



# Black Diamond Historical Society and Museum

Printed Quarterly



October 2010



## PICTURES OF THE PAST

### ENTOMBED---BUT NOT FORGOTTEN JULIUS PERSYN, 1879-1910

By JoAnne Matsumura

**Julius Persyn**, age 31, was one of sixteen men that perished in the volcanic Lawson Mine explosion on Sunday, November 6, 1910. His remains, along with four others were not recovered, and are entombed in the depths of the Lawson Hill Mine.

That fateful day, his friend asked Julius, a Timberman, to take his place for work. Julius being a man of "charitable character at all times", agreed to take his friends place at the mine.

Julius was born September 3, 1879 in Isenberghe, Belgium, and was the husband of Louise-Julie Fabre, father to son George, (born in Black Diamond on August 26, 1910) and step-father to Hauri.

Julius had been offered to see Monsieur Bonnell for a job and the "drivers house of three rooms" to live in situated between the museum and the Black Dia-

mond Cemetery. "He settled in a remote land and thanks to unceasing labor and a sparing lifestyle succeeded in making for himself a new family." The Heavens called him soon after on that fateful day of November 6, 1910.

On September 23, 1911, Mrs. Julius Persyn, infant son George and Julius's brother Medard Persyn, boarded the Red Star Line, S.S. Finland in Seattle, leaving the soil of the United States and sailed back to Europe. The wife of George and their daughter currently reside in France.

Julius and his four fellow workers may be entombed under the hill overlooking the vastness of Black Diamond, but they are not forgotten.

*Please read related articles in this newsletter about the families of the deceased, and the Lawson Mine by authors, Frank Hammock and Ken Jensen.*

**T**he mission of the Black Diamond Historical Society shall be the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of the history of Black Diamond and environs, as it relates to King County and the State of Washington.

The Black Diamond Historical Society Newsletter is published by and for the members of the Black Diamond Historical Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3), Washington Corp.

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**Society Officers**

President: Keith Watson  
 Vice President: Don Malgarini  
 Secretary: Dee Israel  
 Treasurer: Clayton Mead

**Directors**

Harry Berry, Don "Doc" Botts, Howard Botts, Gomer Evans, Ken Jensen, Don Mason, JoAnne Matsumura, and Conrad "Coke" Roberts



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**We thank 4Culture for the support that helps to keep us operating.**

**Thank You, City of Black Diamond, for the operations support.**

**Museum Hours**

Thursday	9:00 - 4:00
Sat. & Sun. Summer	12:00 - 4:00
Sat. & Sun. Winter	12:00 - 3:00

## EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS



By: Steve Israel

This is the last newsletter that I will be editing. I started doing this back in August of 2000, and have enjoyed every bit of it.

I have learned much about our rich history here in Black Diamond over the past 10 years, and I plan to continue to learn more about it as I become involved in other projects around here.

Looking back over the past 10 years, I have produced 42 newsletters, totaling 704 pages. I have been very blessed to have the support of a very competent staff, and contributors that have penned some interesting and informative articles.

My first newsletter included an article from Dorothy Corlett, titled Around the Town. She told about growing up in Black Diamond, and having to walk by the Hotel to get to the Post Office. The "Darned Goose" chased her. I have reprinted that article on page 26.

It is stories like this and others that make up the history of this little town of Black Diamond. It's been my pleasure to have been a part of it, and would like to thank all of the contributors. (Too many to mention. If I tried, I might leave someone out. I wouldn't want to do that.)

Give a big welcome to Ken Jensen, our next Newsletter Editor.

Thanks,  
*Steve*

## CALENDAR FOR 2010

**Oct. 24 Sun. 1 PM** General Membership Meeting at museum. Greg Olsen will speak about his book: The Deep Dark. A book about Kellogg, Idaho's Sunshine Mine disasters.

**Nov. 6 Sat. 1 PM** Veterans Day Presentation at museum: Lynn Black, Green Beret, will speak on his Vietnam experiences.

**Nov. 25 Thurs.** Museum Closed for Thanksgiving

**Dec. 11 Sat. 1 PM** Christmas Open House at museum

**Dec. 20 thru Jan. 5** Museum Closed for Holidays

**Jan. 6 Thurs. 9 – 3 PM** Museum Reopens for 2011

As the event dates get closer, more details will be published in the newsletters and on the web site.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

The Museum is located at 32627 Railroad Ave  
Black Diamond, WA 98010

The mailing address is:

**The Black Diamond Historical Society  
PO Box 232, Black Diamond, WA 98010**

Information, Tours and Lectures: 360-886-2142  
For Franklin Tours: 253-852-6763

E-mail : [museum@blackdiamondmuseum.org](mailto:museum@blackdiamondmuseum.org)

Web site: [www.blackdiamondmuseum.org](http://www.blackdiamondmuseum.org)

Facebook: [http://www.facebook.com/  
BlackDiamondHistory](http://www.facebook.com/BlackDiamondHistory)

Twitter: [http://twitter.com/bd\\_history](http://twitter.com/bd_history)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Keith Watson

### Change Happens!

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1882) Black Diamond was founded and created

by the Black Diamond Coal Company from Northern California. The Company and its people were from the coal fields in and around Nortonville, California and those coal fields were being depleted. So this forested area of the Territory of Washington changed into a coal mining area and town.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the entire town and its mines were sold to another company called the Pacific Coast Company. Imagine the change that took place in our little town. The Pacific Coast Company purchased many mines in the area as well as railroads, steamships, wharfs in Seattle and Tacoma, and many other holdings. In the late 1930's the Pacific Coast Company experienced much financial trouble and this really changed many things in Black Diamond. Even in the World War II years the Company continued to go downhill. It was going out of business. Change gradually occurred.

In 1958-9 the people of Black Diamond decided to become an incorporated city. There was much controversy over this decision. The city was incorporated in January of 1959. Some people tried to un-incorporate but this failed in the courts. More change.

Along, thru time, Black Diamond annexed more land and gained population. Lawson, Morganville, Lake Sawyer, and areas to the West, East, and Southwest became part of the City. More people, more land, more responsibilities for the City. More change.

In 2009 the City of Black Diamond celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation with much fanfare. The population of the City is now over 4100 people and they are in for more change. The City has been working on a Master Plan

Development (MPD) which may enable the City to work with the large land developer, Yarrow Bay, in establishing "planned communities" within the City limits. The projection is for thousands of new dwellings and many opportunities for new businesses. Much more change.

It will be interesting to see how our City evolves. If you are interested in looking at some of the concepts of our possible future look on the Web at the City of Black Diamond home page and the Yarrow Bay page. Both web sites show concepts of what the Master Plan Development is trying to achieve. Again more change. The planned community concept deals with new schools, various types of housing, traffic patterns, new streets, roundabouts, storm water, sewer, fresh water, intra structure, zoning, and the list goes on. It is overwhelming in its complexity and many people in the community have really studied the various aspects of the plan. There is a struggle to keep up with the ongoing changes to the plan and I salute all those who have taken the time to input their ideas pro and con to help our City progress.

This year the Miner's Day location was changed to Railroad Avenue adjacent to the museum. The newly redone avenue was resurfaced with storm drains and curbs; cement boardwalks on both sides of the avenue, and green street lamps with hanging flower baskets. The ribbon cutting for the opening of the avenue coincided with the opening of Miners Day. Mayor Rebecca Olness ran the museum's antique siren to open the celebration and cutting of the opening ribbon. An hour later former Mayor Howard Botts ran the siren to signify the burial of the Time Capsule. Members of the Black Diamond Historical Society were members of a committee that decided what materials were to be placed in the time capsule and were responsible for acquiring the time capsule. It was decided to ask George Christensen to design and fabricate the stainless steel capsule and he did a magnificent job. It is about 5 feet long by 18 inches wide and 12 inches deep with double walls with wall board insulation between the walls. It is going to be opened in the year 2059 at the hundredth anniversary of the incorporation of Black Diamond. It is buried on the bank opposite the entrance to the museum and will have a large stone above it with a bronze plaque attached. The Capsule holds over 400 items. Thanks to all of you who donated to this endeavor.

*(Continued on page 5)*

(Continued from page 4)



#1 Mayor Rebecca Olness running the siren to signal the start of Miners Day.



#2 Mayor Olness cutting the ribbon to celebrate the new improved Railroad Avenue. Miners Day featured the closure of Railroad Avenue for the day where the Bar BQ and Chili cook-offs and various vendors were located. There were two live bands that played during the activities. It was a very successful event that brought the community closer together.



#3 Fabrication of the stainless steel Time Capsule.



