

01 STATEMENT UNDER OATH
02 OF
03 RANDALL HELMICK
04
05
06 Taken pursuant to Notice by Miranda
07 D. Elkins, a Court Reporter and
08 Notary Public in and for the State of
09 West Virginia, at United States
10 District Court, 500 West Pike Street,
11 Clarksburg, West Virginia, on
12 Thursday, January 26th, 2006, at 2:58
13 p.m.

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01 I N D E X

02
03 INTRODUCTION 8 - 16
04 WITNESS: RANDALL HELMICK
05 QUESTIONS
06 By Mr. O'Donnell 16 - 34
07 By Mr. Mills 34 - 35
08 By Mr. O'Donnell 35 - 51
09 CERTIFICATE 52

10
11

12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

7

01	EXHIBIT PAGE		
02			PAGE
03	NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	IDENTIFIED
04	One	Map of Mine	37
05			
06			
07			
08			
09			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

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16
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18
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20
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01 P R O C E E D I N G S

02 -----

03 MR. O'DONNELL:

04 My name is Joe
05 O'Donnell. I'm an accident
06 investigator with the Mine
07 Safety & Health
08 Administration, an agency of
09 the United States Department
10 of Labor. With me is Bob
11 Wilson with the office of the
12 Solicitor, and Brian Mills
13 with the West Virginia Office
14 of Miners' Health, Safety &
15 Training.

16 I have been assigned to

17 conduct an investigation into
18 the accident that occurred at
19 the Sago Mine on January the
20 2nd, 2006, in which 12 miners
21 died and one was injured.

22 The investigation is
23 being conducted by MSHA and
24 the West Virginia Office of
25 Miners' Health, Safety &

9

01 Training to gather information
02 to determine the cause of the
03 accident. And these
04 interviews are an important
05 part of that investigation.

06 At this time the
07 accident investigation team
08 intends to interview a number
09 of people to discuss anything
10 that may be relevant to the
11 cause of the accident. After
12 the investigation is
13 completed, MSHA will issue a
14 written report detailing the
15 nature and causes of the
16 accident. MSHA's accident
17 reports are made available to
18 the public in the hope that
19 greater awareness about the

20 causes of accidents can reduce
21 their occurrence in the
22 future.

23 Information obtained
24 through witness interviews is
25 frequently included in these

10

01 reports. Your statement may
02 also be used in other
03 enforcement proceedings.

04 I'd like to thank you
05 in advance for your appearance
06 here. We appreciate your
07 assistance in this
08 investigation. The
09 willingness of miners and mine
10 operators to work with us is
11 critical to our goal of making
12 the nation's mines safer.

13 We understand the
14 difficulty for you in
15 discussing the events that
16 took place, and we greatly
17 appreciate your efforts to
18 help us understand what
19 happened.

20 This interview with Mr.
21 Randy Helmick is being

22 conducted under Section 103(a)
23 of the Federal Mine Safety &
24 Health Act of 1977, as part of
25 an investigation by the Mine

11

01 Safety & Health Administration
02 and the West Virginia Office
03 of Miners' Health, Safety &
04 Training into the conditions,
05 events and circumstances
06 surrounding the fatalities
07 that occurred at the Sago
08 Mine, owned by International
09 Coal Group in Buckhannon, West
10 Virginia on January the 2nd,
11 2006.

12 This interview is being
13 conducted at the U.S. District
14 Courthouse in Clarksburg, West
15 Virginia on January 26th,
16 2006. Questioning will be
17 conducted by representatives
18 of MSHA and the Office of
19 Miners' Health, Safety &
20 Training. This is not an
21 adversarial proceeding.
22 Therefore cross examination
23 will not be permitted.

24 Mr. Helmick, the

25 interview will begin by my

12

01 asking you a series of
02 questions. If you do not
03 understand a question, please
04 ask me to rephrase it. Feel
05 free at any time to clarify
06 any statements that you make
07 in response to the questions.

08 After we have finished
09 asking questions, you will
10 have an opportunity to make a
11 statement and provide us with
12 any other information that you
13 believe may be important.

14 If at any time after
15 the interview you recall any
16 additional information that
17 you believe may be useful in
18 the investigation, please
19 contact Mr. Richard Gates at
20 the phone number or e-mail
21 address provided to you.

22 Your statement is
23 completely voluntary. You may
24 refuse to answer any question
25 and you may terminate your

13

01 interview at any time. If you
02 need a break for any reason,
03 please let me know.

04 A court reporter will
05 record your interview and will
06 later produce a written
07 transcript of the interview.

08 Please try and respond to all
09 questions verbally since the
10 court reporter cannot record
11 your non-verbal responses.

