

THEY'LL MISS CEECE AT BRITANNIA

Lowly Mine Pick Helped Roper Up Success Ladder

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On a hot June day in the depression-ridden thirties, a prairie boy, fresh out of college, went to work as a pick-and-shovel man in a British Columbia copper mine.

It wasn't the job the 22-year-old had been dreaming of while he worked for a degree in mining engineering at the University of Alberta. The mine, according to all the experts, was just about washed up.

But it was a job, and that was a big thing in the summer of 1936.

Today the mine is one of Canada's main copper and zinc producers and the man largely responsible for its recovery is the college boy turned underground laborer.

And this week that same boy, now 41, has been appointed executive vice-president of one of North America's biggest mine holding companies.

Sound like a Horatio Alger story? Well, it is in a sense, only this one happens to be true.

And the main characters are Edward Cecil Roper, the prairie boy, and Britannia Mining and Smelting Company, the outfit that was supposed to be washed up.

Long Journey To New Field

Just after the New Year, "Ceece" Roper and his family will step into a ferry boat at the Britannia dock to start the 3,000-mile journey to New York and a new life.

While Roper accustoms himself to the executive offices of the Howe Sound Company and the firm's far-flung operations in Mexico, Canada and the United States, his wife, Dorothy, and their children, Winnifred, Fay and Eddie, will start the major adjustment from mining town to the well-heeled suburb of Irvington, 35 miles out of New York on the Hudson river.

"It's like losing your right arm to leave a community like this," Roper said, and he added, simply, "It's been my life."

And Roper will be missed.

Thursday afternoon, a miner walked into Roper's office. He was just off shift. His name is Johnny Johnston and in '36 he'd worked alongside Roper driving a new mine shaft.

"It won't be the same around here," Johnston said. "But dammit, we're glad for you, Ceece."

In Vancouver, another man who worked underground with Roper said, "Ceece is one of the hardest working men I've ever met, and on top of that he's an all around wonderful guy. The promotion is well deserved."

Tribute From Labor Leader

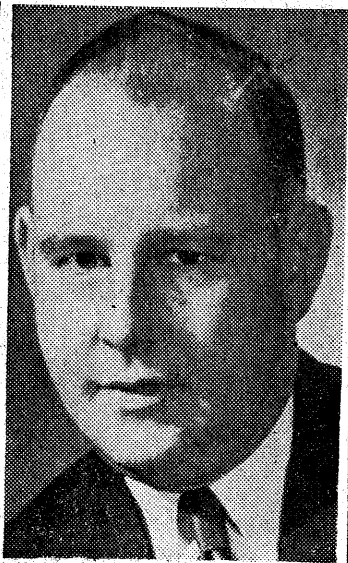
And that particular tribute comes from a labor leader—Ken Smith, recently-appointed B.C. director of the United Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.

Smith should know what he's talking about. He and Roper began working at Britannia within a month of each other. They wielded pick and shovel on the same shift for \$4 a day; came to Vancouver on long weekends together; shared the ups and downs of the depression period.

That's the personal side. The promotion is important industry-wide, too.

B.C. and Yukon Chamber of Mines manager Tommy Elliott put it this way: "Roper's appointment means a lot to us. It shows that the technical know-how of B.C. mining men is being recognized across the continent."

When Roper went to Britan-



E. C. "CEECE" ROPER
... going to New York

nia in 1936, he worked underground almost a year before he was moved to a job as surveyor's helper. Later he went back underground as timberman miner and shaft miner.

Then in 1938, his fast climb up the executive ladder began in earnest. In that year he was appointed field engineer for Britannia's exploration department.

Two years later, Roper became the mine's chief engineer; by 1945 he was assistant mine superintendent.

He won the job of assistant manager in 1947, and then in 1948 he became manager.

During the same year he was elected to the executive committee of the Mining Association of B.C. He served as president of the association in 1953 and 1954. And, typically, he worked hard in the association.

Earns Esteem Of Industry

"During his term as president," said C. H. Mitchell, secretary of the commonwealth mining conference, "Ceece earned the esteem and admiration of the mining industry throughout Canada for his qualities of leadership and determination."

Roper first won recognition on a national basis in 1945 when he won the Leonard Memorial Medal, a highly coveted award in mining for a thesis which appeared in a publication of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.

But Roper's first consideration has always been for the mine he has literally grown up in. He is the man who persuaded his head office in New York to allow a \$1,000,000 expansion program for production of zinc as a by-product at Britannia.

"It was a tough battle because the head office was finally got our way and it's dubious all the way. But we paid off. I guess we were lucky," he said with a boyish grin.

But Roper's "luck" was well seasoned with good judgment, hard work and the courage to turn a \$1,000,000 gamble into a sure thing.

And the qualities that have earned Roper and his mine a top rung on the industry's ladder, have spilled over into Roper's community life.

He's a well-known figure in Britannia's service organizations; he works actively with the boy scouts; he's a past vice-president of the St. John Ambulance association and he's worked in the B.C. Cancer association.

He's keen on fishing and square dancing and until a couple of years ago "when things began to get too heavy at work" he played hard at softball and tennis.

"You can't live long in a town like Britannia without becoming completely enmeshed in the community atmosphere," he explained. "It's one of the things that makes it so hard for us to leave."

"Ceece" Roper has no formula for success apart from hard work. He believes there is no substitute for practical experience and to that end encourages embryo mining engineers to work underground as he did "to find out what it's all about."

Which explains why miners like Johnny Johnston say, "It won't be the same without him."