#4 Sealing the top of the Time Capsule readying for the top



#5 Gomer & Keith getting the Time Capsule ready to bury.



#6 Seth Boettcher, City Public Works Director, fooling around in the vault where the capsule will be placed.



#7 Burying the Time Capsule.

The Labor Day celebration was also a very successful three day event. The parade is one of the main features and it was started by another blast from our siren that lasted two full minutes and was switched on by Judy Watson. The museum was treated to over 200 visitors after the parade. Thanks to all who helped at the museum that day. The Labor Day celebration featured the awarding of a “Lifetime Commitment Award”. Our Black Diamond Historical Society Board member and train engine restoration Superintendent Gomer Evans was named for this award. Way to go Gomer! Well deserved!



#8 Miners Day on Railroad Avenue.

The Society was represented at the Black Diamond Elementary School where “Family Resource Night” was held. Keith & Judy Watson had a booth showing over a hundred pictures of the Railroad that served Black Diamond and surrounding communities for over 90 years.



#9 Judy & Keith Watson at the Family Resource Night.



#10 Gomer Evans Lifetime Commitment Award Winner in car driven by Joe Androsko.



#11 Submarine Veterans float took 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

We are fortunate to have, among our members, many talented volunteers who spend endless hours towards the betterment of the Society. One of

those volunteers has worked tirelessly for the last ten years as editor of our Newsletter. His name is Steve Israel, former president of our Society, former Board Member, and our Web site manager. He seems to have an over abundance of talent; he has his own construction business, can design and construct just about anything, can fix and has fixed just about everything at the museum, paints (he has painted the entire exterior of the museum). He writes music and plays the guitar and harmonica while singing, with a great voice, his own compositions. He has entertained us at many of our Museum Christmas Open House events, at the Black Diamond School Reunion and is just an all around nice guy. He also bakes great pies – he took first place in the Labor Day pie baking contest! Steve is married to Dee the Society's Secretary and Membership Chair. He has decided to turn the responsibility of editor of the Newsletter and Web Master position over to another dedicated volunteer Ken Jensen. I really am at a loss to know how to thank Steve for all the work he has done over the years. I will speak for the entire membership of the Black Diamond Historical Society and give you, Steve, the largest thank YOU from the bottom of our hearts. Change does happen!



#12 Steve Israel singing and playing his original songs at the Black Diamond School Reunion.

Another change has occurred. Anna Morris has decided to step down as a Black Diamond Historical Society Board member. Her commitment to her family has grown and she no longer has the time to volunteer. We understand

and appreciate all that she has done for us over the years and hope to see her in the future. Thanks Anna! A new Board Member has been voted to take Anna's place and his name is Ken Jensen. Ken has been working for our Society in the set-up of our Web Blog, Twitter, and Facebook social communication vehicles. He has also volunteered to be our new Newsletter Editor and Web Master; some mighty large shoes to fill. He has the talent that will help him take on these new challenges and we wish him much success. You most likely have seen his writings in the Newsletter as well as on some of the networks that he has developed. Congratulations to Ken and thank you!

The Locomotive is in the middle of changing to a display that will be hooked to the caboose with the ability to have a walk thru the cab. It has been a challenging project with lots of help from many people and companies. Parts of the locomotive have had to be manufactured and a lot of rust has had to be eliminated. Gomer Evans along with George Christensen and many others have contributed hours and hours towards this project. Some of the parts have been painted and are ready to be attached and look really good. We will keep you up-dated as this project continues to make progress.



#13 Locomotive making progress with the cosmetic restoration.

This coming General membership meeting will feature two men talking about their experiences. The first fellow is Clayton Mead and he will be telling us about his time growing up in Black Diamond, knowing Clayton is a pleasure and he has some great story telling abilities. Our second guest speaker is a well known New York Times Best-Selling author Gregg

Olsen. He will be talking about one of his books "The Deep Dark-disaster & redemption in Americas richest silver mine". He will explore the human toll of Idaho's worst disaster on May 2, 1972 in Kellogg's Sunshine Mine. The meeting will be held at the museum on Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM. It is suggested that you RSVP to the museum phone message machine at 360-886-2142 if you plan to attend.

On Saturday November 6<sup>th</sup> we will have a Veterans Day Program that will start at 12 PM. We are fortunate to have as our guest speaker, Lynne M. Black Jr. who is an Army Veteran and local author who will talk about his experiences as a Green Beret who volunteered to fight in a Top Secret war in South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and the DMZ to engage the communists. He volunteered for classified special operations work in an organization named Military Assistance Command Vietnam / Studies & Observations Group (MACV/SOG). He ran cross-border missions for two years leading small teams against numerically superior forces. He has also authored a book named Whisky tango Foxtrot which is available at the Black Diamond Pizza & Deli. Lynne was awarded a Silver Star, three Bronze Stars for Valor, a Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star and several purple Hearts. If you wish to attend please RSVP to the museum phone machine at 360-886-2142.

There are lots of changes ahead and it is exciting to watch what happens in our Society and in the City of Black Diamond. Check these sites below for changing information.

Visit our Website:

<http://www.blackdiamondmuseum.org>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/BlackDiamondHistory)

BlackDiamondHistory

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/BD\\_History](http://www.twitter.com/BD_History)

Blog: [www.BlackDiamondhistory.ordpress.com](http://www.BlackDiamondhistory.ordpress.com)

City Web site: <http://www.ci.blackdiamond.wa.us/>

Yarrow Bay Website: <http://www.yarrowbay.com/>

Hope you all have a wonderful Autumn!

Keith Watson

## October 24 General Membership Meeting (1 p.m.)

Award-Winning Author Gregg Olsen



**Sunshine Mine Memorial.** The metal-sculpted hard rock miner eternally beams his cap lamp toward the site of one of America's worst mining disasters.

**Gregg Olsen**, author of *The Deep Dark*, will chronicle one of the worst mining disasters in U.S. history, the 1972 fire in Kellogg, Idaho's Sunshine Mine that left 91 men dead and changed mine safety protocol and procedures forever.

Olsen's presentation will cover the ten "fatal flaws" in the mine's configuration, culture, and safety program that led to the silver mine disaster.

"This is the story of the greatest mine rescue effort in our nation's history," Olsen said by phone from his Olalla, Wash., home. "Ninety-three miners were trapped deep in the mine. Eight days later only two of them would emerge alive. It's a story that echoes what's going on in Chile right now—a tale of the impact to a mining town and the people bonded by hope and tragedy."

A New York Times bestselling author, Olsen has written eight nonfiction books, four novels, and contributed a short story to a collection edited by Lee Child. *The Deep Dark* was the 2007 recipient of the Idaho Book of the Year Award.



We wish to thank the following for their generous donations to the Black Diamond Historical Society.

**MEMORIAL DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF:**

**Dennis Hanks**, by Arlene Parkin and Steve & Dee Israel.

**Kodi Hawthorne**, by Arlene Parkin.

**John Lombardini**, by Arlene Parkin.

**Bill Luke**, by Dianne Ridgway.

**George Edward Morris**, by Palmer Coking Coal Co., Gerald & Nancy Kuzaro, Keith & Lois Hamilton & Jerold & Gloria Thompson

**George & Wilda Morris**, by Pauline Kombol, Lynda Maks and Byron & Janie Parkinson.

**Concelia Vernarelli Picini**, by Flavia Meyer.

**Ron Poleski**, by Albert & Maureen Guidetti, Pauline, Kombol, Lynda Maks, Palmer Coking Coal Co., Arlene Parkin, Terry & Judy Collins, Wally Duchateau, Gerald & Nancy Kuzaro, Shirley Kuzaro, Vickie Okeson, Daryl & Norine McCauley, Ramon Kravagna, Joe & Eileen Zumek, Frank & Aldine Poleskie, Stephen Loch Bowie, and Don & Joan Malgarni.

**Hans "John" Saftich**, by Palmer Coking Coal Co.

**Ernie Seliger**, by Palmer Coking Coal Co.

**Margaret Thomas**, by Margaret Stanley.

**David Walsh**, by Donald H. Botts and Don & Joan Malgarini.

**Kenneth Williams**, by Arlene Parkin.

**Rudy Zinter**, by Arlene Parkin.

**GENERAL FUND DONATIONS BY:**

Sherrie Acker

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Discovery Tours LLC

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Nikkei Horizons

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Elsie Vandenberg & H. Teresa Cain

**ARCHIVE PRESERVATION FUND DONATION BY:**

Billie & Shirley Kelley

**WELSH DAY CELEBRATION FUND DONATION BY:**

Marcia Lee Berg

These donations are greatly appreciated. The Black Diamond Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the Law.

