

# Lax management named as cause of mining disaster

United Press International  
PALMER, Tenn. — Federal investigators say lax management and a coal miner's "stupid mistake" of lighting a cigarette caused Tennessee's worst mining disaster — an explosion that killed 13 men last December.

A U.S. Mine, Safety and Health Administration report released Tuesday said Grundy Mining Co. officials refused to evacuate workers from their No. 1 mine despite repeated warnings of a lethal pocket of methane gas.

The report also cited the company for failure to ventilate the mine section properly. Also, the company did not perform the legally required pre-shift checks of miners for smoking materials, the report said.

The explosion was ignited when a coal miner flicked on a cigarette lighter.

"To smoke underground is a stupid violation of the law," MSHA spokesman Frank O'Gorman said. "It is a stupid mistake because they were in an atmosphere of grave danger."

"But you could not have had the explosion unless there was a failure on the part of management to properly ventilate the mine."

Mine officials were warned at least three times of very dangerous concentrations of methane gas beginning as early as five hours before the explosion, the report said.

The report said a safety lamp, designed to show the level of methane concentration, flared "like a Christmas tree" in a test before the explosion.

O'Gorman said two other tests with hand-held methane readers showed 5 percent concentrations of gas. Federal law

requires mine operators to evacuate workers if readings show concentrations of more than 1.5 percent.

"Any time you have methane gas remotely in that range you get the miners out in a hurry," O'Gorman said.

Officials stopped production while they worked to ventilate the mine, but they ordered workers to stay in the area, O'Gorman said.

He said investigators were unable to find out why workers were ordered to stay.

Five lawsuits seeking a total of \$55 million in damages have been filed because of the disaster.

Grundy Mining Co. has been cited for 36 federal safety violations, including five linked to the explosion, O'Gorman said. The company could be fined up to \$10,000 for each violation.

# Dusty Farlow's 'Dallas' ranch being sold by Texas oilman

United Press International  
FORNEY — It's not as famous as South Fork — the fictional residence of J.R. Ewing, television's archvillain in the show "Dallas" — but the Southern Cross, home of rival Dusty Farlow, is more palatial and is now available.

Dallas oilman Norris Harris is

selling his 500-acre Bar H ranch, used by Lorimar Productions as the set for Dusty Farlow's home, for \$2.9 million. The ranch, 20 miles east of Dallas, and consisting of three Spanish-style houses, was the west Texas site of numerous lustful encounters between Farlow and Sue Ellen, J.R.'s estranged wife.

Real estate agent Marilyn Hoffman-Hipps, hired by Lorimar in 1981 to find an impressive location for the Farlow ranch, said the notoriety of the TV show has not hurt getting prospects for the spread.

"Wouldn't you like to sleep in Sue Ellen's bedroom?" she said. The new owner will continue

to have the filming agreement with Lorimar, which generally spends only 10 days on the location a year, Hoffman-Hipps said.

Harris donated to the Forney library the \$1,000-per-day fee he received while the company was filming in his house.

# Scientist to research effects of microwaves

United Press International  
TULSA, Okla. — Dr. Mary O'Connor has launched a \$50,000 research project for the Environmental Protection Agency to determine what dangers people and animals might face from microwaves.

The project involves dozens of pregnant mice and a specially constructed copper room, O'Connor said. The University of Tulsa psychology professor said she uses pregnant mice because the tissue of unborn mice is very sensitive.

Microwaves are used to heat food in microwave ovens, and so are that part of the electromagnetic spectrum used for radar and for various types of communications.

O'Connor said she hopes to determine what levels of exposure are safe for humans, as it becomes more and more people come in contact with devices using microwaves.

The research, she said, will involve exposing 18 pregnant mice to microwaves six hours a day for the 18 days their offspring are developing.

The baby mice then will be delivered by Caesarean section and examined for possible physical abnormalities as a result of certain levels of exposure to microwaves.

If defects are found, O'Connor said, the tests will be repeated on larger animals such as rabbits and guinea pigs.

