

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY APRIL 25



Arnold Miller being sworn in for his second term as UMWA president, December 22, 1977

Arnold Miller, who served as president of the United Mine Workers of America from 1972 to 1979, was born in Leewood on April 25, 1923.

CSO: SS.8.24, SS.8.25, ELA.8.1

Investigate the Document: *News Tribune and Mountain Echo*, July 13, 1985, Drawing, Arnold Miller, Sc85-01; *Si Galperin Collection*, Flyer, Ms2006-016, 1:38)

1. Arnold Miller helped form the West Virginia _____.
2. According to UMW President Richard Trumka, what was Arnold Miller's greatest accomplishment?

Think Critically: Why do you think there was opposition to passing black lung legislation? Did coal operators believe it to be a mythical occupational hazard? How does the Black Lung Strike of 1969 compare to the Mine Wars of the early 20th century? What did the Black Lung Strike of 1969 accomplish? Does black lung disease remain a prevalent occupational hazard for coal miners?

Arnold Miller

News Tribune and Mountain Echo (Keyser)

July 13, 1985

Miller Funeral Monday

Charleston, W. Va. (UPI) -

Arnold Miller, credited for introducing democracy into the United Mine Workers as the union's president from 1972 to 1979, died Friday after being near death in a Charleston hospital since May.

The funeral for Miller, 62, who resigned as UMW president because of recurring heart attacks, is scheduled at 1 p.m. Monday at the Bible Center Church on Oakhurst Road in Charleston.

Widely hailed for introducing democracy into the miners union formerly ruled by the iron fists of John L. Lewis and Tony Boyle, the smallish man with the curly white hair and ruddy face made his early mark by fighting for black lung compensation for miners. This was an issue shunned by early union leaders.

Miller campaigned for UMW help in gaining for black lung victims the right to compensation under West Virginia's Workmen's Compensation Law. However, union officials expressed little interest and he helped form the West Virginia Black Lung Association. Now, the federal government carries the load on black lung assistance.

"It's a sad day in the history of the United Mine Workers, not only in the UMW, but in organized labor as well," said Dennis Saunders, president of UMW District 29 at Beckley. "He brought democracy to its fullest in the United Mine Workers of America."

In a statement issued in Washington, UMW President Richard Trumka also cited Miller's reforms in the union and his efforts for black lung legislation.

"Possibly Miller's greatest achievements were the internal reforms he instituted within our union and the historic breakthrough he led in the area of black lung legislation."

Trumka noted that Miller made his reforms for coal miners and their families "in the face of what seemed, at times, overwhelming odds."

In 1969, Miller led a threeweek work stoppage over black lung issues and led a march of miners to Charleston. UMW officials condemned Black Lung Association members for "dual unionism," and urged legislators to ignore their demands. The legislation was approved, and in 1970 Miller was elected president of the Black Lung Association.

It was 1972 when Miller, the grassroots candidate, knocked out Boyle, a John L. Lewis disciple, in a bitter campaign for union president. The vote was 70,373 to 56,334. Boyle died May 31 in Pennsylvania while serving life terms in prison for the 1969 murders of union insurgent Joseph Yablonski, his wife and daughter.

The most turbulent period in Miller's reign was the 110-day nationwide coal strike before the signing of a new contract in 1978.

Upon his resignation in November 1979, he was made president emeritus of the UMW. His successor as president was vice president Sam Church, a man about whom Miller said he was sorry he had selected as a running mate in his 1977 reelection campaign. Miller said he was "not very happy" about Church's becoming president.

After filling out Miller's unexpired term, Church was defeated by Trumka, a Pennsylvania lawyer, for president.

After stepping down as union president, Miller told UPI, "I think I did a commendable job running the union for seven years, with the health problems I had. There are a number of things I'm feeling pretty good about." He was "extremely proud" of the union's work on safety issues.

Miller grew up on Cabin Creek, east of Charleston. His parents split up shortly before his birth and he was reared by his grandparents. He left school after the ninth grade and took a job in the Cabin Creek mines hand-loading coal with his grandfather in 1939, earning 77 cents a ton.

Miller was severely wounded in the Normandy invasion of Europe in World War II and had most of an ear shot away. He spent 23 months in military hospitals and underwent about 20 operations.

Returning to the Cabin Creek mines in 1948 after Army service, he served on mine and safety committees and was elected president of UMW Local 2903 at Eskdale. He ran for the West Virginia House of Delegates, but lost.

After taking office as the UMW president, the plainspoken Miller said in his soft, clipped voice, "The era of one-man rule in this union is over." He cut his president's salary from \$50,000 to \$35,000.

Critics, however, claimed Miller adopted some of Boyle's autocratic tactics. He became suspicious of some of the young reformers who helped him capture control of the union. He fired people regularly, kept a baseball bat by the side of his desk and took to arriving at contract negotiations in a limousine bigger than the car used by Boyle.

Miller was reelected to a five-year term in 1977 in a race against UMW Secretary-Treasurer Harry Patrick and Lee Roy Patterson, a western Kentucky UMW official linked to Boyle.

Married Nov. 26, 1948 to the former Virginia Ruth Brown, they were divorced in 1979. They had two children, Larry Allen and Vicki Lynn.

Burial will be at Montgomery Memorial Park in London. Visitors will be received at Pryor Funeral Home in East Bank on Sunday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.



West Virginia Archives and History

*Taylor Jones
The Charleston Gazette
1974*

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#971 Arnold Miller #15

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