*CORRECTION: In the July issue of the Black Diamond Historical Society Newsletter we mistakenly showed a memorial donation from Lynda Maks as being for Kenneth and Margaret Williams; it should have been for Kenneth Williams and Margaret Lombardy Chamberlin. Sorry for the mix-up.*

## WELCOME MEMBERS

By Dee Israel, Membership Chair

The Black Diamond Historical Society now has a total of 301 memberships. We are pleased to announce that during this past quarter we have acquired the following new members:

Jennifer Banchemo & family

Cindy Bess

Joan Decker

R. Wayne & Pat Frantz

Peter Johnson

Jill Johnson Krilich

Don & Phyllis Maks

Karen Meador

Gregg Olsen

Dianne Ridgway

We would like to thank the following members for renewing their membership this quarter:

Chad M. Abramson Sr

Sherrie Acker

Harry Berry

Betty Blakeney

Lynne Mae Bonnell

Margaret Bourquine

Mary Lou Bovee

Cathy Jean Bradley

Darryl Buss

Carol Campbell

Lois Clapper

Ralph Dockham

Robert & Joann Doyer

Louis & Rosa Draghi

Tom & Joyce Erath

Paul Goldsberry

Donald J. Greggs & family

Carolyn Henderson

Steve & Dee Israel

Becky Jack

Leasha Janet

Edward Andrew Johnson

Mary Kennedy



## GUESTS, By: Don Botts

During the month of **June 2010 we had 387 guests, July 2010 we had 386 guests and Aug. 2010 we had 441 guests.** Making a 3-month total of **1214 guests** to the Museum. There were visitors from **18 States:** Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and here in Washington. There were also people visiting from other places, such as Mexico.



## REMARKS MADE BY OUR GUESTS

Here are a few of the nice comments that were in our guest book this quarter:

One of my most favorite places

Lovely memories

We absolutely love it, We've been here at least 10 times

Lovely! Good job archiving

A great tour

Love to visit

Best museum I've ever seen

Very educational

Terrific display

Filled with memories of my grandfather & mother

Love this museum & it's curators

Nice display of your history

Very interesting museum

The kids learned a lot

Very interesting

Well laid out. Informative & interesting

Fascinating; lots to see

Cute, nice & amazing

What a beautiful place

Having a great time in Black Diamond

I still own some of these things – I'm too old!

Loved the tools

So much to see – well organized & documented

Best small town museum I've seen

## BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

### TO SOCIETY MEMBERS FOR THIS QUARTER OF THE CALENDAR:

(If your birthday is this quarter & you don't find your name on this list, it's because we don't have the date. Let us know when it is so it can be included next time.)

Sep.15	Sherrie Evans	Nov.25	Mickie Greenside
Sep.30	Janie Dal Santo Parkinson	Nov.25	Bill Williams
Oct.01	Olga Grady Swann	Nov.30	Karl Berg
Oct.02	Ray Kravagna	Dec.01	Suzie Morganti
Oct.03	Don Covey	Dec.01	Steve Thompson
Oct.06	John Malgarini	Dec.06	Betty Corlett Luke
Oct.08	Carolyn Donati Henderson	Dec.06	Betty Franz Uhrig
Oct.08	John Herbert	Dec.07	Robert Morgan Smith
Oct.11	Nora Whisenant	Dec.11	Loriann Taff
Oct.13	Dan Dal Santo	Dec.12	Marie Merlini Freeman
Oct.13	Randy Roberts	Dec.12	Arlene Parkin
Oct.14	Scott Peterson	Dec.12	Sandra Zumek Sonsteng
Oct.18	Peggy Witman	Dec.13	Muriel Botts Waldo
Oct. 19	Carmel Shaver Camerini	Dec.14	Leih Mulvihill
Oct. 20	Carol Wieltschnig	Dec.16	Bill Kelley
Oct. 21	Maureen Guidetti	Dec.16	Betty Merryfield
Oct. 23	Ruth Brown Susnar	Dec.19	Barry Kombol
Oct. 26	Evelyn Dal Santo	Dec.21	Betty King
Oct. 26	Ken Jensen	Dec.23	Rob Fitzgerald
Oct. 26	Fonda Ranta Willson Zimmerman	Dec.23	Christine E. Mead
Oct. 27	Jeanne Riggs	Dec.25	Mary Malgarini Kennedy
Oct. 30	Nancy Cross Baltazor	Dec.26	Ryan Kitz
Oct. 31	Marian Albaugh Short	Dec.27	Anne Remshe Thorsett
Nov.03	Kimberly Brown	Dec.28	Mary Peterson
Nov.04	Ress Benson	Dec.30	Maxine Niles Gamba
Nov.04	Louis Traverso	Dec.30	Jack Thompson
Nov.04	Paula Perkins	Dec.30	Joe Zumek
Nov.05	William G. Bisyak	Dec.31	Donald J. Greggs
Nov.05	Susan Noon	Dec.31	Paula Ordonez
Nov.05	Rose Vetter		
Nov.08	Rosemary Rogers Konoske-Bigelow		
Nov.08	Janelle Noller		
Nov.10	Marylou Carl Toth		
Nov.11	Daniel A. Hutson		
Nov.12	Virginia R. Mills Tracy		
Nov.14	Nancy Dodge Mead		
Nov.14	Thomas Wieltschnig		
Nov.15	JoAnn Doyer		
Nov.16	Dave Hester		
Nov.20	Joe Dal Santo		
Nov.21	Miriam DelDuca Adlum		
Nov.21	Janice Goldsberry Ranton		
Nov.23	Dorothy Franz Corlett		



## “Smiles for Living: Tears for the Dead”<sup>1</sup>

by Frank Hammock, 2010

On Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1910, the night shift Fire Boss Jack Zan returned to the surface from within the depths of Black Diamond’s Lawson Mine at about 6 a. m. to post his report near the mouth of the slope. On this morning, he would only find gas at 38 ½ breast but said that all other areas were clear – including the 6<sup>th</sup> level south and the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> levels as well. He would later tell a jury that “...in his judgment it was absolutely safe.”<sup>2, Note 1</sup>

Sec. 113. It shall be the duty of the fire boss to examine carefully not more than three (3) hours before a first shift enters the mine, every working place in his charge in which men have not been employed at the working face within ninety (90) minutes previous to the starting time of such shift all open places adjacent to live workings, ... . He shall see that the air current is traveling in the proper course. ... The fire boss shall examine for all dangers in all portions of the mine under his charge, ...

Sec. 115. Each fire boss shall, immediately after making his inspection and before the employees are allowed to enter the mine, report on a bulletin board provided for that purpose at the entrance to the mine, a true record of such inspection, designating each place where gas is found, also that all other places are clear. ...<sup>3</sup>

No one questioned the Fire Boss nor gave any indication that his assessment of the conditions within the mine’s workings were anything less than safe. They trusted him. They had to. He followed the law to the letter because it was a matter of safety. People’s lives were at stake, not to mention the operation of the mine.

For the men, it was the start, or the end, of a routine weekend shift – nothing more. Time for some to hit their beds and rest, while others took over where the

previous shift left off. Back in town, the light of a new day was dawning and the regular shift working crews of some 200 miners and support staff lay nestled in their beds until Monday morning when the full work shifts would begin again as they did at the start of each and every week since the Lawson Mine opened in 1895. Those off-going might attend church services, have a drink at the saloon, or go to a social event with their families. For those on-coming, their families may be attending church or other social event without them. Sundays were meant for social get-togethers. It was a day of rest from an otherwise busy work week. Today was no different than any other Sunday.

But, on this cold day, the morning shift began their descent down the main slope in the man-car at about 6:30 a.m. They consisted mainly of a skeleton maintenance crew of ten or eleven men sent in to shore up support timber, check ventilation and air shafts, remove outstanding water, and clean the tracks from debris; thus completing work that the regular shifts were not able to do during the week. At the same time, the five men ending their night shift on the sixth level some 2,200 feet beneath the surface, waited patiently for the descending car to reach them. They chatted briefly amongst themselves in their native language, with weary anticipation of their restful bliss that awaited them in the blossoming daylight of civilization far overhead.

Both shifts comprised of Timber Packers, Track Cleaners, a Timberman, a Timberman Helper, a Fire Boss, and a Boilerman.

### *Smiles for Living...*

They were also Italian, Polish, Austrian, Belgian, and Finnish. About half of the men had families in the local area or back in the old country (of their origin) and the other half were single. The wage that most of them earned in that era was recorded to be about \$3.15 per day, while one, the Timberman, earned \$3.80 per day. It was not recorded what the Fire Boss earned but his wage was upwards of \$3.50 or more per day as well.

