

Ralph Blankenbecler

Most collectors probably know by now that Ralph Blankenbecler passed away on July 6 at the age of 77. Ralph was one of the "grand old men" of lamp and coal scrip collecting. I personally never talked to Ralph, although we had corresponded a few times. He always had great material to trade, but alas, I never had anything he needed. By all reports, his lamp collection was nothing short of superb.

Ralph was a lifelong resident of Coeburn, Virginia, a retired merchant, a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, and a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Survivors include his wife, one daughter, two sons, and five grandchildren.

Mark Ballard related the following to me:

"Ralph was a true pioneer collector of carbide cap lamps. The first time I met him was at a National Scrip Collectors Association show, of which Ralph was a member. On a 4 x 8 table sat some of the finest carbide cap lamps I had ever seen. Sitting behind the table was a man with a big smile and he said: 'Son, do have any cap lamps for sale or trade?'

Ralph was a true gentleman and honest and fair to all. He will not be forgotten by the lamp and scrip collecting community." --- Len Gaska

Nystagmus

by Jim Steinberg

Nystagmus is described as being strictly a miner's disease in Peele's "Mining Engineer's Handbook" of 1918. Supposedly affecting the optic nerve, the disease caused the eyeballs to oscillate. Victims were sometimes unable to walk straight due to a perceived rotary motion. Nystagmus was blamed on insufficient or poor lighting with the chief causative factor being mine safety lamps, particularly early models that did not produce much light. Some statistics stated that 91% of those affected were using safety lamps, whereas among those using open lights, less than 1% were affected.

Successful solutions to the problem included using two safety lamps for illumination, open flame lamps such as oil wicks and carbides, and electric lighting.



Any Collectors Out There With Electronic Mail?

I know there must be a few collectors out there that have E-Mail (electronic mail) addresses via their academic institution or place of work. If so, I would like to publish your addresses so we can exchange information or just chat about collecting. How about it? I do know that E-Mail can be exchanged within and between ARPANET, BITNET, and CSNET. To get things rolling, my E-Mail ARPANET address is GASKA.PASA@XEROX.COM. Let me hear from you!