12 Also, please try to keep your
13 voice up. Copies of the
14 written transcript will be
15 available at a later time.

16 If any part of your
17 statement is based not on your
18 own first-hand knowledge, but
19 on information that you
20 learned from someone else,
21 please let us know. Please
22 answer each question as fully
23 as you can, including any
24 information you have learned
25 from someone else. We may not

14

01 ask the right questions to
02 learn the information that you
03 have, so don't feel limited by

04 the precise question asked.
05 If you have any information
06 about the subject area of a
07 question, please provide us
08 with that information.

09 At this time, Mr.
10 Mills, do you have anything
11 that you'd like to add on
12 behalf of the State of West
13 Virginia?

14 MR. MILLS:

15 Mr. Helmick, the West
16 Virginia Office of Miners'
17 Health, Safety & Training is
18 conducting this interview
19 session jointly with MSHA and
20 are in agreement with the
21 procedures outlined by Mr.
22 O'Donnell for these interviews
23 that will be conducted here
24 today.

25 But the Director

15

01 reserves the right, if
02 necessary, to call or subpoena
03 witnesses or require the
04 production of any record,
05 document, photograph or other

06 relevant materials necessary
07 to conduct this investigation.

08 MR. O'DONNELL:

09 Mr. Helmick, you're
10 permitted to have a
11 representative with you during
12 this interview, and you may
13 consult with your
14 representative at any time.
15 You may designate any person
16 to be your representative. Do
17 you have a representative with
18 you?

19 MR. HELMICK:

20 No.

21 MR. O'DONNELL:

22 Do you have any
23 questions regarding the way
24 that we're going to have the
25 interview?

16

01 MR. HELMICK:

02 No.

03 MR. O'DONNELL:

04 Okay. Will you please
05 swear him in.

06 -----

07 RANDALL HELMICK, HAVING FIRST BEEN
08 DULY SWORN, TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

09 -----

10 BY MR. O'DONNELL:

11 Q. Okay. Could you please state
12 your full name and spell your last
13 name?

14 A. Randall Helmick,
15 H-E-L-M-I-C-K.

16 Q. And your home address and
17 telephone number?

18 A. [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED]

21 Q. Are you appearing here
22 voluntarily?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Randy, how many years do you
25 have in the coal mine?

17

01 A. Like 21.

02 Q. And how many years here at
03 Sago?

04 A. Well, with Anker and Sago,
05 March will be four years.

06 Q. So you've been there four
07 total?

08 A. Uh-huh (yes).

09 Q. Is that continuous, or was it
10 broken? Did you work somewhere

11 before and come back?
12 A. In between them, no.
13 Q. Okay. And what's your present
14 position?
15 A. Roof bolter.
16 Q. And have you been a roof
17 bolter for the four years that you've
18 been there?
19 A. Yeah.
20 Q. So the whole time you've
21 worked in that section?
22 A. Spruce and --- I was working
23 for Spruce, then come to Sago.
24 Q. But you've been in the Sago
25 Mine for four years?

18

01 A. No.
02 Q. How many years?
03 A. We come over there when we was
04 in Truby Run. And they started up
05 the Truby Run, probably a year, a
06 year and a half.
07 Q. Okay. So you've been there a
08 year and a half?
09 A. Yeah.
10 Q. Okay. Have you done any other
11 kind of work there besides roof
12 bolting?
13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. And what kind of mining
15 certificates do you have?

16 A. Just underground.

17 Q. I'm sorry?

18 A. Just underground card.

19 Q. Okay. In the State of West
20 Virginia?

21 A. Uh-huh (yes).

22 Q. Any other certifications in
23 any other states?

24 A. No.

25 Q. And who's your boss?

19

01 A. Owie Jones.

02 Q. And how long has he been your
03 boss?

04 A. I think since August.

05 Q. Okay. And what time do you
06 usually start your shift?

07 A. 6:00.

08 Q. And I'm going to let you go
09 and tell your story now, from the
10 time you got to work until the time
11 you left the property. I'm not going
12 to interrupt you.

13 A. From the time I pulled in the
14 parking lot?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. I pulled in the parking lot
17 and got my dinner bucket and water
18 jug, and went into the dressing room.
19 I talked to some of the guys and got
20 dressed, and went over to the light
21 room to get my light. I checked in,
22 talked to some of the other guys. I
23 went and got three steels, drill
24 steels, and it was about time to go.
25 And we went down and got on

20

01 the mantrip. And it was too small.
02 I had to get back out to get the rest
03 of the crew in. He swapped the
04 mantrip then. And we started under.
05 When we got up to the first
06 left switch, the guy that was sitting
07 on the outside on the inby, he got
08 out to throw the switch. As soon as
09 he got back in, that's when we
10 encountered it. It just come right
11 at you. I don't know what it looked
12 like. I closed my eyes and ducked
13 down in the seat. I know there was
14 debris hitting you, a lot of wind.
15 And at a point I felt some heat. I
16 put my hand up over, like beside my
17 face and stuff, and I could feel like
18 heat on my hand, on the back of my

19 neck.