At approximately 6:40 a.m. – everything changed.

The initial explosion was so powerful that it could be heard, even felt, for miles, and even before all of the debris had settled from the blast, every person in the town of Black Diamond had arrived at or near the mine's entrance to validate what they knew must already be true. Every man, woman, and child who lives within or nearby a coal mining community carries within their mind the unthinkable possibility that a loved one may one day never return home. It is as if the earth would have to claim something every once in a while in exchange for goods taken. There, in the semi-moistened depths of perpetual darkness and motion, life has meaning but it lies hidden within the dormant confines of fear whose chaotic nature is held silently in check by packed earth and rock, timber, dampness, obscurity, policy, procedure, and personal experience. Then, one day, without warning, the great sadness arrives whereby fear has its day to escape and be expressed in whatever capacity it wills. Some flee its humbling power, while others do not. Yet everyone must live with its presence like an evil that lurks just beyond the doors of a church.

### *...Tears for the Dead*

The Timberman was not suppose to be working on that day in November, according to one account from a living relative. *“My grandfather was not to have been working on that particular Sunday (November 6<sup>th</sup>) but he did work because a friend of his had asked him to replace him,”* writes Catherine Persyn, about her grandfather Julius, in a recent email received by JoAnne Matsumura, Archivist of the Black Diamond Historical Society (BDHS).

Three men of the oncoming day shift were not able to crowd themselves into the man-car and descend to start their work, so they waited top-side until the next descent that would follow a few minutes later. One man stood in the hoisting shed near the opening to the main slope and when the explosion occurred, he had been thrown to the floor and sustained lacerations about his

head and face. The other two were nearby but were not within the vicinity of the blast that poured forth through the mine opening and into the sky beyond. One newspaper account tells of another man who laid in a town hospital with one side of his face completely unrecognizable from coal dust that was literally blasted into his skin. <sup>1</sup>

Outside the mine entrance, local women and children gave comfort to one another in groups that huddled together. Sobbing could be heard in sporadic gasps as they awaited the news – any news – that their loved one was safe. Even the emergence of a body would put closure to the incident, however dreadful such closure could be. Frightened children were taken in by friends and relatives in an effort to protect them from the emotional trauma. Strangers even offered comfort where and when it was needed. Thus, a town had come together in great adoration and support in an effort to ease the burden of tragedy and pain as one collective and empathic experience. Friendships ran deep within a group such as a mining community because of nationality, shared lifestyle, and the dangers involved.

*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.* (NAB, John 15:13) On this particular day, it was certainly not by choice. Did it still count in the grand scheme of judgment? Was it mere fate?

How much tolerance existed within such a community during such grief-stricken events while rescue efforts continued and those of the living fought desperately to deal with their own sanctuary of sorrow? A visiting reporter from an area newspaper was at the home of a local woman whose husband was still buried beneath the rubble. After asking for a picture of him to print, he discovered her tolerance when she responded.

“No, no, no!” she screamed, snatching up the cheap cabinet card of a family group, obviously ill at ease before the country photographer's camera. “No, no,” she croned in broken English, as she pressed photograph and living child to her breast and resumed her monotonous pacing back and forth in the little room. <sup>4</sup>

Here is another account of a local woman's grieving intolerance. Her husband was also buried somewhere within the labyrinth of hell.

In a one-story house a short distance off the main street of the town, Mrs. Fred Setti, a woman still in her twenties, paces the floor, clasping her few-months-old son to her breast, snarling with almost animal ferocity at the kind-hearted neighbors who offer to relieve her of her burden. <sup>1</sup>

Down at the saloon, the mood was somber and everyone drank to numb the pain that hung in the air like a morning fog. Old men stood at the stove and told stories of close calls from their own past experiences while an occasional new arrival off the street and down from Lawson Hill would tell his own version of what he saw or heard, or even nearly became, and thus would earn a small amount of dignity and standing in this subdued patronage. Yet, even within the smoke-filled atmosphere, curiosity sat in anticipation like an expectant father awaiting the arrival of his newborn. Some had to know.

"What's the latest from Lawson?" asks the bartender as he proffers a drink on the house. <sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, back at the entrance to the mine –

One woman, an anxious wife who has followed her man to the workings, turns silently away into the night, wiping away a tear with the corner of her plaid shawl twined about her head. "Good night, Jen. Go home and sleep," the man calls awkwardly. She vanishes in silence. <sup>5</sup>

One woman, wife of one of those who was about to risk his life on the faint chance of saving another, stood with tears in her eyes aiding her husband

prepare for his work, as with trembling fingers she trimmed his safety lamp and watched him depart. In the presence of his fellow workers there was no sentimental farewell. Turning away she curtly bade him good night and told him she would go home and await his return. <sup>5</sup>

Both the husbands of these women would quickly join the rescue efforts that continued on throughout the night in the hope of finding the men who had met some undetermined fate beneath them.

Who were the men involved in that accident on that fate-filled morning almost one hundred years ago?

The following are the names of the men as they appeared in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1910 <sup>5</sup>, while rescue efforts were yet underway:

#### THE PROBABLE DEAD

Bael, Oscar (widow and one child)  
    Bael, Ceazar; single  
    Beagi, C. (widow in Italy)  
    Capiatti, Julius (widow in Italy)  
Fanstiria, Maetili (widow and three children)  
    Fontana, Albert; single  
    Gardina, Frank; single  
    Gardini, Isadore; single  
    Gregory, Domini; single  
    Kumenberg, Joseph; single  
    London, Dave; single  
    Mars, Cyril; single  
Puyson, Julius (widow and one child)  
    Setti, Fred (widow and one child)  
    Vergan, Franz; single

The following table was printed in the State Inspector of Coal Mines report showing additional data about each person as well as one additional name:

LIST OF MEN KILLED IN LAWSON MINE DISASTER NOVEMBER 6, 1910

Name	Occupation	Age	Nationality	Married	W	O	Family at -	Body Re'cd
Julius Persyn	Timberman	30	Belgian	Yes	1	1	Lawson	No
Fred Setti	Helper	29	Italian	Yes	1	1	Black Diamond	No
Cezar Bael	Track cleaner	---	Belgian	Yes	1	1	Lawson	No
Joe Kronenberg	Timber Pk'r	30	Polish	Yes	1	1	Old country	Yes
Mactili Fanstina	Timber Pk'r	33	Italian	Yes	1	3	Black Diamond	Yes
C. Biagi	Timber Pk'r	28	Italian	Yes	1		Old country	Yes
Julius Capiati	Timber Pk'r	30	Italian	Yes	1		Old country	Yes
Frank Gardini	Timber Pk'r	24	Italian	No				Yes
Isadore Gardini	Timber Pk'r	22	Italian	No				Yes
Dom. Gregois	Timber Pk'r	24	Italian	No				Yes
Albert Fontana	Timber Pk'r	25	Italian	No				Yes
Frank Vergan	Timber Pk'r	23	Italian	No				Yes
Mat Galope	Timber Pk'r	19	Austrian	No				Yes
Dave Lunden	Fire boss	34	Finn	No				Yes
Oscar Bael	Track cleaner	---	Belgian	No				No
Girili Maes	Boiler man	33	Belgian	No				No

### THE INJURED

Kruntz, Louis  
Marino, Louis  
Martina, Arvila

RECAPITULATION – Sixteen men killed: eleven bodies recovered; five bodies still in mine. Seven married men; four widows and six children at Black Diamond and Lawson; three widows and at least one child supposed to be in their native country. Italians 9, Belgians 4, Finn 1, Pole 1, Austrian 1. Adults 13; minor 1; unknown 2. <sup>2</sup>

Of those who perished, the off-going night shift consisted of: <sup>5</sup>

- Julius Persyn, Fred Setti, Oscar Bael, Cezar Bael, and Cyril Mars

Of those who perished, the on-coming day shift consisted of: <sup>5</sup>

- Frank Gardini, Isadore Gardini, Joe Kumenberg, Dave London, C. Biagi, Mactili Franstina, Domini Gregory, Albert Fontana, Frank Vergan, and Julius Capiati.

