Newspapers.com by Ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/725281810/

Six Families Face Sad Christmas As Work of Mine Rescue Stops

Sad Mothers With Light Gone Out of Their Lives Face Future With Big Families.

* * *

Black Damp Forces Wilkeson Mine Rescuers to Give Up Heroic Fight They Have Been Making.

BY FRANCES STONE.

WILKESON, Dec. 22.—Accepting the inevitable with the same stolidity with which they meet the everyday occurrences of their humdrum existence, something like 200 workers and their company leaders have knocked off rescue work at the mine here until it will be safe for them again to undertake to reach the six men entombed somewhere more than three miles in the depths of darkness under a mountain of coal and clay.

The deadly black damp has drifted down into the main gangway where the rescuers were working; the counter above the gangway has filled again with water and clay and loose gravel, and life has become too perilous for the men who must work under the counter to make further attempts for the present more than a challenge to fate that government and mine officials say their men must not issue.

Cannot Face Danger.

Thinking of the little family groups at home, the men themselves are not willing to continue the work until the conditions have settled and with reasonable safety they may again take up the task of seeking the entombed men.

Christmas will dawn on a little mining town curled up against the great hills, nestled about the black mouth of the coal mines, going about its daily tasks as it did a fortnight ago, but heavy of heart and crushed in spirit.

The accident which robbed six homes of their heads, shattering the hearth gods of that many women and 25 children, has made this Christmas the saddest in the history of the little town.

Light Out of Hearts.

For the light that went out of the hearts in the homes of William Tomco, "Hill" Heino, Mike Semak, Pete Marchetti, William Scroupski and Joe Rusnak has left the shadow of its absence in every other home in Wilkeson.

This is the first accident of a serious nature since the mines were opened by George Driver in 1878. The mine has always been regarded as a particularly safe one, and the unexpectedness has added to the tragedy for workers and mine officials alike. So long as the search could be prosecuted with vigor, some faint semblance of hope lived in the breaking hearts of the women; but the black damp that temporarily closed the search for the entombed men shut the doors of hope.

Bright Windows Passed By.

Bright windows, carefully dressed by shop keepers last week to tempt the Christmas buyers, are passed unheeded, and the shop keepers haven't the heart to care very much.

Most of the miners who were caught had worked for years at Wilkeson, and the deep sense of community ties that exists in Wilkeson even more than in other small town in the county has drawn mine officials, workingmen and the laymen in the town together in a common sympathy and understanding.

At the home of William Tomco, where seven children under 12 years play so nobly about, hardly heeded by the stooped, sobbing little mother, a pile of glittering baubles and scintillating tinsel on the center table, near the wooden cradle of little Jennie, spoke of childish hopes for Christmas not yet abandoned by little hearts unable to understand the depth of tragedy.

Staunchly for America.

Tomco was a belligerently American Born and raised near the Carpathian mountains in Hungary, he as well as Rusnak and Semak were of the Slovak peoples who hate Austria and Hungary and have been heart and soul with America and her allies since the beginning of the war.

"My husband he say stick by his country," Mrs. Tomco said, snuffing back the gathering tears. "He say Hungarians rob our peoples and take the lands they had this God knows how many years. Dey jealous because we're peaceful and work hard. We come to dis country and at Franklin I marry my husband 10 years ago. Eight year ago we came to Wilkeson. My man good worker—

Try to Comfort Her.

"For his work he lost his life," she sobbed, while Mary and Johnnie and Mike and Helen and Eddie and Annie and Jennie, who had come fast to the Tomcos, gathered about her and tried to comfort her.

Across from the Tomco house the little Greek Catholic church raised its cross high above the surrounding houses. That cross is the only comfort that the surviving women have. These are not women to suffer so acutely as one people, their suffering will be the more complete, and their grief will last their whole lives, and they cannot seek solace in the thousand occupations that the mind that native American women have ben taught to find. "He" was the axis about which their little world revolved, and when "he" was good and kind and gentle with his family, as were all of these men, his loss is twice a tragedy.

Her Face Is Sad.

