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Dinner Off For Missing Man's Kin

By NILES JACKSON

KNOXVILLE, W.Va. (AP) — When Juanita Mayle makes pumpkin pies for her family's Thanksgiving dinner, she makes 18 at a time.

She's not making any today.

JUANITA's husband, Hart Mayle, 31, is one of 78 miners trapped in the burning Mountaineer Coal Co. No. 9 mine.

She is among those who believe he will be found alive.

"I've been with him ever since he's been down there," she said, her brown eyes red-rimmed by tears. "And you know what? He's worried about us. That's the kind of man he is."

Mr. and Mrs. Mayle have 16 children.

Their ages range from the twins, Cindy Sue and Linda Lou, who are 4, to Stana, who is 25. There are eight girls and eight boys.

"I HAVE such a wonderful family," the 45-year-old woman said, managing a faint smile. "We are lucky to be as well off as we are."

The Mayles moved to their 36-acre Taylor County farm four years ago when "we didn't know the difference between a cucumber and a pepper," she said. They had just enough and now raise chickens, pigs and corn.

Since the explosion, a friend started a drive to keep the Mayles in groceries but it takes a lot to feed 16 children.

"I make four gallons of vegetable soup and it's gone in a day," she said, adding that the family also goes through six pounds of spaghetti at one sitting and two turkeys at one sitting.

HER LIFE hasn't been the same since the explosion. "I've been rained in a mine."

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Tragedy Strikes Deep

GRAFTON, W. Va. — Mrs. Juanita Mayle appears outside her home with some of her 16 children. She is the wife of Hart Mayle, one of 78 coal miners trapped in the burning Mountaineer Coal Co. No. 9 mine.

camp and I know about all this," she said. "I sleep on the couch each night in case the telephone rings in the middle of the night."

"What really hurts is the kids. The other day I came back from the mine and they asked me, 'Dad they let you go home?'"

"I just know he'll come out of that mine," she said, glancing around the room at her children. "Someone's eyes will be opened when he does and they'll see I've been right all along."

"WHEN HE first got trapped down there, the boys wouldn't eat until he got back. But I convinced them he's coming back and they're eating okay now."

"I've had too many things happen to me — too many things," she said sadly. "He's got to come back."

She looked again at her 16 children, some of whom were playing outside.

"We have a wonderful close family," she said. "That means more to me than anything else. I just thank God for what I've got and pray my husband will come back to us."

Don't Seal Mine, Relatives Plead

MANNINGTON, W.Va. (UPI) — Relatives of 78 miners trapped one week in a burning explosion yesterday pleaded with officials not to seal the mine if only on the chance one of the trapped men may be alive.

Even if just one man comes out, it would be worthwhile, they said.

Megna, a brother of a trapped miner, said.

MEGNA WAS among relatives presenting their plea at a news briefing on conditions in the Mountaineer No. 9 mine.

He said by more than 20 fire-breathing explosions since he last saw his brother, he had been down Nov. 20 when an initial blast trapped 98 men underground. Two men were rescued or were rescued hours after the first explosion.

John Concoran, president of Consolidation Coal Co. which owns the mine, said no final decision will be made on what will be done until the miners are completely drilled 10 hours of the mine can be taken.

He said the "will give conclusive evidence as to atmospheric conditions in the entire area where the 78 men were working."

TESTS FROM THE five holes already completed showed the air could not sustain life.

A spokesman said the only way to get out the miners was to seal the mine off all oxygen to the mine.

He said the mine if there is no danger to anyone except the men down there.

Megna said, referring to the fact officials said Tuesday they would not seal rescue teams into the mine under any circumstances.

TWO TEAMS made brief probes into the mine Sunday — the only such exploration by rescue teams since the men were trapped.

Megna's sister, Mrs. Robert W. Friend of Parkersburg, W.Va., said, "They teach the men to barricade themselves, to stay put. And now they want to abandon them without making contact."

Megna, a high school principal at Plain City, Ohio, cited the spectacular rescue of 21 miners last May from a flooded mine at Hominy Falls, W.Va., after they had been trapped deep underground six to 10 days and given up for dead.

He called on the officials to authorize the drilling of more bore holes into the mine's seven miles of tunnels to listen for signs of life and test the underground air.

"THE MINE here covers a vast area but they plan only to drill holes," Megna said.

"At Hominy Falls, a very small mine, they drilled nine holes. People said they didn't have a chance at Hominy Falls, but they did."

Company officials said air samples brought up through five consensated bore holes drilled to different levels showed a "very high" content of carbon monoxide and highly viscous methane gas.

Mannington: An Old Story Retold

Over 90,000 Lives Lost In Coal Mines Since 1902

By STAN BENJAMIN

WASHINGTON (AP) — In coal country, disaster has been the familiar lot of an old scrapbook photo: smoke or dust swirling from a hole in the ground; agonized men and women huddled around the top; rescue crews waiting helplessly for the earth to relent and let them in.

Since 1902, more than 90,000 men have died mining coal; safety underground has gradually improved, but no one has to go to a mine the job is still dangerous.

