

# Miner Rescued After 17 Hours

## Gerd Eggers Is Reached Just in Time

ATIKOKAN (Special) — Gerd Eggers, a 31-year-old underground miner, owes his life today to coolness in the face of peril and to the dogged determination of fellow miners who freed him after 17 hours of entombment 640 feet below the surface at Steep Rock Iron Mines.

Eggers, father of two young children, escaped from his ordeal with a severely crushed right hand although W. J. Huston, manager of operations for the mining company, said that when rescue workers reached the place where he was trapped "he had started to show the first signs of suffocation."

Eggers' release came at approximately 3:45 p.m. Saturday and he was taken immediately to the Atikokan General Hospital.

Dr. A. B. Adey, chief of the medical staff, who accompanied rescue workers in their drive to the trapped man described his general condition as fine and said that Eggers' crushed hand was the "only injury of any consequence."

Eggers' wife vigorously supported a statement made by her husband from his hospital bed that he'd no longer work un-

derground. Said Mrs. Eggers: "I say most definitely no and I think that everybody can understand my feelings."

### SAVED BY MIRACLE

The cave-in that trapped Eggers occurred around 10:45 p.m. Friday and brought 1,000 tons of ore, rock and muck into the 80-foot-long scam in which he had been at work, 60 feet above the 700-foot level of the Errington underground mine at Steep Rock. By some miracle, Eggers found himself left in a small shelter or pocket framed by smashed timbers and buckled steel cross sections.

One of the giant timbers pinned his right hand to a section of the mucking machine that he had been operating.

Mr. Huston said that Eggers, an experienced mine rescue worker himself, could sit up and move his legs. The mine official said Eggers showed

"remarkable presence of mind" in a variety of ways. Uncertain whether his pinned hand was bleeding, Eggers fashioned a tourniquet with his free hand and tied it securely in place on his right arm.

He spent long periods in total darkness, turning off his miner's headlamp to conserve the lamp's power. Rev. Gordon Phillips, rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd who visited Eggers in hospital, said the miner told him that when he realized his air supply was dwindling he released air from one of the tires on his mucking machine.

"After he'd taken the air from one tire he tried to do the same with another tire but although he could touch the second tire the valve was out of reach," said Rev. Phillips.

### DESERVES MEDAL

Mr. Huston said that rescue teams removed more than 400 tons of material in their 40 to 45 foot drive to reach Eggers.

About 60 men are employed in underground operations at Steep Rock and virtually all played roles in the rescue operation.

Mr. Huston said that "every man underground deserves a medal."

Dr. Adey, who administered sedatives to Eggers within minutes after his release and again at the hospital, said no bones had been broken in Eggers' hand nor had the skin been broken.

Eggers told the doctor that he wasn't bothered by any pain until his arm was freed and he began to recover circulation.

"He wasn't bothered by his

confinement or by the waiting until he could hear the men talking as they got closer to him," said Dr. Adey.

He had been surprised at the length of time that he had been entombed.

"I didn't have a watch and I thought I'd been there about six hours, not 17 as it turned out. I've heard that people in such situations find time passing slowly but it wasn't that way in my case."

Eggers said that to keep his mind off his predicament and to help pass the time, he resorted to loosening and tightening various nuts and bolts on his mucking machine.

Dr. Adey added, "He'd hear them working and he'd knock on his mucking machine but they couldn't hear the sounds because of the noise of their own machines."

Mr. Huston said he had no idea why the ground had "failed" in the scam where Eggers had been working.

"Of all our stopes this was the one that we thought was really ideal," he said.

### DIRECTS RESCUERS

Mr. Huston said that when rescue workers finally broke through "Eggers sat up and directed the men in how to remove the timber that had him trapped."

The mine official added, "That way we got him out a lot faster than I thought we could do it."

Eggers, born in Hamburg, Germany, started working at Steep Rock as an underground miner in 1955 after brief employment at a gold mine in Red Lake.

He married an Atikokan girl Marilyn McMillan, in 1957 and they have a son Billy, and a daughter Barbara. Billy will be six on Feb. 4 and Barbara will be four on Feb. 5. Not until Eggers had been brought to safety were the children informed of their father's miraculous escape.

Eggers had planned to go ice fishing with a friend on Saturday and Mrs. Eggers left the children with the impression that he had gone on his intended trip.

His wife was waiting up for his return at 1 a.m. Saturday and had coffee ready when instead, a mine official, two church associates and a clergyman arrived at her door.

Rev. Phillips told her of the cave-in. He said she asked whether her husband was alive and he replied, "I'm sorry, I don't know."

Mr. Phillips prayed through the night with the family.

A birthday party was planned Sunday, but it was decided that instead the children will have their party when their "Dad comes home."

From his hospital bed, Eggers said: "It's a miracle I'm alive."

Mucking machines of the type operated by Eggers weigh about a ton and are capable of carrying a load equal to their weight. They are operated by air pressure forced down by compressors from a plant near the surface.

Except for the fact that the slide pinched off air in the hose attached to Eggers' machine, the miner would have been able to obtain an air supply through the hose.