Inanitely sad, her face white save for the deep circles under eyes that caught some of the gold from her smoothly glistening hair, Mrs. William Scroupski dragged her weary feet to the door of the modern home which her husband had built two years ago. Even in her sorrow she did not forget the dignity of the hostess and her invitation to the fire was as warm as the night outside was dark and dripping.

Mrs. Scroupski's husband, a miner in the corner and exquisite handiwork that entered the heavy oak dining table spoke more than ordinary accomplishment.

"My husband worked in the mine 17 years here," she said. "This was the first accident he had ever been in. He came from Poland. When he was 16 to escape the oppression of Russia there. I came to Wilkeson when I was a very small girl. We have been married 13 years and we loved Wilkeson. Latter part Lord's day our children.

"Chester, if you have finished you can wash the dishes for mother," she said quietly to a handsome lad whose beautiful head had somehow straightened a little more to take the brunt of the world from mother, and he his father's son.

"Oh yiyiyiyi!"

Daughter Interpreter.

With this quivering sigh, Mrs. Joe Rusnak turned to take down some of the wet clothes from the lines in her spotless kitchen, explaining that the pounding rains outside made it necessary to hang them in the house. She understands no English and a lovely tall girl of 15 is her interpreter for every stranger who comes to the little home beyond the "Department mine" on the outskirts of Wilkeson.

"The Rusnaks have only been in the United States eight years and in Wilkeson two months. Their two oldest children, Mary and Joe, were born in Hungary. Susie and Stephie and Agnes and Mikie have been born since the Rusnaks turned their faces to Liberty in New York harbor and set foot on the land which was to bring them freedom and happiness.

Into the Dark Night.

"Papa has worked in the mines since he was 12 years old." Mary repeated her mother's words in English. "He has never been in an accident before. Mama thinks he may still be alive because he was working away from the others. Mamma went down to the mine about 7 o'clock when the accident occurred. Papa had not come home and she knew there was something wrong.

"Papa says in the shafts can be dark in those black hills, a long walk down the railroad track, stumbling through muddy places in the rain, with a shawl thrown over her head, the rain pelting, she had finally reached the mine office, where one of the men, getting ready to "go in," had told her that Joe was in there, caught by the water. And she had stumbled blindly back. For she carries another life than her own now, and she had to go back.

Blights Little Homes.

And so the tragedy has blighted each little home this Christmas time. It has come as a blow to Mrs. Marchetti and her two beautiful black-eyed, rosy-cheeked children, Mary and Joe. Whom Pete had come from Genoa, Italy, years ago to work in the American mines. Mrs. Semak, facing old age in her home in Wilkeson, her children, Anna and Joe and Mike and Mary, grown or nearly grown, sobbing as she lifted a candle in a crucifix to find the picture of her Mike; to Mrs. Heino and her boy and girl—Hill Heino was a good worker and splendid provider.

Life will be resumed in each household, for the children must be brought up, though strong beautiful children they are, and life will be lived in every family is, they'd grow to fine manhood and womanhood in this their native country despite every obstacle.

But it will be for six women life with the light gone out and the heart dead, even after the uncertainty and suspense has been ended and the little Greek church opened to receive its own.

JOHN TOMCO.

MICHAEL SEMAK.

"BILL" HEINO.

PETER MARCHETTI.

WILLIAM SCROUPSKI.

Ocean Beach in Mine Thrills Girl Reporter in Overalls

FRANCES STONE

She Goes in With Rescue Workers to Get a Story—Wears Miner's Regalia—Her Picturesque Letter.

When almost any tap of the telegraph sounder in the adjoining Associated Press room may be expected to bring some new war thrill into a newspaper office, newspaper folk, trained to stay at the consumption, may be expected to begin to wonder if there are any thrills left at home.

But The News-Ledger office has been thrilled. Frances Stone got a beat, a fine big "beat." She went deep into a mine—when they told her she couldn't—and got a gripping story of heroism, and of manhood, and of hope that won't down in an almost certainty of despair. She told it simply, cleverly and truthfully, with a vision of the "inwards" of stern hearts and strong men and great mountains, as every reader of The News and News-Ledger knows.