20 And then when the dust ---
21 when you didn't feel the wind and
22 stuff, you know, we got --- we
23 started talking and stuff, you know,
24 get out. You couldn't see anything,
25 it was so dusty. It blowed my hat

21

01 off. I didn't know where it was at.
02 I got ahold of a light cord and
03 pulled it back, and my hat was on the
04 cord. It stayed attached, but the
05 headpiece, it already took it off my
06 hat. I slapped it on and we got out
07 of the trip. Got together there.
08 And we started down the track. You
09 couldn't hardly see.

10 And you could see --- what you
11 could see, you could see some it
12 looked like blocks and stuff like
13 that laying in the track. I don't
14 know how far we went down before we
15 went through the stopping on the
16 intake side. And after we got there,
17 we got together there and, you know,
18 we started out. It was me and two
19 other guys helping another guy. He
20 had some problems with walking and

21 stuff, and we stayed back with him to
22 make sure, you know, he got out.

23 From there until where we come
24 back out, I don't know how many
25 blocks we went, I don't know what

22

01 block we come out at. And they
02 picked us up there and brought us on
03 out. When we got outside, I went to
04 the light room, you know, to put my
05 light stuff on charge. And they gave
06 us a paper, you know, to sign, sign
07 your name, you know, to see who all
08 was out. I put my light on the
09 charge and I checked out. Then I
10 went to the dressing room. A group
11 of us stayed at the dressing room.
12 You know, hung around there.

13 And then some of the family
14 members was coming in. The dressing
15 room was split, you know. It's got a
16 wall, like, in the middle. You can
17 dress on both sides. We was over on
18 the one side and the family members
19 come in there, we moved over in the
20 other side, you know, out of their
21 way. And there's a guy there, he
22 asked us to step back with the family
23 and have prayer. We stayed back

24 there with the family and we had
25 prayer with them. We stepped back

23

01 over on the other side.

02 We hung around there, then
03 they --- I don't know if it was gas
04 or what, you could smell it out in
05 the parking lot and stuff, and they
06 told us to, you know, to leave the
07 parking lot. And we went down to the
08 sawmill plant. We was in a room
09 there. We stayed there for a little
10 bit, and I believe it was the press,
11 they had put them a place. We left
12 there and we went to --- over to the
13 tipple, because they weren't there.
14 And we stayed at the tipple. And
15 they was coming by --- like, when
16 they found out something, they'd tell
17 the family members, and they'd stop
18 by and tell us and then go to the
19 reporters.

20 I stayed there, and I got home
21 probably about 8:00 or 8:30 that
22 night, cleaned up. Well, I half
23 showered at the plant and you know,
24 finished cleaning up at home. And it
25 was on the news. I started watching

01 the news, and I watched it until all
02 I could. Then I went back to the
03 plant the next day, and I probably
04 got there 9:00 or 9:30, and I stayed
05 there to I'd say around 6:00 or
06 something like that, and I come home.

07 When we encountered the wind
08 and everything, we got off. What you
09 could see on the trip, there wasn't
10 no --- I mean, we had our buckets
11 sitting on the trip, you know, like
12 the sanders part. We had our buckets
13 there, and we couldn't feel no
14 buckets or drill steels or nothing
15 there.

16 Q. Cleaned everything off?

17 A. Yeah. The only thing I had,
18 I had my water jug, plus it's round,
19 and it rolls around, and I had it up
20 front with me.

21 Q. Where were you sitting in the
22 mantrip, Randy?

23 A. On the inby in.

24 Q. Inby in facing?

25 A. Facing.

01 Q. So you got hit right in the
02 face with it?

03 A. Yeah.

04 Q. You said that one guy got out
05 threw the switch, got back in, and
06 you got hit --- and you got hit with
07 the full force of it?

08 A. Yeah. It was --- the way we
09 was sitting, there was three sitting
10 with their backs to it and four
11 sitting up facing it.

12 Q. Did you hear anything?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Nothing? Just wind hitting
15 you, debris?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. What about smoke?

18 A. You could smell something,
19 but ---.

20 Q. What did it smell like?

21 A. I don't know.

22 Q. Was it different than
23 something like you smelled before,
24 not burning coal?

25 A. No. It puts your mind of ---

01 to me, it was like --- you've smelled
02 smoke off a shotgun ---

03 Q. Yeah.

04 A. --- after you shoot it. It

05 kind of smelled like that.

