

~~1/18~~

ME - how old were you at the time of the accident

MR. M - I was eleven months old

ME - how old was your father

MR. M - my father was forty two

ME - did anyone else live with you at the time

MR. M - I had um, my mother and two sisters and two brothers, there was five of us in the family, six counting my mother

ME - how long had your father been working in the mine

MR. M - well he had been working there for about four years

ME - was that when it opened

MR. M - no it was open prior to that, I don't know how long before that it was open

ME - what part of the mine did he work in

MR. M - he was, he was a pumpman but at that day at the mine disaster he worked nightshift as a pumpman and then they asked him to work dayshift because one of the miners didn't show up, so he volunteered to work a double shift and when he worked a double shift that's how he got killed there. It wasn't his regular shift, he had to work nightshift at a pumpman.

ME - have you ever been to the mine

MR. M - well I'd been there after it caved in, yeah

ME - when did your mother first hear about it.

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MR M. - Oh she heard about it my brother
the miners used to come up for dinner see, and my
brother would bring them dinner pail over there but he
was there at the time when the mine caved in, and he came
running home and told my ma that something happened
at the mine he thought the mine caved in and she didn't
believe it well then when he went running back
to the mine again and he came back home and told
her that the mine caved in she went running over there
and then it was announced that the mine caved in.

ME - Where did you live at the time

MR M. - I lived in the Barnes Hecker location, its a
quarter mile from where the mine is.

ME - After the disaster did you receive any outside
support

MR M. - ya, the widows, the widows from the mine
disaster, the company paid the four thousand dollars
and that was compensation then the federal government
paid four thousand that would be double compensation
so they got, received eight thousand dollars allotted out
so much per week for so many years.

ME - did your mother, brothers, or sisters ever get a job
after the disaster

MR M. - the boys did, us boys did ya we worked all
three of us. Me and my two brothers.

ME - was the eight thousand dollars enough to support
your family

MR M. - No way, well it only last so long and then,
something like, it was deleted in a ten year period

ME - what did you do after that

MR. M - well we lived on, my brother was older and he was working part time in the woods and then we got county relief help, sometimes we got a use to supply us with wood from the mine. then we had cow and chickens and pigs and garden and

ME - did you ever think about a disaster when you worked in the mines

MR. M - well you always think of it but once you get used to working underground it doesn't bother you. Now-a-days the modern, the mining is more modern, in them days it wasn't safety first.

ME - did you think there was enough safety at the mine

MR. M - well, I didn't get all the details of what happened, but the way I feel, I felt they were mining to close to surface and that's why the lake caved in. I think there was engineering problems. That's my own opinion

ME - How did you know the survivor of the accident

MR. M - well he was my godfather

ME - Did you know him very well

MR. M - ya, ya I knew him personally his name was Wilfred Wills. He was twenty two years old when he climbed up the ladder.

ME - he was a lot younger than your father

MR. M - ya, my father was one of the oldest guys there, one of the older ones.

his father

ME - did you hear if he had a chance to get out

MR. M - they as they didn't have no chance. The mine filled in water from the first level down filled it all in.

ME - what level was he working the pump on

MR. M - my dad wasn't working in the pump house, he was down in right at the mining place where it caved and that's where he got killed.

ME - what level is that

MR. M - well it caved in at the first level then the water went down and filled the other two up. There's only three levels on the mine, the mine was sixteen hundred feet deep with three levels. It caved in at the first level and the water went down the shaft and filled in all the other levels. They found seven miners at the Morris mine, that would be two miles east of the Barnes and Hecker, that went through the tunnel. They found seven dead bodies there and then they found three dead bodies bloating in the shaft at the Barnes and Hecker.

ME - they never found your fathers body

MR. M - No, still down there, they a, one of the guys who got killed there is the mine inspector that's one of the guys that wasn't a miner, all the rest were miners, there was a, forty-one guys that got killed there, forty-one of them were married and there was a hundred and twenty-eight fatherless children out of the forty-one guys.

