



Robert B. Scanlan (1936-1972)

Hoistman and Hero

2018 Inductee from Mining's Past

Robert Scanlan was born and grew up in the southern Idaho farming town of Gooding. In 1955, he moved to Wallace. There, he married his wife Eva in 1956. They had three children. He advanced his career at the Sunshine Mine from mucker to miner to hoistman.

The Sunshine Mine is deep, and essentially is a mine within a mine. Access from the surface was through the Jewell Shaft, which extended from the surface to the 3700 foot level. Approximately one mile from the Jewell shaft was the #10 shaft, which ran from the 3100 level to the deepest working level, at the time 5600. Most of the mine's production came from areas served by the #10 shaft.

Principal escape ways were the 3700 level and the 3100 level, both connecting with the Jewell shaft. There was also an escape way on 3100, which connected to the Silver Summit mine. Because of the importance of the #10 shaft in evacuating the mine, two hoistmen were in attendance, in the unlikely event of something incapacitating the operator.

On May 2, 1972, a crew of 178 was working underground. Operations continued normally until about noon, when fire was reported. Smoke soon appeared in the hoist room. Self-rescuers were donned, but smoke began to overpower the hoistmen. Ira Silger, the senior hoistman, had respiratory problems. Bob Scanlan told him to leave and he would continue to operate the hoist. Silger escaped the mine. Bob Scanlan heroically gave his life in attempting to hoist the crew to safety.