06 Q. Like gunpowder?

07 A. Yeah. But I mean, I don't

08 know --- you know, it had ---.

09 Q. Something you haven't smelled

10 before?

11 A. Yeah, I never did smell it

12 before.

13 Q. And you say you felt heat?

14 A. Uh-huh (yes).

15 Q. What about flame, did you ever

16 see a fireball or ---?

17 A. No. When it started, like

18 wind started, you know, to hit you

19 and debris started hitting you, I

20 turned my head --- I closed my eyes,

21 turned my head and ---.

22 Q. You went down on the floor?

23 A. Well, I went down as far as I

24 could against the guy I was sitting

25 beside of. He was --- you know, he

27

01 went down too.

02 Q. Did you get hurt at all?

03 A. The only thing it was, it was

04 like little pieces, you know, hitting

05 you and stuff, but I mean, hurt-wise,

06 no.

07 Q. How long did it last?

08 A. It seemed like it was for a
09 while, but I don't know.

10 Q. Did you have a methane
11 detector on you, or a detector at
12 all?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Do you remember if anybody who
15 had a detector, if it went into
16 alarm?

17 A. The boss had one.

18 Q. Do you know if it was beeping?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. It was beeping?

21 A. Yeah, it went off.

22 Q. Right away?

23 A. I think after we got out of
24 the trip to start down, it started
25 beeping.

28

01 Q. Do you remember if Owen made
02 any phone calls?

03 A. Yeah.

04 Q. When did he make a phone call?

05 A. When we got to the phone. It
06 was like down from the trip.

07 Q. Did he try to call on the
08 trolley phone, or was that just a
09 lost cause?

10 A. I don't know. I don't know if
11 he hollered or ---.

12 Q. How far was the phone from the
13 mantrip where you stopped?

14 A. I don't think it's too far.

15 Q. Okay. Do you know what he
16 said?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Did you hear any other
19 conversations on the phone or the
20 radio or anything like that after
21 that?

22 A. No.

23 Q. No?

24 A. No.

25 Q. So you got out of the mantrip

29

01 and everybody was --- I guess there
02 was some confusion?

03 A. Uh-huh (yes).

04 Q. Was there some reason why you
05 didn't take the mantrip back out?

06 A. We figured that the mine
07 blowed, and you know, if you go in
08 with the mantrip, you know, throw
09 another spark or something, you know
10 ---.

11 Q. So you didn't even consider
12 it?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. Did you put your SCSR

15 on?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Not at all?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Did anybody put them on?

20 A. Yeah. I was still breathing,

21 and we didn't know what was going to

22 be laying in front of us, a second

23 explosion or what, you know. We was

24 holding off a little bit. And like I

25 said, you know, we was helping

30

01 another guy there. You know, if you

02 need it, you know, you could have it.

03 Q. So he had his on?

04 A. Yeah.

05 Q. Okay. Did you know if anybody

06 had any trouble getting the thing

07 started, putting it on or having any

08 breathing problems with it?

09 A. Not as far as I know.

10 Q. They all work pretty good?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay. So the whole crew ---

13 who was running the show? Was it

14 Owen?

15 A. Yeah. He helped us get to the
16 intake.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And he talked to us there and
19 stuff.

20 Q. And did he travel with you
21 outside?

22 A. No. His brother was in there.

23 Q. So then you guys continued
24 down the intake?

25 A. Yeah.

31

01 Q. And what caused you to go back
02 onto the track?

03 A. There was some in front of us.
04 They said that they encountered fresh
05 air down there. And we went to the
06 track.

07 Q. And did you go straight out?

08 A. Yeah.

09 Q. Okay. Now, when the explosion
10 happened, is there anything that you
11 can tell me that I didn't ask you
12 that you might come up with that was
13 --- any part of this that we didn't
14 ask? Something that you recall.

15 A. Okay. Just like a normal
16 morning. You know, you just go into
17 the section. You got to the switch,

18 and you know, you turn to go left,
19 and right there it was.

20 Q. So outside, did you require
21 any kind of treatment?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. What was wrong?

24 A. They come around and --- I
25 don't know what you call it, put the

32

01 thing on your finger to check your
02 oxygen. And they asked to see if you
03 was okay, you know, if you had any
04 injuries. And if you --- and they
05 said if you had any difficulty
06 breathing, they would give you
07 oxygen.

08 Q. Did you require any of that?

09 A. No.

10 Q. Did you ever get sick from it?

11 A. Chest. It hurts, you know.

12 Q. Are you still sick from it?

13 A. It seems like you're a little
14 bit short-winded and stuff. I was
15 going to go to the doctor, but ---
16 you know, be checked to see.