O'Connor, who holds a doctorate in biopsychology from the

University of Georgia, said she began building the testing facility a year ago with a \$250,000 grant from the EPA's medical research division microwave branch.

The "oven" is a 10-by-10-foot copper room lined with plastic foam insulation and equipped to seal in microwave heat during testing.

The mice are placed in half-pint plastic containers and left atop conical foam perches for their six-hour-per-day exposure.

"We are looking at several different levels (of exposure)," O'Connor said. "The first is actually higher than what you would expect people to be exposed to."

That level is twice the recommended standard. She said the second test would involve the standard level of exposure and the third stage would be a test involving only one-tenth of the recommended exposure limit for humans.

The researcher said she already can anticipate some results of the test.

"I expect smaller mice," she said, indicating the microwaves would cause the infant mice not to develop to normal size before birth.

The project should take two years, O'Connor said, and even then, not all questions will be answered.

"All I will answer after two years is whether or not radio frequency energy (at certain levels)

will produce birth defects in mice when they are exposed for six hours a day throughout the entire gestation period," she said.

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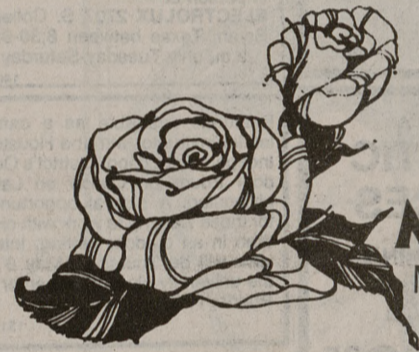
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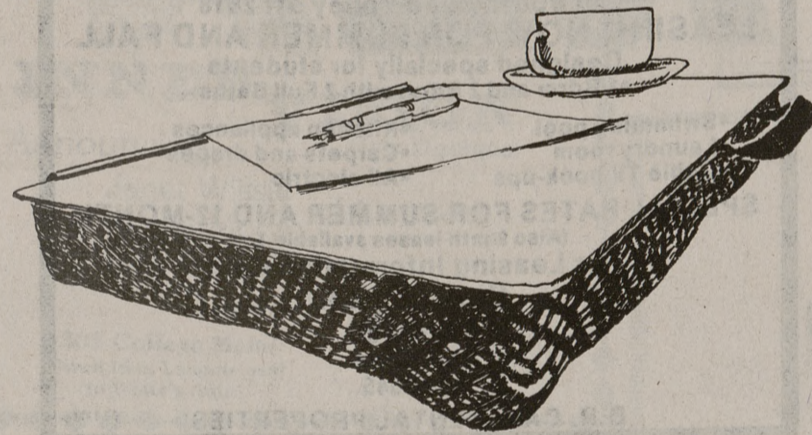


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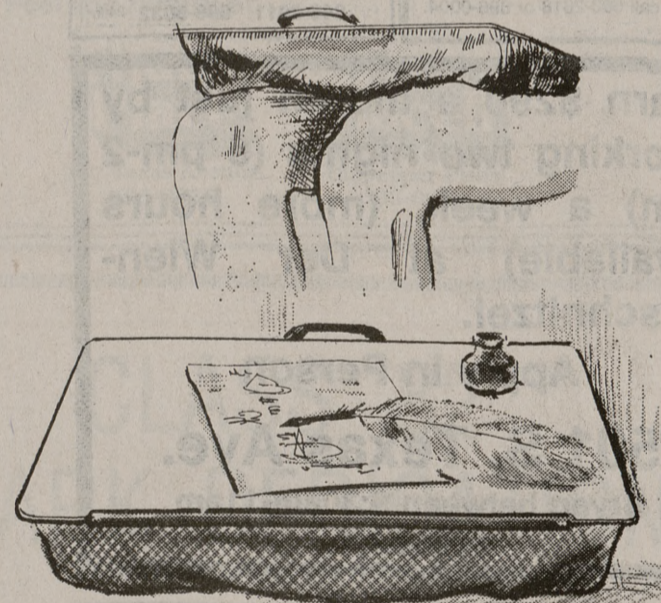
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