IN 1902 — considered one of the safest years ever for mining — 220 men died in the pits.

During the first nine months of this year 182 were killed. Suddenly, Wednesday, a week ago, despite modern improvements, safety training and a federal and state inspection, it was just like old times.

There were 78 men trapped by explosions and fire in the Mountaineer Coal Co. No. 9 mine at Mannington, W.Va.

Government, industry and labor representatives immediately agreed on one thing — whatever the cause of the explosion, safety measures are not enough.

SECRETARY of the Interior Stewart L. Udall sent two of his top officials to the scene, and scheduled a conference to seek a solution to the problem of coal mine safety.

Both he and the director of the Bureau of Mines, John F. Leary, stressed that "none of the same" won't be the answer.

"We're dealing with a complex geological hazard system," Leary said in an interview. "We have to have a mining process that takes that account in its initial design."

O'Leary had his staff working over the weekend, "to start talking about the whole strategy."

A RESORT TO additional mine inspections might have some influence, he said, "but it would not be decisive."

O'Leary compared the hostile environment of an underground mine with that of a space craft. After a flash fire in an oxygen-filled Apollo capsule killed three astronauts in January, 1967, he pointed out, detailed research, redesign and retraining was done to prevent a recurrence.

That's what the mining industry needs, O'Leary said — a systems approach. That goes to the roots of the problem. It's going to be expensive to resolve, but I'm told by the experts it can be solved.

That kind of talk is a far cry from the first half of the century, when the federal government was virtually powerless in the field of mine safety.

The Bureau of Mines was established in 1910, but it was not until 1930 that it was authorized to inspect coal mines, and even then its inspectors had no enforcement power.

FROM 1906 onward, some 10,000 miners were killed by fire, gas, rock falls, and other causes. In 1930, the death of 361 men by an explosion at Monongah, W.Va.

Since then, mortality in the mines has gradually declined, partly because there are fewer men working underground now, partly because the mines are safer.

In 1930, at the outset of the depression, there were about 644,000 coal miners; in 1967 there were some 144,300.

IN THE EARLY 1900s one man in 250 who made his living underground would die there. By the early 1960s those odds had improved to about one in 600.

But since then — during the era of federal inspection and enforcement — that rate has leveled off and remains today just about as it was in 1902.

O'Leary said the federal inspectors have been effective, and within their record would probably have been worse. A spokesman for the United Mine Workers disagreed.

"We have no criticism of the federal inspectors," he said. "We're satisfied they

are dedicated men; they know their business. But there ought to be more of them."

IN 1967, THE bureau's 268 inspectors checked 6,000 coal mines and ordered 461 complete or partial closures. Since July, 1962, when the enforcement law took effect, there have been a total of 2,282 mine closures.

O'Leary said the larger mines get two or three inspections a year — and it takes up to a month to inspect a mine the size of the stricken Mountaineer No. 9, which underlies an area the size of Manhattan.

He would like — and expects — Congress to authorize a year — and it takes up to a month to inspect a mine the size of the stricken Mountaineer No. 9, which underlies an area the size of Manhattan.

But inspection can't solve all the tough mining problems, he said. Mountaineer No. 9, for example, overran an old field, he said, and the mining constantly liberates inflammable gas that must be diluted by forced-air ventilation. An unexpected gas pocket in the earth is a potential bomb.

MODERN, high-speed mining equipment, too, has increased certain mining dangers, he said. The new equipment liberates more gas and finer coal dust. George Judy, president of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association, the voice of management, said, however, that the new cutting methods are reducing that hazard.

Judy urged strong enforcement of existing laws, but did not think new ones are needed.

"I don't think you can legislate safety," he said in an interview. "You still have to have people, and mistakes can be made. I think more ought to be done with education and safety training."

O'Leary agrees with the need for training, but wants new legislation too.

MINING REGULATORS, he said, should be able to fit their practices to changing technology without having to go to Congress for new authorizations every time.

"We need rule-making power for the Secretary of the Interior in this area," he said.

Judy is against that. "I don't think it would be right for one man to be able to make the law," he said. Still another approach — perhaps the most important — may be through research seeking basic advances in safety methods.

UDALL emphasized that need in a news conference following the explosion. Bureau of Mines officials say that mine had been recently inspected and no

Bitter Truth

BLAIR, Neb. (UPI) — Jesse Purcell and Sam Corbin have spent \$20,000 so far in an effort to retrieve a rumored fortune in quicksilver from the steamboat Bertrand, which went down in the Missouri River in 1885.

Saturday they reported the recovery of the first salvage from a vessel believed to be the Bertrand. It consisted of five cases of "Dr. J. Hostetter's celebrated stomach bitters."

dangerous conditions were found there.

"We don't know enough, we haven't done enough research in order to determine how to combat conditions like this," Udall said. He contended that neither industry, nor the unions, nor his own department have done enough for mine safety.

"I think in the type of country we have with the type of capabilities we have to provide safe working conditions for workers, this is simply not acceptable," Udall said.

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