17 Q. You need to if you got a

18 problem. What about the couple of

19 days right after that? Did you have

20 any kind of flu-like symptoms or
21 anything like that?
22 A. Well, your nose burns. It
23 feels like your nose is kind of raw.
24 And my eyes burnt for a couple of
25 days. Ear, when I went around this

33

01 way, it went in this ear, and it
02 feels like --- it feels like you can
03 stick your whole finger in your ear,
04 you know, and stuff. It was like
05 that for a few days.

06 Q. So did you require --- did
07 they have to take you to the
08 hospital?

09 A. No.

10 Q. So you went --- did you walk
11 out or did someone drive you up?

12 A. No, I walked out.

13 Q. When you were out in the
14 dispatcher's shanty or anyplace in
15 that area, was there any
16 conversations that you heard,
17 communications between people in the
18 mine and out of the mine, and ---?

19 A. No. We was just --- you know,
20 it was close friends that we lost.

21 Q. I'm sure.

22 A. And we was worried, you know,

23 about them. We were hoping, you
24 know, they'd be out. You know, what
25 could you do to, you know, to help

34

01 them.

02 Q. Did you play any part in any
03 of the decision-making that was done
04 by the command center, or ---

05 A. No.

06 Q. --- assist in any way?

07 A. No.

08 Q. You just went to the
09 bathhouse, stayed with your crew and
10 kind of supported each other and then
11 left?

12 A. Yeah.

13 MR. O'DONNELL:

14 Brian, do you have any
15 questions about that?

16 BY MR. MILLS:

17 Q. Just the color of smoke, was
18 there any color you noticed?

19 A. No. The stuff was coming at
20 you, and from what I've seen of this
21 stuff, it was just like brown.

22 Q. Brown?

23 A. You know, it was like a bunch
24 of dust.

25 Q. Road dust?

35

01 A. Yeah.

02 MR. MILLS:

03 Okay. Oh, one other.

04 BY MR. MILLS:

05 Q. Do you have any mine rescue

06 experience, mine rescue team?

07 A. No.

08 BY MR. O'DONNELL:

09 Q. So you say Owen's detector was

10 going off. Did it stay in alarm all

11 the way down to the intake?

12 A. I heard it go off. I don't

13 know how far it went in --- you know,

14 stayed in alarm. The main thing was,

15 you know, to get to fresh air, and

16 you know, get everybody out.

17 Q. Was there some reason why you

18 didn't put them on?

19 A. Like I said, I didn't put mine

20 on because I was still breathing.

21 You know, I didn't feel like I was

22 having any difficulty of breathing.

23 And we didn't know if, you know, we

24 was going to have a second explosion

25 or what.

36

01 Q. And you were saving it?

02 A. Yes.

03 Q. Okay. Did you feel anything
04 else, a second pressure change,
05 or ---?

06 A. No.

07 Q. Okay. So you didn't don your
08 SCSR, but you saw other people that
09 did. Let me look through my list
10 here.

11 A. That's all right.

12 Q. You said you worked at the
13 mine for a year and a half?

14 A. Uh-huh (yes).

15 Q. The area where you were
16 working in, One Left, did you work in
17 any other areas of the mine?

18 A. They brought us and some of
19 the crew over when they was going
20 through Truby Run. And we drove
21 straight up from Truby Run.

22 Q. That would be in the mains up
23 past Two Left?

24 A. Yeah. It would be straight
25 ahead up there.

37

01 Q. And did you work that section
02 until it was worked out?

03 A. No. Did you mean the mains,

04 or ---?

05 Q. Let's go over to the map. It
06 might be a little bit easier for you.
07 We're going to say this is Exhibit
08 One.

09 (Helmick Exhibit One
10 Number marked for
11 identification.)

12 BY MR. O'DONNELL:

13 Q. And this is the first Left,
14 second Left, and this is the Two Left
15 seal area. Did you say you worked in
16 that area?

17 A. When I was with Truby Run up
18 through and then they swapped us
19 around. And for --- drove this out.
20 I wasn't there. They swapped us
21 around. And that's when they drove
22 this, and I hardly ---.

23 Q. You weren't involved in any of
24 the mining there?

25 A. Up in here at the seal area,

38

01 no.

02 Q. Okay. Did you ever work ---
03 were you familiar with the seals when
04 they put them in?

05 A. No.

06 Q. Did you ever work in that

07 area, other than when you were just
08 mining the mains?
09 A. No.
10 Q. Did you hear any talk of any
11 of the people when they were building
12 the seals?
13 A. No.
14 Q. Any methane, talk of methane?
15 A. No.
16 Q. What about when you're roof
17 bolting in One Left, what's the most
18 methane you usually get?
19 A. You get about one to two-
20 tenths.
21 Q. That's it?
22 A. Yeah.
23 Q. So it's not a problem?
24 A. No.
25 Q. It's there, but it's --- okay.

