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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1996/6/1

No. 26 Mine Explosion • The Root Cause A poem about yet another mine disaster
• in 1978 • by Joe Nugent A Miner's ghost before me stood And asked if I would
write Something in a style of verse To tell his story right. I told him yes I'll do it now
While it's fresh within my mind. Just tell me what you want to say And this is how it
rhymed. We went to work the midnight shift; We went down on the cages; We rode
on in the motor road To eam our daily wages. We climbed aboard the arch deep
rake Then on to 12 South wall. We shifted in the roof supports And caused the gob
to fall. We loaded all conveyors High with bonus coal; Another slice along the face
Would help us reach our goal. Don't say amen to rumors That we caused our own
demise By fouling up the monitors To help production rise. Oh No! Twas something
more severe That brought about our end A danger that was caused each day Which
we did not comprehend. Ever since the machines were found To brush the roadway
space; The gob side packs were left unfilled. And sent air through the waste. The
roadside packs behind us Leaked away good air. But no one seemed to realize The
awful danger there. If full ventilation pressure Had been coursed along the face.
The firedamp gas would have remained Safely back within the waste. The gas
moved out onto the face And drifted to the top Yet nothing really happened 'Till the
shearer struck a rock. Then came a fiery circle When the shearer struck a stone Oh
God! The wall is all aflame. Never more shall we go home. This message to our
brothers all Before it is too late. Make sure the ventilation Comes through the face
end gate. Don't let good air stray through the waste To push out firedamp gas For
sure as hell when it moves out, A spark will cause a blast. So hope and pray that
never more Will such dangers line up right To take away twelve miners Just as it did
tonight. is because of electricity or flame shots. Those are the two sources of it. Or
some? times what is called "friction ignition." Friction ignition is when a machine,
huge machine, is gouging out the coal and it strikes some kind of a bastard rock,
huge hard rock, and it creates a fire. That hap? pened in Number 26 Colliery back in
'78. So looking back at all the experiences that I've witnessed I would have to say
that coal mine explosion disasters are the result of neglect... let's say criminal
negligence, but for that purpose we have to prove something. So I stayed there
until 1965. I was trans? ferred over to Glace Bay to set up a trans? portation system
for transporting coal, a conveyor system. It was a huge affair, cost a lot of money,
and didn't materialize. I was over there, I helped to set up a belt, I was one of the
supervisors in charge. I helped to set up a belt line there that had the capability of
running 1200 tons of coal an hour, if you could get the coal to put on the belt. They
were dumping the coal so fast and then the belt was empty, empty, empty, empty,
empty. No coal coming out. So what they done is they set up an elaborate system
there and didn't have the resources inside--they had the resources but they didn't
have the production technique in or? der to get the coal out. Celestial
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