

Mrs. Arthur Gadd White:

“She met Murray Andrews, a coal company policeman. He said ‘Oh, Mrs. Gadd, I just got word, there’s been an explosion in 12 pit.’ Well, my mother was from Wales and she had heard so much about Welsh mines exploding. She right away got afraid. She said ‘Oh my God, my boys are in there.’ And he said ‘Don’t worry, Mrs. Gadd, it will be alright. You go home and we’ll let you know if there’s anything further.’”

“Then after they started to bring up the bodies, we went over. There were two places, one over at 12, a parish hall over there with all the bodies laying on the floor. And you could go in there and identify them, your own. I remember going around this with my mother, and she’d say ‘No, that’s not my boy. That’s not my boy.’”

“She went back to the pit and stayed there, because of the boys not being brought up. Her clergy came, talked with her and helped her through it, for the day. She wouldn’t leave the pit. She was getting sick herself, falling down. Remember, she’d been up all night that night, looking after this other man that was dying. And all this time I was with her, in those halls. She wouldn’t go without me. I was her baby. She was too frightened to leave me. She was down at the pit. Her clergyman came down to her. He said ‘Mrs. Gadd, will you come home?’ She said ‘I want to know the truth. I only want to know the truth.’ ‘Well’ he said ‘are you willing to submit to God’s will?’ And she said ‘Yes, no matter what. Whatever God will.’ she said.”

“Mr. Johnson, a Salvation Army officer, he was a wonderful person, he told her that one boy had been killed. But the other one was spared. I had brothers overseas and we had to send word that one brother was killed in the explosion. Then it had to be changed, that two were killed. Because the little fellow was right in where the explosion happened. He was a trapper. And he was blown through the trap door with the force of the explosion.”

“There were mass funerals. All the Protestants were buried in one funeral, and all the Catholics were buried in one funeral. The coal company gave a lot to everybody. My brothers were buried in what they called a double grave, but they were separate graves. There were no mass graves. The company looked after that. And my mother got ten dollars a month for each boy’s life. That was the compensation.”

Mr. Henry W. MacKay:

“Oh there was gas. You know, the war was on then and the company was after coal as easy as they could get it. You know what I mean. They weren't looking after the mine. There was gas. They should have been keeping the air course open. So the air could go down. Well, they weren't looking after that. It used to fall in, block the air off. Oh no, they were after coal as cheap as they could get it. They has a mine, number 15 mine, they took all the handy coal out. They didn't drive ahead. Then when all the handy coal was gone, they had to close the mine. The war was on and everybody was after coal and there were hardly any men, they were gone. And miners couldn't change conditions. They had a union but it wasn't old enough. It was only new.”

“Those fellows that were all torn up were on 7 landing. I was on 8 landing, I was down further. When the explosion happened I had the horse standing with his head facing out, I was back. The shafts were made with a bow at the back--and I had a hold of the back of the shafts up over my shoulder, hooking the straps on the back on his hips, hooking the straps there--and when I get them hooked I come to the front and I lift the shafts up and I hook on the chains. Well, when I had the shafts up over my shoulder there was a breeze of wind came out off the level, oh, it was carrying everything. Lumps of coal were going with it and dust, you couldn't see anything. And pieces of wood flying. It knocked me and the horse down . But I never thought it was an explosion. I could hear like a long distance off, I heard like a shot going off and everything shook, you know? But I never thought an explosion. I was only a kid. I got up out of there. I got the harness back on the horse and got the shafts on him. By this time the wind had all died down. And I hooked on 10 empty boxes and went in where the loaders were. I left the 10 empties there and there were 10 boxes of coal there standing. I hooked on them and went back out again--about a mile, I guess. When I got back out the overman was there. He said, 'Listen, boy, there's an explosion. How about going back in after those loaders?' There were four. So I took one box in and I got the loaders, told them there was an explosion.”

“My father was killed in the explosion. That's my father that's on the monument. John D. Mackay. He was blamed for firing the shot that set the explosion off, not through his fault. But the men who found him said it was impossible for him to fire a shot because he had his battery cable on his shoulder. But when you fire a shot you hook the two wires together and that cable is 150 feet long or 200 feet long, to bring out. Well, after you fired the shot you coiled that cable up again to carry it to the next place. Well, he was found with his cable all wound, he had it on his shoulder. If he had fired that shot - wouldn't have had time to gather up his cable.”

“It was their (the mining company's) fault. They never had brattices (heavy cloth partitions to control ventilation), they never had nothing. The war was on and they wanted coal wherever they could get it. The air course should be clear like the floor here. But the roof of it would fall and it'd be high in places. Well, the air had to come down and go up over these falls and come back down and go up over the next one. They weren't looking after it. But after the explosion they had to clear out that air course.”