Various documents and newspaper accounts gave different spellings of the men who were involved in the tragic explosion. The spelling differences were probably due to the phonetic accountability of the men and their names often only heard spoken within an accent or in their native language, without any written records available to go by for accuracy. Some noteworthy variations were as follows:

Julius Puyson - a.k.a. Julius Persyn  
Oscar Bael - a.k.a. Oscar Baile  
Cezar Bael - a.k.a. Ceasar/Cezar Baile  
Civili Maes – a.k.a. Girili Maes/Cyril Mars  
Frank Gardini - a.k.a. Ferdinando Godini  
Isadore Gardini - a.k.a. Isadore/Isadora Godini  
Joe Kumenberg – a.k.a. Joe Kronenberg  
Maetili Fanstina – a.k.a. Mactili Fanstina, Martelli Faustina & Metelli Fonstina  
Frank Vergan - a.k.a. Francesco Vergai, Frank Bergan & Frank Vergai  
Dave Lunden - a.k.a. Davit Albein Lunden/London  
Dominick Gregois - a.k.a. Dominick Gregorio & Domini Gregory  
Mat Galope - a.k.a. Matt Golob  
Julla Kapai – a.k.a. Julius Capiati  
Louis Kruntz – a.k.a. Louis Kranc  
C. Biagi – a.k.a. Chesera Biaga

Little is known about each of the miners who lost their lives on that tragic day. Some information has been found, but details remain sketchy. For example, according to information obtained by JoAnne Matsumura, of the BDHS, family members for Matt Golob are buried at the Krain cemetery as found in Enumclaw Cemetery Index. They lived in Cumberland (Albin Golob & John & Mary Golob). Matt was living with Louis Golob in BD (Black Diamond). Matt Golob Jr. was the son of Matt Golob in Leadville, Colorado, as found on the 1900 Census. Matt may have come to Washington for a better job and he had relatives in the BD area to help him.

From a 65-page probate record obtained by JoAnne Matsumura (BDHS), filed January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1911, under the name of Davit Albein Lunden, shows that he was age 35, marital status – single, was a member of the United Finnish Brotherhood of the World and a resident of BD. His father, David Sylvester Lunden, lived in Lakalshdi, Grand Duchy of Finland, Empire of Russia, and his mother was deceased. He had one brother who was a seafaring man sailing from out of New York. David A. Lunden was a rich man for the 1910 time frame and his estate, nearly \$6,000, was in the form of cash at four different banks with additional monies due from the UMWofA (United Mine Workers of America) accident insurance (\$100.00), wages from the Pacific Coast Coal Co. of \$122.70 and other smaller amounts from different sources. He left no Last Will and appeared to have no debts.

For the Gardini brothers (Frank and Isadore), their only living heir was their father, Eugenio Godini, age 65 (at the time) and mother Pierino Godini, also age 65, both living in Villa Sorano, Carrara, in northwestern Italy. By 1911, their estate was valued between \$200.00 and \$400.00.

According to information also obtained from JoAnne Matsumura, after the 1910 Lawson Mine disaster, many local children were admitted to the Washington (Seattle) Children's Home in Seattle. This was a time of hardship for those who experienced this tragedy and such admittance was a sign of that hardship. Children were often admitted either under permanent conditions because of the loss of a family member whereby no other living relatives remained in the area, or perhaps due to a temporary condition while the family came to terms with the loss, both emotionally and financially.

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, just eight days after the explosion, a funeral procession slowly paraded north on Railroad Avenue, then down the hill and into Morganville where the cemetery lay in quiet slumber, perpetually gathering its faithful brood by default. An article from the Seattle Star described it this way:

Nearly all of BD and the surrounding territory turned out to pay tribute to the memory of eight of the miners killed in the recent explosion in the Lawson coal

mine. Fully 1,500 persons participated in the funeral ceremonies. The last rites were conducted in the Catholic Church. The only hearse in BD was brought into service, Miners acted as pallbearers, carrying coffins to the cemetery, three-quarters of a mile distant. The procession of sympathizers extended almost the entire distance from the church to the cemetery. The funeral was held under the auspices of the Miners' union. All eight of the bodies were buried in one large grave. The bodies were identified as Isadore Gardini, 21; Ferdinand Gardini, 23; Martelli Faustina, 26; Joe Fronenberg, 28; Chesera Biaga, 35; Julla Kapai, 41; Frank Vergain, 22 and Albert Fontana, 23. <sup>6</sup>

In the end, these men and families will be forever remembered in history, despite the unforeseen tragedy that came upon them on that fateful day, for their contribution to Black Diamond and the community we live and work in today. With honor and respect, we humbly thank them in meek resignation for their untimely sacrifice.

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A note to our readers – while every effort was made to obtain as much information as possible about the miners and their families and lives, we regret to say that what information we could obtain was quite small since records of that time were not as well kept as they are today. We apologize for any misspellings and misinformation and would sincerely welcome any details that you, our faithful readers, may have so that subsequent addendums to this article can be printed to help maintain a standard level of accuracy that we have always strived to keep in the interest of history and for future generations.



#### References:

1. 1910, Nov. 8, title of article - *Smiles For Living: Tears For the Dead*, Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper; Seattle, WA.
2. State of Washington, *Report of the State Inspector of Coal Mines*, for the Biennial Period Ending December 31, 1910 [includes 1909], Pgs. 75-78, D.C. Botting, Inspector.
3. *Coal Mining Laws of Washington* (as amended 1919, 1927, 1939 and 1943), Department of Labor and Industries; Pgs 48 & 49; State Printing Plant, Olympia, WA. (1943)
4. 1910, Nov. 8, article – *Five May Live in Dark Depths of Lawson Mine*, Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper, Seattle, WA.
5. 1910, Nov. 7, article – *Black Diamond Mine Disaster Seals Up Fifteen Men In Tomb*, Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper, Seattle, WA.
6. 1910, Nov. 14, article – *Bury 8 In One Grave*, Seattle Star, Seattle, Wa.

#### Other Sources:

1. Personal contact with descendants
2. Probate records
3. Census Records
4. Grave markers
5. Lawson mine map
6. Cemetery indexes

#### Notes:

1. A “breast” was an area in the workings within the mine that exceeded 12 feet in width and was used for access to steeper dipping seams of active coal between the various levels. It was a common term, similar to a “room” for the lower dip angles, in the room and pillar system of mining.

## Diamond Junction: Where Yesterday Meets Today

### Lawson Mine

By Ken Jensen



The Lawson Mine after the November 6, 1910 explosion, which claimed the lives of 16 miners—5 of which were never recovered.

In the history of the Green River coal fields, there were three major mining disasters: **Franklin**, on August 24, 1894, where 37 miners were suffocated in a coal mine fire—the worst coal-mining disaster in King County; **Ravensdale**, on November 16, 1915, where 31 men perished in a coal mine explosion; and 100 years ago this November 6, the **Lawson Mine** explosion that took the lives of 16 men.

“It happened on Sunday,” remembered BDHS co-founder **Carl Steiert** in *Black Diamond: Mining the Memories*. “It was maintenance men that got it. Had it been at full capacity, the miners would have been in there, too.” **Regina Marckx Whitehill**, another Black Diamond pioneer, remembered the big explosion, too. “Dad had worked every Sunday for weeks and weeks, but that particular Sunday, he said, ‘I’m just not going to work today. I’m going to rest for a day.’” The man who took her Dad’s place was never found.

The cause of the explosion was never determined, the damage to the mine being so severe that rescuers were un-

able to make their way to the lowest levels. Five men are still there—entombed at the bottom of the mine under tons of coal and debris.

*Newspapers accounts of the day best described the destruction with one word: “Volcanic....”*

**Eugene Lawson**—the man for whom the mine, Lawson Street, and Lawson Hill were named—is something of an enigma. Born in 1858 in Texas, Lawson enters the picture here in Black Diamond when he buys what will become the Lawson Mine in 1895. He sells the mine just 3 years later to the Black Diamond Coal Company, in what turns out to be an extreme case of good timing.

Lawson returns to the scene in 1903-04, now on behalf of the Pacific Coast Coal Company, to broker a \$1.1 million deal to sell the Black Diamond Coal Company’s assets—its mines (including Lawson), land, the *entire* town—to his employer, all from the comforts of his home in nearby Franklin. A lengthy lawsuit over his commission from that sale—settled in Lawson’s favor in 1910—was the last he was heard from, at least in these parts. He died in Seattle in 1937.



One of the rescuers, **Vitalis Marckx**—fourth from the left—was supposed to work that fateful Sunday.

**The Lawson Mine** was a troubled mine from the beginning. The presence of methane gas—known at the time as “after-damp”—and spontaneous combustion made for a bad combination. The original water-level entrance was located on the Columbia and Puget Sound (C&PS) Railroad’s mainline to Franklin—today the route of Old Lawson Road. The main entrance to the mine was at the end of current-day Botts Drive on Lawson Hill. The Lawson Mine, along with Mines 12 and 7 (near Lake 12) and the numerous Franklin mines in sections 18 and 19, formed a horseshoe of sorts, all chasing the McKay seam—an extremely rich coal vein that averaged more than 4 feet across.