39

01 Did you say you had --- or do you
02 have mine examiner papers?
03 A. No.
04 Q. Just ---.
05 A. Just underground.
06 Q. Okay. So you don't do any
07 examinations or pre-shifts, or ---?
08 A. No.

09 Q. Have you ever cut into any gas
10 wells or boreholes?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Have you noticed any --- when
13 you're bolting, do you notice holes
14 in the roof, or ---?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Did you hear of any talk of
17 anybody holing through anything?

18 A. No.

19 Q. We're going to take a break;
20 okay. About a five-minute break. If
21 you smoke, go have one.

22 SHORT BREAK TAKEN

23 BY MR. O'DONNELL:

24 Q. Before you went into the mine,
25 you said you were walking around and

40

01 talking to the guys, having a cup of
02 coffee and whatever. Did you happen
03 to go over to the dispatch shanty at
04 all?

05 A. Well, the light room --- the
06 dispatch shanty's on one end, and the
07 light room is straight --- right
08 there in the middle and you check in
09 there.

10 Q. Did you notice, was there any
11 way for you to tell if the belts were

12 running?

13 A. I don't know.

14 Q. Do you know if any of the
15 alarms had gone on or off, or ---?

16 A. I don't know.

17 Q. Who's the dispatcher?

18 A. I think it was Flea.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I don't know his name.

21 Q. We know his name by now.

22 Everybody told us. Okay. Anyway,
23 what I'm going to do now is ask you
24 some training questions. Do you
25 remember when your last annual

41

01 retraining class was that you had?

02 A. No. It's been --- I don't
03 remember when it was.

04 Q. Was it last year?

05 A. I ain't for sure when it was.

06 Q. Okay. Well, let me just ask
07 you this. Since you've been at Sago,
08 have you had annual retraining, the
09 eight-hour training?

10 A. At Sago, no.

11 Q. No? And when would be the
12 last one that you had; was it over at
13 --- was it Spruce?

14 A. I had one at Spruce. We had
15 like a meeting. We went over the
16 maps and stuff.
17 Q. When you first started?
18 A. It was just a little after.
19 Q. Okay. But what about, let's
20 say, the first day that you came over
21 there, did anyone go over the
22 escapeways, roof control plan,
23 ventilation?
24 A. Yeah. They went over the
25 escapeways.

42

01 Q. The what?
02 A. The escapeways.
03 Q. Okay. So how long did that
04 take, a half a day?
05 A. I ain't for sure.
06 Q. Who gave you that training?
07 A. Johnny.
08 Q. Johnny?
09 A. Stemple.
10 Q. John Stemple. So your first
11 day over at Sago, you did have newly
12 employed experienced miner training.
13 Did you sign the form, and did they
14 sign it and all that?
15 A. I think.
16 Q. Okay. And the last time that

17 you had the eight hours over at
18 Spruce, and that was how many years
19 ago?

20 A. I ain't for sure how many
21 years it was.

22 Q. Okay. Other than that kind of
23 --- the training --- what other
24 training have you had at Sago?

25 A. None.

43

01 Q. Nothing extra?

02 A. No.

03 Q. Okay. Did they ever go over
04 the emergency evacuation plan?

05 A. Uh-huh (yes).

06 Q. Who's in charge, who's the
07 responsible person; did they tell you
08 that?

09 A. You're talking about the
10 one ---?

11 Q. Evacuation plan.

12 A. It would be Owie and Al.

13 Q. And what about the escapeways,
14 did they show you where they were at?

15 A. They got them marked with
16 reflectors.

17 Q. Did they ever do any kind of
18 hands-on SCSR training?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. When?

21 A. When we had the training.

22 Q. So that would have been a

23 couple years ago?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. You haven't had any SCSR

44

01 training for that period of time?

02 A. No.

03 Q. Whenever you did have it, did

04 you have to put it on?

05 A. Yeah.

06 Q. Okay.

07 A. You had to put it all together

08 and set it down. You had to go

09 through it.

10 Q. Okay. But not yet at Sago?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay. Whenever you did have

13 the training, did they tell you when

14 to put the SCSR on?

15 A. Encounter smoke.

16 Q. Okay. Have you had any

17 escapeway drills at Sago where they

18 walked you out of the intake

19 escapeway? I know you drive in the

20 track every day, but what about

21 walking with the boss out?

