

The Louisville Historian

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Present Society Memberships Effective Until 1988

At the October meeting of the Society, it was decided that all present Historical Society membership dues will remain in effect until Labor Day of 1988.

Meeting Times

The joint meetings of the Louisville Historical Society and Historical Commission are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7pm in the Louisville City Hall. The meetings are open to the public.

Museum Store to Have New Roof

A new roof for the Store was approved at the October Commission meeting. This follows receipt of \$2,300.00 from the insurance company for hail damage. These funds, combined with sales of roof shingle certificates, provided sufficient funds to request bids for the project.

Museum House Will Be Warm

Public Service installed the gas meter and gas line to the furnace on October 12. Louisville Electric will complete the electrical work required on it in the near future. When this work is complete, Apex Heating will perform a safety check and start the furnace. No more cold toes....!

Labor Day A Big Success

Although it was a bit on the cool side and not all of the soft drinks donated by *Coca Cola* were sold—everyone involved deemed the day a big success. A large tent, loaned by Dave Stahl, was setup next to the Store with tables for soft drink and coal sack sales. The "Old Timer" video tapes were shown on a continuous basis inside the store.

the beautiful doll donated by Marion Junior. And the winner is (was)—Betty Buffo. Congratulations Betty! Many thanks to Marion, the doll was the hit of the day and brought in many \$\$\$.

As all of the soft drinks were not sold, it was decided at the September 9th meeting to sell them at \$5 per case to anyone who is thirsty.

Thanks to the Merchants and Businesses Who Supported Labor Day

Activities

The Louisville Historical Commission and Louisville Historical Society would like to extend joint thanks and appreciation to the sixty-nine merchants, professional offices, and businesses of Louisville who donated or contributed to the Labor Day activities.

Louisville Books Donated to the Commission

Carolyn Connaroe has graciously donated a box of her book "Louisville Story" to the Louisville Historical Commission. The Commission may sell the books and use the proceeds for Commission activities. Many thanks to Carolyn for her support.

Old Fashioned Christmas

Christmas ornaments are being produced for sale during the holidays. Workshops have been held every week to produce 24 of each design.

The Louisville Chamber of Commerce will sponsor an "Old Fashioned Christmas" on December 4th. The celebration will consist of a parade of lights, musical groups, etc. The Commission and Society will hold an open house at the Museum House where the Christmas ornaments will be sold. It is hoped that one of the florists will agree to decorate the house for the holidays.



From the files of the Colorado State Historical Society

Friday, December 6, 1889

SEVEN HUNDRED MEN ON STRIKE

Seven Hundred Coal Miners at Louisville, Colorado, Have Struck for Higher Wages

At their meeting last Monday, the miners abolished the Committee of Conciliation on the part of the mines. This made impossible the meeting of the operators and the Conciliatory Committee appointed yesterday.

After taking this action, the 700 men of this district voted to go out on a strike. The men claim that if the Simpson, Cannon, and Jackson can afford to run and pay for guards with "scab" and "blackley" labor, they can well afford to pay the advance asked by the regular miners.

Again they claim that the operators resent this meddling in their business by intelligent miners, and think there is a tendering to place intelligent laborers at a disadvantage.

The men can do nothing now except through the mass meeting. They had supposed that all the operators would join the association and on that basis, they determined to strike until the matter of machines were settled at Lafayette.

They now see that in this they have failed and every hour they are out, they are simply injuring the mines, like the Marshall and the Standard, whose managers have always granted the demands of the miners in their labor demands.

Mister Simpson, upon the declaration of the strike, placed a heavy guard and at same time imported laborers from Rich Hill, Missouri. Each squad met at the preceding station and conducted to the mine.

Yesterday, the Jackson, Cannon, and Simpson mines started to work for the full 24 hours and put out 41 car loads and of course, are reaping the benefit at the expense of the mines who have not put in machines and who have depended upon the mines.

Mister Gorman of the Marshall Mine was in Louisville all day trying to present the justice of his case to the miners and showing them the necessity of coming

once to the rescue if they did not wish to force him to machine and scab labor.

A mass meeting was consequently called for Friday evening, and upon the assurance of consideration, Mister Gorman consented to delay action. The Louisville miners want to go to work.

From the files of the Colorado State Historical Society

January 31, 1890

BIG WIND AT BOULDER

Sheriff Edward Autry has been around the county and reports marvelous freaks of the great windstorm which prevailed last Friday and Saturday. The farmers between Langford and Louisville and to the Jefferson County line say there is not a stack of hay or alfalfa left standing. At Lafayette, one wall of the new brick school house was blown down and the walls of the Acme Mine engine house at Louisville melted to brick dust before the awful storm.

Thank You Note

The Louisville Historical Society would like to thank Precision Visuals, Incorporated of Boulder for its assistance in producing this newsletter.



BENNY PHILLIPS—LOUISVILLE LEGEND

by Ron Buffo

The mines in and around Louisville provided a basic income for many families but also brought death and very often disabling injury upon others. While not everyone was touched by the consequences of hazards in the mines, it is easy for old timers to recall many occurrences where lives were either ruined or snuffed out in the dark, cold caverns. One such occurrence involved a truly amazing young man named Benny Phillips whose life would be drastically changed because of a mine accident.