Maybe it is talking shop—nearly a betrayal of shop confidence—to print a letter to the city editor, written when she was gathering her wits for the writing of her story of the Wilkeson accident. And maybe she won't like it very much of us to print her picture—a picture of her at work at her typewriter in The News-Ledger office. It isn't the picture of her writing the Wilkeson story. That story was written with a stub of a pencil in a shivery little hotel room at Wilkeson some time between midnight and dawn Friday morning after a four-hour plunge three miles into the depths of the Wilkeson Coal & Coke company's mine.

Picturesques Letter.

But regardless, here is her picture, and here is her letter:

"Midnight Thursday.

"Dear Boss:

"I thought I couldn't be thrilled—"I was tonight when I saw an ocean beach standing on end three miles back under the hills.

"Yes, even so, I went into the mine. Ben (The News photographer who scoffed at women working in overalls when he was assigned to get their pictures) should have been there. I'd a boot his Milwaukee shop girls. Wore overalls, big rubber boots, a blue cotton shirt (John Hewitt's), a gray sweater, blue jumper and miner's cap, not because they are fashionable in Wilkeson this year, but because I had to. The boslight the miners wear was too heavy for me, so I carried it.

"Mr. Evans, the United States mine inspector, pleaded with Mr. Lee, the mine superintendent, when he said: "Oh, hell, what does she want to go in for——" and I assumed full responsibility.

"Mr. Bagley, state mine inspector, and Mr. Carey, general foreman, who used to be mines mail at the University where I was there, and Mr. Evans went in with me.

"Crouched up back of the glowing maw for the fire box of the 'foot,' the 'foot' engineer, Mr. Carey and I sat very comfortably, with the two government men in the coal box behind. The little 'foot' coughed and tore three miles up under the hills, going through a half foot of water at times.

Digging for Men.

"We went right up to the place where they are digging into the debris in the effort to get to the entombed men. And they took me way up a chute similar to where the men were caught. They explained everything.

"We must have walked one and one-half miles, wading through water and mud to our knees at times.

"Listen! I've been under the earth three miles, with just little timbers between us and the whole world. And I wasn't scared the teensiest bit, once. The men thought I was gritty, and said so, but grit is where you're brave when you're afraid.

"And when I saw the ripples of an ancient ocean beach, standing upright on the falls of a gangway, everything seemed rather outside after all. And the intelligence back of it—well, rather greater than wars and strife.

Close to Death.

"But I'm glad I'm living, anyway. It would be awful without the little lights twinkling down through the channels in the earth's inwards—and lonesome if you didn't know you had human friends about. I can imagine now what death is like. We were rather close to it tonight. We didn't know but what we were sitting on those men, who were caught in the accident, when we rested on great lumps of clay.

"This is too much of a personal note when I've got my whole story to write yet. Gee! this place is spooky.

Interviews Men.

"I'm not going to attempt to give you more than just a bare story, because I AM tired. Tomorrow Mr. Evans is going to make me a diagram that you can photograph—the interior of the mine and how the accident is believed to have occurred. I'll get a first hand story of the escape from one of these two men who got out and see some more of the families of the men who got caught. Could only reach one of them tonight. Have had a busy p. m. Was in the mine from 7:30 to 11 and then scrubbed my skin off trying to get the coal dust off—to discover I'd forgotten my ears!

"Having gotten this thrill out of me, I'll take pen in hand, brave Mr. H.'s malediction on my undecipherable writing and get up some kind of a story.

"Don't forget the Red Cross. I promised them that I'd see that their campaign got a good story.

"Oh, yes, I only got into the mine by swearing I wasn't a 'sob sister,' but I'm afraid I am. Can't help it, I guess.

FRANCES STONE."

Heroic Battle In Mine Inspires Engineer's Verse

Heroism isn't a trait peculiar to the men who are fighting the battle of the world in the trenches and air of Europe.

Men who daily trust their lives to the skill of man and faith in fickle nature are of the same stuff that makes heroes of the men who fight the Kaiser's hordes. But when they push their way under the hills to save comrades who have been caught challenging the same fate that may have cost the other lives, their courage is real, and their bravery worthy of the little tribute that H. K. Chisholm wrote yesterday in the offices of the Wilkeson Coal & Coke company. Mr. Chisholm is in charge of the mine rescue station for the government at the University of Washington and has been assisting in the search for the entombed men at Wilkeson. He has taken part in rescue work in many of the biggest mine disasters in the United States during his long service with the government, and is considered a great authority.

