

I am Melissa Lee, widow of Jimmy D. Lee a miner that died in the May 20th, 2006, Kentucky Darby Mine explosion in Harlan, Kentucky. Jimmy and I have four sons and many broken dreams. We married only after dating a very short time. We were to celebrate our 9th anniversary in 2006, but that did not happen.

I was given a call at 3:39 am and told there had been an explosion and that 6 men were underground. Jimmy being one of the trapped. I was shocked to hear that all his close coworkers were trapped as well. Roy Middleton, Paris Thomas, Bill Petra, Cotton "Amon" Brock and Paul Ledford. I made the trip to the church I was told to go to and there I found my seat to wait.

During the wait, we were told nothing for hours. The update information came from people not even at our waiting spot. Paul Ledford was the first and only to be found alive. All others were dead. I was more than heartbroken..I was beyond numb..I was dead myself.

During the next weeks, I was given calls always saying if they could help, or if I or my sons needed anything to not hesitate and contact them. That was a joke. The widows and myself were kept on the low end. NO information given on the explosion, just promises of help. State police were called to stand watch over the area of the questioning of witnesses. I was told by the state troopers that they were to keep us away from the doors and make sure we did not make a scene. WE heart ripped out, tear stained and drained widows. I was appalled at these choices. We were not a threat, but grief stricken.

I found out later through the autopsy report that my darling husband had substained blunt force and thermal trauma to his body during the explosion. HE had part of his skull removed, impaled by a oxygen tank and destroyed by heat and soot. He would have never survived. He was asked by his foreman to stay behind to do a job. THAT job took him from his wife, sons and life. I lost my bestfriend, the one I

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wanted to grow old with. I was looking forward to having another child with. He is gone.

The explosion wrecked many many lives. It has caused to many of us to have to remap our lives. I moved away, closed my new busines, relocated my children to diffferent schools they do not like, I have had to make changes in things I should have never had to change.

The bill I worked for and think will save lives of other miners is only one of commonsense. It doesn't require much but the want to have safe mining. I have family still underground.

Three of these miners have small children just like their cousins who lost their daddy to a terrible devastation. This will keep these men/women safe and never let what has happened in my life happen to other wives and children.