**After-damp** was such a problem at the Lawson Mine that in December 1899, the Black Diamond Coal Company—owners of the mine by this time—banned the use of open miners’ lights in favor of lights with a magnetic locking device, which prevented them from being opened inside the mine. The miners objected and walked off the job, but the company prevailed.

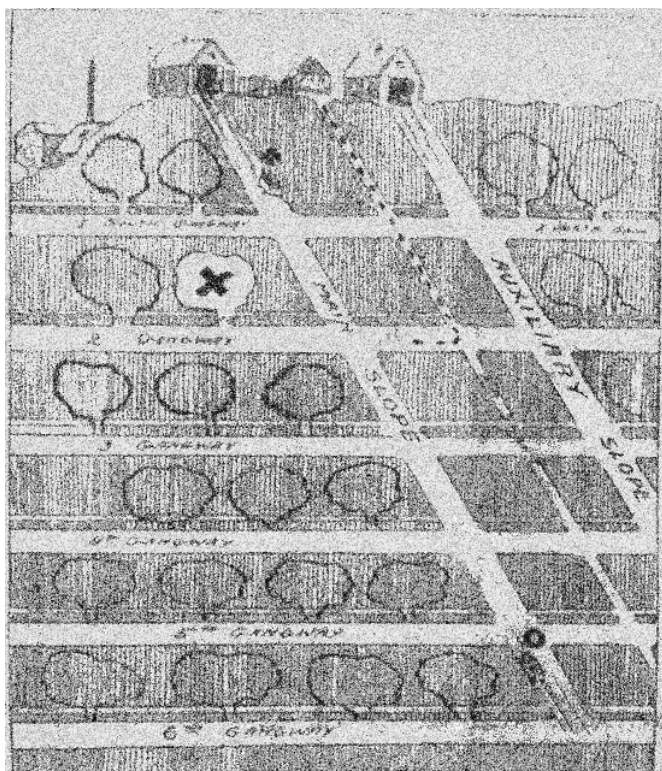
According to the *Report of the State Inspector of Coal Mines for the Years 1901-1902*, the company made significant investments in the safety of the mine.

The workings are ventilated by two fans, a 10-foot double inlet cyclone fan on the south airway and an 8-foot single inlet Capell fan on the north, making two separate and distinct ventilating systems.... This mine throws off considerable gas, but is well ventilated, each fan having displacing capacity of 80,000 cubic feet of air per minute. A pipe system is laid through the mine for sprinkling dust.

But mistakes or ill-advised “shortcuts” happen, even in the safest of mines—and Lawson wasn’t considered particularly safe.

**October 1, 1902.** Case in point: 11 men lost their lives in the 1902 Lawson Mine explosion. The cause? Two “shots” of dynamite were fired, one right after the other. Definitely an unsafe practice—especially for a mine with a history of after-damp. According to official reports, the first shot loosened the coal and released methane gas and dust into the air. The second shot set the methane gas on fire, and that in turn ignited the explosive coal dust, which exploded.

*In a cruel twist of fate, just 8 years later, another explosion—much more violent—would rip out the heart of the small community of Lawson, effectively wiping it off the map....*



The explosion took place in or near the main slope. The cross marks the position of the descending car at the time of the explosion. The circle marks the position of the descending car at the time of the explosion. The X marks the sealed chamber where it is thought gas accumulated and was ignited by fires burning in other

chambers. The dotted line in the air shaft shows the route of the rescue party. (*The Seattle Star*, November 7, 1910)

**The town of Lawson**, also known as MacKay or McKay, was established in 1896 when 50 miners’ homes were built on and around Botts Drive. Also constructed nearby was the Lawson Store, a Finnish meeting house, and a school to serve the burgeoning community.

The mine and its bunkers were served by a spur of the Bruce Branch. The Bruce Branch split from the C&PS mainline at First Avenue, running its length to the south before crossing over today’s SR 169. It then doubled-back on itself, snaking north down Fifth Avenue and behind today’s Lawson Hill Estates before crossing current-day Lawson Street eastward to Botts Drive. The spur ran the length of Botts Drive to the mine entrance, while the branch line continued to its terminus: the town of Bruce, located between Mines 12 and 7.

**Nearing the end of its useful life.** By 1910, the four upper levels of the Lawson Mine had been played out and at more than 2,200 feet deep, it was already one of the deepest in the world. Its lower levels were proving problematic to mine due to faults and steep slopes—not to mention being expensive and labor intensive. About 150 men were employed in the mine at the time.

*And there were a dozen fires burning in the upper levels. The fires were walled in with concrete—some of those walls supposedly 14 feet thick. These portions of the mine were never visited....*

**November 6, 1910.** “With a roar that was heard for miles, gas in the Lawson mine exploded at 6:40 a.m.,” reported *The Seattle Star*.

[The] disaster was one of the most heartrending in the black history of coal mining in this state. From an explosive standpoint, it was the worst. It was vol-

canic in its intensity, the mouth of the mine discharging timbers, piping, dinner buckets, and the miners' clothing as if they were shot from a gigantic cannon. High into the air the debris shot. Huge timbers and piping that weighed half a ton rained down on the hillside for a radius of a quarter mile, crashing through roofs and stripping branches from trees.

**Arvila Martina, Louis Marino, and Louis Krantz**, who were standing at the top of the slope, "were caught in the rain of debris that spurted from the mine and were knocked prostrate by flying timbers, receiving injuries of a serious nature," reported *The White River Journal*.

Everyone knew instantly what had happened. But before a rescue party could enter the mine, they had to wait ... and wait. Hour after hour, the sounds of rock and earth could be heard crashing below. The first rescue party tried to make its way down an air shaft, but were stopped by a mass of rock. It took until 10 p.m. before they could get to the first level of the mine.



In the background behind the wrecked Lawson Mine is the hotel where many of the single miners lived.

**Gas in 38 1/2 breast. Other places all clear.**

**6 a.m.** That was the report of John Van, the night fire boss, just minutes before the explosion. Eleven men from the morning shift were headed down the mouth of the mine that morning, while five men from the night shift waited at the bottom. According to *The Seattle Star's* report, Krantz, who was standing at the mine's entrance, "positively declares that the explosion was caused by gas on the sixth level," noting a fire there several times.

*For the eleven men on the way down into the bowels of the mine—their fate was sealed. But for the five men down on the sixth level....*

**Rescuers gave up hope** of finding the five alive, reported the November 9 edition of *The Seattle Star*. Two search parties, working from both ends of the mine, could get no farther than the third level before they encountered the deadly after-damp. "Even had the five miners on the sixth level escaped death when the terrific explosion occurred, their lives must have been snuffed out by the fatal after-damp." All was certain when workers detected the unmistakable odor of death.

*"It's all over, boys," said the foreman, dropping his spade for the moment. "They're dead, all right, now."*

**"The minute they got them out, they buried them,"** remembered **Cecil Gwylm Robinson** in *Mining the Memories*. "It wasn't good to keep them around any longer. They buried them even at night. From our front porch we could see them going to the cemetery with the torch lights." On November 14, *The Seattle Star* reported that 1,500 people turned out for one funeral; last rites were conducted at the not-yet-dedicated St. Barbara Catholic Church. The procession stretched from the then-tiny church on Lawson Hill to the Black Diamond Cemetery as eight of the miners were

buried in one grave.

For the miners among the living, many gathered at the Black Diamond Saloon, now Baker Street Books, to share a drink and recall “the old tales of mine horrors,” reported the *Seattle P-I*. “The latest comer from the scene of the horror, any man who had a far-fetched part in it, has gained a fleeting dignity and standing in the community.”

**Cause unknown.** Common practice at the mine was to search miners for matches before allowing them to descend into the mine—a search that supposedly wasn’t performed on that fateful November 6. That was one of the theories put forth by the Pacific Coast Coal Company. Another, reported in the official investigative report, was “that the overlying strata caved and caused concussion enough of itself to wreck the mine, or that a cave forced out a large body of gas, the concussion or compression damaging one of the miner’s safety lamps, and gas being ignited in this manner.” The miners always believed, however, that one of the long-burning fires caused the explosion.

The mine was abandoned by the Pacific Coast Coal Company following the explosion—deemed too expensive to repair.



Houses from the Lawson Mine were moved to current-day Lawson Street, here shown circa 1950.

**Lawson on the move.** Once a thriving community, now the pieces of the town were being picked up and moved to more suitable locations—a common practice at the time. The Lawson Store was moved to the Black Diamond business district around 1911 or 1912, where it became the Pacific Coast Coal Co. General Merchandise Store. It occupied a spot on Railroad Avenue for 50 years between today’s Smokehouse & More and Baker Street Books until the mid-1960s.

