

[Page 57 - Serving on the Mine Rescue Team](#)ISSUE : [Issue 31](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1982/6/1

bags melted in the heat. I don't know what the hell--they must have been in 140 , Those fellows sealing that fire--you're talking about 11 South, I don't think there were temperatures ever worked any? where in the world like those fellows worked under here--to save that pit. It went on for weeks--must have been two months before we finally got that thing under control in the pit. But they were in that heat. And there were lots of ordinary miners that worked just as hard or harder than they did, to save it, too. That was one time that there was 100% cooperation. The ordinary guys, they were terrific, too. They worked--and worked any time. As long as they were asked to work, there were no holds barred, you know. That was probably the toughest conditions that rescue teams ever worked under. I was a team captain in both of the Springhill disasters as a young fellow myself. And they weren't as bad as that one was here. I mean, you weren't in that intense heat. You had a lot of other dirty things to contend with. (What happened in 1975?) It's something can happen in a mine any time. You're mining coal, you're generating a highly explosive gas, methane, CH<sub>4</sub>. There's 1 part carbon monoxide to 4 parts hydrogen. And hydrogen's the most volatile element you have. When that gas is generated, the slightest spark causes it either to burn or explode. If it's at a certain percentage, from 5 to 15%, it explodes if it's exposed to heat. And the maximum explosive range is 10%, just in between 5 and 15. It'll burn at any percentage, if there's enough oxygen in the air to maintain combustion. But it will explode, and very explosive, at that range. Well, then you have coal dust. If there's coal dust in the area--if there's dust particles hanging in the air, tiny little things that you can't even see, or hardly see--that's more explosive than methane. And where can you mine coal without having them? Usually the methane starts, it's just the trigger, starts the explosion; and then the dust particles propagate it. It's something like an atomic reaction. Now when coal dust explodes-- really, an explosion is a fast fire. If you burn coal slow, you get carbon monoxide and you get the other gases. Well, the faster it burns, the more is generated. And an explosion is a great big fast fire.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

Corner Jean Shop P'crz CENTRAL AVE. SHIRTS  
"-- T-SHIRTS TRANSFERS G.W.6. HOWICK LEVI INVERNESS TEL. 258-2412 ""\*'  
ZIGGY ' BIG BLUE ANDRE MICHEL ESPRIT LEE CREAM SIZES 2-46 ?? ~"~ • ~ ~  
\_All Your Jean Needs ' • " Lobster Kettle Whorffid\* ft?stovrail Steamed Clams.  
Boiled Lobsters. Chowder \* Seafood at Its Best Road \* Louisbourg, Nova Scotia \*  
Phona 733\*2877 Look for us enroute to the Lighthouse! MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT  
OF CAPE BRETON COUNTY Welconfies everyone to take part in celebrating  
COUNTY DAYS the whole month of July ' / / //A Watch for listings of events. "County  
Days" is coordinated by the Recreation Commission. Let's celebrate "County Days"  
together. Warden&Councilors Entertainment Is the key to an of enjoyment, and  
this major touring program will satisfy every entertainment taste. Watch for  
PERFORMANCE '82- SPOTLIGHT TOUR, and let us entertain you. A PROGRAM OF  
Department of Culture Hon. R. Fisher Hudson, Q.C, IAinister (57)