22 A. It's been a while.

23 Q. Do you recall anybody ever
24 doing it in your section, just at
25 Sago?

45

01 A. I think some did. For who it
02 was, I don't know.

03 Q. Okay. What about fire drills?

04 A. For the last one, I don't know
05 when it was.

06 Q. Did you have any since you've
07 been at Sago?

08 A. I think we had one, but for
09 the time when it was, I don't
10 remember.

11 Q. Okay. And at that time, did
12 they give you like a job, somebody
13 goes on the phone, somebody gets rock
14 dust; is that what it was, a
15 simulated fire drill?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. You don't know --- you
18 haven't --- have you had one at Sago?

19 A. We had one. Like I said, I
20 don't know when, how long ago it's
21 been.

22 Q. Okay. What about smoke
23 searches? Have you ever been smoke

24 searched?

25 A. Yeah.

46

01 Q. And how often is that done?

02 A. They do it --- for how often,

03 I don't know. But they checked for

04 smokers.

05 Q. Have you ever observed anybody

06 smoking underground?

07 A. No.

08 Q. Have you ever found smoking

09 articles?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Who usually gives you your

12 smoke search?

13 A. Owie, he'd give it. Al.

14 Q. And how do they do it?

15 A. They like pat you down.

16 Q. Do they?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Do you recall when the last

19 one was that you had?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Was it more than a week?

22 A. It was more than a week.

23 Q. More than two?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. More than three?

47

01 A. Yeah.

02 Q. More than a month?

03 A. I don't know when it was.

04 Q. You can't remember when it

05 was?

06 A. No.

07 Q. It was that long ago?

08 A. I don't recall when the last

09 one was.

10 Q. Okay. Just be honest. That's

11 all. If you can't remember, you

12 can't remember. That's fine.

13 I look at them to see if they

14 have any more questions.

15 A. I was looking to see who I was

16 going to talk to.

17 Q. Has anyone offered you

18 anything or made a promise to you in

19 exchange for your appearance today?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay. Randy, do you have

22 anything you would like to add that

23 may be relevant to the investigation?

24 A. I would just like to know what

25 caused it.

48

01 Q. So do we. We'll find out,

02 hopefully.

03 A. That'd be nice.

04 Q. And we're all learning to
05 become safer for it.

06 MR. O'DONNELL:

07 On behalf of MSHA, I
08 want to thank you for
09 appearing and answering the
10 questions today. Your
11 cooperation is very important
12 to the investigation as we
13 work to determine the cause of
14 the accident.

15 We ask that you not
16 discuss your testimony with
17 any person who may have
18 already been interviewed, or
19 who may be interviewed in the
20 future. This will ensure that
21 we obtain everybody's
22 independent recollection of
23 the events surrounding the
24 accident.

25 After questioning other

49

01 witnesses, we may call you if
02 we have any follow-up
03 questions that we feel we may
04 need to ask you. If at any
05 time you have additional

06 information regarding the
07 accident that you'd like to
08 provide us, please contact us
09 at the contact information
10 that we gave you.

11 The Mine Act provides
12 certain protections to miners
13 who provide information to
14 MSHA, and as a result are
15 treated adversely. If at any
16 time you believe that you've
17 been treated unfairly because
18 of your cooperation in this
19 investigation, you should
20 immediately notify MSHA.

21 If you wish, you may
22 now go back over any answer
23 that you have given us during
24 this interview, and also make
25 any statement that you'd like

50

01 to make.

02 A. No.

03 MR. O'DONNELL:

04 Again, thank you for
05 your cooperation. We
06 appreciate it. Go ahead, you
07 got something to say? Go

08 ahead.

09 A. On the report and stuff, ---

10 MR. O'DONNELL:

11 Yes.

12 A. --- do you get one?

13 MR. O'DONNELL:

14 Yes. You have to

15 request ---.

16 ATTORNEY WILSON:

17 The report that MSHA

18 completes?

19 A. Yeah.

20 ATTORNEY WILSON:

21 Or are you talking

22 about the transcript?

23 A. The transcript.

24 ATTORNEY WILSON:

25 The transcript.

01 A. Yeah.

02 ATTORNEY WILSON:

03 Yes. If you send in a

04 letter to the information

05 there, if you send them a

06 letter requesting a copy of

07 the transcript, that will be

08 provided after the

09 investigation's complete.

10 A. I know some take --- you know,

11 it'll be a while. That's fine.