And many of the miners’ homes from Lawson found a new home, too—moved to today’s Lawson Street. BDHS Director “**Doc**” **Botts**, whose home stands near the entrance to Lawson Hills Estates, said his house was moved to its present location in 1914 or 1915. Most of the other houses were moved around the same time.

**Mining did continue** in and around the Lawson Mine during the late 1930s up until the eve of World War II. According to BDHS Archivist **JoAnne Matsumura**, **Frank Hann** and a partner, a Mr. Ring, had a mine that went toward Old Lawson, as did **Ed Johnson**. The Johnson Coal Mine went in and “pulled the pillars” of the Lawson Mine—the process whereby the pillars of coal holding up the roof of the mine are removed, letting the mine collapse on itself as you work your way out of the seam.

**Today**, the area where the mine was located is owned by YarrowBay and is part of the Lawson Hills development that will eventually bring 1,200 new homes to the area. In preparation for the development, the previous owner, Palmer Coking Coal Company, removed 65,000 cubic yards of coal slag near the site of the old Lawson Mine bunkers just last year. The slag was transported to the Franklin area, where it was used to help reclaim the Fulton Coal Mine, which operated in the 1950s.

One hundred years of history in Lawson.... What the next one hundred will bring—what with all the plans for massive development in our sleepy community—is anyone’s guess!

## Where Was the Town of McKay?

In the museum is a memorial plaque for **Mr. Herman Wiskus**, who died in Franklin in 1906. He was a member of the United Finn Brotherhood of the World, Lodge #7, MacKay (aka Lawson).



For those of you who've just read this latest Diamond Junction column, you already know the answer: **McKay** or **MacKay** and **Lawson** were one and the same.

As you may remember, I began my column in January with a series of questions about Black Diamond history. In April, I answered the question, "How did trains turn around in Franklin?" (They *didn't*. They used the Franklin Wye or "Y" to back into Franklin.) In July, we found out that Mine 7 was in—duh!—Section 7 (Township 18, Range 7), just east of the Lake 12 boat launch. And now the McKay mystery is solved. Case closed.

But that's not to say I'm out of questions—far from it!

For 2011, I'm already thinking about several topics. For instance, I want to know more about:

- **Script issued by the Pacific Coast Coal Company** as pay for use at the company store. The phrase "getting snaked" was when you got a slip of paper with an "S" on it on payday—meaning you were so far in debt at the company store that

you could forget about getting paid.

- **The history of Lake Sawyer.** Photos of the sawmills and resorts and their accompanying stories are hard to come by, or at least haven't been put down to paper.
- **The Indian Mine**—aka the New Black Diamond Mine—that I frequently drive by on the Renton-Maple Valley Road.
- **The Green River Gorge Resort** near Franklin and the giant checkerboard next to the river that you can *still* see from the one-lane bridge.

What would you like to know more about? Drop me a line at [BlackDiamondHistory@comcast.net](mailto:BlackDiamondHistory@comcast.net) or make a comment on the Black Diamond History Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/BlackDiamondHistory>. I'd love to hear your ideas.

## WANTED

**YOU at the General  
Membership Meeting**

**Be prepared for Fun  
and Entertainment**

**Sunday Oct. 24th  
1:00 PM**

## WE GET LETTERS

By JoAnne Matsumura

**MarciaLee Berg writes:** Facebook site is “very professionally done. Give Ken our assurance that we were most impressed.”

**Lynne Evans Bonnell writes:** Newsletter – “is the Best”.

**Mary Lou Bovee writes:** “I have such glorious memories of Lake Twelve, Black Diamond, and the Henry family from 1943-1963 and then from 1995-2000!”

**Lou Draghi writes:** “JoAnne, I can’t tell you how pleased I was to read your recognition and tribute of Bill Luke. What a wonderful job. What a nice picture. Bill was a superb person.

“I smiled when I read the article I wrote {Penmanship article} and enjoyed the other peoples experiences on the subject also. I know a lot of effort goes into the production of the Quarterly and this was an outstanding issue. Great work to you and the others.”

“I loved the Black Diamond History on Facebook. Thanks for making me aware of it.”

**Marilyn Donati Kienke writes:** “JoAnne, yes, Carolyn & I are receiving your memorable newsletter. The July issue was a small ‘novel’! Happy Birthday to Doc Botts whose birthday is the same as mine. We grew up on Lawson Hill and three doors apart! MEMORIES.....”

**Betty Luke writes:** “JoAnne, I have been remiss in contacting you to let you know how much I appreciate the wonderful article about Bill (Luke). It is difficult for me to express the true depth of my feelings. I will treasure it forever. You truly put your heart into it and it was especially touching that you remembered the things he tried to do for the museum. Please thank Steve and Dee, and others at the museum for helping getting it into the newsletter. Also presented it in such a way and for paying tribute to him.”

**Pam Nixon from Scotland writes:** “Thanks for putting me onto the BDHS Facebook site. It has been most interesting.”

**Becky Teeters stated:** “The last newsletter had such interesting stories and so full of information. I like stories of small towns, and those were so interesting. I really enjoyed it.”

**Marylou Toth writes:** “JoAnne, I was overwhelmed and gratified beyond words when I received the previous issue of the quarterly museum bulletin in which you printed my dearly beloved husband Richard Toth’s obituary.

“I have no words to tell you how much it meant to me that you would not only mark his passing, but that you would mention his enjoyment of the museum and his sharing that enjoyment with family and friends. I felt that you were saying Dick was more than a museum patron; he was a friend. Thank you for that; it means more to me than I can say.”

“Thank you also for letting me know, via the bulletin, that good friends, David & Nancy Grant, had made a contribution to the museum in his name. That means a lot to me too.”

**Melodie Thomas writes:** “I really enjoy reading this page---(Facebook) can’t wait to move closer this summer! It sounds like a great place to raise our family. Love the history on this little town is fabulous!!”

**Millie Vierra states:** This is my first visit to the museum and its like walking back into history. The atmosphere is so homelike and inviting. Everything is so clean. I’ll enjoy writing about this experience in my blog.

**Dennis Williams writes:** “My brother Ken was a member who has passed away last year. I noted it in the newsletter, and I thank you for that. We came to Black Diamond in 1943 and lived on the hill on the way to Morganville.” “I have the book {Mining the Memories}, and treasure it and the memories.”

**Eileen Wyke writes:** “Hi JoAnne, what an interesting bulletin from Black Diamond this month, very interesting and newsworthy. The Facebook site is “Very informative”.

**If you haven’t visited Facebook yet, go to [www.facebook.com/BlackDiamondHistory](http://www.facebook.com/BlackDiamondHistory).**

✿ **IN MEMORIAM** ✿

**Gone but not forgotten**

By JoAnne Matsumura

✿ **Ernest R. Seliger**, the son of Arthur & Grace Miller Seliger was born October 3, 1914 in Cumberland, Washington. His parents immigrated to the Black Diamond-Franklin-Bayne area in 1880 from Germany. He was well known as Ernie, and he died August 8, 2010 at the age of 95.

He worked as a coal miner and “had a coal mine during the depression”. He was also a logger, and resided in this area all his life. History states that he discovered a McKay seam near Deep Lake in 1942. Ernie stated that this mine operated there until 1952.

Ernie penned that the “years 1932 to early 1940s on the Green River, near Franklin in Section 8” were his special memories.

Ernie was a Lifetime member of the Society having joined our Membership Family in 2002.

Ernie is survived by stepson Bill Vine, stepdaughters JoAnn Pogue and Linda Callahan, grandchildren and many great-grandchildren. His wife Dolores preceded him in death.

✿ **Ellen Gertrude Olsen Vieg** a lifetime member since 1988, passed away on July 15, 2010 at her home. She was born February 3, 1916 in Iditarod, Alaska to Osmund and Hulda Olsen. Later the family moved to Auburn, Washington.

Ellen’s first five years of school “were spent in a little one room school-house called “Greenwood”. Ellen wrote, “Black Diamond was my school district so we drove back & forth by school bus.” “At first” she said, “I felt shy coming to such a large school. However, the children and teachers were so kind and friendly, I felt at home.” Ellen entered the Black Diamond schools in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and graduated from the Black Diamond



High School in 1934. She served as an Usher for the Senior Class Play, *Aunt Jerushy on the War-Path*.

She moved to Seattle and began working for Western Union, where she met John Vieg and they were married in 1944, where they remained for their 55 years of marriage.

Earlier this year she wrote and stated, “There were wonderful schools, great teachers, and so many friendly people, young and old.”

