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a new one, they sealed off the one behind them. That way the air circulates further down into the mine. They sealed them with steel and concrete. (The tunnels at Westray run more than a mile underground. The explosion blew out all eleven major crosscuts. They had to be re-sealed, one at a time. No air was get? ting anywhere near where any of the vic? tims might be, or even far enough down to make a rescue possible. (That's where George Muise begins. On Sat? urday afternoon, his team gets its first look at the massive destruction under? ground.) George: We got our gear onto the transpor? tation system which was a tractor at this time. And we were told to report to the fresh-air base, which at that time was at 5 crosscut. As we headed down through the mine, we realized that this was a major explosion. At each one of the crosscuts, any material that was in the crosscut was blown from Number 2 deep over into Number 1 deep. This blocked off the travelway every 500 feet with huge pieces of con? crete, twisted metal, H-beam, 4-inch wa- terpipe. And just about every piece of ma? terial or machinery that was in that crosscut was now blown out into the road? way in Number 1 tunnel, which made it very hard for the mine rescue teams to travel down into the main tunnels. At this time there was machinery in place. And from Number 1 crosscut to Number 5 crosscut there had to have been a path "Enjoy superb dining in a re[a?(ing & [u?(urioiis atmospfiere SPECIALIZING IN CHINESE CUISINE Canadian Dishes also available FULLY LICENSED TAKE OUT & DELIVERY ORDERS Major Credit Cards Accepted 355 Charlotte Street Downtowr' Sydney Tel: 539-7775 Open daily 11:00 am | | | | | enough room, real? ly, to get the tractor around the debris that was there. On the way down into the mine, somewhere around 3 crosscut, the tractor that we were driving on blew a rear tire. And it gave some of the guys guite a jump. I mean, here we are travel? ling into a mine that has just seen a ma? jor explosion, and all of a sudden we hear a big bang. We realized that it was a tire, and we had to unload our gear and walk from 3 crosscut down to 5, to the fresh-air base. At the Number 5 crosscut, we checked in with the coordinator at the site. He in? formed us that there was a team at Number 6 crosscut building a temporary seal. And we would be required to continue on at Number 7 crosscut and build a seal there. I gave the order for the team to go under ox? ygen. And they placed their BG174's in oper? ating condition, which I had to check for each team member. The BG174 is the machine that most mine rescue teams wear. It's a ma? chine that weighs roughly 34 pounds when it's full. It can last either three hours or four hours. At that point we were using ca? nisters that lasted three hours. It carries a supply of oxygen with it. And as you breathe out, the air is recycled and the canister inside the machine scrubs the carbon dioxide from your breath and recirculates the oxygen. Plus it's replen? ished by a small bottle of oxygen which gives the machine its life of three hours. It's a fairly compact machine; it is like a metal backpack on your back. There's two hoses that leave the machine that come up and connect to the facepiece. Once the facepiece is on, communication and visi? bility is pretty limited.



Expecially when you only have the light that you're wear? ing on the helmet--the miner's helmet. Once the team was prepared and I checked each team member to insure that his ma? chine was in good working condition and that he himself was prepared to undertake the task that we had at hand, we left Num? ber 5 crosscut, which was the last area where the debris that was blocking the MciyflO??Kti McM Over 70 Stores & Services Every Last Thursday of Each Month Is SENIORS DAY Come & Enjoy Tea & Cake in the Mall Congratulations on 20 Successful Years! 800 Grand Lake Road, Sydney, N.S. B1P 6S9