Born on August 20, 1913 in Louisville, Benny Phillips was to grow into a strong, hardworking, athletic young man who would become well-known for his prowess in track and skill in baseball. After high school, Benny played two years of professional baseball with the Saint Louis Cardinals and later for the local Centennial Coal baseball team and was admired as a hard hitting outfielder with great speed. In fact, Benny was capable of running the 100 yard dash in 10 seconds flat. Benny loved sports and excelled in all that he participated in.

Benny, the son of Harvey and Ella Phillips, was two years old when his father was killed in the infamous Ludlow Massacre. Ella and her three children, Benny, Orville, and Hazel would soon form another family when Ella married Steve Fotis. From that bond would come four children; Dorothy, Sylvia, Helen, and Stanley. Ironically, Stanley would die in a mine accident in 1942.

In 1940, Benny was working in the Centennial Mine southeast of Louisville. On Tuesday, November 18, Benny and three of his buddies had signed up for military duty in naval aviation and were to report for duty the following Monday. On Wednesday, November 20, 1940, Benny Phillips reported for his last day of work at the mine and the beginning of the most difficult struggle he would ever encounter. In Benny's own words, It was the very last minute of the very last hour on the mine job that a runaway 18-car coal train smashed me up against a tunnel wall. Benny was riding the coal train to the exit of the mine when the train went out of control. He tried to jump into a side tunnel, but missed and was immediately pinned against the side of the tunnel with only 3 inches separating him and the coal cars. As

the cars went past him, he was rolled 54 feet down the tunnel and in the process was pinned and crushed by 17 of the 18 cars. Incredibly, Benny was still alive, but just barely. His left arm was cut off near the shoulder, five vertebrae in his spine were crushed together, all the flesh had been ripped off of his back and legs, a hip and leg were broken and a cut on his forehead would require 24 stitches. When he was brought to the surface, it seemed apparent that Benny Phillips would die soon. He was rushed to Boulder Sanitarium Hospital where he received eight blood transfusions that night and tried to hang on to life.

After the first week, Benny stabilized and when he emerged from, as he called it the "black hole of pain," he painfully questioned why he was allowed to live. Not only would Benny go on to live, but his attitude and determination would be an inspiration to everyone. Benny's stay at Boulder Sanitarium would be for a period of eight years and all of those years would be spent lying on his stomach. Early on, the pain would be almost intolerable and his physical condition deteriorated. Before the accident, Benny weighed 183 pounds. He would eventually reach bottom at 100 pounds. Because of the incredible trauma to his back and legs, Benny was forced to undergo numerous skin grafts. In many places there was just skin covering bone since the muscle had been torn away.

In spite of all this and faced with the likelihood that he would never walk again, Benny was determined to see this through and make the best of a truly negative situation. According to Benny, The next eight years were rough. I spent them in bed, lying on my face, while doctors forced flesh to grow on my legs and back. In my heart, I was determined that someday I would sit up again, that I would be out of that hospital bed, that I would take care of myself.

Not long after Benny's accident, the Fotis family moved to Boulder to be closer to him. Benny's mother, Ella, would make daily trips to the hospital for the entire time he was there. In addition, there was an outpouring of goodwill from the citizens of Louisville and Lafayette. There always seemed to be

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visitors to his room who most often brought gifts, food, and reading materials to him. During Christmas, it was not unusual for people to bring in as many as four or five Christmas trees, which Benny would usually give away to other families.

Being such an avid sports fan, it became a tradition that Benny Phillips would attend the annual Louisville/Lafayette football game. He would arrive by ambulance and would view the game from one end of the field so as not to show any bias toward one team or the other. At other times, Benny would be taken to Fort Collins for a high school football game or to the Army All-Stars versus the Chicago Cards.

After spending eight years in the hospital, most of them on his stomach, Benny was given the opportunity to travel to California where he might possibly have surgery on his spine. On his departure, he was given two Louisville Slugger baseball bats with autographs of the 1949 World Series players. Benny's destination was Kabot-Kaiser Hospital in Oakland, California. The many surgeries eventually enabled Benny to use a bucket type crutch, but he would constantly rely on his wheel chair.

While in California, Benny enrolled in a business program at the University of Southern California and was eventually hired by the Kaiser Foundation as a purchasing agent.

Benny was married to Rosalie Hitchner on December 17, 1955. He and his wife would remain in California for the rest of his life. Benny made a few visits to Colorado and whenever he came back, everyone remembered him and saw cause for celebrating with

him. After all, Benny was the epitome of courage and perseverance and his example was a guidepost for everyone.

Two years before his death, Benny's health began to deteriorate and he was unable to work. The massive injuries his body had sustained were finally catching up with him. Benny died in 1962, having lived twenty-two years longer than the doctor's believed he would.

We can still benefit from the inspiration of Benny Phillips today. In his own words: **PERSEVERE, HAVE FAITH, VISUALIZE, YOU CAN'T MISS**

Bon Voyage to Pura

Pura Rojas-Weiss announced at the October meeting that she will be submitting her resignation from the Commission as she and her family will be moving to Florida. She has turned over the oral history work to Bill Buffo. Her work and presence will be missed by all. Best wishes Pura, we will miss you!

National Historical Register

The commission approved a request from Mike Sheen, a student, to be allowed to work on a project to get more Louisville homes placed on the National Historical Register.

LOUISVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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