His tribute to the miner is more significant in that his son, Just 21, is already in France with the American engineers.

"War means not all the battles
For all nerves soldiers wine
Nor all deeds counted brave deeds
Smiled on by sun and skies
For among the bravest battles
And the victories value bought
Are the battles in the coal mines
Down under ground are fought.

"Down where the black damp strangles
Where floods and caves and death
In a mighty mass of rubble
Proclaim man's helplessness
Down go the true and tried men,
The bravest of the brave,
With no thought of self or danger
When lives are then to save."

Former Health Commissioner Says Nuxated Iron

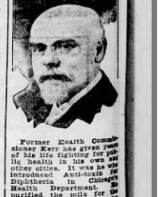
Should Be Used in Every Hospital and Prescribed by Every Physician—Attributes His Own Great Physical Activity Today at Over 60 Years of Age Largely to His Personal Use of Nuxated Iron

WHAT FORMER HEALTH COMMISSIONER KERR SAYS

"As Health Commissioner of the City of Chicago I was importuned almost every second day by different medicine manufacturers, etc. Never yet have I gone on record as favoring any particular remedy, but I feel that in Nuxated Iron an exception should be made to the rule. I have been using Nuxated Iron myself and experienced its health-giving, strength-building effect and in the interests of the public welfare, I feel it my duty to make known the results of its use. I am well past my three-score years and want to say that I believe that my own great physical activity is due largely today to my personal use of Nuxated Iron, and if my endorsement shall induce anaemic, nervous, run-down men and women to take Nuxated Iron, and receive the wonderful tonic benefits which I have received, I shall feel greatly gratified that I made an exception to my life-long rule in recommending it. From my own experience with Nuxated Iron, I feel that it is indeed a tonic remedy that it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician in this country."

Former Health Commissioner, City of Chicago.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which has been used by Former Health Commissioner Kerr with such surprising results, and which he prescribed in his own practice for so many years in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, the iron contained in it is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in 10 days' time. It is dispensed by Cross Drug Co. and all good druggists.—Advertisement.


Former Health Commissioner Kerr gives proof of his life fighting for the public good in his own advertising. It was he who introduced Anti-toxin for Diphtheria in Chicago's Health Department. He purified the water for 2 Consumers and thereby helped to save the lives of thousands of babies. He introduced the antiseptic ordinance which has prevented all over the country and also took care of the Iron working gangs in the interest of public health. He is positive that the wide-spread use of Nuxated Iron would greatly lessen the sufferings and trouble Health Commissioners have keeping up a high standard of public health.

JOSEPH RUSNAK.

FRENCH DRUG Co
WE SELL IT FOR LESS
THREE STORES
French Drug Co. 13th and Pacific Ave. MAIN 69
French Drug Co. 11th and Broadway MAIN 91
OWL DRUG CO. 904 Broadway MAIN 867

GIFTS GIFTS GIFTS GIFTS

To the Eleventh Hour Shopper

Here are ideas for you. Sensible and useful gifts for everyone. We have sufficient experienced and courteous clerks to give you immediate service. SHOP AT OUR STORES.

Military Hair Brushes, $1.00
Fountain Pens, $1 to $11
Traveling Cases, $5 to $25
Safety Razors, $1 to $9
Shaving Brushes, 50c to $2.50
Kodaks, $7 to $75
Pipes, 35c to $2
Writing Portfolios, 85c to $6

Get Your Candy Here
Large assortment of Fancy Boxes filled with the choicest sweets—
50c TO $2.50

Razor Strops, $1.50 to $5
Umbrellas, $3
Hair Brushes, $1 to $5
Cloth Brushes, 50c to $3.50
Fountain Pens, 50c to $5
Pocket Knives, 75c to $2.50
Gift Stationery, 50c to $2.50
Box Candy, 25c to $2.50
Pyralin Ivory
Perfumes, 40c to $7
Writing Portfolios, $2.50 to $6
Toilet Sets, $10 to $22.50
Manicure Sets, $3.50 to $10
Kodaks, $7 to $75
Hair Brushes, $1 to $5
Toilet Waters, 75c to $2.50
$1.50 Handbags and Purses, 98c

