blanket pay raise for both departments, but Mayor David Parish said the council could not approve the hike.

Fire Chief Wallace Curneal said today, "We feel the best town on earth deserves the best fire department, and it is getting more difficult to provide that lately. We're losing experienced men to better paying jobs.

"It takes at least two years of continuous training to make a class-A fireman," he added.

Chief Richard Bogard, instructor of fire service training for the Kentucky Department of Education, who is conducting a fireman training school here, commented today, "These men are tops. They go in where the fire is. It's one of the best departments in the state to work with."

Madisonville firemen received 912 hours of training in 1967, it was learned, about 70 percent of actual training each month.

Each man is on duty 336 hours a month, working in 24 hour shifts. He works 72 hours two weeks a of a month, and 96 hours the other two weeks.

Each policeman, meanwhile, works a 48-hour week, or 192 hours a month. This does not include extra shifts, for which they get extra pay. Firemen do not work extra shifts.

The fire department is five regular men short.

First In The State

Mosquito Control District Becomes A Reality Here

AUG. 10

Hopkins County is Kentucky's first mosquito control district today, so created Friday afternoon by action of Fiscal Court.

Four magistrates voted for establishment of the district, one abstained, and two were counted absent.

Seventh District Magistrate Ruby Davis, officially listed "absent," was present for all the session except voting on the mosquito issue, when he excused himself from the courtroom.

Actually absent from the court session was Sixth District Magistrate A. B. Chester.

Voting for creation of the mosquito control district were Dorman Franklin, first district, Dudley Gill, second district, Morton Dickerson, third district, and Jimmy Ray, fourth district.

Fifth District Magistrate C. B. Martin abstained.

Fiscal Court took the action after being petitioned by an estimated 2,500 citizens.

State law provides that the fiscal court, if petitioned by 25 percent of the number voting in the last general election, can establish a mosquito control district and levy a tax not exceeding 10 cents on each $100 assessed valuation of property to finance it.

Judge Hubert Reid said that not all the signatures have been checked against voter registration books, but enough have that the required number — 2,071 — has been verified.

He noted that the signatures represent 60 percent of the county's assessed property owners, who will of course be paying the 10 percent tax.

The new charge goes on this year's tax bills, he said.

Judge Reid said he hopes a five-member board of supervisors for the new district will be named by Fiscal Court within a month.

He also expressed his sense of achievement over the step. "I've been fighting mosquitoes ever since I've been in office," he said. "If it (the control district) doesn't work, I'd be trying to get rid of it just as much as I was trying to organize it. But it will work."

State Rep. William M. Cox, who has waged the mosquito war along with Judge Reid, said the move is an "indication the people of Hopkins County are ready to do something about this problem."

Cox said he is going to New Orleans today to confer with Roy Rice, director of the state division of pest control, to see how the Jefferson Parish Mosquito Control District there is set up. That district is directed by Glenn Stokes, the entomologist who conducted a survey of Hopkins County's problem last fall.

The state representative said he hopes to have a commitment within 60 days from an entomologist to serve as director of the Hopkins County district. It will probably be 90 days before one is actually secured, he added, however.

The yet un-appointed board of directors is to appoint a director for the district.

State Sen. Richard L. Frymire, now in service, who also has worked toward establishment of the new control district, said it is "the only hope we've got to rid the county of mosquitoes."

The required number of signatures on the petition was gained well short of the 90-day period allowed by law. The drive began June 20.

The campaign for a mosquito control district here actually had its start well before that, however, when then-Gov. Edward T. Breathitt met with several experts in Madisonville May 16, 1967, at a Western Kentucky mosquito control conference.

The experts agreed that a mosquito control district would be the best long-term solution. The first step toward formation of one was a survey of the problem here last fall by Stokes, the Louisiana mosquito expert.

Stokes outlined his report here May 24, and machinery began moving for circulation of petitions.

Despite the drive's early success, some opposition was voiced all the way into Friday's court session.

Magistrate Davis, for instance, who excused himself from voting on the measure, later claimed, "In the most mosquito-infested areas of the county, they didn't get any signatures."

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