ME - was there many who had it worse off than you did

MR. M - well I don't know about that as there probably was. There was, there was some who probably had more kids than my father, I don't know for sure, but on that ah, on the levels, the first level there was thirteen men working there and on the second level there was fifteen and the third level there was twenty-three that's how many men there were in the mine. See I just jotted this down cause I didn't remember some of the stuff just off the top of my head.

ME - how did your mother take it after the accident

MR. M - well my mother took it pretty bad you know cause it was her husband. Us kids we were pretty small. My brother was the oldest one, he was thirteen the same age as you are. I was the youngest. I was eleven months old so I suppose the other kids took it pretty bad because they were old enough to know about it. But I wasn't, I didn't know anything.

ME - did you regret it later

MR. M - oh ya, I was born and raised without a father, sure ya didn't like it but there wasn't much you could do about it. It's just that as you wonder sometimes if it could have been prevented you know.

ME - did you think it could have been prevented in any way.

MR. M - well I think that as, if the engineering personal was up to snuff, I think they could have prevented it.

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ME - did anyone predict it was going to happen

MR. M. - some of the miners had mentioned that they heard rumblings and water. I know my dad himself was telling my mom that he had heard water gurgling ~~when~~ when he was a pumpman, but they're only workers, they didn't have much to say

ME - didn't they report it

MR. M. - ya he reported it, ya he did a couple of times but they didn't do nothing about it, but a, its like every-thing else you know, you can say a lot of things and some people won't listen you know, just a worker there that's all you are. Nowadays its different you have a little bit more to say, you've got the unions and people are a little bit more understanding now. In them days, way back in the early, the early part of the century you know a worker didn't have much to say then, but a, myself I think they were drilling to close to the surface. From what I hear from people talking, some of them say that it was a, the cause of it was mining to close to the surface. When you mine underground you're suppost to leave so much overhead between the surface to hold it up. Well if you mine to close well then the surface won't stay up by itself because there's nothing to hold it, see, then it caves in, that's what happened.

ME - did your father say anything about going to close to the surface.

MR. M. - well they had mentioned, he had mentioned when they were in there they had big sand runs and mud runs and they'd be down there trying to block them up. the miners had said that they, well they knew themselves that they were to

MR. M - close to surface, because your not suppose to have them kind of runs, and when get them kind of runs they shut down that part of the mine and go some place else, but they just kept on working and working and it finally caved in.

ME - the owners didn't do anything about it

MR. M - well they, they tried to block them up, but I guess they were to late see.

MR. M - They put up a monument up there ~~by~~ the Cly township had their centennial in seventy-one and they put a monument up there by the Evergreen Drive-in theater. They have a, they put it up there in seventy two, ~~and~~ all the names of people who got killed are on this monument, you've probably seen it up there its right on the right hand just before you come to the Evergreen Drive-in theater. That's the only markings they got of the disaster you know the people can go and see the monument, the people that were left there, their names are on it, that was built in seventy-two, there, but a, the mine had been shut down ever since it caved in and I don't know who owns it now. I don't know what company owns it but after so many years well then its just like a graveyard you know. I don't know how many years before they can operate it again I guess its in the twenties, its got to be over twenty some years before they can open it up and operate it again on account of its remetary like.

ME - did they try to recover the people after the disaster

MR. M - well they got ten men out and they tried to pump it but the, they couldn't, they couldn't get it pumped fast enough it kept filling up. & remember when I was a young lad & used to, they used to have pumps up there, but they could never pump it out, it just kept filling up and filling up and I suppose the pumps weren't modernized enough them days to really get enough water out ^{to} get down to where they wanted to get, to get the people out, so there's forty-one guys still ~~in~~ there. I suppose some time they'll probably ^{leave in} drain it by open pit or something, probably then they'll get down in there, cause it's a shallow mine it's only sixteen hundred feet deep see, that ain't very deep.

ME - do you think they'll ever try to mine the area again

MR. M or I think so they'll probably open pit it. & I don't think I'll be here to see it, but in the next generation they'll probably, they'll probably mine it, cause as there's good ore there, lots of ore there. That's about all I've got to say about it.