Brush and Comb Sets, $3.50 to $11
$6.00 Silk Umbrellas, $4.95
Cutex Manicure Set, $1
Parisian Ivory Clocks, $3.50 to $8

$2.00 values, Ladies' Handbags and Purses 98c

Tinker Toys, 50c
Rubber Toys, 35c
Rubber Balls, 25c
Large Dolls, $3.50
75c Dolls, 49c
Gilmotor Autos, 75c
Ingersoll Watches, $1.50
Pocket Knives, 75c
Hair Brushes, $1

24 Double Sheets of White Tissue Paper, special at.... 9c

Flashlights, 75c
$1.50 Erectors, 98c
Leather Purses, 75c
Brownie Cameras, $1.75.
Box Paper, 50c
Gilbert's Toys, 50c
Oneida Knife, Fork and Spoon, $1.25
Kewpack Rations, 50c
Metal Soap Boxes, 25c
Metal Tooth Brush Holders, 25c
Metal Shaving Brush Holders, 35c

Comfort Kits, $2.50 to $5
Trench Mirrors, 25c to $1.25
Fitall Rollups, $1.75 to $3.50
Khaki Writing Portfolios, 85c to $1.35
Service Safety Razors, $5
100 Cigarets in Humidors, $1.50
Purses and Money Belts, 75c to $2.50
First Aid Kits, $2.25
Housewives, $1
Large Jars Tobacco, $1.25
Cigars in Boxes of 10, $1
Fountain Pens, $1 to $11

We have a few Dolls left that are selling for 49c

Hair Brushes, $1 to $5
Safety Razors, $1 to $9
Shaving Brushes, 50c to $2.50.
Shaving Mirrors, 50c to $5
Thermos Bottles, $2.25 to $5
And Lunch Kits, $3.50 to $4.25
Cloth Brushes, 50c to $3.50
Bath Brushes, 69c to $2.50
Razor Strops, $1.50 to $5
Old Style Razors, $2.50 to $5
Umbrellas, $1.25 to $5
Card Cases, 75c to $2.50
Traveling Cases, $5 to $20

Don't Forget That KODAK

IN FIGHTING COUGHS OR COLDS or to overcome the weakening effect of persistent throat or lung trouble try
ECKMAN'S ALTERATIVE
This Calcium preparation is a tonic and upbuilder of proved efficiency in the treatment of coughs. Contains no Alcohol, Narcotic or Habit-Forming Drug.
$2 size, now $1.50. $1 size, now 80c
Sold by all leading druggists.
Eckman Laboratory, Philadelphia.

AT LAST YOU SAY
My Mind Is Made Up. I Am Going to Have My
TEETH
Fixed Right Now, and the Old Reliable
Tacoma Dental Parlors
Are Going to Do It.
We Are Giving Special Christmas Rates All This Month.
You take no chances in coming to this office. We have been on this street for years, and will be in the same location for years to come. Examinations Free!
Out-of-town patients can have their work finished same day. Dr. O. F. Norris Dentist
DON'T HESITATE TO COME HERE BECAUSE I ADVERTISE.
Anyone who has a good thing to offer ought to let the people know. Your department store does it; your bank advertises; and the dentist who has the knowledge and the facilities for serving you better for less money surely ought to tell you about it.
I MAKE

$10 Gold Crowns, for..... $5.00	Plates Repaired for..... $2.00
$10 Bridgework, per tooth... $5.00	Teeth Extracted $1.00
Plates for $10.00	Temporary Teeth Extracted.... 50c

AN IRONCLAD WRITTEN GUARANTEE
For 15 Years That Is Good as a Government Bond, With All Work Done in My Office.
DR. NORRIS'
TACOMA DENTAL PARLORS
1146½ PAC. AVE. Near 12th and Pacific Ave. Look for Showcase at Foot of Stairs
PHONE MAIN 4282. LADY ATTENDANT.
Open Wednesday and Saturday Evenings and Sunday Morning.

Copyright © 2025 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.