

the distinctive pressures evident in each area. In the equalization campaign and coal bootlegging workers developed strategies that resonated with local elites—including small business owners, clergy, and area professionals. Working-class protest quickly escalated into community struggles against managers and owners of the leading anthracite firms. These strategies provided mine workers power they did not possess in the broader political arena and a measure of relief from the insecurity of the Depression. The sectarianism of the Communist Party organizers was ill-suited to permit them to assume a leadership role in these efforts, though they did offer important support to the organization of independent miners that grew out of coal bootlegging.

Howard offers a parallel story in his account of anthracite-region Communists between 1919 and 1950. He argues for the significance of Communist efforts, but it is not at all clear that they had much influence on working-class or community protest in these decades. He concludes by describing Communists as “authentic American radicals” (p. 213), but the weakness of their appeal in the anthracite region undercuts that characterization. Other radical currents emerged in anthracite, with less ideological content and free of connections to broader left-wing traditions, that enabled miners to challenge the political and economic groups that dominated their lives.

*SUNY Binghamton*

THOMAS DUBLIN

*Voices of the Knox Mine Disaster: Stories, Remembrances, and Reflections on the Anthracite Coal Industry's Last Major Catastrophe, January 22, 1959.* By ROBERT P. WOLENSKY, KENNETH C. WOLENSKY, and NICOLE H. WOLENSKY. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2005. xi, 286p. Notes, glossary, illustrations, index. \$12.95.)

There have been many coal mine disasters in Pennsylvania that took more lives, but few can match the horror and drama of the Knox Mine disaster. Explosions or fires kill large numbers quickly: the Avondale fire took 110 lives, and the Darr Mine explosion 239. The 12 men who died in the Knox mine were victims of an illegal shaft breaking through the river bottom under the rampaging waters of the icy Susquehanna on January 22, 1959. Their lives were taken perhaps in minutes, perhaps days or even longer, as the water advanced inexorably through the tunnels. Their bodies were never recovered. Thirty-three men escaped after a harrowing trek through the maze of shafts and tunnels in search of higher ground and a way out. Billions of gallons of water surged through the interconnecting mines, effectively ending more than a century of mining in the northern anthracite field.

The Wolenskys have told this story in an earlier book, *The Knox Mine*

*Disaster, January 22, 1959* (1999), a straightforward and objective account of the event. This follow-up book digs into the event's deeper meaning; how it affected the rescued miners, the surviving family members, and the community. It provides the subjective web of personal and collective memory in a well-organized and moving fashion. Interviews are organized in concentric circles starting with the rescued miners, the wives and siblings, the children, and then through poems, songs, and memorials uncovering the communal memory. There are stark accounts of the survivors as they climbed along the edge of life and death; powerful memories of family dreams and premonitions; the moment of hearing on the radio, at school, or from a neighbor that there had been an "accident at the mines"—a phrase that struck fear in the hearts of mine communities for generations.

One of the interviewees tells one of the coauthors: "Some of your questions have pried some things open" (p. 170). In fact many things are pried open in this book: the deep bitterness that virtually everyone felt toward a company that ignored warnings and ample evidence of impending breakthrough, then offered no condolences or reparation; the corruption of union officials; the incompetence or collusion of mine inspectors; the bitter divisions that emerged between two groups of rescued miners that got separated, causing the larger group of twenty-five to wander in terror for seven hours.

Almost as much as the interviews, nearly eighty photos and illustrations inject the reader into the event and the lives of those who lived it: children with the father they will lose, a happy wife and husband a year before the disaster, service photos, wedding pictures, family portraits after the event with bewildered faces and visible pain. In recent years, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has made a sustained effort to broaden the public's understanding of history beyond the battlefields and political leaders. Central to this effort has been a growing recognition of the importance of labor history to the understanding of Pennsylvania's heritage. This book by the Wolenskys makes a significant contribution to that process.

*Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

CHARLES MCCOLLESTER

*A Capitol Journey: Reflections on the Press, Politics, and the Making of Public Policy in Pennsylvania.* By VINCENT P. CAROCCI. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005. x, 298p. Illustrations, index. \$39.95.)

*A Capitol Journal* is a narrative of Vincent Carocci's life in which the author reflects on his more than forty years of service in journalism, government, and the private sector. Part autobiography and part memoir, the author includes passages