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Serving on the Mine Rescue Team Throughout this article, the words "dragerman" and "mine rescue team" are used interchangeably. They mean the same thing, although drager is the older term. It comes from Draeger, which is the name of a German company that still makes mine rescue breathing and testing apparatus. The photos of a simulated disaster were taken during the Mine Rescue Competition at the Glace Bay Forum in 1976. Allan Atkinson, Glace Bay: Drager crew is called for fire. That's the big thing where you have to wear your drager equipment. Not only a fire, any time when the ventilation is disrupted. Now if you have an explosion big enough that your stoppings dividing your fresh air from your return air were broken down--your gas would mix with your fresh air--and that would be a job for dragemen. When I got my second class papers, I started loading coal and I started going to night school. I studied for shotfirer's papers. And I remember I got my shotfirer's papers on a Friday and I started shooting coal on a Monday. And it was just shortly after that that I went on the drager crew in 1940. (Was the drager crew something that you always wanted to be on?) To be honest and truthful, I didn't know that much about it at the time. I didn't know what it involved, really. • (I guess I'm sort of asking whether drager men were your heroes.) No, not really. We were requested. Management asked us if we wanted to go on the drager team. What it involved at that time was one Saturday a month. You'd go to the office and you'd either travel Number 20 Colliery--Number 2 Colliery at that time--with your equipment on, or you'd go to the smokehouse with a smoke mask on, and cut logs, build stoppings--to get you used to the heat and smoke and whatever. A stopping is--say, a board stopping--something to block an airway off. Say fresh air was going into a place and you didn't want it to go in because there was a fire in there--to cut the oxygen off or to direct it down below or force the air to go in different directions, you'd put up a stopping. You might put about 4 timber across a roadway and then just board it in and then plaster over it--cut the air off. On a Sunday night, 1943, somebody found a fire on a belt level. It was about 4 o'clock. And 6 o'clock I was going to go in the mine on day shift, and we got word about it and had to go right to the drager office at Number 2 at that time. And you The photo above is of the first Draeger crew formed in North America at Numbers 2 and 9 Collieries, Glace Bay, 1909. Front row: John Joe MacNeil, Mr. Fergie, Norman MacKenzie; middle row; Dan "Storey" MacDonald, Joe Campbell, Thomas Turner, James MacMahon, ?, Roddie "Heenan" MacDonald, Matt MacAdam, Dan MacGillivray, Gilbert Darroch, Alex T. MacNeil, Mike Steele; back row; Harry Miller, Vannie Nicholson, John MacLean, John Robinson, Dan W. "Kink" MacDonald, ?, ?, Evan Prothero, ?. (Photo courtesy Beaton Institute, College of Cape Breton.) (47)