She penned in 2005, “The years spent in Black Diamond remain beautiful memories. I enjoyed school activities and associating with friends. My best friend, Audrey Kramer Mendenhall is still my dearest friend for almost 80 years.” “We often spoke of the fun times growing up in Black Diamond.”

Ellen enjoyed reading the newsletter and visiting the museum, and thanking us for her surprise birthday card.

Mr. Vieg passed away in 1999. Son Jack and daughter Karen survives Ellen, and her dearest friend Audrey Kramer Mendenhall.

✿ **David Walsh** was born in Cle Elum, WA, on September 3, 1924 and joined our membership family in 2006. He passed away peacefully on July 19, 2010 in his Renton home. His membership support of the Society’s mission and his interest in our work will always be appreciated.

At the age of 3, David, with his parents and seven older siblings moved to Black Diamond and resided there until the family moved to Renton, WA in 1941.

After serving with the U.S. Army during WW II, he retained a position with Pacific Car and Foundry and Kenworth where he remained until 1953, and was hired by the City of Renton as a Firefighter wherein he served for 31 years.

He favored hanging out with friends in a mountain cabin, sometimes watching the snow falling outside by the warm glowing fire when he wasn’t cooking up his favorite meals on the old wood burning stove.

David’s wife Nell McClean preceded him in death. He is survived by daughters, Emmeline, and Susan, and brother Jim.

A celebration of life was held August 6, 2010 at Kennydale Memorial Hall, Renton, WA.



## HAVE YOU BOUGHT & TURNED IN YOUR RAFFLE TICKETS FOR THIS QUILT YET?

This beautiful quilt was by Miss Berl Baxter with fabric from the 1930-1950's, and has been finished by Taylor Creek Quilts (Joanne Lee & Karin Wheeler of the Covington Quilt Guild.) The quilt is valued at \$1,000.00. Tickets are only \$5.00 each and the drawing will be held at the General Membership meeting of the Black Diamond Museum, on October 24, 2010. The proceeds from this raffle will be used for Archive Preservation. You need not be present to win! To purchase these tickets by mail, send your request with the dollars to BDHS Archive Preservation Fund, P.O. Box 22, Black Diamond, WA 98010.

We hope to see you at the General Membership Meeting of the Black Diamond Historical Society, held at 32627 Railroad Avenue on October 24<sup>th</sup> 2010.

(If you wish to see this quilt, it is on display at the Museum during regular business hours.)



## AROUND TOWN

By: Dorothy Franz Corlett

(Reprinted from August 2000 Newsletter)

We played basketball in the "old gym". I guess it had been a bunkhouse for the single miners years ago. It didn't have very high ceilings. It didn't have ceilings at all! If one threw the ball too high, it sometimes got caught in the rafters and bounced around 'til it came back down! The dust raised from the floors when all those kids ran around. We thought we were in the "dust bowl" at times! That old building was torn down when I was in high school and the W.P.A. built a large new one for us. A lot of people volunteered their time and helped build it. Mr. Cobb's Manual Training Class had his students do some of the work--laying flooring under his watchful eye, etc. Several years ago, that gym was moved several blocks away to be used for other purposes. The moving costs were many times higher than the original cost! As money comes available it will be renovated to other uses.

The town had it's own movie theatre, where Hollywood movies were shown 3 or 4 times weekly. The Black Diamond Athletic and Community Club issued membership cards to the adults and their kids to use as passes to go to the movies. I still have my card. The miners paid, I think it was 50 cents a month to help pay for this. Mr. Babb monitored the show hall, and "boy you'd better behave in there or out you'd go!" There were only a couple of busloads of kids from out of town, whose Dads were not miners. Mr. Babb said, "Let them all go to the show as long as they behave". We really appreciated that. For years we went to free shows twice a week.

Mr. Babb was really good to the kids. He really kept the "rowdy" element in line, too. Occasionally some of the kids got out of line and were hauled into jail in Seattle. He'd go to Seattle and "go to bat" for them. He usually brought them home. They had to keep an appointment with him each day to monitor what they were doing. When he figured they were straightened out they were on their own! Most of the kids didn't like it at the time; but I'm sure that they respected him for it.

Everyone had to go to the post office for their mail. I usually went on my lunch hour. The post office was down the hill from the school (where the Eagles Hall is now.) We would go "kitty corner" behind the hotel to get there. It was closer than going around on the road. Mr. McCray (sp) lived at the hotel and did odd jobs for them. He had an old gray goose that was meaner than sin! The older kids had probably teased that goose until he attacked anyone who came near. We always surveyed the area to see where he was, or if he had his back to us, before we ventured down the hill. One day, I was a little late going for the mail. It was still lunch hour but get-

ting near bell time. I had to go on my lunch hour as there wasn't time after school because of the bus leaving immediately. Anyway, I came to the area where I'd have to go in back of the hotel. I looked all around for that "darned goose" and finally saw him with his back to me. He was about 250 feet away. I figured I'd be able to make it to the post office without him seeing me. Boy, was that a mistake! He started for me, half running and half flying! Before I knew it, he was right in front of me with his long neck and head down and hissing like mad! I tried to keep going and hoped he would leave me alone if I didn't aggravate him. Another mistake! The trail was muddy going down the hill. I realized I'd have to defend myself if I could. I kicked at him just as he was going to flail me with his wings. I slipped in the mud, and landed in his neck! His head was behind me when I sat on him. The rest of the goose was in front of me. One of my feet and legs was on each side of him. At 120 lbs., I must have "knocked the wind out of him"! I was mad and scared. I had to get up, but I was afraid of what he might do to me! I got up; wondering what to do. There wasn't a soul around to help me. The goose was slow to get up. I was afraid I had killed him accidentally. He finally got up, looking around like he was confused. He started away from me. I thought I'd get the last lick in. By then, I was getting madder. I booted him like a football! He took off, half flying and half running. He didn't hiss anymore, just let out a screeching "Aawk". He looked sort of dizzy and sort of cross-eyed when he got up. He took off like he was possessed, for parts unknown! I was afraid I'd be in trouble for kicking at him. I guess no one saw the incident as no one said anything to me.

I don't remember seeing that goose after that, come to think of it. I assumed at the time, that he was staying away from the kids. I'm sure he didn't know what struck him! He used to flog people terribly. Most people were terrified of him, including me. I'm a little leery of geese to this day.

You know, it was a fun place to go to school, really. Looking back on it, I wonder what the kids now-a-days would have done. They don't know how lucky they are with all their modern conveniences. Maybe it helped that we had a sense of humor. How else could we have survived the Great Depression? I'm sure it wasn't funny to our parents, though, trying to raise a family on next to nothing. Our kids have said, "Mom, it wasn't that bad was it?" My retort usually was, "I'm only telling you the good things! You wouldn't believe the rest!"

*Dorothy Franz Corlett*



# Membership and Renewal Form



Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Eve Phone \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

If this is a gift, who is it from? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership Fees		
Individual	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization	\$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lifetime Individual	\$100.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Donation	\$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	\$ _____	
Total Enclosed	\$ _____	

\_\_\_\_\_

New  
 Renewal  
 Cash  
 Check  
 Ck # \_\_\_\_\_

Make Check Payable to: **BDHS**  
 Mail to:  
**Black Diamond**  
**Historical Society**  
**PO Box 232**  
**Black Diamond, WA 98010**

*For our records, on all checks please note purpose of check. (Dues, Donation, Memorial, etc.)*

(Museum Use Only) Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Posted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ (rev. 6/10/10)

## IN THE MUSEUM

### 1925 Gyrotator

Early model Maytag washing machine pictured here is one of many washing machines on display in the basement of the museum. This model had a gasoline engine with a kick starter. The Maytag repairman would say: "It's not broken, ma'am, it's just out of gas."





**Black Diamond Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 232**  
**Black Diamond, WA 98010-0232**

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

NONPROFIT ORG.  
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BLACK DIAMOND, WA  
PERMIT NO. 17

Membership due date is on your label.

**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP  
MEETING**

**1:00 PM, Sunday October 24th,  
At the Museum**

**Gregg Olsen, author of *The Deep  
Dark*, will chronicle one of the worst  
mining disasters in U.S. history**

**MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS**

**12:30 PM  
3rd Thursday  
Of Each Month**

**The Black Diamond  
Historical Society**

**is a non profit organization.  
Our funding comes mainly  
from donations, dues, and  
some grants.**

**The restoration and mainte-  
nance of the Museum and its  
contents are done by volun-  
teers.**

**To donate your time or money  
would be a great way for you to  
help preserve your history.  
Find out more in this issue!**