12 MR. O'DONNELL:

13 Okay. Thank you again.

14

15

16 * * * * *

17 SWORN STATEMENT

18 CONCLUDED AT 3:39 P.M.

19 * * * * *

20

21

22

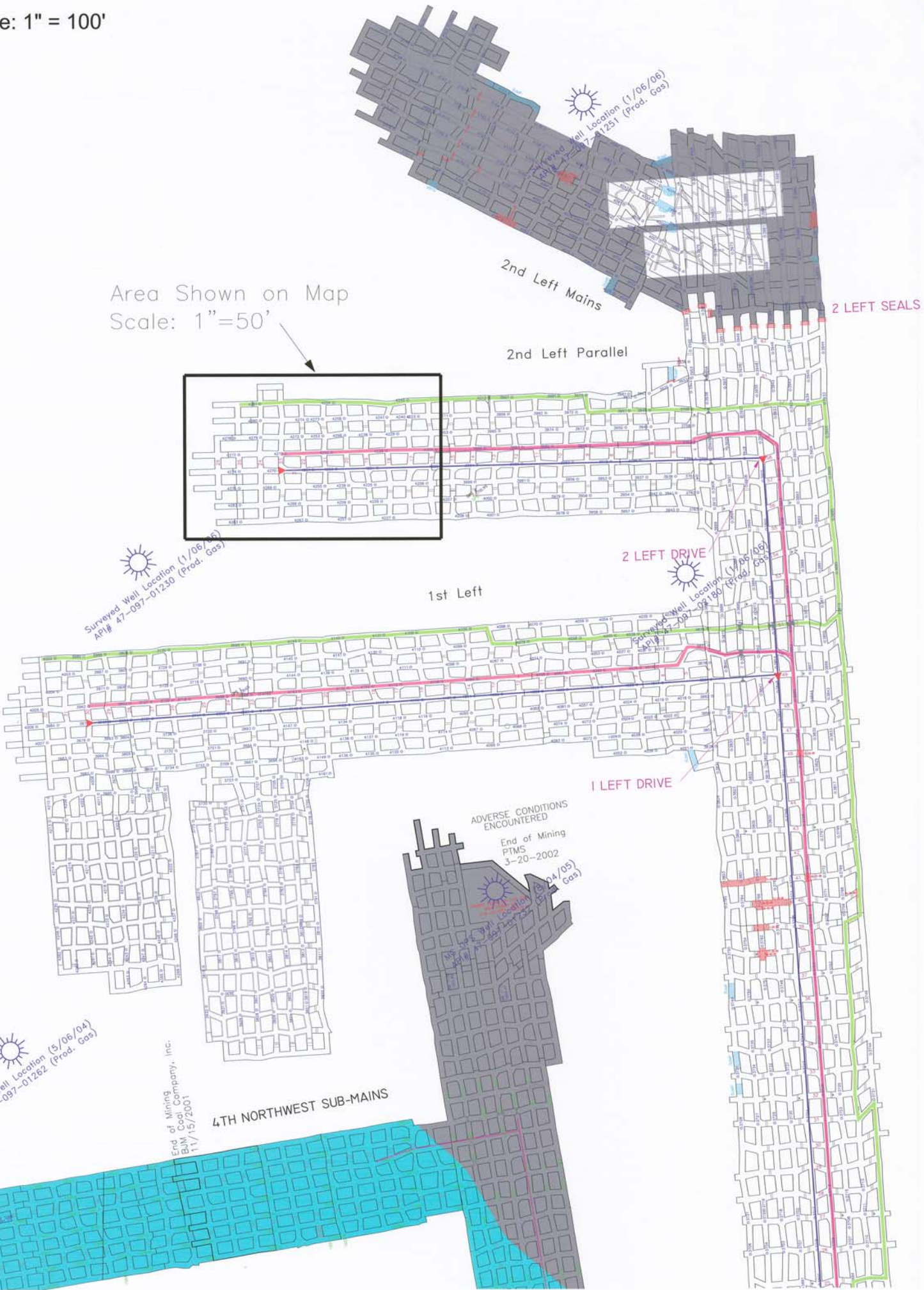
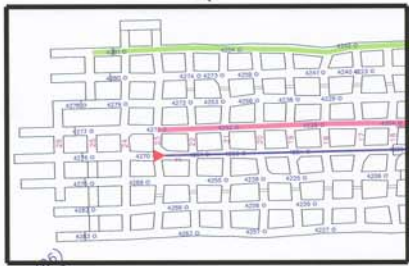
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24

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Scale: 1" = 100'

Area Shown on Map
Scale: 1"=50'



Surveilled Well Location (1/06/06)
API# 47-097-01251 (Prod. Gas)

Surveilled Well Location (1/06/06)
API# 47-097-01230 (Prod. Gas)

Surveilled Well Location (1/06/06)
API# 47-097-01180 (Prod. Gas)

ADVERSE CONDITIONS ENCOUNTERED
End of Mining
PTMS
3-20-2002

Surveilled Well Location (1/06/06)
API# 47-097-01252 (Prod. Gas)

MG GPS Well Location (5/06/04)
API# 47-097-01262 (Prod. Gas)

End of Mining
BAM Cog Company, Inc.
11/15/2001

4TH NORTHWEST SUB-MAINS